

UPPER WITHAM INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of Upper Witham Internal Drainage Board held on Monday, 26th January 2026 in Witham House Boardroom, North Hykeham, Lincoln at 2pm.

<u>Present:</u>	Cllr D Armiger	via video conference
	Mr. T Arnold	via video conference
	Mr A Buckley	
	Cllr B Bushell	
	Cllr L Bushell	via video conference
	Cllr M Green	
	Cllr G Hewson	
	Mr J R Hollis	
	Mr E Jackson	via video conference
	Mr P Knight	
	Cllr R Longbottom	via video conference
	Mr F H Myers	Chairman
	Cllr L J Pennell	
	Cllr L Sanders	via video conference
	Mr J Scarborough	
	Cllr P J Vaughan	Vice Chairman
	Mrs J Wilkinson	Vice Chairman

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.

43.25 Apologies.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R Baker, Cllr P Ellis, Cllr A Hagues, Cllr A McNulty, Mr M Porter, Cllr I Stokes, Cllr P Taylor, Mr W Timmins, Mr A Ward, Cllr J Wells and Cllr E Wood.

44.25 Declarations of Members' Interests.

Members present, appointed by the relevant five Councils, declared interests relating to those Councils (City of Lincoln, North Kesteven District, West Lindsey District, South Kesteven District and Newark & Sherwood District Councils).

45.25 Chairman's Announcements.

Mr Fred Myers welcomed members to the first meeting of 2026. He thanked those members who were able to attend in-person, rather than online, and emphasized the importance of regular attendance at Board meetings.

The Chairman advised that Mr Ray Phillips, long standing Upper Witham Board Member and former Chairman of the Board, had decided following the November 2025 Annual Public Meeting, after a period of poor health, to stand down from the Board, as the member representing Pike Drain & Hykeham Electoral District.

He was also a member of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, which leaves a further vacancy on that subcommittee. There may be up to 12 members, and currently we have 7, so any member who would like to join the subcommittee was encouraged to let the Chairman or Jane Froggatt know.

Traditionally at the January meeting the focus is to set a financially balanced budget for the forthcoming new financial year from April. There is a legal duty to do so and to publicise this and drainage rates and special levies for the 5 councils by 15th February each year.

This year officers and the F&GP Committee were recommending to the Board a 4.75% increase in the Penny Rate. That is lower than last year, which is good news. A 4.75% increase will also be recommended to Witham Third's Board tomorrow morning, whilst in Witham First and North East Lindsey Boards, a balanced budget can be achieved with a 4.50% and 3.50% increase in the Penny Rate respectively.

Although there are inflationary increases, particularly continued increases in pumping station electricity fixed costs, repairs and maintenance costs, insurance costs, he was pleased we are able to present to members a financially balanced budget.

Members would also receive an update on how capital schemes are progressing, particularly those funded from the one-off national IDB £91 million Fund. As a reminder, the 4 IDBs secured £17.4million of the £91 national fund for IDB recovery, resilience and innovation schemes. There are several schemes like Saxilby pumping station at £1.7million, together with Fen Lane and Decoy pumping stations, where civils work is well underway.

46.25 Minutes of the Board's Annual Public Meeting, 24.11.25.

The Minutes of the Board's meeting held on Monday, 24th November 2025 had been circulated with the agenda and were proposed, seconded and APPROVED as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING:

46.25.1 Chief Executive's Report: Fish & Eel Regulations 2009 (item 30.25.2 refers).

Officers attended an event in Birmingham on Wednesday 26th November 2025 but were still unable to get further clarity. The EA formal position remains that the Board is unable to achieve gold standard compliance with the regulations without 2mm mesh screens in front of pumping station intakes, which is not practicable. As a compromise, we have got extended exemption licenses for varying lengths of time at individual pumping stations and that seems like the best position we will achieve.

John Scarborough asked if there was a charge for this, and it was confirmed that there was not.

46.25.2 Minutes of JSC 14.07.25, Greater Lincs Combined County Authority (GLCCA) (minute 31.25.1 refers).

Cllr Gary Hewson asked if there was an update to his query regarding monies being available for water management, it was confirmed there was no further information. The GLCCA was establishing an 'enhanced water partnership Board' on which there would be EA, upper tier Council, Water company and IDB representation. The first meeting was scheduled for 13.02.26 and the focus would be on ensuring the 3 key strategies for Greater Lincolnshire were familiar to the GLCCA- i.e. Fens 2100+, the Humber Strategy and the Lincolnshire Coastal Strategy.

46.25.3 Chief Executive's Report: ADA Lincolnshire Branch Pay & Conditions Committee update and proposed pay settlement of 2026/27. (minute 33.25.1 refers).

It was confirmed that the November 2025 ADA Branch approved pay settlement for 2026/27 of 5% was included in the budget Estimates being presented to Members today.

46.25.4 EA Drought Warning update.

Cllr Gary Hewson asked if there was an update on the drought warning from the EA on 09th January 2026 that had been circulated to all members.

The update from the EA advised that they were moving from "Prolonged Dry Weather" status to "Normal".

Although rainfall since November has been sufficient to support this transition, the document explains that we still require more than 100% of the long-term average rainfall for Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire to continue recharging groundwater supplies.

Martin Shilling advised that the aquifers would be suitably recharged if the average rainfall was achieved and the latest statistics appeared to show that we were getting towards that position.

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

47.25 Minutes of the Joint Services Committee Meeting, 08.12.25.

The minutes of the Joint Services Committee held on Monday 08th December 2025 had been circulated with the agenda for noting.

MATTERS ARISING:

47.25.1 Audit Plan 2026/27 (item 7 refers).

It was highlighted to Members that the Audit Programme had already been agreed for the current financial year 2025/26. The Internal Auditor will be undertaking the bulk of the work during the two weeks 02nd to 13th March 2026, including some onsite presence. Chris Harris will be accompanied by a colleague who will be shadowing Chris to provide resilience for the future.

