CURF & WIMBLINGTON COMBINED INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Curf & Wimblington Combined IDB Held at the Middle Level Offices, Tuesday 12th May 2026 at 2PM.

PRESENT

Marc Heading (Chair)	Tobias Martin
Robin Gowler (V-Chair)	Raymond Mason
Richard Angood	Alison Morris
Maureen Davis	Donald Morris
Stephen Edgely	Sam Murphy
Christopher Gowler	David Nicholas
Robin Gowler	Thomas Noble

Mr Paul Burrows, the Clerk, was also in attendance and was Mr Morgan Lakey representing the Consulting Engineer. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chairman welcomed Mr T Noble to his first meeting.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from C Martin and L Nicholas

B.601 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman reminded Members of the importance of declaring an interest in any matter included in today's agenda that involved or was likely to affect any individual on the Board.

Mr Heading, Ms Morris, Mr R Gowler and Mr C Gowler declared an interest in the Fens Reservoir.

Mr Heading and Ms Morris declared an interest in matters concerning the Middle Level Commissioners as Middle Level Board members.

B.602 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2025 were reviewed and confirmed as a true record and no Matters Arising were identified.

RESOLVED

> That the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 13th May 2025 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.603 Constitution & Membership

Mr Burrows reflected on the length of tenure of the Chairman and Vice Chairman and encouraged the Board to consider its succession arrangements. Mr Burrows also shared the register of electors and highlighted that elections will take place later this year. He added that members will receive a notice during July/August and are requested to return their slip as soon as possible as terms end on 31st October 2026.

RESOLVED

That the register of electors be approved for use in the upcoming elections.

Mr M Heading is re-appointed as Chairman and Mr R Gowler is re-appointed as Vice Chairman

B.603 Clerk's Report

Mr Burrows provided an overview of his report highlighting in particular the Policy Review, Waste Exemptions and IDB1 items. He added that the Compliance & Enforcement Policy is now finalised and has been published and outlined the Standing Advice that now supports MLC and IDB regulation, one focused on system capacity and one on Byelaw strips.

Mr Burrows also provided an update on the Working Group focussed on IDB amalgamations within the Middle Level, noting a session for IDB Chairman is planned for 1st July 2026 before potentially bringing a proposal to the relevant IDBs for consideration and decision. The Chairman reminded the Board that they were reasonably relaxed and open-minded to the concept at their last meeting and that it was important to drive a more efficient future locally.

RESOLVED

That the Clerk’s Report is noted.

That the Board delegates the approval and publication of new and/or updated policies to the Clerk.

B.604 Environment Officer’s Report

The Chairman reported a positive discussion with Ms S Lloyd and Mr M Lakey to develop the draft Biodiversity Action Plan. He added that it was thorough and detailed and largely focussed on the Board’s standard operating procedures. Mr S Edgley added that the BAP was asking all members to be diligent and keep an eye out, reporting sightings.

Mr Burrows highlighted a change in approach to the Environment Officer’s reporting. There will now be newsletters developed and circulated to Members of all MLC administered IDBs with interesting and generic updates. An annual report for each IDB will now be specific to that Board and focussed on their Key Environmental Compliance Indicators as seen in the paper for this Board Meeting.

Following a discussion about sparrow boxes required for planning and the prevalence of Kingfishers, the Chairman asked that if any of the Board’s past installations of barn owl boxes are in poor condition for members to report these so they can be addressed.

Mr M Lakey asked whether the Board own the old pumping station structure and it was confirmed that the structure is not owned by the Board and it is on the Gowlers’ land.

RESOLVED

That the Environment Officer’s Report is noted.

The Biodiversity Action Plan is approved.

A biodiversity budget of £250 was set for swift boxes.

B.605 Consulting Engineers’ Reports

The Board considered the Consulting Engineers’ report, and it was taken as read.

Enforcement and Compliance

Mr Burrows reported that the new Enforcement and Compliance Officers have had success and are building the caseload. He added that Board members are important eyes and ears on the ground and asked that they report any questionable activity that is relevant to IDB and MLC operations and interests. The Board were asked to authorise the Chair and Vice Chair to take decisions on enforcement action on behalf of the Board, having taken advice from MLC officers. They will engage with other Board Members as they see appropriate and determine whether a Special Meeting of the Board is needed on a risk and complexity basis.

