

WITHAM FIRST DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the one hundred and thirtieth meeting of Witham First District Internal Drainage Board, held on Tuesday, 28th January 2025 in Branston Booths Village Hall, Lincoln at 2pm.

Present:

Mr E Applewhite
Cllr I Carrington
Cllr M Clarke
Cllr K Fernandes
Mr P Gilbert Chairman
Mr W Grantham
Mr M Harrison
Cllr M Head
Mr A G Hodgson
Mr S Maplethorpe
Mr A Means
Mr C R Oxby
Dr V Stanton
Cllr P J Vaughan

In attendance:

Mr Ian Coupland	Director of Operations
Ms Jayne Flower	Executive Assistant
Mrs Jane Froggatt	Chief Executive
Mr Steve Larter	Director of Finance & Governance
Mr Martin Shilling	Director of Engineering & Technical Services

2739 Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Armstrong (Chairman), Mr D Busby, Mr P Carrott (Vice Chairman), Mr S Cobb, Cllr A Hagues, Cllr G Hewson, Mr R Hickling, Mr S Leggate, Mr I Mair, Dr B Maplethorpe and Cllr L Sanders.

2740 Declarations of Interest.

Declarations of interest were received from members appointed by City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council, in matters relating to the respective Councils.

2741 Chairman's Announcements.

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, Mr Peter Gilbert had agreed to Chair the meeting. Accordingly, he welcomed everyone to the January meeting.

He invited members to stand and pay their respects to Mr Dave Tempest, Land Drainage Operative with the Board for 16 years until his unexpected and untimely death on 01st December, aged 63 years. Dave's funeral was well attended by family, friends, colleagues and representatives of the Board on Monday, 06th January at Alford Crematorium.

The Chairman advised that the Board would receive updates on the recovery works arising from storms Babet and Henk and the heavy rainfall events of autumn and winter 2023/24.

Recovery works are funded from 3 sources. The Statement of Claim made last December to the RFCC and subsequent FDGiA monies, the IDB £75 million Fund announced in February, from which the Witham & Humber Drainage Boards levered in £4.1 million in Tranche 1 for 20 projects. And thirdly, the IDB Fund Tranche 2A schemes, from which the Boards levered in a further £6.5million for asset resilience and improvement works, approved on 14.11.24.

This is excellent news for IDBs as it is an opportunity to refurbish, repair and replace assets. The difficult challenge is the unreasonable deadline, as the IDB Fund schemes must be completed and paid for by 31st March 2025, a major challenge for all our staff in the IDB teams and for our suppliers and contractors to gear up to such a short-term surge in additional works.

Traditionally at the January meeting the focus is to set a financially balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year from April. Boards have a legal duty to do by 15th February each year, by setting the Penny Rate which drives the level of Drainage Rates paid and Special Levies paid by the 2 councils.

This year officers and Executive Committee are recommending to the Board a 4.00% increase in the Penny Rate, thankfully far less of an increase than in the last couple of years. To give context, Upper Witham's Board yesterday approved an increase of 5.00%, similarly Witham Third approved this morning an increase of 5.00% and tomorrow NELDB will be advised it can set a balanced budget with a recommended 4.00% increase.

The Chairman put on record his thanks to Mr Eddy Poll, Chairman of the Anglian [Northern] RFCC who had led the Committee on 18th October in approving that IDBs should be fully recompensed from RFCC Local Levy monies for their May 2024 Highland Water Claims, which the EA was due to pay by 30th September 2024 and which were not paid in full, rather at only 54% of claim. It was reported at the RFCC meeting last Friday 24th January that the RFCC had been 'heavily criticised' by 'the upper echelons of the EA' for honouring these Highland Water payments, an action 'felt to be unwise'. Thankfully, the RFCC Chairman put on record that he disagrees with this EA view, and the IDBs should be paid what is owed. But this does not bode well for future Highland Water Claims, and Eddy Poll's term of office as RFCC Chairman finishes in a few months.

2742 Minutes of the previous Board meeting, 26.11.24.

The Minutes of the Board's previous meeting, held on 26th November 2024 were proposed, seconded and APPROVED as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING:

There were no matter arising all items being covered by the agenda.

2743 Minutes of the Joint Services Committee meeting, 09.12.24.

The minutes of the Joint Services Committee held on 09th December 2024 had been circulated with the agenda and were received and NOTED by members.

MATTERS ARISING:

There were no matters arising.

2744 Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting, 14.01.25.

The minutes of the Board's Executive Committee meeting held on Tuesday, 14th January 2025 had been circulated with the agenda and were proposed, seconded and APPROVED as an accurate record subject to one amendment:

Mr Steve Cobb was listed as being present, this to be deleted and his name to be added to those having sent apologies for absence to the meeting.

MATTERS ARISING:

There were no matters arising, all items being covered by the agenda.

2745 Chief Executive's Report.

The Chief Executive's report had been circulated with the agenda and was taken as read, with issues highlighted as follows:

2745.1 Lincolnshire LRF Major Incident: Floods Sunday 05th January 2025 to Thursday 09th January 2025.

Following rainfall of 45-65mm rainfall for a 36-hours period overnight from Sunday 05th January into Monday 06th January, severe flooding was experienced across some localities in all four Boards' drainage districts [town, villages and agricultural land]. At several meetings the issue of why catchments responded so quickly to this amount of rainfall had been raised. Reasons include already saturated catchments [Soil Moisture Deficits of only 1mm as of 31.12.24], rain falling on icy frozen ground, vegetation, trees and bushes growing in EA main rivers meant the state of the receiving watercourses was not good, the Lower Witham tributaries having had little maintenance over the last 25+ years, localised rain profiles and potentially that there were no main river breaches on this occasion unlike the 13 in Lincolnshire last autumn/winter which perversely took pressure off the main river systems.

A major incident was declared by Lincolnshire LRF at 18:30 on Monday 06th January, in response to the impacts. This was one of two LRFs to declare a major incident due to flooding, the other being Leicestershire and Rutland. Emergency services had operational responses in place for several ongoing incidents, including multiple road closures and evacuations at properties across the county because of flooding. At that time there were 34 flood warnings and 29 flood alerts in place across the county, and reports of 62 properties which had been internally flooded.

This number rose and as of 16:00 on 13.01.25 there were 106 residential properties with confirmed internal flooding and a possible 32 TBC with internal flooding [of the 106, 35 had also been flooded in Storms Babet/Henk]. Twenty properties had confirmed external flooding with a further 19 TBC.

The Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF) met regularly and monitored the situation as it developed because of the potential for more flooding. Crews from Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue responded where people had to be evacuated from properties, including schools. There were 25 road closures in place across the county, and this list was being constantly updated. The Humberside LRF did not declare a major incident but also convened relevant meetings throughout the event.

Witham & Humber Drainage Boards' staff and contractors were responding to local problems and routine work was suspended, e.g. conditions were not suitable for bank slip repair works to continue. Pumping stations were once again operating 24/7 and we did have some pump failures during the period.

The risk in Canwick & Sandhill Fens was low regarding residential properties at risk of flooding. However, the risk of a breach in the EA's main river system was high [particularly South Delph and Sandhill Beck where the overspill weir was operating once again] and we did have close monitoring of the situation as water levels were rising on Witham First DIDB's Sandhill pumping station. Local landowners and Washingborough PC were raising concerns. There was a change in the EA's operation of penstocks in the locality; following litigation claims after winter 2023/24 the Agency stuck to the December 2006 legal agreement on the operation of penstocks only in the event of a bank breach of Sandhill Beck or South Delph and not for routine operational use. This was lifted at 14:30 on 09.01.25 and the Board was then authorised to operate Ferry Lane penstock for the protection of Sandhill Fen pumping station [which was surrounded by water].

There followed considerable discussion about the impact, once again, of heavy rainfall on already saturated catchments and in particular that water from EA main rivers was again causing a problem to IDB systems and assets.

Levels within the main river system at gauging stations from Claypole, through to Horseshoe, Langworth, Bardney were consistently the highest recorded. Overtopping of the EA raised defences continued over lengths of +100m's downstream of Lincoln as far as Bardney. Sandhill Fen and Heighington Fen Pumping stations [Witham First DIDB] were at risk of inundation. There are several residential properties within Heighington Fen.

At the SCG on Thursday, 09th January at 11:30 the major incident, SCG and TCG were stood down. The LRF moved from response phase to recovery phase and 3 recovery meetings have been held to date, the latest on 20.01.25.

The picture was one of extensive disruption once again in Lincolnshire, with 25 temporary road closures and localised flooding in towns/villages. There appears to have been no main river bank breaches, but there were areas of significant EA main river bank overtopping and bank seepage [including South Delph out of Lincoln, Sandhill Beck, Barlings Eau, Cricket Till and Till, Witham in Grantham, Billingham Skirth, Carr Dyke, Timberland Delph].

The multi-agency recovery group continues to meet to take forward the action plan.

