

WARBOYS, SOMERSHAM & PIDLEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Warboys, Somersham & Pidley Internal Drainage Board
Held at Lakeside Lodge, Pidley on Thursday 28th May 2026.

PRESENT

Daniel Brown (Chair)	Ian Johnson
Thomas Noble (Vice Chair)	Sam Johnson
Stephen Edgley	Charlotte Lowe
Daniel Edwards	Lucy Munns
David England	Jonathan Short
Dan Fabb	Hugh Whittome
James German	

The Lead Clerk Mrs Ruth Martin representing the Clerk was in attendance.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

B.1958 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from J Carney, M Heading and A Sweeney

B.1959 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 Whittome declared an interest as Chair of the Middle Level Commissioners Board.

Members agreed to declare any other interests during the course of the meeting.

B.1960 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes were confirmed as a true record and no Matters Arising were identified.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 27th November 2026 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.1961 Confidential Items Subject to Legal Privilege

This item is excluded under S1(2) Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

Ms Howe left the room for this item.

B.1962 Constitution & Membership

Mrs Martin advised the Board that there are currently 6 vacancies on the Board pending Reconstitution. She reported that the Reconstitution is still waiting for Defra to advertise the schedule as reported at the last meeting, and that the Reconstitution has not progressed any further since the Board last met.

Training

Mrs Martin reminded Board members that Board training is reported on the IDB1 form and asked to advise the Clerk of any training completed or required. The Board discussed Health and Safety training which is reported on under Health and Safety in the minutes.

B.1963 Clerk's Report

Mrs Martin asked that the Clerk's Report be taken as read.

Policy Reviews

Mrs Martin asked the Board to consider delegating the approval of new and updated policies to the Clerk, as there are several policies that need to be developed and published. The Board agreed to this proposal.

Waste Exemptions

Mrs Martin updated the Board on the current position with Waste Exemption licences and the proposals as detailed in the Clerks report. She drew their attention to the plan to move each IDB to having their own suite of waste exemptions, and that it is likely that there will be a need for associated training for IDBs and their District Officers.

IDB1 (Annual Reporting to Defra)

Mrs Martin advised the Board that extra information is being reported on the IDB1 return and the challenges that this is causing. This includes additional information relating to drain maintenance which is compiled for the Board with support from the District Officer, and Mrs Martin stressed to the Board the importance of keeping this data and providing the information when it is requested. She added that Defra have been asked to provide more information on why this level of detail is necessary.

RESOLVED

That the Clerks Report is noted.

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

Environment Officers Report

Mrs Martin referred the Board to the Environment Officers report, and the Chair advised that he, the District Officer and Mr Whittome had met with Sofi Lloyd. Mr Whittome updated the Board on their discussions, particularly highlighting the challenges the Board faced in dealing correctly with badgers, and a discussion on drain cleansing was had by the Board. Mr Whittome added that a good water vole population in the District shows the positive effect of the Board's work. The Board discussed the importance of balancing ecology with cost and water management and approved the Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Board agreed to setting a Biodiversity budget of £250 for a swift box, and Board members were encouraged to report sightings using the iRecord app as detailed in the Environment Officers report.

RESOLVED

That the Biodiversity Action Plan is agreed

That a £250 fund for Biodiversity to be set aside to be used for swift boxes

B.1964 Consulting Engineers' Reports

Mrs Martin referred to the Consulting Engineers' report, asking that it be taken as read.

The Chair reported successful bids had been made for funding for the weedscreen refurbishments at the Washways and Pidley Pumping Stations from the T2B Storm Recovery fund, and that the vibration in Pump 1 at Washways was still ongoing. The Lowland Peat Recovery Fund has presented the Board with an opportunity to bid for funding for works to the Acre Fen Slacker, water control structure at Red Tile Farm, and a new slacker at Puddock. These are all expensive items so the Chair will keep pushing to seek funding for these. Mr I Johnson reminded the Board that they had previously agreed to fund the Puddock slacker from the Board's funds, but to receive grant funding for this would be preferred.