The Chairman outlined his correspondence with Ms T Gravenor at the MLC regarding development pressures in Manea on the Board's highland boundary with Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners. There are several applications for long 'ribbon-like' developments of 6-8 dwellings running north from Westfield Road. These all propose a small attenuation pond serving the development, with the final surface water discharge at or just above greenfield rate to Darcey Lode. The concern with these ribbon developments is that the attenuation ponds are small, often with limited access, and when further developments appear either side, they could become less visible to the wider area, with problems being missed and maintenance may become overlooked. While Darcy Lode is not a Board's drain, the accumulation of multiple smaller discharges may increase the pressure on the Lode, and the Board's system further downstream. Due to the ongoing capacity issues at Anglian Water Manea Lots WRC, and as discussed at the May 2025 Board Meeting, applicants are being advised that the Board will not consent the discharge of treated effluent into its district, that would otherwise have been treated at the WRC. It is not known whether Anglian Water are planning an increase in capacity at the WRC in the near future. Mr Burrows reflected that this type of situation is why the Standing Advice referred to earlier is so important. The Chairman added that it was unfortunately an increasing typical issue for many IDBs, with this Board having similar issues in Dodington and Wimblington.

Operations

Mr M Lakey gave an overview of his paper highlighting the access works delivered for mobile pump deployment under the IDB Fund Tranche 2b. He added that the Board's drains are generally in a good condition and outlined the planned programme for this year.

He reported that subsequent to last year's meeting discussion a survey had been undertaken to assess the possibility of re-routing water from Fincham's district into Stonea Fen district via the private drain between point 39 and 28. He added that the results are promising with consistently level levels even if Fincham's Farm pumping station sits 60cm higher than Stonea Fen pumping station. He added that culvert works and a new water control structure are likely to be needed to enable re-routing. Ms A Morris highlighted that as landowner; to serve their irrigation requirements they rely on Finchams inlet.

Mr P Burrows sought to clarify if the Board's strategic objective was to enable re-routing of water to facilitate a future potential decommissioning of Fincham's Farm Pumping Station. Mr M Lakey added that as per the M&E report, this is the Board's weakest link and least likely station to be eligible for significant grant. Mr Burrows added that there may be opportunity to include the works required within Defra peat funding grants that are currently open for bids. The Board confirmed this to be the case and were supportive of being included in any peat funding applications being developed by the MLC. The Chairman added that regardless as to the success of this they would like to see proposals for the enabling works for review at next year's meeting.

Mr Burrows suggested that it may be wise for the Board to consider the private drain between Points 39 and 28 becoming vested in the IDB as a Board drain as this is key to enabling the re-routing strategy. This was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Mr D Nicolas and agreed unanimously. Ms Morris added her support as landowner covering that stretch of drain and therefore did not expect to receive the notification letter from the Board to the drain's adoption.

M&E and capital works

The Board reviewed the paper from Mr D Bantoft the MLC Head of M&E. The Chairman thanked all the MLC staff involved for securing a fantastic outcome from the IDB Fund on behalf of the Board. He outlined that pump 2 at Bensons Pumping Station has now been replaced along with a new control panel. He added that frustratingly pump 1, despite being only 8 years old now needs to be addressed with the whole life cost of replacing it being cheaper than overhauling it. He added that this has been factored into the estimates for budgetary decision later in the meetings. Mr R Gowler added that new pumps do not seem to be as good as old ones. Mr M Lakey highlighted that canister pumps such as those at Benson's have their electrics below water and are therefore more vulnerable but with the stations configuration there are no alternatives unfortunately.

The Board agreed with the principle that they needed an Investment Plan as indicated by the Consulting Engineer but would value understanding what the cost is to develop one and what is included therein.

RESOLVED

That the Chair and Vice Chair are authorised to take decisions on enforcement action on behalf of the Board with advice from MLC

To vest (adopt) the private drain between Points 28-39 as a Board drain updating the Board's plans accordingly.

To replace pump No1 at Bensons Pumping Station.

To not approve that the MLC take electricity meter readings.

B.606 Health & Safety

Mr Burrows gave an overview of his report and the recommendations that the Board consider show it could strengthen its approach to health & safety. He added that MLC intended to develop a H&S service provision offer that would be discuss at the Chairman's meeting in December 2026 for potential roll-out from August 2027. The Board noted the paper and reaffirmed that the Chairman is the Board's H&S lead.