2745.2 EA Highland Water payments to IDBs, due in September 2024.

As reported to Members at the November Board meetings, 54% of the 80% EA Highland Water payment due for payment by 30.09.24 for the 2024/25 Estimate had so far been received by the Boards. The EA notified IDBs verbally, via a videoconference meeting on 13.09.24 that they had insufficient budget to meet the IDB claims.

The RFCC agreed at its meeting on 18.10.24 to ensure payment is made, potentially from Local Levy, before 31st March 2025.

Following discussion at the RFCC, it was agreed that the IDBs across Lincolnshire should be paid in full the shortfall of £421,705.40, this being from Local Levy, before 31.03.25 if national funds are not forthcoming. EA staff were to discuss with individual IDBs our in-year cash positions, so that where possible the Local Levy will not be used if there is a possibility of getting the money from the IDB Fund Tranche 2 or other national source.

On 24.12.24 IDBs were asked to submit additional information for verification, this was completed and submitted after Christmas. The new contact point for processing the claims is Henry Hammond at the EA.

As the Chairman had mentioned at the beginning of the meeting, at last week's Anglian [Northern] RFCC meeting the Chairman Eddy Poll reported some criticism within the EA for the agreement to reimburse IDB costs from Local Levy monies.

2745.3 IDB £75 million Fund

The national IDB £75 million Fund monies levered in by the 4 IDBs were indeed good news, with £4.1 million of Recovery schemes under tranche 1 approved and underway. The second tranche 2A schemes, for asset resilience and improvement, approved only on 14.11.24, were now also underway. Completion of both tranches was required by 31st March 2025. The Boards would be submitting bids by 31.01.25 for the final, tranche 2B schemes which if successful would need to be delivered by 31st March 2026.

A variety of works were underway, which would be covered in more detail by the Director of Operations, but it was noted that works ranged from restoring all aspects of pumping station assets damaged in the floods of 2023/24, the purchasing of new mobile pump assets to provide improved resilience in future flood events through to £1.5 million of bank slip repair works across the 4 Boards.

The Chief Executive's report and update were discussed and NOTED.

2746 Corporate Risk Register.

A report had been prepared by the Risk Manager, circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Finance and Governance.

The purpose of the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) report is to provide the Boards and the Public with an update of the Corporate Risk Register for Witham and Humber Drainage Boards. The CRR provides a strategic oversight of the corporate risk management process and the key risks to which WHDBs are exposed.

The CRR is taken to each of the 4 Board Meetings to ensure that Board members are aware of the strategic risks which affect the four statutory Boards within the Witham and Humber group. The CRR details those risks that are significant enough to warrant management and or oversight by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Providing detail of the risk control measures in place to reduce the likelihood and/or impact of a risk occurrence where this is felt to be practicable /appropriate.

Witham and Humber Drainage Boards have a robust risk management process, which enables consideration of external and internal risks. By establishing a systematic approach to identification, assessment and management of risk, WHDBs intend to continually improve the 4 Boards' governance, increase accountability and enhance overall performance.

The risk matrix showed an executive summary of the movement of risk. Other aspects for the layout of the report and the Corporate Risk Register remained as previously. Following the Winter 2023/2024 storms, various funding streams were opened to the IDBs. They are included as 'risk' within the CRR as the Boards continue to manage the works to repair and reinstate assets. Additionally, the risk of the repair or not of the EA Main Rivers is included, and whilst the Main Rivers are not IDB assets, how this may impact upon our Boards should repairs not be undertaken by the EA. The CRR was reviewed internally in August 2024 and again end December 2024/ early January 2025 as part of the ongoing risk management process. This was following the January 2025 rainfall event, which resulted in the Lincolnshire LRF declaring a 'major incident' for the period 06.01.25 to 09.01.25.

The CRR continues to be presented to the Boards annually, in January meetings. However, if required, due to significant risk or significant changes to management, the CRR would be presented more often.

Changes:

- Ref 1 – General update to reflect the position. References have been updated to reflect the impact of Storm Babet and the inundation following EA main river breaches, overtopping and significant seepage. Whilst the risk rating has remained, the 'trend' has increased due to the potential for increase in the future.
- Ref 2 – Additional information added to the risk consequence added to include the risk of a failure of any key contract provider or supplier from which the Board obtains supplies.
- Ref 3 – General update to reflect the claims submitted following the Winter 2023/2024 storms and damage to IDB assets following several main river breaches.
- Ref 4 – Review and general update to reflect the position as is now. Also included the addition of Highland Water receipts and the potential for EA late or non-payments.
- Ref 5 – NEW RISK added. Due to the IDB Fund monies made available to IDBs (£75m), the risk to non-completion of works, resulting in loss of full or partial payment and or non-reimbursement are acknowledged and have been added until such time those works are completed in line with the deadlines provided and all monies are drawn down.
- Ref 8 – General update to reflect staff and retention. Reduction in the inherent risk following general review.

- Ref 10 – General update to reflect current position. It is welcomed and noted that the position with regard to the new Rating Management System has stabilised, with positive updates to the position as the software provider builds the replacement system.
- Ref 11 – General update to reflect current position and recognition of the 2023/24 storms which impacted upon IDBs assets.
- Ref 12 – NEW RISK – insurance added as a stand-alone risk, due to the changes in premiums over the last few years, and the property insurance noting some pumping stations are not covered for flooding. The mitigation covers the works being done to support and reduce the risk, such as looking with the Brokers The Risk Factor at the best way to cover assets where currently the cover is not provided (exemptions to cover e.g. for flood risk).

Val Stanton asked how much of a risk was it that the EA would not settle its debts. The Chief Executive advised that for budgeting purposes it must be assumed that the Highland Water debt would be paid. It could not be assumed that the EA would not pay, as to do so would load the costs of disposal of water from upland areas on to drainage rate payers and Special Levy paying councils in lowland areas, and this cross-subsidy would seem unreasonable. But realistically, the risk had been recognised and was detailed within the risk register.

Following review and discussion, the Board:

- Approved the addition of Ref 5 and 12 to the CRR, whilst these risks remain high or very high.
- Approved the amendments to the CRR to reflect the current risk position.
- Confirmed and approved the revised CRR as an accurate assessment of the current risks profile.

2747 Financial Report for month 9 of 2024/25, as at 31.12.24.

A report on month 9 of 2024/25 as of 31st December 2024 had been prepared by the Director of Finance and circulated with the agenda. The financial performance as of 31st December 2024 was summarised as:

Profiled Budget P9 £	Actual (Surplus)/Deficit £	Variance £
(647,579)	(725,154)	(77,575)
<i>With Highland Water owed</i>	<i>(5,867)</i>	<i>(83,442)</i>

The Board had a positive variance position of [£77,575] against the profiled budget. However, this is affected by the non-receipt of the full amount of Highland Water monies that were due from the EA at the end of September 2024. Whilst the Board received the balance of 2023/24 actual Highland Water claim, it only received 54% of the 80% due for the estimated claim for 2024/25. This is a shortfall of £5,867 (after adjustment for IDB reimbursed costs) for this Board. If this is received in full, then the position would increase this positive variance to [£83,442].

Some of the 'high risk' spend areas may occur (especially electricity) over the remainder of this financial year depending on further heavy rainfall events.

As it stands, once the outstanding Highland Water monies are received, as agreed by the RFCC on 19th October 2024, then the Board is in a reasonable financial position for

2024/25. Some of this is due to the delivery of a significant amount of Capital Projects, which means some current budgets may not be utilised in 2024/25 only (e.g. Pump Lifts budget). Therefore, this is only a one-year 2024/25 benefit.

Income (£1,461k):

The main income streams have been posted in terms of Drainage Rates raised (not necessarily paid) at (£865k) and Special Levies received (£681k) for the full year, with second payments received in November from the 2 relevant councils.

Significant grant income has been received for both FDGIA schemes (Telemetry (£42k), Billingham & Timberland (£100k) and Flood recovery works (£388k), LAPSIG (Peat Projects (£59k) and IDB Fund schemes (£909k).

Rechargeable Works are being undertaken, mainly for the EA through the PSCA. Invoices have been raised up to the end of October (£61k) for PSCA works and for (£5k) in other recharges.

Highland Water claims have been submitted to the EA for the balance of the 2023/24 actual costs incurred of (£3,279) and for the 2024/25 Estimated claim of (£32,600). The EA was due to pay 80% of the estimated claim for 2024/25 (£26,080) along with the balance for 2023/24 actual costs incurred (£3,279), i.e., a total of (£29,359). Correspondingly, the balance adjusted for actual 2024/25 costs incurred will be payable by the EA in September 2025.

To date, they have only paid 54% of the 80% of the 2024/25 Estimate. The issue has been raised in several forums including the RFCC which met on 19th October 2024. At this meeting, the RFCC agreed that the Highland Water claims would be paid in full by the end of the financial year 31st March 2025, potentially from Local Levy monies, and that discussions would take place with individual Boards on the cash flow impact and timing of these payments as well as a reconciliation with monies received from IDB Fund for Storm Recovery costs. The net shortfall of £66,046 had not been paid. This is a key risk for the Board, not just in this financial year but for future financial years.