Smaller authorities are required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to 'undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness

of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance’.

Internal Audit is a key part of the Governance of the Board and Members were reminded that should they have any concerns regarding the running or financial affairs of the Board then they have the right of direct access to the Internal Auditor.

JSC Members had approved the 2026/27 Internal Audit Plan on behalf of the 4 IDBs.

47.25.2 **Joint Services Budget for 2026/27 and Estimates 2026/27.**

Members were advised that at the meeting on 08.12.25 the proposed 2026/27 Joint Services budget estimates were summarised along with the previous year’s approved budgets for 2025/26 and the year-on-year variances.

A new Joint Services Agreement signed by all 4 Boards became operational from 01st April 2017. This was reviewed and updated after 3 years, with agreed revised cost contribution arrangements of Upper Witham (UW) 30%, Witham First (W1) 20%, Witham Third (W3) 30% and North East Lindsey (NEL) 20%. These had been used for preparation of the 2020/21 Budgets onwards.

The proposed 2026/27 Joint Services budget of £1,474,930 was an increase of £56,550 (3.99%) on the approved 2025/26 budget of £1,418,380. This increase is due to:

- Staffing costs - pay award (agreed by each Board at 5.0% for 26/27) £54.2k (including incremental point movements/rebasing for some staff £14.5k), corresponding Pension contributions (£34.9k), National Insurance £11.5k, Essential User Allowance costs £2.4k.
- Additional post of Operations Administrator to be based at Woodhall Depot £20.8k, based on 6 months (Sept 26-Mar 27). The remaining 6 months will need to be built into budgets for 2027/28.
- General inflation on support contracts, insurance, ICT, utilities etc, at £2.6k.

Members were advised that the JSC had, after discussion, supported the proposed budget and it had therefore been included in the agreed proportions within each Board’s proposed Budget Estimates for 2026/27.

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

48.25 Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting, 14.01.26.

The minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Monday, 14th January 2026 had been circulated with the agenda and were proposed by Cllr Lance Pennell, seconded by Joanne Wilkinson and APPROVED as an accurate record, with the recommendations from the meeting on 14.01.26 being noted.

MATTERS ARISING:

48.25.1 Pumping Station Capital Programme 2026/27 onwards (Item 11 refers).

F&GPC Members had noted that an update will come to the Board meeting. This is necessary for 2 main reasons:

- The works undertaken via FDGiA schemes and the IDB Fund schemes means the programmes approved by all 4 Boards in January 2024 now need to be reprioritised in the light of works undertaken.
- Following Defra's consultation to 29.07.25 on new FDGiA arrangements for capital schemes, new formula guidance was issued by Defra on 14.10.25 and the new arrangements are to take effect from 01.04.26. Unfortunately, the guidance on how this is to be applied was not issued last week and has been delayed but will hopefully be issued by 01.04.26.

Full detail to be provided later on the agenda.

48.25.2 Budget Estimates for 2026/27 (minute 12 refers).

It was highlighted to members that a paper was tabled by the Director of Finance summarising the proposed Budget Estimates for 2026/27, which would be covered in detail later on the agenda.

The additional required budget on staffing related measures was set out, and totalled net £29,578. This took account of pay awards, pension costs and ECR rates, JSC recharges, consents service reimbursed by LCC.

In addition to these staffing costs, a range of cost pressures totalling £58,803 was set out- increased insurance costs at £5.8k, fleet review costs at £2.5k, an increase to plant and machinery budgets of £15k to acknowledge that the costs of R&M servicing and repairs are increasing in all Boards, depreciation costs on plant £25.4k, general inflation budget uplifts at £5.1k and an increase of £5k contribution to the Capital Programme to fund future contributions to capital schemes. This meant that the proposed budget, pre-electricity increases, required an additional £88,381 [5.09%] to set a balanced budget for 2026/27.

Once electricity fixed charges increases were added, at £9.4k for UW [standing charges and KVA charges], this increase rose to £97,781 or 5.64% without land movements to 31.12.25.

However, there were land movements, which were as set out in the accompanying Annual Value paper to consider alongside the proposed Estimates for 2026/27.

There followed discussion at F&GPC about the impact of land movements from 'land capable of being farmed', and therefore on which the Board levies drainage rates, to the category of 'other developed land' under the Land Drainage act [1991].

Each 1% increase in the penny rate equates to £17.5k income to the Board in cash terms it was noted.

The proposed Budget Estimates as set out require a 4.75% increase in the Penny rate for 2026/27 if the budgets are to be uplifted as set out by £97,781. The impact with land transfers added was set out for drainage rate account holders and for each of the 5 councils.

Members noted that F&GPC members had been content to recommend the proposed Budget Estimates 2026/27 to the Board, with a recommended 4.75% increase to the Penny rate.

The discussion and the support of the F&GPC for the proposed Budget Estimates 2026/27 was noted.

49.25 Chief Executive's Report.

The Chief Executive's report had been circulated with the agenda. Issues highlighted included:

49.25.1 Board Membership.

Ray Phillips, long standing Upper Witham Board Member and former Chairman of the Board had decided at the November APM, after a period of ill health, to stand down as a Board Member. Ray represented Pike Drain & Hykeham Electoral District as reported earlier by the Chairman.

The Board therefore has the following electoral seat vacancies:

- City of Lincoln
- Pike Drain & Hykeham
- South Witham
- Borough of Grantham

49.25.2 All-Party Parliamentary Group presentation on Wednesday 10.12.25.

Innes Thomson contacted the CEO about the All-Party Parliamentary Group [on Sustainable Flood and Drought Management] meeting in London on Wednesday, 10th December.

The APPG meets 3 or 4 times a year and ADA provides the secretariat support. He invited a short presentation of 10/15 minutes, followed by fielding 1 hour of questions from the Group of cross-party MPs. He similarly contacted Iain Sturdy in Somerset.

The title for the presentation was "the impact of reduced main river maintenance on lowland systems and assets".

