RAMSEY FIRST (HOLLOW) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Ramsey First (Hollow) IDB
Held at Ramsey Golf Club, Thursday 18th June 2026 at 14:00

PRESENT

Cedric Armstrong	Michael Smalley
Jacob Armstrong	Robert Stacey
Tom Caton	David Stokes

Mr Paul Burrows, the Clerk, was also in attendance along with Morgan Lakey representing the Consulting Engineer. Given that the Vice Chairman had sent his apologies and the Chairman was absent, Mr M Smalley put himself forward to Chair the meeting. This was unanimously approved by the other members in attendance.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from D Caton, T Noble, B Rignall and A Roberts

B.1057 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 C Armstrong declared an interest in any matters relating to the District Officer.

B.1058 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2025 were reviewed and confirmed as a true record.

RESOLVED

> That the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 19th June 2025 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.1059 Constitution & Membership

Mr Burrows summarised the issues experienced in contacting the Chairman over recent months and the associated lack of attendance at meetings and response to key matters. He added that this is an issue for the Board and untenable if it continues and they therefore ought to consider their appointments to Chair and Vice Chair roles.

Mr C Armstrong added that this is difficult in their absence, and he didn't know if they wish to continue or not. Mr S Johnson added that he didn't realise there was an issue. Mr R Stacey reminded members that the Vice Chairman expressed his wish only to be Vice Chairman given he is Chair on two other Boards.

Mr D Stokes committed to have a conversation with the Chairman when he returns from his holiday.

RESOLVED

Support that the current Chairman and Vice Chairman continue in post if they wish to. If the Chairman wishes to step down or there are continued issues, then the Board agree to hold a special meeting to take appropriate decisions.

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

B.1060 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.

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.1061 Environment Officer's Report

Mr P Burrows clarified that there was no report from the Environment Officer or draft Biodiversity Action Plan to review and approve, given that the Chairman did not attend the meeting that was set to inform and finalise the draft document.

Mr M Lakey added that the BAP is a statutory requirement, and a first draft has been developed but this needs inputs before being presented to the Board. He added that given he oversees the Board's maintenance programme, he ensures compliance and the integration of environmental objectives within this aspect of the Board's responsibilities.

RESOLVED

> The Biodiversity Action Plan be reviewed and approved by correspondence once a draft version has received input from the Chairman and/or District Officer.
>
> A biodiversity budget of £250 was set for a swift box for erection within the district.

B.1062 Consulting Engineers' Reports

The Board considered the Consulting Engineers' report, and it was taken as read. Mr S Johnson suggested also adding the District Officer to the delegation to agree and advise on enforcement matters.

Operations

Mr M Lakey referenced the highlights from his report, firstly mentioning the culvert and access works funded by the IDB Fund grant. Board Members were grateful for his efforts and the benefit these works provided. He added that a flag for wider culvert replacement and conveyance management works was being made by the MLC to the Environment Agency for consideration as they review eligibility and prioritisation for FCERM grant in aid under Defra's new flood funding policy. Mr P Burrows added that expectations need to be managed as there will be more projects than there is funding and it is likely that IDBs will need to contribute to boost their likelihood of securing grant.

Mr M Lakey then referred to the condition of the headwall at point 2 and that he proposed to address this as part of this year's maintenance programme whilst plant is on site for efficiency. The Board agreed this for inclusion within the budget and works programme. Mr M Lakey also referenced a control structure that the Vice Chairman would like to be addressed and suggested this is a topic for the next meeting, once we have an indication on likely grant for wider works in the district.

M&E and capital works

The Board reviewed and noted the paper from Mr D Bantoft the MLC Head of M&E. They agreed that the replacement and re-location of the control panels was the priority action. Mr C Armstrong mentioned that the Board then need to save to address the weed screen.

Mr P Burrows highlighted that the Chairman was unresponsive to contact ahead of the development of the budget to be reviewed later in the meeting, therefore there has been no steer as to how he feels the Board should finance the works to the control panels. He suggested that the Board could earmark up to £80,000 from a combination of their Development Charges, Pump Replacement and General Fund reserves for these works and recommended that the Board provide clear delegations of authority so that these can be progressed efficiently rather than waiting until the next annual meeting and potentially missing a delivery window.

RESOLVED

> That the Chair, Vice Chair and/or District Officer are authorised to take decisions on enforcement action on behalf of the Board with advice from MLC.
>
> Approve that the Chair, Vice Chair and/or District Officer be authorised to approve works to replace and relocate the control panels up to the value of £80,000 and instructing the MLC Head of M&E accordingly.

B.1063 Health & Safety

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

The District Officer confirmed that matters highlighted within the H&S inspection were in hand.