Drainage Rates 2024/25:

The collection rate stands at 94.5% (compared to 98.9% @P9 2023/24), so it is below last year's collection rate. First reminders were despatched on 19th August 2024 and final reminders were despatched on 18th October 2024. A court date had been set for 27th January 2025 at Boston Magistrates Court. However, this had been cancelled due to the small sums involved, but any non-payment in this year will be rolled forward into April invoices for 2025/26. All historical outstanding rating queries are now resolved and only land issues raised in-year are now being actioned.

Bank Balances:

The balances as of 31st December 2024 were presented for information. The current account (NatWest) was held at a minimal level over the Christmas and New Year period to minimise the risk of cyber-crime.

A replacement £250k 1-year fixed term cash deposit was made on 18th October 2024 with Chorley & District Building Society at 4.5% (previous similar one-year investment in 2023 was at 6%). This was in combination with the other 3 Boards (although 4 separate investments of £250k each Board) to achieve this rate, with a combined investment of £1m. This will generate (£11.25k) interest for each of the Boards.

Due to the receipt of the grant income, further investments have been made to achieve an uplift on the 4 Boards' Nationwide accounts. The rates on these Nationwide accounts have reduced from 2.25% to 2.05% on instant access and 4.25% to 4.15% for 95-day notice accounts, from 01st November 2024.

Overall, for the 4 Boards, investment income from fixed term deposits (so excluding Nationwide) is achieving (£182k) of income:

Interest Earned Per Board from Fixed Term Deposits						Total
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	
NEL	£ 6,780.82	£ 19,625.89	£ 6,133.56	£ -	£ -	£ 32,540.27
UW	£ 6,739.73	£ 42,024.82	£ 6,133.56	£ -	£ -	£ 54,898.11
W1	£ 6,739.73	£ 24,759.73	£ 6,133.56	£ -	£ -	£ 37,633.01
W3	£ 6,739.73	£ 43,688.49	£ 6,133.56	£ -	£ -	£ 56,561.78
Total	£ 27,000.00	£130,098.93	£24,534.25	£ -	£ -	£181,633.18

Members discussed and NOTED the financial performance for the period 01.04.2024 to 31.12.2024.

2748 2025/26 Proposed Revenue Estimates & Capital Programme 2025/26.

A proposed 2025/26 Revenue Estimates paper and capital programme for 2025/26 onwards had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Finance.

Detailed work had been undertaken to review the actual income and expenditure in 2024/25 as of 31st December 2024. This position was used to inform the proposed budgets for 2025/26, together with any known cost pressures, necessary developments and known savings.

The summary of the Joint Services Budget was included in the report, presented and had been recommended for approval by the 4 Boards' JSC meeting on 09th December 2024. These costs had been allocated between the 4 Boards on the agreed proportions of 30% each to Upper Witham IDB and Witham Third DIDB and 20% each to Witham First DIDB and North East Lindsey IDB.

The Capital Programme previously approved in January 2023 for the refurbishment of the Board's Pumping Stations, including potential grant funding available from the Flood Defence Grant in Aid [FDGIA] resource funded by DEFRA via the EA, along with the already approved Plant Programme were also provided.

The Board had experienced 2 very challenging years preparing Budgets for 2023/24 and 2024/25, due to significant increases in electricity costs, inflationary impacts on pay, insurance costs, fuel, service and maintenance costs, etc and especially following the heavy rainfall events since October 2023, including Storms Babet and Henk. Dealing with the significant additional water entering IDB systems from EA main river breaches, overtopping and excessive seepage had given significant financial uncertainty to the Board and this continues. Electricity usage was very significant during 2023/24, with some pumps running 24/7 for several weeks and at higher unit rates than those paid in the last major wet weather event in Autumn 2019. Pumping stations had been inundated or running excessively,

resulting in significant repairs across the 4 Boards.

Another significant increase experienced over the last couple of years is the electricity standing charges, which in cash terms had risen to nearly £200k by 01.10.23 from £15k on 01.10.20 (£245k including KVA charges as well) across the 4 Boards. These costs are incurred whether the pumps are running or not. Although the standing charge has not increased from 01st October 2024 (for the 12 months until 30th September 2025), indeed there is a small reduction of (£17k) for the 4 Boards, the KVA allowance charges have this time increased, giving a net overall increase of £26k for the 4 Boards. The following table summarised the increase in electricity standing charges and KVA allowance charges for the 4 Boards between 01.10.19 and 01.10.24:

W&H Pumping Stations Standing Charges						
	Oct-24	Oct-23	Oct-22	Oct-21	Oct-20	Oct-19
NEL	£ 14,750.78	£ 16,119.75	£ 10,670.12	£ 4,678.99	£ 1,378.84	£ 1,147.12
UW	£ 40,836.67	£ 44,481.50	£ 28,820.22	£ 12,244.51	£ 4,124.13	£ 3,803.99
W1	£ 76,169.02	£ 84,851.25	£ 54,622.95	£ 20,361.68	£ 5,173.69	£ 5,218.87
W3	£ 51,031.49	£ 54,410.29	£ 33,803.27	£ 14,099.40	£ 4,313.06	£ 3,521.91
Total	£ 182,787.96	£ 199,862.78	£ 127,916.57	£ 51,384.58	£ 14,989.73	£ 13,691.90
Increase						
NEL	-£ 1,368.97	£ 5,449.63	£ 5,991.13	£ 3,300.15	£ 231.73	
UW	-£ 3,644.83	£ 15,661.27	£ 16,575.71	£ 8,120.38	£ 320.14	
W1	-£ 8,682.22	£ 30,228.30	£ 34,261.27	£ 15,187.99	-£ 45.19	
W3	-£ 3,378.80	£ 20,607.02	£ 19,703.87	£ 9,786.34	£ 791.15	
Total	-£ 17,074.82	£ 71,946.21	£ 76,531.98	£ 36,394.86	£ 1,297.83	
Min	£ 246.75	£ 214.47	£ 189.04	£ 168.49	£ 73.00	£ 72.31
Max	£ 13,692.21	£ 15,188.94	£ 9,411.86	£ 3,092.10	£ 756.37	£ 735.38
Average	£ 3,808.08	£ 4,163.81	£ 2,664.93	£ 1,070.51	£ 312.29	£ 285.25
KVA Rates						
	Oct-24	Oct-23	Oct-22	Oct-21	Oct-20	Oct-19
NEL	£ 2,014.80	£ 1,076.40	£ 1,076.40	£ 1,048.80	£ 1,146.84	£ 1,119.24
UW	£ 15,772.32	£ 9,998.88	£ 8,905.92	£ 8,406.24	£ 8,240.28	£ 7,934.28
W1	£ 35,955.36	£ 21,903.84	£ 19,424.16	£ 18,184.32	£ 17,268.84	£ 18,197.88
W3	£ 19,778.40	£ 13,762.80	£ 12,171.60	£ 11,595.60	£ 11,403.60	£ 11,143.20
Total	£ 73,520.88	£ 46,741.92	£ 41,578.08	£ 39,234.96	£ 38,059.56	£ 38,394.60
Y-O-Y Increase						
NEL	£ 938.40	£ -	£ 27.60	-£ 98.04	£ 27.60	
UW	£ 5,773.44	£ 1,092.96	£ 499.68	£ 165.96	£ 306.00	
W1	£ 14,051.52	£ 2,479.68	£ 1,239.84	£ 915.48	-£ 929.04	
W3	£ 6,015.60	£ 1,591.20	£ 576.00	£ 192.00	£ 260.40	
Total	£ 26,778.96	£ 5,163.84	£ 2,343.12	£ 1,175.40	-£ 335.04	
Net Increase in KVA & Standing Charges						
	Oct-24	Oct-23	Oct-22	Oct-21	Oct-20	
NEL	-£ 430.57	£ 5,449.63	£ 6,018.73	£ 3,202.11	£ 259.33	
UW	£ 2,128.61	£ 16,754.23	£ 17,075.39	£ 8,286.34	£ 626.14	
W1	£ 5,369.30	£ 32,707.98	£ 35,501.11	£ 16,103.47	-£ 974.23	
W3	£ 2,636.80	£ 22,198.22	£ 20,279.87	£ 9,978.34	£ 1,051.55	
Total	£ 9,704.14	£ 77,110.05	£ 78,875.10	£ 37,570.26	£ 962.79	

Whilst many of these cost pressures continue, pleasingly in preparing the 2025/26 Budgets

we were not aware of any further significant additional issues which will affect the Board from April 2025 onwards. However, the Board is still carrying a significant amount of additional financial risk compared a few years ago, and this must be factored into the Board's financial plans, particularly the level of Reserves.

The 4 Boards have been very successful in securing one-off grant funding through both Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGIA) and the IDB £75m Fund announced in February 2024, but this has only been to repair and restore pumping stations and repair bank slips to their previous state [recovery funds]. The need for ongoing annual maintenance and repairs continues and costs are rising.