The APPG's stated purpose is: "to provide a forum for the discussion and progression of lowland sustainable water level management policies and to improve preparedness in the UK for global warming and its weather extremes".

The CEO informed Leigh Edlin at the EA of this opportunity to present facts and data about the challenges we collectively face in a low-lying area like Lincolnshire, the benefit of added resilience from the one-off IDB Fund and

schemes but the limitations to our main rivers maintenance and increased future risks as a result.

She had also alerted Pete Reilly at the EA to this meeting, and they had met beforehand to gather facts & data which the Area team would be comfortable to be used in the presentation.

I assured him that this was not an “EA bashing”, it was an opportunity to present facts about the challenges we collectively face in our rural communities where current funding formulae do not support a level of revenue maintenance any of us would wish to see, particularly on embanked watercourses behind which sit productive agricultural businesses feeding the nation with staple food crops, but insufficient houses to qualify for the level of maintenance required; increasing the risk level to IDB systems and assets and to our stakeholder landowners and Special Levy paying local councils.

Both presentations had been circulated to members with the electronic versions of this Board Pack. The links to the two presentations, the CEO’s for Lincolnshire and Iain Sturdy’s for Somerset are also available on the Boards’ website www.witham3idb.gov.uk (homepage).

Cllr Pat Vaughan asked if Emma Hardy MP, Minister for Water & Flooding, was present at the APPG and it was confirmed that she was not.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Anglian (Northern) RFCC had on Friday, 23rd January 2026 approved funding of £1.5million for EA maintenance in 2026/27, this coming from Local Levy monies. There is arguably a certain irony there that a nationally funded EA is having its core maintenance function financially supported by local levy monies raised from local taxation [e.g. the IDBs in Lincolnshire contribute £2.2million pa towards RFCC Local Levy].

49.25.3 2025/26 Financial Positions as of 31st December 2025.

The 4 Witham & Humber Drainage Boards were each in a healthy financial position as at month 9 2025/26, 31st December 2025. Each has a modest positive variance from month 9 profiled budget spend, as follows:

Upper Witham IDB – (£56,454)
Witham Third DIDB – (64,982)
Witham First DIDB – (£65,052)
North East Lindsey IDB – (£56,219)

These positions are stated after neutralising the impact of the one-off capital funding coming into Boards for FDGiA schemes and the 33 IDB Fund schemes.

This year we are in year 2 of the 2-year IDB Fund Schemes, all 33 of which in our Boards must be completed by 31st March 2026. There are, therefore, tranches of IDB Fund monies coming into the Boards which we are investing wherever possible on a short-term basis whilst preserving

necessary liquidity to be able to pay the higher than usual invoices for capital works like new pump and civils works at our pumping stations.

49.25.4 IDB £75 million Fund [increased to £91 million in April 2025].

The 4 Boards successfully bid for all tranches of the IDB Fund national monies, leveraging in a total of £17.4 million across 33 schemes. All schemes must be completed for 31.03.26.

This has been a great opportunity for recovery across the drainage districts [e.g. £1.6 million bank slip repairs] after storms Babet [October 2023] and Henk [January 2024], for achieving greater resilience of our IDB assets where practicable, e.g. schemes at Sandhill Beck PS, at Shortferry PS, at Coulson Road and for innovation, e.g. conversion of two diesel engines to be operated electronically, one each at Stixwoud and Fiskerton stations.

A full breakdown was provided in the Capital Programme Report elsewhere on the agenda. Of note, as some of the capital schemes progress [e.g. the £1.7 million refurbishment of UW's Saxilby pumping station], we have undertaken demolition works and have temporary pumping arrangements in place whilst civils works and new pump installations are completed.

The high volume of work still underway, with c £6 million still to spend on schemes to be completed by 31.03.26, was highlighted.

49.25.5 Staffing & Recruitment.

There had been no new starters or leavers since the last report to the Boards in November 2025.

However, Ms Lorraine Sayce, Finance & Ratings Officer, has decided to retire on 10th May 2026. Lorraine started with Upper Witham IDB on 01st May 2006, so she celebrates her 20-year long service on 01st May 2026.

Her current role predominantly includes processing of all 4 Boards' invoices and Ratings officer for Upper Witham.

Recruitment for her successor will be undertaken shortly, with the intention of a new team member joining the small team before Lorraine leaves.

49.25.6 National Study on IDB Funding & Costs.

Defra and MHCLG have commissioned a study into the future of IDB Funding and Costs. The study is being led by consultants ICF, working with Logika. The brief communicated to IDBs by ADA is that the appraisal will consider IDBs' operations- focusing on financial efficiency, value for money and the broader benefits that IDBs deliver. The research has 3 stated core objectives, as follows:

- IDB Funding & Financial Appraisal: to analyse IDB funding mechanisms, operational costs and financial pressures over the past decade, and explore future funding options.

- Benefit Evaluation: to assess the economic and social value of IDBs' work, both locally and nationally.
- Data modernisation: to explore how the IDB 1 forms can be improved and modernised to improve data collection and reporting.

We were contacted by Nicola Haysey, Senior Consultant for Public Policy at ICF on 08th January 2026, advising that they are conducting case studies on a selection of IDBs across the country.

They would like to include Upper Witham as a case study for this project, to delve deeper into some of the work that we do and the challenges faced. The case study will consist of a visit to the IDB by one or two members of the ICF research team on Tuesday, 17th February.

Whilst we were pleased to have Upper Witham IDB, one of our four IDBs in the W&HDB selected, we are encouraging them to review our consortium arrangement and broaden the scope of the visit to cover all 4 IDBs here (Witham First DIB, Witham Third DIB, Upper Witham IDB and North East Lindsey DB).

Members received and NOTED the Chief Executive's report and update.

50.25 Month 9 2025/26 Financial Monitoring Report, as at 31.12.25.

A financial monitoring report for the month 9 period of 2025/26, as of 31st December 2025 had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Finance.

