

BLUNTISHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Bluntisham Internal Drainage Board
held at Hanson's, Needingworth Quarry on Friday the 4th June 2021

PRESENT

P D Burton Esq (Chairman) P Burgess Esq
J R Anderson Esq (Vice Chairman) A L G Holloway Esq
J Neish Esq

The Clerk to the Board was in attendance.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from C Hudson Esq and H Law Esq.

B.798 Standing Orders

Further to minute B.759, the Clerk reported that ADA have obtained agreement from Defra for the flexibility which allowed the Board to choose how they wished to hold Board meetings during the pandemic to become permanent. This change will allow remote attendance or fully virtual meetings to take place in future should that best meet the Board's particular requirements at that time.

RESOLVED

That the Board adopt the revised Standing Orders.

B.799 Declarations of Interest

The Clerk 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.

The Chairman declared an interest in any matter in which Lattenbury Farms were involved.

Mr Neish declared an interest in all planning matters as a member of Huntingdonshire District Council.

B.800 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 8th January 2021 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.801 Board Membership

Further to minute B.772, the Clerk reported that Mr Paul Burgess had accepted the invitation to become a Member of the Board.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Burgess to his first meeting of the Board.

B.802 Maintenance works in the District

Further to minute B.774, the Chairman reported that all works had been completed last year in line with the budget and that approximately half of this years' budget works had also been completed.

It was reported that several complaints had been received in relation to a footpath in the Coldhams Lane area where dredged material placed on the bankside had resulted in the use of the footpath being challenging. The cause of this relates to the historical planting of a hedge within the byelaw strip, which is particularly now an issue due to its height. The cost of removing the dredged material from the footpath was likely to be very costly.

RESOLVED

That the Clerk write to Messrs Hudson and Law asking to reduce the height of the hedge to be such that the machine working in the area can deposit material over the hedge to the far side of it reducing the impact on the footpath.

B.803 Ouse Washes Section 10 Reservoir Inspection Middle Level and South Level Barrier Bank Works

Further to minute B.776, the Clerk referred to the Newsletter from the Environment Agency dated March 2021.

The Clerk summarised progress on this scheme, including the challenges associated with the banks redesign and the damage caused to it as a result of the winter floods.

B.804 Clerk's Report

The Clerk advised:-

- i) Association of Drainage Authorities
- a) Meeting of the River Great Ouse Branch

That the Annual Conference of the River Great Ouse branch of the Association was held virtually on Tuesday the 2nd March 2021.

Matters covered were that there was a change in Chairman with Harry Raby stepping down and Marc Heading taking his place. Councillor Doug McMurdo takes on the role of Vice Chairman. This maintains the balance of having upland and lowland members in key roles and also balances council and agricultural ratepayers' interests. John Heading was appointed for another three years on the ADA Board as branch representative. Robert

Caudwell gave an update on ADA matters focusing in on progress of the agriculture bill through parliament and the lowland peat initiative which he considers must not negatively impact on livelihoods and the need to produce food for the nation. Next to speak was Brian Stewart who was seeking support for his initiative to create an Ex-Officio post on the FRCC for the sitting Chairman of the Great Ouse branch of ADA (EA nominated post). This was supported unanimously and Marc Heading will take up this new role with immediate effect.

Claire Jouvray and Paul Burrows gave updates on the revenue funding position, which was quite healthy with sources of money found to deliver what had been targeted and on the long-term strategy for the area including the tactical plans which are set to make access to grant in aid smoother than it might otherwise be. A warning was raised that funding may get squeezed as time passes and the financial impact of COVID-19 gets addressed.

Approximately 30 people attended this virtual meeting, which should return to its normal format at Prickwillow Hall next year.

That the date of the next meeting is Tuesday the 1st March 2022.

b) ADA response to publication of EFRA Flooding Inquiry Report

That ADA have responded to the Government EFRA report into the winters flooding, which has the headline conclusion that the lack of clear flood-resilience targets is leaving England at risk of 'playing catch-up' with climate change.