Cost pressures due to inflation, market changes and contractual arrangements have been addressed in the proposed 2025/26 budgets and include:

- Pay Related Costs £24k – The Board is facing significant retention and recruitment issues with a much quicker turnover of staff than has previously been experienced. A 2025/26 pay award of 5.1%, as recommended by the ADA Lincolnshire Branch, was agreed by the Board in November, based on the ONS average changes in public sector pay. This also includes the increase in employers' National Insurance from 13.8% to 15% and the earnings threshold reducing to £5,000 as announced in the Chancellor's Autumn 2024 Budget.
- JSC/Engineering £19k – these pay related costs also feed into JSC recharges, which are apportioned across the 4 Boards by the agreed allocations.
- Insurance costs £11k - The Boards are facing very significant challenges in procuring suitable insurance cover at realistic prices, and this continues to increase with continued wet weather events. Following discussions with our advisors, The Risk Factor, we have assumed the renewal costs budget for July 2025 will be as per the costs of the July 2024 renewals plus 10%. However, some covers may be reduced or withdrawn, so we are reviewing our insurance arrangements with our advisors.
- Electricity (£0k) – no reduction in electricity budget has been included to reflect reduced unit rates due to the budget being significantly overspent during 2023/24 storm events. Standing/KVA charges have increased again, and the Board needs to be mindful of more frequent rainfall events where IDB systems are receiving/pumping additional excessive water coming from EA main river.
- Fuel (£7k) – fuel costs have reduced, so some budget reductions have been included which have been reinvested in additional repair, maintenance and servicing costs.
- Pump Lifts, Repairs & Maintenance (R&M)/Servicing £7k – further budget increases on R&M/servicing of plant budgets have been included for 2025/26, to reflect the reality of increasing costs. Pump lift budgets have been retained as whilst works have been undertaken that have been grant aided in 2024/25, a programme of pump lifts will need to be restarted in 2025/26 onwards.
- General inflation £8k – whilst overall inflation has reduced from its peak in 2023, it is still unstable and some of the impacts of the Autumn 2024 Budget are still feeding through, so we are still experiencing increased costs in many areas of the 4 Boards' spending. These will feed into ICT, mobile phones and other CPI based contracts from April 2024 onwards.

To mitigate some of these cost pressure increases, where possible we have frozen budgets. Significantly, we have also deferred where possible major plant purchases, which will have a further impact on our service and maintenance costs. Where capacity allows, we are also sharing staff and machines across the Boards to reduce external costs. We have reviewed our main spend areas and achieved savings for items such as mobile phones and by

standardising the supplier base across the 4 Boards. In terms of back-office functions and costs as a proportion of turnover, the 4 Boards have worked together in a voluntary partnership now since April 2017, considerably reducing management costs for each Board.

Capital Programme 2025/26 Onwards:

The Capital Programmes were approved by the Board in January 2023. The latest version was presented that reflected the latest approvals of FDGIA, the rephased schemes following an EA national review of the overall FDGIA programme and updates in cost estimates.

To deliver the Pumping Station Capital Programme in the medium term (10 years) the Board needs to make an annual contribution from its Revenue Budget to the programme, to make it affordable and deliverable. Therefore, in the draft Revenue Estimates an additional contribution of £5k per annum has been provided, increasing the existing £40k pa budget to £45k pa.

After much discussion between Officers and Members of the Executive Committee at the meeting held on 14th January 2025, a balanced budget position can be achieved for 2025/26 based on these assumptions and a recommended 4.00% penny rate increase.

For information, the following table was presented which sets out the 'penny rate' increases that the Boards have set in recent years:

Historic Penny Rate Increases												
Increase in penny rate												Proposed
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
NEL	1.37%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%	1.00%	2.00%	2.00%	5.00%	15.00%	14.00%	4.00%
UW	1.89%	1.75%	1.50%	1.25%	2.00%	2.00%	2.40%	2.50%	6.25%	15.00%	16.00%	5.00%
W1	2.00%	1.75%	1.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	2.50%	6.50%	29.00%	20.00%	4.00%
W3	2.00%	1.75%	1.25%	0.75%	2.00%	0.50%	2.00%	2.50%	5.00%	15.00%	14.96%	5.00%
Average increase since 2014/15												
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
NEL	1.37%	0.69%	0.46%	0.97%	0.77%	0.81%	0.98%	1.11%	1.54%	2.89%	3.90%	3.91%
UW	1.89%	1.82%	1.71%	1.60%	1.68%	1.73%	1.83%	1.91%	2.39%	3.65%	4.78%	4.80%
W1	2.00%	1.88%	1.75%	1.31%	1.05%	0.88%	1.46%	1.59%	2.14%	4.83%	6.20%	6.02%
W3	2.00%	1.88%	1.67%	1.44%	1.55%	1.38%	1.46%	1.59%	1.97%	3.28%	4.34%	4.39%

Without this proposed 4.00% Penny Rate increase the Board cannot set a balanced budget and endeavour to secure its financial stability. Additionally, there will be the land movements from agricultural land to 'other developed land' under the Land Drainage Act 1991, which impact on each individual Special Levy paying Council. A 1% change in the penny rate equates to £15,553 for 2025/26 for Witham First DIDB.

Funds and Reserves:

The revised Financial Regulations approved at JSC in December 2024 agreed a policy of holding a general 'Revenue Reserve' for emergencies of 15% to 20% of turnover [previously the policy was 10-15%], and that the balance be held in 'earmarked reserves' for specific requirements beyond this. This concurs with previous Member discussions and a resolve to increase the General Reserve to 20% in the coming years, as resources allow.

It was proposed the fund balances be allocated on the following basis:

Reserve	Actual 2023/24 b/f £	Estimated 2024/25 c/f £	Estimated 2025/26 c/f £
Revenue Reserve*	(205,114)	(280,114)	(355,114)
Emergency Event	(0)	(280,663)	(345,663)
One Off Projects**	(111,957)	(0)	(0)
Commuted Sum	(105,055)	(105,055)	(105,055)
Capital Programme Funding			
Plant & Machinery	(275,494)	(192,191)	(323,269)
Pumping Station Refurbishments	(72,842)	(80,681)	(88,520)
PS Capital Programme	(50,000)	(90,000)	(135,000)
Balance	(820,462)	(1,028,704)	(1,352,621)

*Assumes year end balanced position for 2024/25.

** Assumes all FGDGIA schemes completed in financial year.

Revenue Reserve:

This is the general 'contingency' reserve and will be utilised for any unexpected or emergency purposes which cannot be contained in the revenue budget. This assumes a balanced position on the Revenue Account at the end of this financial year 2024/25 on 31.03.24.

The 2025/26 balance is estimated to be 20.45% of estimated turnover, so is within the Board's updated approved Policy on Reserves of holding 15% to 20% of turnover. The actual position for 2024/25 as of 31st March 2025 will be part of the Outturn report, to be reported to the Board in May 2025.

Emergency Events Reserve:

The Board established this new reserve for 2024/25, with a budgeted contribution of £65k pa. This can be boosted by the storm recovery costs that have been reimbursed by the IDB Fund (£215k). This will be used for funding emergency expenditure incurred if a flooding event takes place, additional electricity usage is incurred at the pumping stations or for preventative/remedial action to help deal with emergency events.

One Off Projects:

This reserve holds the balance of any FDGIA monies received and not yet fully utilised (e.g. Telemetry Replacement, etc). It is assumed all schemes will be completed in 2024/25 but if not, any balances will be held in this Reserve until required.

Commuted Sums:

This reserve holds commuted sums received which are then released to the revenue account to meet the costs of maintenance.

Plant and Machinery (Capital) Reserve:

This reserve funds future purchases of Plant, Machinery and Equipment and depreciation charges and sales income replenish this fund on an annual basis to fund future purchases. Going forward, this reserve will require additional resources to meet the increasing cost of Plant, Machinery & Equipment.

Pumping Stations/AWCs Reserve:

This reserve receives the depreciation charges from the Automatic Weedscreen Cleaners

(AWCs). This fund will fund future one-off emergency works at Pumping Stations/AWCs.

Pumping Station Refurbishments (Capital):

Annual contributions are made to this reserve to fund the Pumping Station Refurbishment Capital Programme. These contributions will be held in this reserve until required.

Members were reminded that they can reallocate resources between these earmarked reserves at any time, should the need arise.

Following discussion Members:

- **APPROVED** the financially balanced Estimates for 2025/26, based upon a 4.00% increase in the penny rate.
- **NOTED** the outcome of this report determined the level of penny rate, drainage rates and Special Levies to be set for 2025/26,

2749 Annual Value, Drainage Rates & Special Levies 2025/26.

A report had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Finance.

The Annual Values must be formally approved by the Board. These start with those brought forward from last year's rate setting as of 31st December 2023, with then the land movements during the 2024 calendar year added, for land that has been developed or is no longer used for agricultural purposes. This land transfers out of Drainage Rates and is allocated to the Special Levy for the appropriate Council.