The financial performance as of 31st December 2025 was summarised and presented to Members. The Board was in a reasonable financial position for month 9 2025/26, with a modest surplus ahead of budget profile of (£56,454):

Profiled budget	Actual (Surplus)/Deficit	Variance
£	£	£
(595,407)	(651,861)	(56,454)

The main income streams have been posted in terms of Drainage Rates raised (not necessarily paid) at (£376k) and Special Levies received (£1.359m) for the full year payment from the 5 relevant councils. Ongoing action is taking place against unpaid drainage rate account holders.

Significant grant income has been received for both FDGIA Flood recovery works and IDB Fund schemes (£3.117m). The detail of these schemes was provided in the Capital Update report elsewhere on the agenda.

Rechargeable Works are being undertaken, mainly for the EA through the PSCA. Invoices have been raised up to the end of November (£130k) for PSCA works and (£5k) in other recharges.

Highland Water claims were submitted in May 2025 to the EA for the balance of the 2024/25 actual costs incurred of (£31,472) and for the 2025/26 Estimated claim of (£290,300). The EA paid in September 2025 80% of the estimated claim for 2025/26

(£232,240) along with the balance for 2024/25 of actual costs incurred (£31,472), i.e., a total of (£263,712).

So, everything owing to the Board for Highland Water this year has been paid by the EA. Correspondingly, the balance adjusted for the actual 2025/26 costs incurred will be payable by the EA in September 2026.

Drainage Rates 2025/26:

The collection rate stands at 93.4% (93.2% @P9 2024/25), so it is very similar to last year's collection rate. First reminders were despatched on 18th September 2025, and final reminders were despatched on 24th November 2025. A court date has been set for 23rd February 2026 at Boston Magistrates Court. All historical outstanding rating queries are now resolved and only land issues raised in-year are now being actioned.

Electricity:

The Board was updated at the last meeting of the potential future large increases to fixed costs (Standing Charges and KVA allowance). This presents a significant financial risk to the 4 Boards' costs in 2026/27 onwards.

In terms of 2025/26, due to the very dry summer period and mild autumn, the electricity costs to date have been contained within the approved Budget. The table below sets out the monthly costs compared to profiled budget (based on previous years' cost profile). It was highlighted there has been an increase in November 2025 following an increase in rainfall.

Month	Profiled Budget	Budget Profile	Actual	Variance	% Budget Utilised
	£	%	£	£	%
Apr-25	£ 13,148	7.51%	£ 3,741	-£ 9,407	2.14%
May-25	£ 9,212	12.78%	£ 3,678	-£ 5,534	4.24%
Jun-25	£ 7,611	17.13%	£ 8,674	£ 1,063	9.20%
Jul-25	£ 6,782	21.00%	£ 5,695	-£ 1,087	12.45%
Aug-25	£ 6,545	24.74%	£ 6,323	-£ 222	16.06%
Sep-25	£ 7,041	28.77%	£ 4,317	-£ 2,724	18.53%
Oct-25	£ 18,419	39.29%	£ 7,904	-£ 10,515	23.05%
Nov-25	£ 17,757	49.44%	£ 16,154	-£ 1,603	32.28%
Dec-25	£ 25,302	63.90%			
Jan-26	£ 25,267	78.33%			
Feb-26	£ 20,771	90.20%			
Mar-26	£ 17,145	100.00%			
Profiled Budget	£ 86,515		£ 56,486	-£ 30,029	£ -
Overall Total	£ 175,000		£ 56,486	£ 118,514	

Profile based on historical spend

Discussions have taken place between ADA and OFGEM to highlight the unique position that IDB's are in, that we require significant amounts of electricity capacity for rainfall and flood events, but most of the time this means the Boards are paying fixed charge for capacity they are not using. This was highlighted to OFGEM and they undertook some analysis work on the Witham & Humber connections which confirmed we are paying for higher capacity than is needed in a 'normal year', but it was agreed that the capacity should not be given up as if we do require it in the future it may not be available (i.e. allocated to other users).

Break-ins at UW Depot:

Members were advised that there had been three break-ins at the Upper Witham Depot on Meadow Lane, North Hykeham over the Christmas period and each time fuel from machines had been stolen. No damage was caused to property or plant with the suspects climbing the fence to gain entry to the compound; on another occasion they had cut the padlock to the staff entrance gate. It was more of a nuisance factor than a large financial issue. Extra measures were being investigated to combat any further attempts of theft, and this would be reported to members in further detail in the Operations update, later on the agenda.

51.25 Capital Programme.

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

The Storm Babet Recovery fund for FDGiA schemes, namely Boultham & Coulson Road Pumping Stations are both completed. Both motors at Boultham have been refurbished and reinstalled. A gantry has been constructed enabling access to the southern weed screen deck. Some pumping enabling work has been undertaken at Coulson Road. The total spend to date on these projects is £50,806.00.

As part of the IDB Recovery Fund extended schemes (to 31.03.26) the automated weedscreen cleaners have been ordered for Ingleby, Boultham and North Hykeham. An application for Oxpasture was rejected by the EA at this stage due to funding commitments.

At Coulson Road two new cannister pumps have been installed, replacing existing pumps and a third installed in the empty chamber as back up. These works are complete, with the building due to have some remedial work and a new fence erected. The AWC has had the design approved and is currently in manufacture, to be delivered and installed before April 2026.

Replacement Archimedes Screw Pumps at Fen Lane & Decoy Pumping Stations (UW) and North Kyme (W1) AT2B - 018

At Decoy PS, the main contractor has started on site, and all trenching / ducting works have been completed in readiness for the overhead electrical diversion to be undertaken by National Grid on the return to work after the Christmas break.

Design work has been ongoing for all three sites, with final details to be added to designs after the demolition phase has allowed access to concealed areas of the works. Fen Lane was scheduled to have the main power supply disconnected on the first week back after the break, to allow the contractor to progress demolition works.

Procurement of MCCs is progressing, with the panels now approved for manufacture. Cost to date £707,979.