Encouragingly, in addition to recognising these challenges, EFRA have also clearly stated that in light of ever more frequent and severe storms, there is an urgent need to provide long-term funding for the maintenance of existing and new flood defences, to match capital commitment together with a need to examine the mental health impacts of severe flooding, calling for an action plan to address this alongside the economic and physical effects.

ADA's response is attached and the full EFRA report can be found via the following link; <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmenvfru/170/170.pdf>

ii) Smart Level System/District Wide Telemetry Bid

Further to minute B.777(vii), that a Local Levy Bid had been submitted that appears to have been successful and will offer a contribution of half the cost of installing telemetry at pumping station sites. This will allow early warnings of pump or weedscreen failure and remote operation. Also, as the bid covers all MLC administered IDBs there is scale which will facilitate very competitive rates.

When looking at the cost of telemetry there will be a number of factors that will impact upon cost. We have asked Xylem to put together a table that should cover the upper and lower bounds of all IDB pumping stations (see below). Prior to placing an order a site survey will be undertaken, average cost for this is expected to be in the region of £200. Xylem will then assess what if any control panel modifications will be required to allow telemetry. The other defining factor will be whether there is to be an additional requirement for remote control of the station pumps and set points. The table covers this range.

The costing bands are:

Low	£2000 - £5,000	Minor panel modifications are required, signals are present but need work to the panel to present or make these available to telemetry.
Medium	£5,001 - £24,999	Signals are not present to enable telemetry and panel modifications are quite intensive to bring the panel to a point where a telemetry unit can be installed.
High	£25,000 +	Signals are not present and the panel requires major modifications to give the required signals. Should this option be required it is anticipated that consideration first should be given to replacement of the control panel which would bring more value and longevity. Signals for telemetry could be more easily accommodated in a new panel.

Note all above figures are gross and if the Board resolves to go ahead as part of the Grant funded scheme currently on offer will be discounted 50%.

Note: The telemetry access will be cloud based, increasing the flexibility in access at the appropriate level for staff and District Officers.

Members discussed the potential merits of having telemetry, which was supported by the Chairman who had experience of telemetry in the equipment and plant operations his business operates. It was considered that the need warranted further discussion but that it was worthy of further investigation.

RESOLVED

To place this matter on the next agenda and in the meantime get Xylem to survey the station and provide a quotation.

iii) Anglia Farmers

Further to minute B.693, the Clerk advised that although the running of the remainder of the Anglia Farmers electricity contract has continued to be monitored it has been difficult to address some of the issues due to the restrictions caused by COVID-19.

In view of this, the Middle Level Commissioners' resolved to remain with Anglia Farmers for a further contract period post 30th September 2021 and to continue to monitor the performance of Anglia Farmers over the new contract period.

The Clerk reported that in addition it was proposed that quotes for 'green energy' be included, with a view to moving over to this form of power supply if the cost differential is marginal. The Clerk further reported that the need to show that IDBs carbon footprint is being actively managed over future years is expected to increase with the Environment Agency setting themselves the target of being carbon neutral by 2030.

The Clerk reported that the Chairman had subsequently agreed for the Board to remain with Anglia Farmers.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman's actions be approved.

iv) Land Registry

That whilst it is a legal requirement for land occupiers to notify the Board of any change of occupation, including releasing contact details for the new occupiers, on many occasions this does not occur and time is spent trying to determine who the new occupier is. When the normal avenues fail to deliver any meaningful information we now use our Land Registry account to gain details of the current land owner. The costs of making an application via this method are small (currently £6) but obviously this will show up on the Board accounts, hence the need to draw this new way of working to the Boards attention.

v) National Drainage Show & Floodex 2021

That the National Drainage Show & Floodex 2021 will be held at ExCel, London on the 9th and 10th November 2021.

vi) Water Resources East (WRE)

Further to minute B.740(iv), the Clerk reported that WRE have had a productive and fruitful year despite COVID and have managed to lever many millions of funding for studies and initiatives which in the long term should benefit this area by recognising the importance of agriculture to the water resource supply chain and by seeking ways to integrate water resources, flood risk management and environmental objective delivery together. For the 2020/2021 year (should the Board continue to wish to support the work of WRE and contribute accordingly) the calculated figure will be £125.00. Please note that ADA have developed a new band based charging structure, hence the change from the previous year's figure.