The Annual Values as at 31st December 2023 were:

	Sub District 1	Sub District 2	Total
	£	£	£
Drainage Rates	315,817	2,019,766	2,335,583
City of Lincoln	1,418,032	0	1,418,032
North Kesteven DC	843,382	783,827	1,627,209
Total	2,577,231	2,803,593	5,380,824
Differential Rating	40%		
Adjusted Totals	1,030,892	2,803,593	3,834,485

A revised developed land transfer rate was agreed by the Board on 15.11.16 of £8,063.73 per hectare. The land movements between 01.01.24 and 31.12.24 that require transfer from Drainage Rates to Special Levy were summarised as follows:

	Sub District 1	Sub District 2	Total
	£	£	£
Drainage Rates	0	-341	-341
City of Lincoln	0	0	0
North Kesteven DC	0	24,215	24,215
Total	0	23,874	23,874
Differential Rating	40%		
Adjusted Totals	0	23,874	23,874

There were no land movements 01.01.24 to 31.12.24 affecting City of Lincoln Council's Special Levy, all land movements related to North Kesteven District Council.

This results in the following Annual Values as at 31st December 2024:

	Sub District 1	Sub District 2	Total
	£	£	£
Drainage Rates	315,817	2,019,425	2,335,242
City of Lincoln	1,418,032	0	1,418,032
North Kesteven DC	843,382	808,042	1,651,424
Total	2,577,231	2,827,467	5,404,698
Differential Rating	40%		
Adjusted Totals	1,030,892	2,827,467	3,858,359

Penny Rates:

The following 'penny rates' will be applicable if the proposed 4.00% increase is agreed:

	Sub District 1	Sub District 2
	pence	pence
Current	16.1241	40.3103
Proposed (+4.00%)	16.7691	41.9227

This will increase the net amount of income to the Board generated from Drainage Rates from £865,096 in 2024/25 to £899,557 (+£34,461) in 2025/26.

Special Levies:

These changes will have the following impact on Special Levies, including the rebasing of the Annual Values for the land transfers for each of the two Councils:

	City of Lincoln	North Kesteven DC	Total
	£	£	£
Current 24/25	228,644.90	451,950.65	680,595.55
Proposed 25/26	237,791.20	480,180.63	717,971.83
Difference	9,146.30	28,229.98	37,376.28
Increase	4.00%	6.25%	5.49%

In summary, income to the Board in 2025/26 increases by a net total of £71,837 (being an increase of £37,376 in Special Levy and a net increase in Drainage Rates of £34,461, after the transfer of agricultural land to the category of 'other developed land'). Income from Drainage Rates is £899,557 and Special Levy income is £717,972 in 2025/26, with land movements and a 4.00% increase in the Penny Rate.

Following discussion Members:

- **APPROVED** the transfer of land from Drainage Rates to Special Levy as set out, at the 15.11.16 Board's approved transfer rate of £8,063.73 per hectare.
- **AGREED** the land valuations as at 31st December 2024 upon which Drainage Rates and Special Levies are calculated is set at £5,404,698 (£3,858,359 after 40% differential rating is applied on sub-district 1).

- **APPROVED** the Penny Rate [in the pound] be increased by 4.00% from 16.1241 pence to 16.7691 pence [in the pound] for sub-district 1, and from 40.3103 pence to 41.9227 pence [in the pound] for sub-district 2 of the drainage district.
- **APPROVED** The Special Levies for 2025/26 be agreed for each of the 2 Councils as:

• City of Lincoln Council	£237,791.20
• North Kesteven District Council	£480,180.63
- **AGREED** The Chairman and Chief Executive be authorised to sign the Rate Book, apply the seal of this Board and publicise the revised Penny Rates, estimated Drainage Rates and Special Levies for 2025/26 before 15.02.25.

2750 Operations Report, including Health & Safety.

The Operations report had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Operations.

Between the 4 Boards, there have been 3 reported Incidents/accidents, but none for Witham First DIDB.

Heavy Rainfall event update:

The year started with another heavy rainfall event from 06th to 09th January when Lincolnshire LRF was one of two nationally to declare a Major Incident, due to the impact of flooding. This took priority over other works and meant the watercourses and banks were not accessible to carry on with regular maintenance. This rainfall event saw all four Boards affected on this occasion, with watercourses out of bank in several areas, and several EA main rivers significantly overtopping into our IDB systems.

Once levels dropped, annual maintenance resumed and the contractors repairing bank slips have been able to continue. We currently have Carnaby Contractors in North East Lindsey, Maine Agri and Spence in Witham First, Mill Farm Contractors and Spence in Witham Third with Timmins Contractors and Hill Contractors covering Upper Witham.

There had been problems once again in Canwick Fen and Sandhill area. Water had significantly overtopped again from EA main rivers South Delph and Sandhill Beck, including the spillway. During this event, the EA has adhered to the December 2006 agreement which stipulates that the penstocks be operated only in the event of a bank breach on Sandhill Beck or South Delph, which had not happened although both were significantly overtopping. This is different from how Witham First has operated the penstocks in previous events, when the EA and the Board's staff accepted their use on a best endeavours basis to move water between the 2 catchments with the aim of not overwhelming the Board's 2 pumping stations at Sandhill and Heighington, to protect LCC's highway and access to one residential property. It may be that the several litigation claims for compensation which the EA received following winter 2023/24 storms has altered the EA's position on the operational use of the penstocks.

IDB staff made repeated representations to the EA Incident Room to authorise the use of the penstocks. We did not unilaterally operate them, as then the Board would not be

indemnified against potential claims. As at 14:30 on Thursday 09.01.25 the EA authorised use, partial operation of the penstock on Ferry Lane to a circa 50% closed position, from an open position as default, as Sandhill PS was surrounded by water which was gaining on the station. We mobilised this within an hour or so and continued to monitor levels. Levels were lowered at Sandhill. In addition, we put an 8" mobile pump in situ at Ferry Lane, on the west side [Canwick Fen side], which it was estimated would probably be moved by Wednesday afternoon [15th] and then we can fully open the Ferry Lane Penstock again, letting water go down to Sandhill PS.

Annual Maintenance:

The annual vegetation maintenance programme had been expected to be completed by late January, this had been delayed to the second week of February, due to the impact of the heavy rainfall event of 06th January. Desilting and bushing works will then follow.

Staffing:

It had been reported for a while that an Operative was on long term sickness, and it was reported with regret that Dave Tempest died unexpectedly on 01st December, aged 63. Members of the Board and Officers attended Dave's Funeral on the 06 January at Alford Crematorium.

Gordon Hodson was employed by Witham Third in a Floating Operative role and has been at Witham First covering the sickness absence. Gordon is now staying in the role as Witham First's wheeled excavator Operator. He had previously been an employee of Witham First some 20 years ago, so he does have some knowledge and experience of the district.

Depot:

A contractor has been appointed to take down the sheds at Witham First's old Timberland depot and this will be undertaken before 31st March 2025, at a cost of circa £20,000.00. We will keep all the steel work and tin sheets with a view to reusing at the combined Woodhall Depot in the future, subject to planning permission. Should the sheds remain empty and standing then they incur business rates at a cost of £6k per annum.

Fleet Vehicles and 4x4's:

We are still reviewing the fleet vehicles, with a view to placing orders for any new vehicles needed before the April deadline on crew cab pick-ups.

Public Sector Cooperation Agreement [PSCA] works:

We have provided estimates/quotations for a similar amount of PSCA work in 2025/26 as undertaken for the EA on main rivers in previous years on all 4 Boards. We await confirmation from the EA regarding acceptance of the estimates and works they wish to commission next financial year. The estimates value for this Board is £107k in 2025.

Other rechargeable works:

UW are due to start work at Stapleford soon on a rechargeable job for LCC and Witham First are due to soon start a couple of jobs for LCC around Rauceby and Holdingham roundabout near Sleaford. Witham Third have completed ditch works at Cherry Willingham on behalf of LCC.

Cllr Ken Fernandes asked if it was possible to increase the size of drainage at Sleaford Holdingham and he was advised that this is LCC responsibility, should they wish to specify such works. He asked if the banks could be raised, and it was confirmed that this element

was an EA responsibility, not Drainage Board. Cllr Fernandes advised that flooding would continue to happen and would only get worse.

There then followed a general discussion about the Board's maintenance programme. Ed Applewhite commented that, with regard to maintenance, the Board always seems to be 4-6 weeks behind and later than the other 3 Boards in completing the annual programme. He queried whether the Board was understaffed in comparison to others. Ian Coupland stated staffing levels can always be reviewed, subject to funding, although he pointed out that after Kevin Rossington had retired he was replaced with a full-time tractor/flail Operative on Witham First and a Witham First Pump Operative in the pumping station team [Aaron Ward]. It was acknowledged that there were more kilometres of watercourse annual maintenance in this Board than in Witham Third, but the watercourses were perhaps not directly comparable. Jane Froggatt suggested that we had indeed struggled on Witham First in the last season due to a combination of new Operatives learning the drainage district, and the absence and then unfortunate death of an experienced Operative. Although overtime is non-contractual, it is actively encouraged through the maintenance season in all the Boards, but a comparison of overtime levels in the 3 Witham IDBs demonstrates a marked difference in hours worked. Far more overtime is worked in Upper Witham and Witham Third IDBs than in Witham First, which gets the maintenance programme completed. However, Operatives are able to work across the group of Boards and we are deploying Operatives, where they are available to assist, to work in Witham First's district. Ian Coupland added that Members may next year not recognise some staff due to staff turnover. There are several new Operatives, and they need to learn the district.