Members noted the Capital Schemes update.

52.25 Operations Report, including the Health & Safety and Risk Update.

An Operations report, including the Health and Safety update, had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Operations.

Health & Safety:

Between the four Boards, there had been nine reported Incidents since the last Board meetings, with one in the Upper Witham Board workforce. Whilst an Operative was walking past a barriered-off culvert, a further area collapsed resulting in the Operative stumbling into the watercourse, there was minor scuffing to his knee and elbow. The barriers at the site have been extended and a notice issued to all operatives to avoid using the culvert. Three fuel thefts have occurred on the premises: 11.11.2025, 23.12.2025 and 09.01.2026.

Annual Maintenance Programme:

All the Boards' Operational staff and contractors have started de-silting, reforming or bushing works across their districts, with the last throws of the IDB fund works to be completed by 31/03/26. It had been necessary to over-pump at several of the pumping station refurbishment sites, resulting in several mobile pumps set up which require fuelling and maintaining seven days a week. There are also pumps set up at sites where there have been pump failures.

Plant and Machinery:

The Tenders received for the replacement of the wheeled Atlas 150w with sliding dipper have been evaluated and an order has been placed with Contract Plant (formerly TDL) for a new Atlas 160w with sliding dipper at a cost of £245,247.00. That includes 5 years 5000 hours extended warranty and 3 years' service package. This was the only machine that offered the 12m reach, matching the existing excavator. A trade in value of £20,000.00 has been offered by TC but all the used machinery will be advertised on the Boards' website for sale within the next couple of weeks using the trade in value as the Boards' benchmark lowest value.

Fuel Thefts:

Since November, Upper Witham compound has suffered 3 break ins resulting in the theft of fuel from the machinery parked in the yard. Estimated losses are around 400 /500 litres; following the first theft not all the machines were refuelled. These have all been reported to the Police and further measures to prevent it happening are being investigated including the monitoring of our CCTV cameras and potential improved lighting to the yard. The current lighting is solar powered and therefore quotes are being sought for mains powered lighting. The compound does have CCTV, but this is only recorded and not monitored – an option for monitoring is being explored with Lindum's who provide our security monitoring.

Fleet Vehicles and 4x4's:

The three single cab 4x4 pick-ups and the KGM Rexton ordered have all been delivered to the relevant Boards. Delivery of the 20 petrol vans have been put back slightly to the end of January but are with the garage having the ply lining etc fitted and will hopefully be delivered soon. The five electric vans are currently estimated to be delivered in early March – three of these are for UW.

Public Sector Cooperation Agreement [PSCA] works.

We have received a request to provide quotes to the EA for works for 2026/27. There are still a couple of systems per Witham Board that are missing from the list, but most have been added back on to works for next year.

The EA asked the RFCC for £1.5 million to fund the gap in their 2026/27 maintenance budget, and it was announced last week that this money has been awarded. However,

it will not automatically mean all systems will be funded, it may still come down to the number of chimney pots protected by maintenance.

In summary, even though estimates have been completed for next year on the maintenance schedules provided by the EA it will most likely be subject to change before the start of the season. It is possible that the Boards may have some choices to make again this year.

The quote submitted for UW is almost the same as last year which was £216,471.10

PSCA Quoted works for the EA in 2026/2027.

NEL:	TBC
UW:	£216,947.67
W1:	£ 86,698.99
W3:	£285,148.08

Cllr Lance Pennell asked if, for the quoted works, would it fully occupy the Operations team and be absorbed by them, or would some be outsourced. It was confirmed that it would be incorporated into the Operatives' workload and undertaken in-house, using the retained plant and overtime and by using Operatives flexibly between the Boards as needed.

Members received, discussed and NOTED the Operations report and update.

53.25 Corporate Risk Register.

The Corporate Risk Register had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Finance & Governance.

The purpose of the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) report is to provide the Boards and the Public with an update of the CRR 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 W&HDB.

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.

W&HDB continue to have a robust risk management process, which enables consideration of external and internal risks.

By establishing a systematic approach to identification, assessment and management or risk, WHDBs intend to continually improve the 4 Boards' governance, increase accountability and enhance overall performance. Once approved, the CRR will be published on the Board website.

Following discussion Members were content to:

- Approve the removal of Ref 10 Risk – Failure to collect income by the Board due to DRS (Rating System) being de-supported from 31, March 2025 due to the implementation of the new Ratings System now operational.
- Approve the amendments to the CRR to reflect the current risk position.
- Confirm the revised CRR reflects an accurate assessment of the current risks profile.
- Confirm the Risk Objectives are still relevant and reflect the key aspirations of the Board.

54.25 Pumping Station Capital Programme Refresh 2026.

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

The Pumping Stations Capital Programme was last updated in January 2024. Since this time there have been 2 significant changes, which mean the Capital Programme needs to be reviewed during 2026:

- The FDGIA funding arrangements for Capital schemes funding have been reviewed nationally. Defra issued guidance on 14.10.25, with a new scheme being introduced from 2026/27 onwards.
- Spend on refurbishing and replacing some assets funded by the FDGIA Recovery Fund and the national £91m IDB Fund (the latter from which these 4 Boards secured £17.4m+ of funding for 33 schemes).

Current Capital Schemes:

The following are the current major capital schemes that are underway for each Board (i.e. excluding IDB Fund pump refurbishment works).

Board	Scheme	Cost £	Funding	Status
NEL	Immingham PS	£2.0m	FDGIA	Business Case submitted awaiting sign off by EA.
NEL	Mawmbridge PS	£4.0m	FDGIA	Business Case in development
UW	Saxilby PS	£1.7m	IDB Fund	Works underway new pump, MCC, etc.
UW	Decoy PS	£2.5m	IDB Fund	Works underway new pump, MCC, etc, at each site
UW	Fen Lane PS			
W1	North Kyme PS			
W1	Timberland & Billingham PS	£4.8m	FDGIA	Contracts awarded, new pumps at both sites, resilience measures at Timberland and Billingham.
W3	Woodhall PS	£2.7m	FDGIA	Works underway new pumps, MCC & discharge pipes.