New FCERM Grant Funding Guidance

The Board noted the new guidance and considered the Consulting Engineers comments. The Chair advised the Board that he had been in contact with the Consulting Engineer to discuss critical failure points within the District. The Board agreed to develop an asset improvement plan for future asset refurbishment and noted how this would support future funding applications.

Planning

The Board were advised of the discussion at the Finance Meeting regarding the development at Little Acre Fen, and Mr I Johnson outlined to the Board the potential issue that an attenuation pond would create for the management of the water for the Board. The Board agreed with his proposal that any discharge from this catchment should be an unattenuated discharge downstream of Washways Pumping Station into Fenton Lode.

Mechanical & Electrical

The Board considered the Mechanical & Electrical report and noted the content.

The Pumping Station reports were considered, and Mr Whittome asked about pump planning, and Mr S Johnson added that the pumps at Washways are an issue. Mr Whittome questioned the report details regarding the pumps at Puddock and asked that the M&E Engineer review the content of the report, as there are 2 pumps there and one has recently been refurbished. Mr I Johnson flagged that the Pidley pumps are probably the Board's highest risk if both pumps are unserviceable. The other pumps highlighted in red in the report have alternative arrangements that could be put in place. The Chair advised that all pumps are tested regularly, and that there are no issues with the pumps at Pidley Pumping Station. Mr I Johnson agreed that provided the Board have adequate funds to purchase two pumps should they both suddenly need replacement, this would be the best standby position.

RESOLVED

That the reports are noted.

That an asset improvement plan for future asset refurbishment be developed

That any discharge from the Little Acre Fen catchment should be unattenuated and discharge downstream of Washways Pumping Station into Fenton Lode.

B.1965 Health & Safety

The Chair advised that he and the Vice Chair had met with AW Safety to carry out inspections, noting that they had inspected the same places as before and with the same comments being made. He advised that the railings at Westmoor Pumping Station need repairing and he proposed that he seeks a quotation for the works for the Board to discuss at the next meeting. Mr Whittome agreed that the work needs doing. The Chair advised that grant funding had been received to install a new concrete ramp down to the Westmoor Pumping Station, and that this looks good.

Mrs Martin then gave an overview of the Clerks Health and Safety report and the recommendations that the Board consider showing how it could strengthen its approach to health and safety. The Board were asked to take note of their Health and Safety accountabilities and reminded that they cannot delegate their responsibilities.

Mr Whittome advised that either one Board member takes on this responsibility, or that the Board collectively take the responsibility. He also felt that as the Board have an employee, he should have some Health & Safety training. Mr I Johnson proposed that the Board's employee (the District Officer) attend a one day Health & Safety training course and this was agreed by the Board.

The Board were advised that MLC are planning to terminate their agreement with AW Safety (formerly Cope) in August 2026, but that the Boards agreement would continue until August 2027, after which time alternative service providers would be considered. It is MLCs intention to develop a service provision which they would offer to IDBs, and the Board agreed to consider such a provision dependent on cost. The Board also noted their contentment to remain with AW Safety until the contract termination next year.

RESOLVED

That the report is noted.

That the District Officer attend a one-day Health and Safety training course

B.1966 District Officer's Report

The Chair gave a verbal report on behalf of the District Officer. He had reported at the November meeting that the gear box on the truck was being repaired, and this is now complete, although it took 6 weeks and cost around £4,000. There have been some small issues when using the flail with the new digger, but Komatsu have been out and adjusted the flow pressures to the flail. Mr Fabb added that they had initially thought that there was a leak on the slew motor, but this was not the case, and the adjustments resolved the problem. The Chair advised that the skids, blades, rotor bearings and hydraulic pipes have all been replaced.

The Chair advised that he will be developing a works programme with the District Officer, which will include monthly goals, but acknowledged that as they do not meet every day management is not as the Chair would like.

The Board discussed the possibility of purchasing a slubbing bucket and trailer but concluded that this would not be necessary at the present time.

Mr Whittome updated the Board on some discussions which had been held at the Finance Committee meeting, and the Board agreed to list the works they wanted the District Officer to attend to with a guidance on priority, and this can be considered at an Annual Review with the District Officer.