Mark Harrison asked if there was any news on the pump that has been out for a motor repair at Blankney Pumping Station for almost a year. He was advised that no, unfortunately it has now been away for an unreasonably long time, for repair/motor rewind with a company we regularly use in Mansfield. Officers had received photographs of the motor being rewound and the contractor has until the end of January, when he has promised it will be completed. The dilemma is that whilst the motor is in bits, it is difficult to collect it from his workshop and find another specialist supplier who will be willing to take on the job. The intention is to reinstate the pump and then send the second pump motor for repair once we are confident it is running satisfactorily. But it will go to a different contractor given the wait with this first pump motor repair.

Members received, discussed at length and NOTED the Operations Report and update.

2751 Capital Programme Report.

A report had been circulated with the agenda and was jointly presented by the Director of Finance & Governance, the Director of Engineering & Technical Services and the Director of Operations.

The Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) programme is administered by the Environment Agency (EA) on behalf of Defra and applications to claim GIA are approved by the EA.

Capital Programme Refresh – Indicative Allocation September 2025:

We are waiting for the Grant in Aid allocation for 2025/2026 to be confirmed by the EA. Early indications are that FDGiA funding may be reduced or removed in 2025/26 onwards. However, further details are awaited.

The indicative allocation for 2025/26 was received from the EA on 16 January 2025. This is significantly less than the request for funding we made in May 2024. We have been told the usual six-year programme to 31st March 2027 is now to be a five-year programme, the 2025/26 allocation now being classed as the final funding allocation for year five, ending on 31st March 2026. No indication has been given as to what the future funding is likely to be, or what format it will take from 01st April 2026. This does delay and potential put at risk some of the capital schemes from FDGiA in our 4 Witham & Humber Boards.

The funding received was outlined as follows:

Witham 1st	Timberland PS	£511,079
Witham 3rd	Woodhall Spa PS	£513,640
Upper Witham		£0
North East Lindsey		£0

We are currently in discussion with the EA to determine how we continue to progress our capital programmes, given this changes those programmes considerably from previously available grant levels under the previous 6-year programme.

Timberland & Billingham PS Refurbishment:

IDB No	FD 533-2020-PRO
EA National Project No	ANC403I/002A/051A & ANC403I/002A/041A
GIA Claim No	IDB 0408
GIA Approval Amount	£183,000
Project Stage	OBC Development

The Outline Business Case (OBC) was submitted to the EA for approval with a funding gap and discussions have been ongoing during autumn 2024 to close that gap. This was successfully achieved but the funding has since been withdrawn, and Officers are back to the drawing board on this project.

The preferred option is to replace both pumping stations with new fish friendly variable speed pump and a new MCC. At Timberland the AWC will be refurbished and resilience to overtopping of the River Witham improved, by raising the vulnerable equipment above the maximum flood level. At Billingham the resilience measures will be limited to raising equipment as high as possible

A summary of the key information for the scheme is:

	Combined Scheme
Total Project Cost	£4,899,800
GIA approval amount	£4,899,800
Funding Gap	£0
OM1A Benefits	£77,118,550
Duration of Benefits	5 years
OM1B (People related)	£1,041,504
OM2A (Residential properties)	97
Cost Benefit Ratio	15.7
Partnership Funding Score	101%

Income and spend as at 31st December 2024:

<i>Billinghay & Timberland Catchment Review</i>	Approved	Actual	Variance
Grant Received	(£183,000)	(£183,000)	£0
Consultants Fees	£183,000	£78,439	(£104,561)
Net	£0	(£104,561)	(£104,561)

Lowland Peat Projects:

The Board's officers bid successfully for two of the national Lowland Peat Projects, funded and to be completed in 2024/25, one at Tyndalls Bankside [near Bardney] and one at Nocton Fen.

Tyndalls Bankside:

The Tilting Weir for Tyndells Witham Bankside is in manufacture, with an anticipated installation in February 2025, for completion by 31st March 2025.

Income and spend on the scheme were as follows, as at 31st December 2024:

<i>LAPSIP - Tilting Weir - Tyndells Bank</i>	Approved	Actual	Variance
FDGIA Grant	(£108,900)	(£42,846)	£66,054
Equipment & Installation	£108,900	£35,063	(£73,838)
Net	£0	(£7,784)	(£7,784)

Nocton Fen:

The Nocton Fen (Engine drain No1) tilting weir is also in manufacture, with the project being run in tandem with that at Tyndells Witham bankside.

Income and spend were as follows, as at 31st December 2024:

<i>LAPSIP - Tilting Weir - Nocton</i>	Approved	Actual	Variance
FDGIA Grant	(£102,080)	(£26,175)	£75,906
Equipment & Installation	£102,080	£18,590	(£83,490)
Net	£0	(£7,585)	(£7,585)

Metheringham PS Refurbishment:

IDB No	FD-1143-2014-PRO
EA National Project No	ANC403I/002A/046A
GIA Claim No	IDB 0461
GIA Approval Amount	£163,000 (+ Board contribution 5k)
Project Stage	Delivery

The leaking flap valves are to be replaced in February 2025 by contractors.

Income and spend as at 31st December 2024:

<i>Metheringham PS FDGIA Scheme</i>	Approved	Actual	Variance
Income	(£168,000)	(£168,000)	£0
Expenditure	£168,000	£150,889	(£17,111)
Net	£0	(£17,111)	(£17,111)

Telemetry (W1):

IDB No	JA-1583-2014-ASS
EA National Project No	ANC501E/000A/188A
GIA Claim No	IDB 0555
GIA Approval Amount	£167,500
Project Stage	Delivery

Contractors Xylem and Paktronic are working at various sites to make modifications to the Nexicon panels and set up the new ultrasonic heads. One of the Nexicon panels is soon to be commissioned. Paktronic will then commission all remaining units in the same way.

Income and spend on this scheme were, as of 31st December 2024:

Telemetry	Approved	Actual	Variance
FDGIA Grant	(£167,500)	(£167,500)	£0
Equipment & Installation	£167,500	£59,754	(£107,746)
Net	£0	(£107,746)	(£107,746)

Storm Babet Recovery – FDGIA Schemes:

Following Storm Babet recovery work to 18 locations across three of the 4 Boards [not NELDB] was approved by Anglian [Northern] RFCC, to be via the FDGIA funding route. There are no time constraints or deadlines for these projects, unlike some of the other schemes and the IDB £75million Fund schemes.

Sandhill Pumping Station:

The pump and motor have undergone refurbishment and have had some resilience built in; the motor has been seated on approx. a 600mm pedestal and has had an external greasing point added at a cost of £18,850. The access culvert into the compound is being extended to allow better access for mobile pumping plant. The track has also been levelled. It was pointed out that separately, a bid had now been successful under Tranche 2B of the IDB Fund for further works at this station.

Farroway Pumping station:

The pump control panel had 2 x doors overheat and burnt out the electronics within the door, these have both been replaced at a cost of @£18,210. Some civils work is required at the station, these works have started. The access track has also been levelled.

Blankney Pumping Station:

The two motors at Blankney need refurbishing. As discussed earlier, one motor has gone away, and the second will follow upon reinstatement of the first motor, but not to the same contractor who has struggled with the repairs on the first. The fence around the station has been replaced at a cost of £9,115 and the access track has been levelled.

Heighington Pumping Station:

The two pumps and motors need refurbishment at Heighington, 1 x pump and motor has gone away for refurbishment and the second will follow when the first is reinstated. The compound has been refenced @ a cost of £5,413 and the track has been levelled.

IDB Recovery Fund:

In February 2024 the government announced a £75m funding pot to assist IDBs in recovering from the flooding experienced over the winter of 2023/24. This fund is provided through DEFRA and is being administered by the EA.

The funding was allocated to two tranches, the first of approximately £25m being focused on recovery works to assets damaged by the storms and the second of approximately £50m concentrated on the improvement of assets to provide better resilience to flooding. The original timescale for bids and approvals was set out for members, as follows:

21 May 2024	Issue of funding prospectus & EOI forms & Application window opened.
07 June	Application deadline Tranche 1
28 June	Application deadline Tranche 2A
End June	Award of Tranche 1 projects
End July	Award of Tranche 2A projects [subsequently delayed to 14.11.24]
End March 2025	Completion of Works

Witham & Humber Drainage Boards bid for 23 projects totalling £4.4m in tranche 1 and a further 13 projects totalling £10.7m in Tranche 2. The Boards were awarded £4.1m in tranche 1 and £6.6m in tranche 2A. All works to be completed and paid for by 31.03.25.

