BENWICK INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Benwick Internal Drainage Board Held at Ramsey Golf Club on Wednesday 17th June 2026.

PRESENT

Martin Jackson (Chair)
Reginald Few
Dee Laws (FDC)
Alex Miscandalon (FDC)
Thomas Noble
Michael Smalley
Robert Stacey
Tim Taylor (FDC)
Nigel Thacker

The Lead Clerk Mrs Ruth Martin representing the Clerk along with Mr Morgan Lakey representing the Consulting Engineer were in attendance.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

B.1342 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from E Jackson (vice-chair) D Caton and T Caton,

B.1343 Declarations of Interest

The Chair 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 Miscandlon declared an interest in matters concerning the Middle Level Commissioners as a Middle Level Board member.

Mr Miscandlon, Mr Taylor and Mrs Laws declared interest in matters concerning planning as Fenland District Councillors.

Mrs Laws as Planning Portfolio Holder for Fenland District Council.

Mr Taylor as the Chair of Fenland District Council Rural and Farming Committee

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

B.1344 Confirmation of Minutes

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 18th June 2025 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.1345 Constitution & Membership

Elections, Vacancies and Appointments

Mrs Martin advised that there are currently no vacancies on the Board.

Mrs Martin reported that the term of office of the Members of the Board will expire on 31st October 2026, and she submitted the proposed register of electors which is applicable to the 2026 election.

RESOLVED

That the register be approved.

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 advised that no additional training had been undertaken and did not identify any current training needs.

Mrs Laws advised that there are several opportunities through Cambridgeshire County Council for free training courses that may be relevant and agreed to send details on to Gemma at the Middle Level Offices for sharing.

B.1346 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 polices that need to be developed and published. The Board agreed to this proposal.

The IDB governance future within the Middle Level of the Fens

Mrs Martin gave the Board an overview of the discussions of the working group and that an outline design has been developed for further consideration. She advised that there is a meeting for Board Chairs on 1st July and encouraged either the Chair or Vice Chair of the Board to attend.

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 Mr Lakey is compiling for this Board with the support of the District Officer.

RESOLVED

That the Clerks Report is noted.

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

B.1347 Environment Officers Report

The Chair reported that he and the Vice Chair had met with Sofi Lloyd, MLCs Ecology and Environmental Services Manager and Mr Lakey to review the Boards Biodiversity Action Plan, following which the BAP was refreshed and updated. There are links to this on the website. He reported that most work for the Board is managed by Mr Lakey, and that Board training is progressing. There is an Environment Day planned for 3rd December.

Mr Lakey advised the Board that the Environment Officers Report has changed in approach. There will now be newsletters developed and circulated with interesting and generic updates. The Annual Report will be IDB specific and focussed on the Boards Key Environmental Compliance Indicators.

The Board were asked to approve the updated BAP and this was agreed.

The Board discussed setting the Biodiversity Budget and agreed to the proposed £250 budget to purchase a swift colony box. A location is to be identified.

RESOLVED

That the Biodiversity Action Plan is approved

That a £250 fund for Biodiversity to be set aside to be used for a swift colony box.

B.1348 Chairmans Items

The Chair advised that he had nothing further to report and asked that this item be removed from future agendas.

B.1349 Consulting Engineers' Reports

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

Enforcement and Compliance

Mrs Martin advised the Board of the progress of the new Enforcement and Compliance Officers and asked the Board to authorise the Chair and Vice Chair to take decisions on enforcement action on behalf of the Board. This was agreed by the Board.

Mrs Laws asked if a comment regarding the Boards maintenance strip was included in all responses to planning applications. Mr Lakey and Mrs Martin reminded Mrs Laws that IDBs are not statutory consultees and explained that comments are made after manually reviewing planning lists to identify relevant developments. It is understood that FDC have a GIS layer showing IDB maintenance strips for all IDBs within Fenland. Mrs Laws advised that she may be able to arrange for relevant planning applications to be sent to MLC engineers for comment.

Capital Programme

The Board were asked to consider the development of a capital investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly. The Board agreed that a plan should be developed.

The Consulting Engineer has advised that a "Benwick System Study" project has been identified on the FCERM investment programme with an indicative allocation of £30k for 2026/27. The Board agreed to liaise with the Consulting Engineer to agree project scope and timescales for a capital refurbishment project.

Operations Report

Mr Lakey gave a verbal review of his report. He advised that notices have been sent advising of the planned machine cleansing for 2026. The Board benefitted from the Storm Grant Recovery T2B funding and Mr Lakey gave an overview of the works completed, including the culvert replacement at Point 52. Four of the Boards six pumping stations have also benefitted from the installation of new hardstanding.