The Clerk outlined the recent work of WRE on water trading and the ongoing discussions in relation to the location of the proposed reservoir in the lower Ouse catchment. He also pointed to the value of IDBs providing a voice for agricultural need for water for crops, so that the plan developed for the area incorporated requirement to deliver on this need. Members recognised the importance of this and were content to continue to contribute to ADA having a seat on WRE.

RESOLVED

That the Board approve the requested annual contribution of £125.00.

B.805 Consulting Engineers' Report, including planning and consenting matters

The Board considered the Report of the Consulting Engineers, viz:-

Bluntisham I.D.B.

Consulting Engineers Report – May 2021

Pumping Station

Only routine maintenance has been carried out since the last report and the pumping plant is mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition.

The pump has now completed over 18,000 hrs of running time and although all indications are that it is in good order, based upon this figure, it should be assumed that it will not be too long before it will require overhaul/replacement. The Board should therefore consider budgeting for future expenditure of between £16-60K. It should also be noted that the weedscreen often becomes overwhelmed and leaves the pump hunting (running for 3 mins then stopping and being held in that state on restart timer for 20 mins), this is affecting the life of the pump and either the screen must be cleaned more frequently, or an automatic cleaner should be installed.

Pumping Hours

	May 20 – May 21	May 19 – May 20	May 18 – May 19
Total hours run	1500*	750*	250*

	May 17 – May 18	May 16 – May 17	April 15 – May 16	April 14 – April 15	April 13- April 14
Total Hours run	652	350*	563	632	957

***Approximate figures provided**

Flood Risk Management (FRM) for the Fens [previously reported as the Future Fenland Project]

Tactical Plans for the Fens

The Tactical Plans referred to in this document cover what has been termed the 'Great Ouse Fens', which covers the catchment of the River Great Ouse in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Its boundary to the west is formed of the right bank of the River Nene and includes all of the Middle Level catchment area and its constituent IDBs.

'Flood Risk Management for the Fens' is a project that has been set up to plan the best way of managing future flood risk in the whole Great Ouse Fens area. It is to be a Strategic Outline Programme which will set out the preferred option for managing flood risk in the Fens, taking in to account climate change and sea level rise (Strategic Outline Programmes sit above/before Strategic Outline Cases and are large scale programmes, so the Fens catchment scale fits this.)

The project will recommend actions that will be the best/most appropriate way of managing flood risk in the Fens over the next 50-100 years. The Flood Risk Management for the Fens project will take approximately 10-15 years to complete and in the mean time we need to know the maintenance and capital work needed in the area to continue to manage flood risk over the next two 6 year capital Grant in Aid settlement cycles, the period 2021 to 2027 and 2027 to 2033.

The background to the above is that the East Anglia Flood & Coastal Risk Management team have been working with national colleagues to come up with a better way of presenting the whole picture of future investment to allow us to have a conversation with government about the short, medium and long term plans for the area. We agreed that we would produce Tactical Plans for each of the sub-catchments (Middle Level, South Level, West and East of Ouse and King's Lynn areas) to look at ALL FCRM assets for all sources of flooding that would better present the short term programme of works required and the agreed amount of benefits (Outcome Measures) that can be claimed for each project. This advice has led to the piece of work around benefit apportionment to address the issues with double counting of outcome measures by individual projects. In January 2019 all IDB Chairs in the Fens area were sent a letter, explaining the Fens project and how it fitted with the Strategic Approach for Flood & Coastal Risk Management Projects. This strategic approach fits with the Tactical Plans.