We have been successful in gaining approval for 20 projects in Tranche 1 with a total of £4.1m. The full approval for 10 of these 20 projects where repairs to pumps or new pumps were required was delayed until October, due to the requirement for the Fish & Eel regulations compliance to be approved by the EA. One project was withdrawn, and this scheme (Heighington) has remained under the FDGIA funding route due to officer concerns of completion by 31st March 2025 if the scheme was left in T1. Two other Tranche 1 schemes were not approved but were resubmitted for consideration for Tranche 2A funding.

All Boards – IDB Fund Tranche 1- Storm Recovery Costs:

Witham First DIDB Storm Recovery Costs	AT1-065	£215,663
Witham Third DIDB Storm Recovery Costs	AT1-064	£166,053
Upper Witham DIDB Storm Recovery Costs	AT1-066	£120,975
North East Lindsey IDB Storm Recovery Costs	AT1-067	£ 20,900

These schemes were to reimburse the Boards for additional costs incurred during the storm events over and above 'business as usual'. The Witham & Humber Boards also had to offset the income they had received via the successful Statement of Claim to the RFCC in December 2023, and those costs they would receive via the usual Highland Water claim. As these costs had already been incurred, then the full grant amount has been received.

Bank Slip Repairs:

Slip repairs are currently being undertaken by contractors on all 4 of the Boards. On North East Lindsey we have Carnaby's (the current main contractor), on Upper Witham we have Steve Hill contracting and Will Timmins Contractors, on Witham First we are using Maine Agri and Spence Bros and on Witham Third, Third Mill Farm Services. We are supplying all the materials and currently have in stock, timber 5' stakes, 10' & 14' fir piles, back boarding, frost proof lump stone, clay and topsoil. On top of the stock held in the depot deliveries have been made direct to site.

We will soon be in a position where we can add our own teams into the mix, to ensure more slips get repaired. But we will use contractors where practicable to maximise the work done by the 31st March 2025 deadline.

There are some larger Witham Third repairs to undertake from this funding in Minting Village, also on Minting/Gautby beck downstream of the village, All Hallows Drain, Tillbridge Lane [UW] and Stainfield roadside [W3rd].

Mobile Pumps:

We have placed an order for some additional mobile pumps. For 1 x 4" pump, 1 x 6" pump and 1 x 8" pump on road towable trailers in quiet canopies, with telemetry, all required hoses and fittings and 2 x fish /eel baskets. We have also purchased some flat big-ab roll-on -roll-off trailer bodies to put our older pumps onto and 2 x 900 litre fuel cubes to assist with running the pumps during a flood event. All this at a cost of £197,215. We have taken delivery of the 4" and 6" pumps, along with the trailer bodies and the fish screens.

Farroway Pumping Station:

Renew damaged weed screen deck and bridge over Anwick fen drain and renew damaged weed screens on Ruskington fen and Anwick fen.

Timberland Pumping Station:

Refurbishment of pump and motor no.2 at a cost of £33,712. This work is complete.

IDB Fund Tranche 2A - Asset Resilience:

At the ADA Conference on 13th November, Floods Minister Emma Hardy, who the Boards hosted for a visit as then Shadow Floods Minister, on 22nd February 2024 following Storms Babet and Henk, announced that the Tranche 2A schemes would be progressing. We subsequently received confirmation on 14th November of the schemes that had been approved, now known as tranche 2A approvals.

Tranche 2A Sandhill Beck Pumping Station W1:

We have ordered a 12" electric mobile pump complete with pipework, fish screen and electric panel to be permanently installed at the station, mounted on a steel frame and concrete pad. This pump is to aid the recovery of the land in the Sandhill area following a flood event. It will not prevent the land flooding, only aid its recovery as an auxiliary pump.

Tranche 2A Branston Syphon Breakers W1:

This work is due to start early February 2025 and will be completed on time.

Tranche 2B Asset Resilience & Innovation Applications:

At the ADA conference on 13th November, it was announced that a second phase of Tranche 2 will be launched (to be known as Tranche 2B), and this will have an extended timescale of project completion by 31st March 2026. Whilst this is welcome news, it would have greatly assisted the Boards if all projects (particularly Tranche 2A) were extended to this deadline, and we are lobbying Defra, ADA and the EA on this issue. It is understood the circa £50m pot for Tranche 2 has been split into £31m for the current Tranche 2A schemes by 31.03.25 (now known as Tranche 2A) and £19m which will be earmarked for 'innovative' scheme submissions to be known as Tranche 2B schemes for 31.03.26 completion.

The Tranche 2B prospectus has now been issued by the EA IDB Fund team, and schemes must be submitted by 31.01.2025. The focus of these submissions is 'innovation'. More

detailed information is also required over and above what was submitted for T2A schemes. We are considering resubmitting the unsuccessful T2A bids and perhaps a scheme for Stainfield Pumping Station to improve its resilience and future proof it, together with several Archimedes screw pump schemes.

There is a substantial amount of work being delivered across a small team of Officers, and all teams are involved in its delivery, over and above the usual maintenance works and PSCA works. The Boards have been very successful in securing this level of funding for Tranche 1 and Tranche 2A schemes. There is a reliance on external suppliers and contractors to deliver within tight timescales, particularly on the IDB Fund projects, but this also brings in a risk in that the Boards are reliant on these suppliers and contractors to deliver by the 31st March 2025 deadline.

Members noted the report on Capital projects and thanked staff for the huge amount of work being undertaken in very tight timescales. It was recognised that the sheer scale and investment was very valuable to IDBs.

2752 Engineering Report.

A report had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Engineering & Technical Services.

Section 19 Flood Investigations:

The Boards had received the final reports for the following Section 19 investigations from flooding incidents which occurred in Storms Babet [Oct 2023] and Henk [Jan 2024]. These are independent initial investigations, led by LCC as the LLFA.

Location	S19 Code
Butt Lane, Goulceby	S19-786
Brecks Lane, Stapleford	S19-833
Welbourn	S19-907
Boston Road, Horncastle	S19-873
Langworth	S19-708
Minting	S19-731
Scothern	S19-707
Saxilby	S19-687
Sleaford	S19-642
Horncastle	S19-729
Digby	S19-650
Waddington	S19-664
Branston Booths	S19-667
Wood Enderby	S19-739
Old Wood, Skellingthorpe	S19-659
Westborough	S19-633
Ingham	S19-689

Following the high rainfall events on 20th October 2023 and 02nd January 2024 the Flood & Water Team at Lincolnshire County Council has received 800+ reports of internal flooding to residential properties within the County. In accordance with LCC's role as the Lead Local Flood Authority [LLFA] for Lincolnshire, these have been assessed, prioritised and

investigated where appropriate within local timescales, as Section 19 Investigations under the Flood & Water Management Act [2010]. LCC's Flood Team was in the process of reducing the number of outstanding Section 19 cases. These reports have been generated by external consultants working on behalf of the council and they contain a variety of recommendations. Many call for further investigations on a catchment basis with the relevant Board being asked to participate in this work. The report often recommends a Board should consider whether or not the existing maintenance regime is appropriate given the circumstances and scenarios experienced since 2023. The reports on prior instances of flooding have been revised, and the recent cases have been much shorter, concise and more timely.

Further information on Section 19 investigations, including an interactive map and spread sheet, can be found on the LCC website:

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/flood-risk-management/flood-investigations>

Beyond the geographical boundaries of LCC, North Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire Council have the role of Lead Local Flood Authority in Greater Lincolnshire.

Lower River Witham Resilience Review & Billinghay Catchment System Review (FD-5336-2020-PRO)

Work to complete the hydraulic modelling of the lower Witham system continues and was due for completion in March/April 2023. However, this is now delayed until the end of the calendar year. In the meantime, the Board's officers are meeting with the EA and its consultants, to discuss maximising benefits that may be available to claim as part of any future FDGiA bids.

The Board's officers continue to raise issues of concern relating to the system's condition and ability to convey water with the EA and its consultants. During the recent high rainfall event [06.01.2025] and the resulting flood levels, instances of where the embankments were overtopped or breached were made known to the EA as they were found by the Boards' workforces or reported to them by members of the public.

The EA had publicised dates of 'drop in' events where the public may view the proposals and discuss them with the Agency's officers and their consultants. A session has been arranged for Wednesday 29th January, between 12 – 4pm to be held at the Crown Lodge and Restaurant at Chapel Hill.

The EA has a web page for the Lower Witham Flood Resilience Project:

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/lincolnshire-and-northamptonshire/lower-witham-flood-resilience-project/>

River Witham & South Delph Embankment Repairs

Following the high-water levels experienced in the 'top pond' reach of the Witham system [upstream of Bardney and downstream of Stamp End Sluice] this last winter, the EA has commissioned various repairs to the raised embankments protecting the adjacent land.