Mr P Burrows ran through the issue with the Board's footbridge over the Forty Foot River, highlighting that he had discussed the issue with the Chairman on 22nd October 2025 and followed up in writing but had received no response despite chasing. A Public Safety Risk Assessment had been undertaken in October 2025 by one of the MLC's Compliance & Enforcement Officers given a concern regarding the condition of the bridge and a risk of collapse that would cause issue for MLC in terms of navigation and conveyance. He added that from an MLC perspective, we need to know what the Board's plan is and when will it be actioned, adding that the MLC has the regulatory right to take action to secure its interests and recharge the Board for costs. However, this is not a route that is in the interests for either party.

Mr Lakey summarised the construction and condition of the footbridge and highlighted the structure's important role as the water supply to the Board's bungalow is affixed to the structure. Mr C Armstrong said that the Public Safety Risk Assessment had not been reported to him by the Chairman. Mr Lakey added that any work moving forward would require prior consent from the MLC.

Members discussed the issue and what their options may be. They highlighted that the alternative vehicular access to the station was over private land with an easement but access arrangements with the neighbour caused issues and was a concern in terms of emergency services' access. They added that the footbridge was important for bins and emergency access/egress, and the desirability of the bungalow as a residence would be impacted without the bridge if the Pump Attendant ever moved out. They reflected that no option would likely be cheap and that they currently had insufficient funds to address.

RESOLVED

Approve the commissioning of a structural survey to advise on the criticality of the structure's condition, risk of collapse and any urgent remedial works. The survey will inform the consideration of at least three options i) stabilise the existing structure ii) replace structure with a do-minimum structure needed to carry the water pipe and provide access and iii) remove the structure and relocated water supply pipe below the Forty Foot River.

B.1064 District Officer's Report

The District Officer reported that the Pump Attendant had been seeking advice from the Chairman with no response and he would therefore like a steer from the Board. The Pump Attendant has another residence locally and wants to know whether the Board would be comfortable in him undertaking the role remotely rather than being based within the Board's bungalow at the Pumping Station.

The Board considered this request and reaffirmed the valuable role and good performance of their employee. They confirmed they were comfortable in the District Officer relaying their agreement asking that the Pump Attendant confirm his intentions in writing to the MLC offices.

Mr P Burrows recommended that if and when written intentions are received, then the Board would need to convene a special meeting to review and determine renumeration and associated terms and conditions, as well as decide on the future of the Board's property.

B.1065 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 of the meeting and Clerk to sign the statement.

B.1066 Finance Report – Looking Back

Finance officer's review and key messages

Members reviewed and noted the financial position as laid out by their Responsible Finance Officer. Mr C Armstrong proposed the accounts be approved and this was seconded by Mr J Armstrong.

RESOLVED

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

B.1067 Finance Report – Looking Forward

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

Fees & Remuneration

RESOLVED

> The Board approved to award up to the following fees and renumeration level for their contracted official(s) for 2027/28

Name	**Role**	**Asset**	**2027/28 Max Value**
Cedric Armstrong	District Officer	NA	£4,414

That the salary for the Board's Pump Attendant employee be increased by 5.25% and that the rent of the bungalow be increased by 5.25%.

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 £7,089.45

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.

Mr P Burrows highlighted that the budget and associate rate estimate had been developed by their Responsible Finance Officer without input from the Chairman. He highlighted the significant value of works that the Board need to plan for and the very limited financial health of the Board's reserves, especially once the works to the control panels agreed earlier have been delivered. He added the Public Works Loan repayment commitment runs to 2028.

Mr C Armstrong highlighted that the Board have no choice but to increase the rate and proposed that the budget be agreed and a rate of 43.50p be set. This was seconded by Mr R Stacey and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED

i) That the estimates be approved.

ii) That a total sum of £114,201 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 £106,647 and £7,554.

iv) That a rate of 43.5p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

v) That Special Levies of £7,554 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.

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

B.1068 Date of next Meeting

Mr Smalley suggested that the date of the meeting be brought forward to avoid the holiday period and being the last meeting in the season of MLC administered IDBs. Mr M Lakey suggested that given other Board's have set their dates for 2027, the end of April seems most suitable. Mr P Burrows suggested that his team will be in touch with the Chairman and Vice Chair to confirm a suitable date.

Mr P Burrows also highlighted that in his view the current venue is not appropriate to host Board meetings where both public attendance and confidential matters need to be facilitated. He added that this is the second time a Board session has had to be conducted from the back-room bar area of the Golf Club. Mr S Johnson agreed and suggested the Middle Level Offices as a suitable and free venue. This was agreed.

RESOLVED

> The date and time of next full meeting of the Board will be determined by the Chairman and/or Vice Chair in conjunction with the Clerk with the intent to hold it in late April 2027 at the Middle Level offices, concluding with a sandwich lunch.

B.1069 Any Other Business

Mr P Burrows highlighted that he was awaiting the Chairman's signature on a letter confirming the Board wish the MLC's legal service provider Burgess Salmon to act for them within the Fens Reservoir project. He added that this had previously been agreed by the Board and asked if the Board would approve that the Chair on the meeting sign in lieu of the Board's Chairman.

RESOLVED

The Board approved that Mr M Smalley sign the letter.

The meeting closed at 15:15

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Chair

………………………….

Date