The Tactical Plans therefore clearly set out what maintenance and capital works are required in each sub catchment over the next 12 years (feeding into the East Anglian Area pipeline of work), and what benefits this work delivers. The plans also highlight the apportioned Outcome Measures and the likely FDGiA funding each scheme can attract based on maintaining the Standard of Service, along with the Partnership Funding (PF) scores to show where PF contributions are needed. The Plans also take into account benefits that have been claimed already in the previous six year capital investment programme (2015-2021).

The expectation is that work in the Fens area will only be to continue delivering the current Standard of Service for the area, until the Flood Risk Management for the Fens project has set out the preferred direction for the area as a whole. This can, though, include capital interventions to assets to return them to design standards, where assets are currently below target conditions and Standard of Service levels. The expectation is that those with assets in the area will be able to provide a plan of work for the next 12 years, and this will lead to us having a joined up, strategic approach for the short to medium term providing certainty to all RMAs with their investment planning and highlighting the amount of FDGiA funding individual schemes are eligible for. It will however remain the case that for each scheme a business case will need to be developed and approved before any grant is released and of course over the six year period national priorities for funding FRM schemes could impact the amount of grant available, in any given year, for schemes that come forward that do not currently have an allocation of funding.

As part of the Tactical plans works, the base line economic benefits have been calculated for each of the Board's assets. This represent the potential maximum Grant-in-Aid that would be supportable, should a scheme or a series of schemes need to come forward to keep the asset operational over the 15 year period, whilst analysis of the long term catchment needs is identified. These sums effectively represent a cap on grant and are not allocated monies. They have been developed to help support scheme economics should an application for allocation be successful and in the development of the business cases. For this Board these sums by asset are;

Asset	Max eligible FDGIA £
Bluntisham PS	108,343
Bluntisham Main Drains	108,343

Baseline Report & Economic Appraisal Report

The draft report documents have been the subject of an internal consultation with the Technical Group. A detailed response was issued by the MLC. The results of the consultation are currently being reviewed by the Agency and its consultant, Capita, and it is understood that this will be issued imminently.

Further to this, additional supporting information has been supplied to the Agency and its consultants concerning the proportion of the annual cost that is due to electricity use, versus the proportion of the annual cost that is due to maintenance and inspection activities and the proportion of pumping stations that are not powered by grid electricity and rely on other energy sources. This information was provided to inform part of the Fens Carbon Baseline work that is being undertaken.

The next virtual meeting of the TAG has been arranged for the end of April in advance of the publishing of the Baseline Report which the Agency has advised that it aims to publish in the week commencing 10th May (after the local elections) via a new fen's webpage on ADA's website.

Planning Procedures Update

The use of Infiltration Devices

There has been no further progress on this.

Example of Good Practice

Reserved matters for Outline planning application 17/01445/OUM for erection of up to 53 houses to include public open space and details relating to access on land rear of Garden Close Sutton – Abbey Developments Ltd (MLC Ref Nos 002 & 004)

The re-submitted Reserved Matters application (East Cambridgeshire District Council Ref No 20/01169/RMM MLC Ref No 004) for this development was refused permission in January

primarily on issues relating to the failure to comply with the Sutton Neighborhood Plan and District Council Policies relating to landscape and settlement characteristics, Design and Biodiversity.

However, the Decision Notice also includes the following:

“6 The applicants have failed to take a precautionary approach to the Riparian Ownership rights and responsibilities of new occupants of Plot Nos 22-31 and 40-46 by locating development within a watercourse on land between the rear of these dwellings which if not properly managed and maintained could lead to flooding of the site and adjoining land to the detriment of their living environment and that of adjoining occupiers contrary to Policies ENV2 and ENV8 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 and the Flood and Water SPD.”

Members will be only too well aware of the importance of riparian watercourses in the larger flood risk and water level management system within the fenland environment and the workload and financial burden that dealing with riparian issues can cause. The importance of these “assets” is often overlooked or ignored when considering planning applications where planning authorities are under pressure to reach growth targets. Therefore, it is considered that the position taken is an unusual but appropriate one which should be applauded and considered as an example of best practice for all the planning authorities in the “fenland” environment.