Two locations where water overtopped the embankments, in Branston Fen (completed) and Sandhill Fen, are being reinstated following the discovery of damage to the embankment.

This work is being undertaken by a contractor on the EA's behalf, Turner & Townsend of Nottingham. The water overtopping the embankment caused the removal of sward and underlying earth material causing the bank to crack and slump.

This work will include the excavation of failed material and the reinstatement by the installation of compacted layers of suitable backfill material.

Two reaches of the landward side of the River Witham embankment slumped back in November 2023. These two reaches are being reinstated by Jackson Civil Engineering, the Agency's main framework contractor. This work also involves the replacement of failed embankment with the installation of compacted material and, in this instance, the inclusion of ground reinforcing material.

Due to the presence of archaeological finds in nearby sites, the work on this site is being closely monitored.

At the site of the downstream failure, at the request of the Board, the Agency has instructed their contractor to install a permanent vehicular crossing of the North Delph. This will initially be used by the contractor to access the site but will be left in place for the Board's future use during its maintenance operations. It is being constructed to the Board's agreed specification, to allow access for both tracked machines as well as tractor mounted flails. The Board's officers have agreed to adopt responsibility for the structure upon completion.

Members were advised and shown a version of a map that is being produced so they can retain and identify districts and watercourses. It will be informative but easy to read and ready for distribution at the May meeting.

Cllr Ian Carrington thanked the Chief Executive for the information sent through for the flood review meeting taking place today. He advised he had raised the issue of Anglian Water discharge that enters NKDC land at Washingborough. Matt Moore of AWS had stated that pollution came from the back of Washingborough and was "very dilute". Cllr Carrington confirmed he had written to Matt Moore asking him to clarify, as he believed there was extensive raw sewage coming from Canwick plant. The stench and slime all over that particular area was powerful. He had received no response yet but would be pursuing the matter. AWS did not see fit to issue a warning to the LRF so no message was filtered through.

In addition to the S19s the F&WM Scrutiny Committee has conducted an Inquiry into Babet and Henk and want all various bodies to work together better, seamlessly and to the same script. The system is now so fragile that just heavy rain not even storms cause issues. The report will be published in 2 weeks' time confirmed Cllr Ian Carrington. Evidence had been provided by various bodies, including our IDBs to that Committee's meetings over the last year.

Cllr Carrington had furthermore noticed that near Sandhill Beck there were fresh vermin hole. These had been reported to the EA but there was also still damage from Storms Babet and Henk in need of repair. It can be seen when walking the South Delph, it drops at least 0.5metre. There followed considerable discussion about the condition of the South Delph and that vegetation/trees/bushes together with considerable siltation were causing an apparent obstruction to flow, increasing the overtopping into the Board's system.

Cllr Carrington gave thanks from all at NKDC to the Operatives for their continued hard work in successive flood events.

Ian Coupland advised the meeting that Paul Barham at Anglian Water had submitted an email to the Boards regarding the flooding, as follows:

"We are seeing an increase in flooding to one of our water recycling centres at Anwick. The flooding is coming from a combination of the river Slea bursting its banks, and also the Drainage Dyke that flows adjacent to the Slea being backed up and flowing into our site. The last few times these events have cost over 3 million GBP to correct and mitigate so we can continue to protect the environment, so you can understand our concern and urgency in getting you to rectify the issues we have found.

We have walked the Slea and the drain today as far as the old lock gates and found several trees in the watercourse that are restricting the flow of water as well as dams of debris that are restricting the flows, according to local sources these are not recent falls or blockages.

Due to the number of photos and videos taken I have uploaded them to my Google photos account and they can be accessed via the link below.

Also, I am happy to meet you on site so you can see the issues we have found first hand and so we can discuss the issues this causes us as a business and the potential impact these failures can have on the environment.

I look forward to your response and your ETA as to when these issues will be rectified".

Clearly, the River Slea is a major watercourse and the responsibility of the EA, not Witham First DIDB. The Board's Foreman has walked the Board maintained watercourses and in doing so he found a fallen tree which was removed immediately. A further issue was discovered at the end of Cottage Drain where it outfalls into the Slea; it had been wedged open with a fencing stake so the Slea was running back. This is an EA structure. Ian Coupland will liaise with Paul Barham at AWS to clarify the position.

Members received and NOTED the Engineering report and update.

2753 Consents and Enforcements.

A report had been circulated with the agenda. There was nothing to highlight to members on this occasion.

Members received and noted the report on Consents and Enforcements.

2754 Planning and Consultations Report.

The Planning and Consultations Report had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Engineering & Technical Services.

There was nothing to highlight to Members on this occasion.

Members received and NOTED the Planning and Consultations report.

2755 Environment Update.

A report had been prepared by the Environment & GIS Officer, circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Engineering & Technical Services.

ADA Lincolnshire Environment Committee Meeting & Environment Day:

The next committee meeting will be in late April date TBC and will be held in the Welland & Deeping IDB district, which will include a site visit. If any Board members would like to attend, then contact the 4 Boards' Environment Officer on email: nick.downing@witham3idb.gov.uk

ADA is hosting an Environment Day on 06th February. This free, in-person event aims to provide an insightful day of talks on a range of topics relevant to the management of the lowland watercourses and the freshwater environment. The day will cover everything from peat soils to invasive species, and aquatic flora to local nature recovery. Booking is through the ADA website. The event will be held at Park Farm, Thorney, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire.

Members received and noted the report.

2756 Any Other Business.

- 2756.1 Ed Applewhite on behalf of the Canwick and Washingborough Fen residents read out a prepared statement.

"I am speaking as a representative of the rate payers and land owners of Canwick and Washingborough Fen.

The recent flooding has caused us great distress and has had financial and cropping implications for us all. I would like the Board to consider this point: We don't see why we should pay rates with immediate effect on these two fens until the frequent South Delph overtopping has been sorted out. Therefore, we demand a meeting with the Board, EA, Highways, Anglian Water and any other parties with an interest in these fens to discuss a resolution to this issue".

There followed much discussion, the outcome of which was summarised by the Chief Executive, as follows:

It was noted that there had been repeat instances of flooding in Canwick, Washingborough and Heighington fens; the IDB systems and assets in the area being repeatedly overwhelmed by water emanating from the EA main river system on these occasions, with water entering the system that was not designed to take it from main river. The Board's officers and some members had met with representatives of the localities concerned on 09.07.24 to listen to the concerns and to examine whether there is anything further that the Board can do to assist. The Board's officers had pursued the recovery works at Sandhill and the issue of auxiliary pumping capacity at Sandhill, as outlined earlier in the meeting, and FDGiA monies had been levered in for recovery works and the IDB Fund Tranche 2B monies had been secured for improvements. But the core issue sits with the EA, and the EA had been repeatedly asked to address the issue of tree/bushing and siltation levels on

the South Delph, which members and officers believe is exacerbating the level of overspill into the fen due to obstructions to flow in the main river system and lack of capacity. In short, the IDB can only reasonably be financing and operationally dealing with the water

Whilst this is being pursued with the EA, and the Board's members and officers had sympathy for the plight of affected landowners, as they do for other areas of the drainage district which had similarly been overwhelmed by water from EA main rivers, the causation of flooding was not from the acts or omissions of the Board. It was therefore felt to be unreasonable for the Board to provide a 'temporary exemption from paying drainage rates' to ratepayers in this part of the Board's district. The Board was incurring additional costs in the area in schemes and in staff time because of what is happening, other drainage rates payers should not in all reasonableness be asked to cross-subsidise the locality and to do so would set a difficult precedent for the future in localities within the drainage district.

2756.2 Potential Local Government Reorganisation in Lincolnshire & Greater Lincolnshire.

Cllr Mervyn Head asked if any impact assessment had been undertaken of the effect on the Boards of the changes in the Local Government Reorganisation. The Chief Executive advised that LCC had been waiting to see if they were given priority status or not for reorganisation. If so, then they would ask for the mayoral elections due in May to be postponed. At the moment it was unknown. But the Boards, via ADA are making representations on the issue, because yes the immediate risk for IDBs is to the thread for Special Levy funding and for potential wholesale changes in IDB membership as a result of reorganisation.

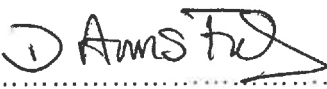
2756.3 PSCA works at Farroway.

Simon Maplethorpe queried the PSCA works at Farroway. He specifically asked if it was possible to contact the EA to let them know it is not working. Discussion took place regarding the material that is left, and the amount that means the AWC cannot cope. It happens after every heavy rainfall event; Board staff do complain to the EA but we can only undertake the level of PSCA works that the EA commission us to undertake, we cannot undertake more or different works.

There were no further items of business, and the meeting closed at 16:35.

2738 Date, Time and Place of the Board's Next Meeting.

The Board's next meeting was confirmed for **Tuesday, 20th May 2025** at 2pm in Branston Booths Village Hall.

 Chairman 20.5.25. Date
W1st BM 28.01.2025.