In summary the new funding rules are as follows:

Eligibility:

- All FCERM assets requiring refurbishment will be eligible for 100% of the refurbishment costs.
- For new assets (including new pumping stations) - eligible for 100% for the first £3 million, and 90% for costs above £3 million

Prioritisation by value for money:

- Benefits assessment
 - Flood damages avoided (residential, non-residential, agriculture)
 - Natural capital
 - Environmental benefits

Strategic Objectives:

- The overarching strategic objective of the FCERM programme is to 'reduce risk from, and increase resilience to, flooding and coastal erosion and deliver environmental outcomes that are intrinsic to meeting this ambition'.
- Deprived communities, a minimum of 20% of FCERM investment will go to the quintile and a minimum of 40% to the 2 lowest quintiles combined, over both the next 3 and 10 years.
- Partnership Funding - non-Defra contributions will boost a project's prioritisation.

Local Choice:

- The new approach will improve local choices

Removing Barriers:

- There will no longer be a need to demonstrate a project is moving properties from one risk band to a lower risk band.
- Properties constructed since 2012 will now be included in the benefit calculations.

The policy will be implemented from 01st April 2026.

The transition arrangements:

- projects of a value under £50 million, which have an approved OBC by 31 March 2026, will stay on the old funding rules. Otherwise, schemes will move to the new rules.
- projects of a value greater than £50 million, which have an approved full business case by 31 March 2026, will stay on the old funding rules otherwise they will move to new rules.

The guidance documents to support the implementation of the new policy were expected to be published by the EA on 30 November 2025 but this is now deferred to January 2026 and we still await the guidance.

Implications for the Board:

- Any new schemes, including pumping station replacements will require a contribution of 10% of expenditure above £3m. This will need to be made either directly by the Board or by seeking alternative funding partners.
- Refurbishment schemes, whilst fully funded, may need a partnership funding contribution if they are to proceed as prioritisation will be based on GIA funding and benefits achieved. (Policy Objective no3).
- Resilience improvements, i.e. moving vulnerable electrical equipment above flood level, may be treated as improvements and therefore not as a refurbishment and will need a contribution if cost is above £3m.

- The Boards need to decide on how they will approach asset replacement, if refurbishment is not recommended by structural engineers. To establish the basic premise for cost estimation for refurbishment/replacement, three options are suggested below. All options will need to be considered in the Outline Business Case (OBC). The cost estimations will be used for the development of the programme.

Option 1 (Current Programme)	Option 2 (Recommended)	Option 3
Lift & refurbish pumps *	New Less Damaging Pumps	New Less Damaging Pumps
New MCC	New MCC	New MCC
New /refurbish AWC	New /refurbish AWC	New /refurbish AWC
Minor Civils	Civil Repairs as required	New Civil Structure
	Resilience Measures	Resilience measures

* Does not comply with eel regulations.

Whilst Option 2 is the Officer recommended approach mainly due to affordability and therefore providing the ability to deliver a larger programme, Option 3 is always the preferred option as it provides a full new pumping station. Option 2 uses the existing sub structure, and whilst these structures may still be suitable for the current programme development there will come a point in the future when these structures also need replacing or will require major works.

As part of the 4 Boards' Budget proposals, since 2023/24 each Board has been allocating an amount each year towards funding the Capital Programmes and this has been contributed to reserves to establish a source of funding to bridge any gaps/shortfalls in funding. Due to this new DEFRA funding model, it is likely that sums will be required sooner than anticipated under the previous FDGIA funding arrangements and therefore the Board's planned contributions may not be sufficient over the life of the programme.

Pumping Station/Scheme Prioritisation

Following the heavy rainfall storm events in winter 2023/24, significant damage was caused to the 4 Boards' assets because of inundation of pumping stations from EA main rivers, excessive pumping, bank breaches, bank slips, and receiving excess water into IDB systems from main river.

Funding has been made available initially through FDGIA Flood Recovery Funding, and then over the last 2 years the £91m IDB Fund set up by DEFRA, from which the Boards secured £17.4m for 33 schemes.

Due to the works undertaken via this funding, lifting and refurbishing pumps and motors, replacing MCC's, installing new AWC's and in some cases installing new pumps, the current approved Capital Programme prioritisation order needs reviewing. Until the revised funding mechanism is fully understood and the new business case model is issued it is only possible to group the Pumping Stations into high, medium and low priority. This is based solely upon the asset condition and no other factors like the importance for any locality, etc.

Officers have reviewed the previous programme and recommend the following prioritisation of stations for indicative approval. This will then provide guidance for officers to shape and develop a new Capital Programme to come back to the Boards for approval in November 2026.

Priority	High	Medium	Low
NEL	New Holland Outfall Little Buck Beck	New Holland Middle Drain	Immingham* Mawmbridge* Habrough Slide*
UW	Thorpe Ingleby Broxholme Burton Hykeham Oxpasture	Boultham Torksey Aubourn Sand Syke Pyewipe Coulson Road	Saxilby* Decoy* Fen Lane*
W1	Digby Branston Heighington Sandhill Beck Nocton	Chapel Hill Farroway Blankney Metheringham Ringmoor	Timberland* Billinghay* North Kyme*
W3	Greetwell Bardney Manor Farm Duckpool Marsh Lane Stainfield Fen Dogdyke	Coningsby Ings Kirkstead Bardney Abbey Bardney Fen Short Ferry Southrey	Horncastle Ings Stamp End Woodhall*

**Assumes current FDGIA schemes are approved/completed.*

Next Steps & Timescales

The key information required is how the new FDGIA funding mechanism is going to work in practice and how this will impact on the business cases for any schemes the Boards wish to submit. Until this is known, and what funding may be available, a new funded Capital Programme cannot be submitted to the Boards for approval. Therefore, it is likely this will be developed over summer 2026 with hopefully a funded draft Programme being available for submission to the November Board meetings for approval.