Planning Applications

No new applications have been dealt with since the last meeting.

No applications for Infiltration Device Self Certification or the Checking Service have been received since the last meeting report.

No further correspondence has been received from the applicants or the applicants’ agents concerning the following developments and no further action has been taken in respect of the Boards’ interests.

- *Change of use of land to commercial fish farm and siting of mobile home for a temporary period at land south of White Bridge, Needingworth Road, Bluntisham – Mr Mustafa (MLC Ref Nos 025 & 029)*
- *Creation of wetland habitat following excavation and processing of sand and gravel and associated changes to the related S106 agreement at Needingworth Quarry, Bluntisham Road, Needingworth – Hanson Quarry Products Europe Ltd (MLC Ref No 026)*
- *8 large houses at land rear of Mill Meadows on land adjacent to 40 Russett Avenue Needingworth - Mr & Mrs D Morgan (MLC Ref Nos 031 & 034)*

In view of the absence of recent correspondence and any subsequent instruction from the Board it will be presumed, unless otherwise recorded, that the Board is content with any development that has occurred and that no further action is required at this time.

Further to Minute B.778 Consulting Engineers' Report, including planning and consenting matters

(ii) the current position is being ascertained in respect of the following developments:

Proposed development to the north of Fairview and west of Enterprise Farm - (Bluntisham Farm), off Bluntisham Road, Needingworth - Client of RSK Land & Development Engineering Ltd (MLC Ref No 011), Gladman Developments (MLC Ref No 013) & David Wilson Homes (MLC Ref No 027)

Residential development (Egret Close) on land adjacent to Fair View, Bluntisham Road, Needingworth - Luminus Homes (MLC Ref Nos 012 & 017)

Comments on previous applications follow:

Developments at Green Acres, Needingworth Road, Bluntisham

(a) Change of use of agricultural land to one gypsy/traveller pitch including two dayrooms (retrospective) at land north of Green Acre – Mr R Harris (MLC Ref No 018)

No further correspondence has been received from the applicant or the applicant's agent(s). No further action has been taken in respect of the Board's interests.

(b) Change of use of the land to Gypsy & Traveller residential with the siting of one static caravan and one touring caravan and the development of a block of stable/utility block (part retrospective) at 2 Green Acre - Mr J Wenman (MLC Ref No 030)

Planning permission was granted by the District Council in April.

Development of existing vacant plot adjacent to Lodel Farm in Needingworth for (up to) 30 new residential units, including 12 affordable housing units at land north of Lodel Farm, Overcote Lane, Needingworth – Mr M Hudson (MLC Ref No 020)

According to the District Council's Public Access web page the planning process is still "In progress".

Residential development with associated landscaping, parking, cycle and refuse storage, sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) and vehicular access point off Mill Way at land north of Sunryl, Church Street, Needingworth – Innerspace Homes Ltd (MLC Ref Nos 022 & 032)

According to the District Council's web site the application is "In progress" with a decision pending.

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) Local Plan to 2036

No further correspondence has been received from HDC concerning Policy Planning issues and no further action has been taken in respect of the Board's interests.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Flood and Water Management (FloW) Partnership

The Middle Level Commissioners' Planning Engineer has represented both the Middle Level Commissioners and their associated Boards since the last Board meeting.

The main matters up to November 2020 that may be of interest to the Board are as follows:

Future Meetings

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic meetings have been, and are likely to continue to be, held virtually. Whilst this does have some benefits the number of participants attending and the restraints that holding a virtual meeting presents restricts open discussion and meetings can be constrained by time limits.

Staffing Updates

There have been several changes of staff both through retirement, internal re-assignment and seeking alternative employment at both the City and County Councils together with other RMAs.

The Oxford–Cambridge (OX-Cam) Arc Property Flood Resilience (PFR)

A request for an extension and additional funding as a result of the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic was submitted to defra.

The Baseline Report has been completed.