B.607 Governance

Mr Burrows asked the Board to consider the Governance report and that its content be noted.

RESOLVED

Completion of the Annual Return – 2024/2025

i) The Board considered and approved the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year that ended on the 31st March 2025.

ii) The Board considered and approved the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year that ended on the 31st March 2025

The Board noted the continued appointment of Whitings as Internal Auditor.

Risk Management Strategy and Internal Controls

The Board did not highlight any specific risks or issues not covered within their Risk Management Strategy (published in 2024 and on the website), noted the system of financial Internal Controls (as published on website) and no additional controls were highlighted as required.

The Board wish to continue to index link their pumping station valuations for insurance purposes.

Exercise of Public Rights

Mr Burrows referred to the publishing of the Notice of Public Rights and publication of unaudited Annual Return, Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the Notice of Conclusion of the Audit and right to inspect the Annual Return.

Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments.

Mr Burrows reported that as part of the Annual Governance review the Board were required to consider if there were any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end that have a financial impact on the authority. It was confirmed that there were no such matters that have been raised through the office of the clerk. Members gave consideration to the position.

RESOLVED

> That there are no such events that would have an adverse financial impact on the Board that would need to be included within the accounting statements for the financial year ended 31st March 2025.

IDB1 and Annual Governance Statement

The Board noted the IDB1 return for 2024/25 submitted on their behalf.

The Board noted and approved the submission of their Annual Governance Statement for 2025/26 authorising the Chairman and Clerk to sign the statement.

B.608 Finance Report – Looking Back

Finance officer's review and key messages

The Board noted the position as laid out by their Responsible Finance Officer and were grateful for the work undertaken by MLC to secure grant and deliver works under the IDB Fund Tranche 2b. Ms A Morris proposed the accounts be approved and this was seconded by Mr T Martin and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED

> The Payments were reviewed and accepted.
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> Accounts for 2025/26 were reviewed and approved with the Chairman authorised to sign the AGAR.

B.609 Finance Report – Looking Forward

The Board noted the position as laid out by their Responsible Finance Officer.

Fees & Remuneration

RESOLVED

That the Pump Attendants fees be increased by 5.25% from £1,036 to £1,090

That the annual lettings of herbage continue at the same annual fees

That the land upon which herbage is let be formally registered with Land Registry

Precept

Internal Drainage Boards are required to pay a Precept (IDB Precept) to the Environment Agency for their expenses managing water passing into main rivers. Predominantly, the Precept funds additional maintenance downstream of and/or benefitting IDB districts.

The Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) determined that the Precept will increase by 2% for 2026.

The precept for 2025 was £11,170.66

RESOLVED

That the Precept is paid in full.

Determination of land for rating purposes

RESOLVED

The determination of annual values for rating purposes and associated write off be approved.

Estimates & Rate Requirements for 2026/27.

Budget

The Board reviewed the proposed budget as recommended by their Responsible Finance Officer. The Chairman outlined that he had been in discussion with Mr A Wool to derive the budget. Mr Burrows added that whilst there was 20% increase factored in for electricity cost increases, he feels that given the Middle East war and the timing of our contract renewal there is risk here.

Ms A Morris added that members were relieved to see that the budget meant that the rate could be held. The Chairman explained that the proposal was to fund Bensons pump 1 replacement from the underspend from 2025/26 that has been carried forward into the General Fund balance, rather than to rate for these works.

Rate Requirement for 2026/27

In order to raise the budget, the Chairman highlighted that the rate would need to be set at 31p.

Ms Morris proposed that the budget be approved along with a rate of 31p, this was seconded by Mr R Gowler and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED

i) That the estimates be approved.

ii) That a total sum of £128,794 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.

iii) That the amounts comprised in the sum referred to in ii) above to be raised by drainage rates and to be met by special levy are £110,332 and £12,369.

iv) That a rate of 31p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

v) That Special Levies of £12,369 be made and issued to Fenland District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure and a contribution from the Middle Level Commissioners of £6,095 in respect of Byall Fen.

vi) That the seal of the Board be affixed to the record of drainage rates and special levies referred to in resolution v).

vii) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levy by such statutory powers as may be available.

B.610 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

The next full meeting of the Board is on 11th May 2027 at the Middle Level Offices, 2pm start.

B.611 Any Other Business

None raised

The meeting closed at 15:30pm.

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Chair

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Date