Furthermore, once the funding criteria is known, the indicative scheme (programme of works) can be developed and costed for each location.

An update on progress will be submitted to the May 2026 meetings.

Following discussion Members were content to:

- note the changes to the funding arrangements for FDGIA from 01st April 2026.
- agree Option 2 as the new approach to scheme requirements for developing the new Capital Programme.
- agree the Pumping Station indicative prioritisation as set out
- note a further update report will be provided in May 2026, with a draft programme available for the Boards in November 2026.

55.25 Proposed 2026/27 Revenue Estimates and Capital Programme 2026.27 onwards.

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

Members were advised of the summary estimates position comparing 2025/26 approved budget to the 2026/27 proposed budget. A summary of the Joint Services Budget was also presented.

Items highlighted to Members for consideration included:

Electricity Standing Charges:

One of the most significant increases experienced over the last couple of years is the electricity standing charges, and now KVA charges, which in cash terms have risen to nearly £200k by 01.10.23 from £15k on 01.10.20 (£293k including KVA charges as well) across the 4 Boards. These costs are incurred whether the pumps are running or not. Whilst the standing charges reduced slightly from 01st October 2024 (for the 12 months until 30th September 2025), they have increased again from 01st October 2025 by £13k. The KVA allowance charges have also increased over the last 2 years by £27k and £24k respectively, giving a net overall increase of £37k.

Pensions:

Triennial Revaluation - new Pension contribution rates have been received for the next 3 years from April 2026. These have reduced for all 4 Boards from the previous rates. It was hoped to move to a consistent 'pooled' rate across the 4 Boards, but the differential to the individual rates is still too much. Therefore, the rates to be used over the next 3 years are as follows:

Employer Pension Contribution Rates

	NEL	UW	W1	W3	Pooled
Current Rates (2025/26)					
Primary %	25.1%	24.1%	30.1%	23.5%	
Secondary %	-4.4%		-10.8%		
Secondary £		£ 11,000	£ -		
Overall % of Pay	20.7%	26.9%	19.3%	23.5%	
2026/27					
Primary %	22.1%	19.6%	21.9%	18.0%	18.8%
Secondary %	-12.1%		-8.4%		
Secondary £			£ -		
Overall % of Pay	10.0%	19.6%	13.5%	18.0%	
2027/28					
Primary %	22.1%	19.6%	21.9%	18.0%	18.8%
Secondary %	-12.1%		-8.4%		
Secondary £			£ -		
Overall % of Pay	10.0%	19.6%	13.5%	18.0%	
2028/29					
Primary %	22.1%	19.6%	21.9%	18.0%	18.8%
Secondary %	-12.1%		-8.4%		
Secondary £			£ -		
Overall % of Pay	10.0%	19.6%	13.5%	18.0%	

Due to the significant reduction in the NEL and W1 rates, it is proposed to budget for these at 16% rather than 10% and 13.5% respectively, as there is a risk the rates could increase again in 3 years' time at the next pension triennial valuation exercise. The Boards will pay the reduced rates indicated, but the full reduction will not be reflected in the reduced Budget to stabilise for future changes.

After much discussion between Officers and Members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee at the meeting held on 14th January 2026, a balanced budget position can be achieved for 2026/27 based on these assumptions and a recommended **4.75% penny rate increase**. Without this proposed 4.75% 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. These land movements were set out in the following report on this Agenda. It was noted that a 1% change in the penny rate equates to £17,500 income in cash terms for 2026/27.

Following discussion Members were content to:

- **APPROVE** the financially balanced Estimates for 2026/27, based upon a 4.75% increase in the penny rate.
- **NOTE** the outcome of this report will determine the level of penny rate, drainage rates and Special Levies to be set for 2026/27.

56.25 Annual Value, Drainage Rates and Special Levies 2026/27.

A detailed 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, starting with those brought forward from last year's rate setting as of 31st December 2024, with the movements during the 2025 calendar year required 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 [there being 5 relevant funding Councils for UW].

The Annual Values as of 31st December 2024 were:

	Pumped £	Gravity £	Total £
Drainage Rates	798,806	1,524,931	2,323,737
City of Lincoln	36,830	6,530,829	6,567,659
North Kesteven DC	245,299	2,725,982	2,971,281
South Kesteven DC	0	2,049,609	2,049,609
West Lindsey DC	215,146	163,211	378,358
Newark & Sherwood DC	41,596	50,534	92,130
Total	1,337,677	13,045,096	14,382,773

The land movements between 01.01.25 and 31.12.25 that require transfer from Drainage Rates to Special Levy were summarised as:

Account	Area ha	Parish	Council	Developed for	Pump/ Gravity
0098	4.935	Lincoln	COL	Charterholme	P
0082	11.429	Manthorpe	SKDC	Residential	G
0276	3.872	Swinethorpe	NKDC	Leisure Park	P
0069	1.497	Lincoln	COL	Charterholme	P

This results in the following Annual Values as of 31st December 2025:

	Pumped	Gravity	Total
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	£	£	£
Drainage Rates	798,373	1,524,432	2,322,805
City of Lincoln	74,854	6,530,829	6,605,683
North Kesteven DC	251,327	2,725,982	2,977,309
South Kesteven DC	0	2,077,387	2,077,387
West Lindsey DC	215,146	163,211	378,358
Newark & Sherwood DC	41,596	50,534	92,130
Total	1,381,297	13,072,375	14,453,672

Penny Rates:

The following 'penny rates' are applicable with the agreed 4.75% increase:

	Pumped (pence)	Gravity (pence)
Current	27.0369	10.5286
Proposed	28.3212	11.0287

This will increase, net of the listed land movements, the income generated from Drainage Rates from £376,526 in 2025/26 to £394,234 (+£17,708) in 2026/27.