The Chair reminded the Board that at the November meeting they had discussed the refurbishment of the grille on the culvert at the border with Sutton & Mepal IDB following repair by Mr I Johnson. Mr Fabb has provided a quotation for the works, and explained to the Board the proposed repair, and the design was

discussed by the Board. Mr Fabb then left the room whilst the quotation was discussed. The Chair advised that a quote of £2700 had been received, and Mr German added that the price was similar to the cost of a new galvanised slacker. The Board agreed to accept Mr Fabb's quotation, and Mr Fabb returned to the meeting.

The Chair reported that he and Mr Fabb would be going to look at the Westmoor Pumping Station railings, and Mr I Johnson suggested that the Board set a budget for the works so that it would not be necessary to return to the Board for an agreement to carry out the works. Mr Whittome proposed that the Board agree that the Chair and Vice Chair decide if they should accept a quotation once provided, to allow for the works to progress before the next meeting. The Board agreed with this proposal. The Chair highlighted the High Fen weed screen electricity cable protection, and the Board agreed that this be looked at when reviewing Westmoor Pumping Station.

RESOLVED

That the quotation for the refurbishment of the culvert grille is accepted.

That the Chair agrees a price for the repairs to Westmoor Pumping Station railings and that the work can be commissioned.

B.1967 Governance

Mrs Martin asked the Board to consider the Governance report and that its content be noted.

Completion of the Annual Return of the Board – 2024/2025

RESOLVED

- 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 Whittings as Internal Auditor.

Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments.

Mrs Martin 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. She 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.

Risk Management Strategy and Internal Controls

The Board did not highlight any specific risks or issues not covered within the Board's 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.

Insured Values

The Insurance Valuations were reviewed, and the Board agreed that they were content with the valuations.

RESOLVED

That the valuations are acceptable

IDB1 (Annual Report to Defra)RESOLVED

That the Board note the submission of the IDB1 to Defra.

Exercise of Public Rights

Mrs Martin 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.

Annual Governance StatementRESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement on behalf of the Board for the financial year ended 31st March 2026.

B.1968 Finance Report – Looking BackFinance officer's review and key messages

The Board considered and noted the key finance messages of the Responsible Finance Officer.

Payments for 2025

The Payments were reviewed and accepted.

Highland Water Contributions

The Board noted the Highland Water contributions.

Annual Accounts and Finance Papers 2025/2026

The Board considered and approved the Annual accounts and Finance Papers for the year ended 31st March 2026, as required in the Audit regulations.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Return, on behalf of the Board for the financial year ended 31st March 2026.

B.1969 Finance Report – Looking ForwardFinance officer's review and key messages

The Board considered and noted the key finance messages of the Responsible Finance Officer.

Fees & RemunerationProperty Rental and Tenancy Review

The Board discussed the current position and condition of the bungalow and discussed appointing a letting agent to deal with the management of the tenancy. Some Board members were reluctant to do this, due to the costs involved, but Mr Whittome advised them of the requirements of the landlord and the implications if they do not ensure compliance of the property. The new Renters' Rights Act has changed how landlords should manage their properties and the Board need to ensure compliance with the Act, which results in quite a lot of work to do. Mr I Johnson added he understood what Mr Whittome was saying. The Board asked the Lead Clerk in conjunction with the Chair investigate the costs involved in appointing an agent to manage the tenancy.

RESOLVED

That the cost of appointing an agent to manage the tenancy be investigated

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 £24,146.78.

RESOLVED

That the Precept is paid in full.

Determination of Annual Values for Rating purposes.

The Board considered the recommendation for the determination of annual value for rating purposes.

RESOLVED

- i) That the determination recommended be adopted by the Board
- ii) That the Clerk be empowered to serve notices and to take such other action as may be necessary to comply with statutory requirements.
- iii) That the Chairman and the Clerk be empowered to authorise appropriate action on behalf of the Board in connection with any appeal against the determination.

