middle level commissioners

Proudly managing water levels in the Fens since 1862

Standing Advice Note MLC003:

Culverting

Issued: July 2026 (Version 1)

Key messages

A. This Standing Advice applies to the Middle Level Commissioners (MLC) and their administered IDBs and should be read in conjunction with the Culverting Policy.

B. Prior consent is needed from the MLC or IDB for new or replacement culverts on watercourses within the MLC or IDB districts under Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 or associated Byelaws. This is separate to and in addition to Planning Permission from the Local Planning Authority.

C. Our principal objective is to avoid loss of capacity of drainage systems by retaining open watercourses with accessible corridors of open land on either side, avoiding loss of, or impact to, habitat and ecology.

D. The culverting of watercourses will not be consented unless there is robust evidence that there is no reasonably practical alternative, with adequate mitigation and compensation.

E. The replacement of existing culverts will be considered for consent if there is no reasonably practical alternative, with adequate mitigation and compensation, or the culvert is required for the effective operations of the MLC and/or IDB.

F. We object to planning applications that include culverting of watercourses within MLC/IDB districts unless there has been pre-application consultation with us, and our culverting policy has been considered.

G. We recommend that the Lead Local Flood Authority objects to planning applications that include the infilling of ditches and/or culverting of ordinary watercourses within MLC/IDB highland areas.

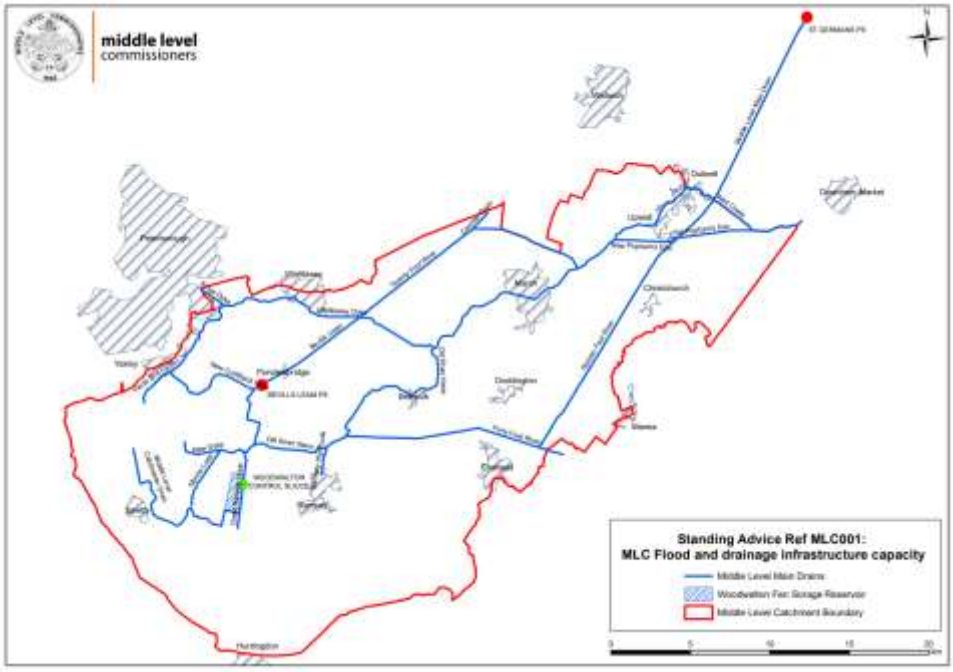
Advice primarily for:

- **Developers and riparian owners**
- **Local Planning Authorities (LPAs): Fenland District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council, Peterborough City Council**
- **Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs): Peterborough City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Norfolk County Council**
- **Minerals & Waste Planning Authorities: Peterborough City Council, Norfolk County Council, Cambridgeshire County Council**
- **Highways Authorities: National Highways, Peterborough City Council, Norfolk County Council, Cambridgeshire County Council**
- **Anglian Water and all other utility providers.**

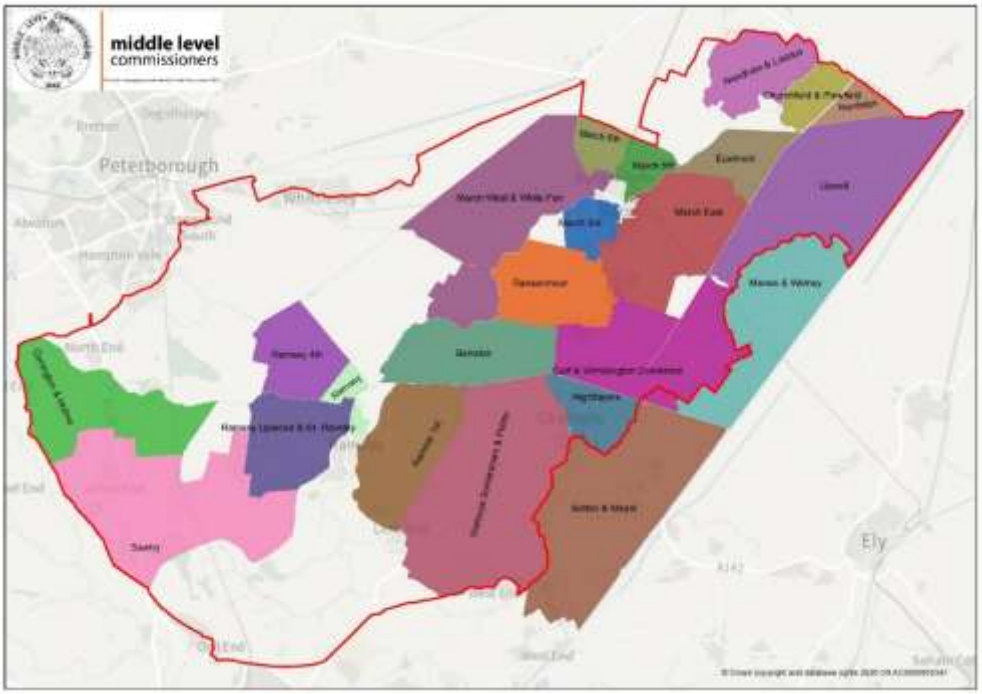
Geographical coverage:

MLC

The Middle Level catchment boundary plus areas where there is the potential through development to transfer water across the watershed into the Middle Level.



IDBs within/linked to the Middle Level (administered by MLC)



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08 July 2026