Special Levies:

The 4.75% increase in Penny Rate has the following impact on Special Levies, including the rebasing of the Annual Values for the land transfers, for each of the 5 Councils, as follows:

	Current £	Proposed £	Difference £	Increase %
City of Lincoln	697,562.44	741,465.16	43,902.72	6.29
NKDC	353,329.01	371,819.30	18,490.29	5.23
SKDC	215,795.15	229,108.77	13,313.62	6.17
WLDC	75,352.78	78,932.13	3,579.35	4.75
N&SDC	16,566.79	17,353.73	786.94	4.75
Total	1,358,606.17	1,438,679.09	80,072.92	5.89

In summary, income to the Board for 2026/27 increases by a total of £97,780 (being an increase of £80,073 in Special Levy and a net increase in Drainage Rates of £17,707 including transfers of agricultural land to other developed land).

Following discussions, Members agreed:

- The transfer of land from Drainage Rates to Special Levy as set out be APPROVED.
- The land valuations as of 31st December 2025 upon which Drainage Rates and Special Levies are calculated be set at £14,453,672.
- The 'penny rate' be increased by 4.75% to 28.3212 pence for Pumped and 11.0287 pence for Gravity/Urban catchments.
- The Special Levies 2026/27 be agreed for each of the 5 Councils as:

City of Lincoln	£741,465.16
North Kesteven District Council	£371,819.30

South Kesteven District Council	£229,108.77
West Lindsey District Council	£78,932.13
Newark & Sherwood District Council	£17,353.73

- The Chairman and Chief Executive were authorised to sign the 'Rate Book', apply the seal of this Board and publicise the revised penny rates, estimated Drainage Rates and Special Levies before 15.02.26.

57.25 Engineering Services Report.

The Engineering Services Report including the Planning & Consultations, Consents and Enforcements and the Environment update and had been circulated with the agenda. It was presented by Martin Shilling, Director of Engineering & Technical Services.

Environment Report:

Class License Renewal

The Board's officers have renewed both the CL24 and CL27 licences, which permit works to proceed under mitigation measures at sites where water voles (CL24) and badgers (CL27) are present. These licences allow the Board to displace water voles when carrying out works on flood defences, watercourses, or drainage systems, and to interfere with badger setts for watercourse and drainage-related purposes.

The CL51 beaver class licence for modifying or removing dams, burrows, and lodges will be renewed at the end of March.

Eel Exemption Notices

The EA has decided to change the way the Board's eel exemptions are processed. In a positive development, the Agency has granted the Board exemptions that will remain valid until the pumping stations are due to be upgraded. This represents a significant shift away from the annual or bi-annual renewal model previously used. The following table shows the expiration dates of the new exemptions. As North East Lindsey DB has no 'high priority' stations meaning exemptions are not currently required.

Board	Pumping Station	Exemption Expiry
UW	Boultham PS	31/12/2031
UW	Thorpe PS	31/12/2029
UW	Aubourn PS	31/12/2040
W3	Duckpool PS	31/12/2027
W3	Southery PS	31/12/2040
W3	Stixwould PS	31/12/2027
W1	Billinghay PS	31/12/2027
W1	Blankney	31/12/2036
W1	Chapel Hill	31/12/2027
W1	Farroway	31/12/2028
W1	North Kyme	31/12/2026
W1	Timberland	31/12/2027

Planning & Consultations Updates:

Charterholme Development, WGC (UD-128-2013-PLN) (UD-4618-2019-PLN)

Meetings continue to be attended by the Board's officers with various partners involved in the development of the site, now known as the Charterholme development. Most recently, there have been discussions between officers and the developers & planners with regard to the data used to assess appropriate flood risk to the site. Comments have also been submitted to the planning authority on the Revised Master Plan Scoping Document.

North Hykeham Relief Road, NHRR (Southern Bypass Link) (UD-3579-2017-PLN)

This is a proposed new highway to complete the Bypass around Lincoln from the A46 to the A15.

The Board was expecting to receive consent applications for the various works in Nov/Dec 2025. Discussions continue to be had between the developers and the Board to keep the Board up to date on the works as they progress into the construction phase.

Enforcement Issues – District:

Reference	Location	Description / Comments	Actions
UD-7222-2025-ENF	Sykes Lane, Saxilby	Possible collapsed culvert	Identified that LCC were responsible for the culvert. Highways to continue with any necessary work. No enforcement required. CASE CLOSED ON 22/12/2025.

This refers to a 600mm diameter culvert. The structure was put in by the Board at the request of LCC in the 1980's. Some 4 years ago a fault was identified and remedied by LCC. The position is now the same. However, LCC have sent a legal letter to the landowner demanding they rectify the collapsed culvert. They state that anything of 600mm and below is riparian responsibility. This is a huge change in policy. Furthermore, a very large fuel supply line has been discovered adjacent to the culvert. Officers have asked for a copy of this new policy from LCC. The owner now has 60 days to rectify the fault. We have requested formal meeting to discuss this policy change but as yet that has not been forthcoming.

Members requested that this new policy be shared with the NFU and CLA once Officers were in receipt of it. A meeting had been promised by LCC for the middle of February to discuss, but it was felt that this change was a very concerning precedent.

Several planning applications were highlighted to Members as being objected to by the Board. There were various reasons:

- Tree planting within the byelaw distance of 9m.
- Site being within Zone 2/3 on the EA flood maps
- Objection in principle to the Western Growth Corridor

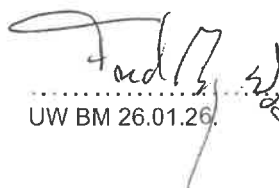
There were no further items to highlight and therefore Members received and NOTED the Engineering report and update.

58.25 Any Other Business.

There were no further items of business, and the meeting closed at 15.50.

59.25 Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Board was confirmed for Monday, 18th May 2026 at 2pm in Witham House. Video Conference facilities will be available to enable attendance at a hybrid meeting.

 Chairman. 18 May '26. Date
UW BM 26.01.26.