Plan showing the extents of the Ox-Cam ARC

Riparian Responsibilities

In order to raise awareness of and instigate discussion on an issue that causes difficulties for RMAs, including the Boards, primarily due to increased workload and costs, the County Council's Flood Risk and Biodiversity Team prepared an "Issues and Options Briefing Note" seeking changes to current practices that are inefficient and create inconsistency across the county in the use of public resources to address the issues associated with riparian assets. The document has been considered by the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) and was subsequently presented to the RFCC Chairman Group with the hope that it would actively support a national information campaign. Unfortunately, this did not happen but the information has been fed into the national strategy via the EA and the action plan is likely to contain actions related to riparian owners.

Flood and Coast Resilience Innovation Programme

In response to the availability for funding as part of the Government's Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme, the County Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, working with partners, including the Middle Level Commissioners and associated Boards, and other key stakeholders submitted an expression of interest for several workstreams which offered innovative approaches to improve resilience to flooding and coastal change, including the ability to adapt to future climate change. Unfortunately, the bid was unsuccessful and other sources of funding are currently being investigated.

Major Flood Response and Recovery document

A consistent approach was requested concerning the provision of sandbags. This is hard to achieve given the desire and need to reassure communities during flooding. The problems associated with the use of sandbags are recognised and it is considered by some people that they do at least provide reassurance to landowners who consider that they are "better than nothing". Political decisions often take precedence about the use of sandbags in relation to this matter however guidance from the County Council's Emergency Planning Team concerning the publication and management of the document is on hold due to the workload generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lessons learnt from recent flood events elsewhere

(a) Environment Agency (EA)

Following the higher than average rainfall experienced during the winter of 2019/20, the EA has been collating data from the Lincolnshire flooding where more than double the monthly rainfall (130mm compared to the normal 50mm) caused a significant incident (breach) at Wainfleet. A recovery programme was put in place looking at locating and fixing defects but also community engagement and asset data gathering.

A debrief exercise originally planned for April 2020 was postponed.

(b) Cambridgeshire County Council - Flood Risk and Biodiversity

August flooding in Cambridgeshire

Flooding occurred in Bluntisham, Colne, Cottenham, Earith, March, Somersham, St Ives, St Neots/Eaton Socon, Weston Colville and Woodhurst plus garden flooding in a number of locations.

Work has been undertaken in conjunction with the County Highways team to investigate and address some of the issues directly.

CCC and PCC Climate Change Strategy/Plan

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Commission on Climate

An initial public consultation sought the views of residents and organisations between 26 October and 13 November to help determine their areas of focus. This will be followed by a six week “call for evidence” and following consideration of the submission a recommendation report is planned to be issued in the spring.

The County Council was keen to ensure that water and flood management are a key focus and is planning on submitting a RFCC response which will highlight the evidence gathered as part of the FRM for the Fens project in particular.

Anglian Water Services Limited (AWSL)

Drainage & Wastewater Management Plans (DWMPs)

Virtual stakeholder workshops will be held on 14 and 15 June.

Highways England (HE)

Organisational Changes

Simon Baldrey has replaced Claire Parsons as the Environment Management Lead.

Consulting Engineer

20 May 2021

The Clerk took Members through some key sections of the report highlighting the Mechanical and Electrical Engineers' observations in respect to the number of hours which the pump had recorded. The Chairman noted that the pump was currently operating satisfactorily, but acknowledged that there will come a time when it fails. The Clerk outlined the options open to the Board and referenced the FRM for the Fens 'hold the line' assessment on what funding could potentially be available.

RESOLVED

- i) That the Report and the actions referred to therein be approved.
- ii) To add an amount within PAFS for the replacement of the pump within this 6 year funding cycle and for further consideration to be given to its' replacement at future meetings before making a final decision on instructing the Middle Level Commissioners to prepare a business case submission (estimated cost £6-10k).

B.806 Pumping Station duties

The Board gave consideration to the payment in respect of pumping station duties for 2021/2022.

After discussion, Members decided that they considered the current rates did not require adjusting. They would however review this position if approached and requested to do.

RESOLVED

That the Board agree that the sum of £1,545.00 be allowed for the provision of pumping station duties for 2021/2022.