Rate Arrears

The Board discussed rate arrears at the November meeting, following which the Vice Chair and Mr Fabb contacted the ratepayers involved and have successfully secured payment.

The Board were asked to consider the writing-off of rate arrears amounting to £2,602.48 relating to the period April to October 2016.

RESOLVED

That the rate arrears amounting to £2,602.48 be written off.

Estimates & Rate Requirements for 2026/27.Budget

The Board reviewed the proposed budget as recommended by their Responsible Finance Officer and the Finance Committee, and the Chair proposed that the budget be agreed. This was unanimously supported.

RESOLVED

That the budget is agreed.

Rate Requirement for 2026/27

Mrs Martin advised that the budget indicated that a rate of 31.0p in the £ would need to be set, and that this had been recommended by the Finance Committee.

The Chair advised that the budget included the proposed Fenton Lode slubbing, and asked the Board if they were happy to use BJ Plant for these works following the Boards satisfaction with their works the previous year. The Board agreed with the proposal.

Mr Whittome commented that there has been a 20% increase in budgeted fuel costs, but we cannot predict how these may change. There is also the unknown impact on electricity prices in October when the current contract ends, we do not know what the renegotiated rates will be like in relation to the current rates. This makes setting the budget for these items challenging.

The Chair asked the Board for their considerations, and Mr Whittome proposed that a rate of 31.0p in the £ be set, and this was seconded by the Vice Chair. The Board agreed unanimously with the proposal.

RESOLVED

- i) That the estimates be approved.
- ii) That a total sum of £257,007 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 £228,914 and £28,093 respectively.
- iv) That a rate of 31.0p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

- v) That a Special Levy of £7,183 be made and issued to Fenland District Council, and £20,910 be made and issued to Huntingdonshire District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure.
- 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.
- viii) That BJ Plant continue to carry out works for the Board

B.1970 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

The next meeting of the Board be held on Thursday 26th November 2026 meeting at Lakeside Lodge, Pidley and commencing with a District Inspection at 10am, lunch at 1pm and followed by the meeting.

That the following Meeting of the Board be held on Thursday 20th May 2027 at 5.30pm at Lakeside Lodge, Pidley.

B.1971 Any Other Business

The Chair reported to the Board that the outstanding issue with Bartletts has been resolved, and a backlog payment has been received. It has been agreed that the current agreement will continue, and annual invoices will be raised for future fees. The Chair will also contact Ollie Barlett to discuss the removal of material next to Washways Pumping Station.

The Chair reported that the Board are owners of a small parcel of land in Fenton Way, Chatteris, adjacent to a Nightlayers IDB Board drain and that an adjacent landowner wishes to cross the Boards land with an electricity cable. Wayleave negotiations have begun and a commuted sum has been asked for. Mr Edgley advised that the construction works have already progressed a long way. The Board agreed that a single commuted sum would be preferred to an annual payment.

The Chair updated the Board with progress on the issues at the Persimmon Homes site, Abbot Walk, advising that Mark from Persimmon Homes has been in touch with him and that he is concerned that people have been driving along the Boards drain, although it is believed that Persimmon have not gated the entrances. The trees within the Board's maintenance strip have been removed following involvement of MLCs Enforcement and Compliance Officers.

The Chair asked the Board to notify him if they see any development close to any Board drains.

At the November meeting the Board discussed land within the District that was not being rated as it was not know who the land belonged to. Mr I Johnson and Mr Heading took on the task of trying to identify landowners. Mr I Johnson reported progress back to the Board, and that land they had previously thought was 'missing' from the rated areas is droves and therefore not rateable land.

Ms Lowe asked if an update on the Somersham Pocket Park could be given and the Chair advised that the Board are still in negotiations with Tarmac, and that both the Board and the landowners want a resolution to the current situation.

Mr Edgley gave an update on the problems faced with fly tipping within the District.

Mr Whittome thanked the Chair and Vice Chair on behalf of the Board for all the work they do to support the Board.

With no other business brought to the attention of the Chair, the meeting closed at 7.20pm.

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Chair

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Date