An inspection of the District has recently been carried out and all is in good order. Mr Lakey recommended that herbicide treatment is applied this year prior to machine cleaning which was agreed by the Board. Mr Lakey advised that Mr Ashman has now retired and will not be available for flail mowing but reported that M&C Agricultural Services are available, and the Board agreed with the proposal to use them for future works. Mr Lakey reported on the costs and the Board reviewed and agreed the proposed plan of machine cleaning works.

Mechanical & Electrical

The Board considered the Mechanical & Electrical report. Mr Lakey reported on the works carried out at the Boards pumping stations as a result of the Storm Recovery Grant Funding, including Control Panel Replacements at Bettys Nose, Broadalls and Ramsey Mere Pumping Stations, and weed screen overhauls at Copalder and Ramsey Mere Pumping Stations.

The Control Panel at Beezlings Pumping Station has been repaired, and the Board should be mindful of the condition of the pumps at Ibbersons/Benwick Mere but this should be highlighted in the system study.

The Board noted that MLC are currently unable to offer weed pile clearance, but the District Officer has this in hand.

Mr Miscandlon asked if, when considering the age of equipment at Ibbersons Pumping Station, if there any issues or concerns. Mr Lakey advised that it is working satisfactorily at present, and that David Caton checks the pumping station on a regular basis.

The Chair thanked MLC for the work undertaken in securing the Grant Funding that has allowed such extensive work to be carried out.

RESOLVED

> That the Chair and Vice Chair are authorised to take decisions on enforcement action on behalf of the Board with advice from MLC.
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> To continue with the System Study and to liaise with the Consulting Engineer to agree project scope and timescales for a capital refurbishment project.
>
> To instruct the Consulting Engineer to develop an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement.

B.1350 Health & Safety

Mrs Martin gave an overview of the 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.

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.

The Board considered their Health & Safety documentation position, and it was suggested that the Board ask AW Safety to write risk assessments for their pumping stations. After some discussion the Board agreed to ask that the assessments be written, and also to pay the costs of Martyn Isaacson, the MLC Operations Manager (H&S) to accompany AW Safety on any site visits needed in order to develop the risk assessments, and to assist with developing the paperwork for the Board to ensure the package is up to date with the relevant documentation.

It was confirmed that all actions identified in the AW Safety Pumping Station inspections report have been resolved.

RESOLVED

That the report is noted.

That AW Safety be asked to develop documentation for the Board in conjunction with Martyn Isaacson of MLC.

B.1351 District Officer's Report

The District Officer advised that he had nothing further to add to Mr Lakey's report, and that the District was in good order.

B.1352 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 Whitings 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 Valuation was reviewed, and the Board agreed that they were content with the valuation.

RESOLVED

That the valuation is 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 Statement

RESOLVED

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.1353 Finance Report – Looking Back

Finance officer's review and key messages

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

Payments for 2025/2026

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.1354 Finance Report – Looking Forward

Finance officer's review and key messages

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

Fees & Remuneration

District Officer and Pump Attendants Fees

Mr Few declared an interest in this item as District Officer and abstained from voting.

Mr Miscandlon proposed that the fee allowance for both District Officer and Pump Attendants increase by 5.25%, and this was seconded by Mrs Laws. The Board agreed unanimously that the fee allowance increase by 5.25%.

RESOLVED

That the Board approved to award the following fees and renumeration level for contracted officials for 2026/27:

Name	**Role**	**Asset**	**2026/27 Max Value**
Reg Few	District Officer		£ 1,273
Reg Few	Pump Attendant	Beezling PS	£ 707
Ricky Dring	Pump Attendant	Copolder PS	£ 707
John Moulding	Pump Attendant	Broadalls PS & Ramsey Mere PS	£ 1415
Nigel Thacker	Pump Attendant	Bettys Nose PS	£ 707
David Caton	Pump Attendant	Benwick Mere PS	£ 707

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 £9,294.54.

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.

Estimates & Rate Requirements for 2026/27.

Budget

The Board reviewed the proposed budget as recommended by their Responsible Finance Officer.

RESOLVED

That the budget is agreed.

Rate Requirement for 2026/27

Mrs Martin advised that the budget indicated that a rate of 22.50p in the £ would need to be set.

The Chair advised that the budget included adding funds to the Capital Reserve Fund, and Mr Lakey commented that this could help with future GiA funding.

With no other rates suggested, the Chair proposed that a rate of 22.50p in the £ be set, and this was seconded by Mrs Laws. This was agreed by all present.

RESOLVED

i) That the estimates be approved.

ii) That a total sum of £116,729 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 £78,913 and £37,816 respectively.

iv) That a rate of 22.50p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

v) That a Special Levy of £2,983 be made and issued to Huntingdonshire District Council and £34,833 be made and issued to Fenland 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.

B.1355 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

The next meeting of the Board be held on Wednesday 16th June 2027 at 12pm at Ramsey Golf Club.

B.1356 Any Other Business

With no further items raised, the Chair thanked the Board for their attendance and closed the meeting at 1.05pm.

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Chair

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Date