B.807 Conservation Officer's BAP Report

Members considered and approved the most recent BAP report.

The Clerk drew attention to the section of the Conservation Officer's report referring to the presence of Giant Hogweed in one of the Board's maintained watercourses. The Vice Chairman advised that this had been treated last year and that he would undertake a check to ensure that it was no longer present and that if it was then further treatments would be applied.

B.808 Environment Agency – Precept

The Clerk reported that the Environment Agency had issued the precept for 2021/2022 in the sum of £1,897.00 (the precept for 2020/2021 being £1,897.00).

Members noted the position and that the precept had been held at the same rate as the previous year.

B.809 State-aided Schemes

Consideration was given to the desirability of undertaking further State-aided Schemes in the District and whether any future proposals should be included in the capital forecasts provided to the Environment Agency.

RESOLVED

That no proposals be formulated at the present time, but to add an amount within PAFS for the replacement of the pump within this 6 year funding cycle and for further consideration to be given to its' replacement at future meetings before making a final decision on instructing the Middle Level Commissioners to prepare a business case submission (estimated cost £6-10k).

B.810 Health and Safety

Further to minute B.747, the Vice Chairman advised that two quotations for fencing and a gate for the weedscreen area had been obtained.

RESOLVED

To place an order with the lowest tenderer (Fen Fencing) in the sum of £1,223.00

(NB) – The Chairman declared an interest in this item and took no part in the discussions.

B.811 Budgeting

The Clerk referred to the budget comparison of the forecast out-turn and the actual out-turn for the financial year ending 31st March 2021.

B.812 Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities and appointment of Internal Auditor

The Clerk reported that, as resolved at its last meeting, the Board will continue with a limited assurance review and not take advantage of the audit exemption available for smaller public bodies with income and expenditure less than £25,000.

The Clerk advised that their Internal Auditor, Whiting & Partners, were in the third year of a three year contract and that normally we would be tendering for this work at this stage. However, with COVID-19 the Middle Level Commissioners had approached Whiting & Partners and asked if they would be prepared to continue into a fourth year on the same terms. They had agreed. It was also being proposed that going forward auditors be invited to tender for a five-year term, the principle being that this gave both parties certainty over a longer period. For the Boards this meant that the investment in time in getting a new auditor up to speed represented better value.

RESOLVED

- i) To continue with a limited assurance review as has been carried out in previous years.
- ii) That the Board approve the one-year extension of the appointment of Whiting & Partners as Internal Auditor and to support the proposal for a five year contract to be tendered thereafter.

B.813 Exercise of Public Rights

The Clerk 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.

B.814 Annual Governance Statement – 2020/2021

The Board considered and approved the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended on the 31st March 2021.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement, on behalf of the Board, for the financial year ending 31st March 2021.

B.815 Payments

The Board considered and approved payments amounting to £12,272.21 which had been made during the financial year 2020/2021.

A query was raised in relation to payments made to D M Green & Sons as the dates relating the payments suggested a gap of 3 months (ie the first payment covering 1st January 2019 to and December 2019 and the second from 1st April 2020 until 31st March 2021).

RESOLVED

That the Clerk check if there is an error in the list of payments and, if so, for what is correct to be reported back to the Board.

B.816 Annual Accounts of the Board – 2020/2021

The Board considered and approved the Annual Accounts and bank reconciliation for the year ended on the 31st March 2021 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 ending 31st March 2021.

B.817 Dates of next Meetings

RESOLVED

That the next Meetings of the Board be held as follows, viz:-

- i) Friday the 7th January 2022
- ii) Friday the 10th June 2022.

B.818 Middle Level Commissioners' Fees

The Chairman expressed concern over the amount of fees paid to the Middle Level Commissioners as a proportion of the Board's overall annual spend. The Clerk outlined that this would cover Clerking fees, engineering and planning advice and servicing of the pumps.

RESOLVED

That the Clerk provide the Chairman with a breakdown of the fees charged by the Middle Level Commissioners.