

WITHAM FIRST DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the one-hundred-and-thirty-third meeting of Witham First District Internal Drainage Board, held on Thursday, 27th January 2026 in Branston Booths Village Hall, Lincoln at 2pm.

Present:

Mr E Applewhite
 Mr D C Armstrong - **Chairman**
 Cllr I Carrington
 Cllr M Clarke
 Mr S Cobb
 Cllr K Fernandes
 Mr P Gilbert
 Mr W Grantham
 Cllr A Hagues
 Mr M Harrison – **Vice Chairman**
 Cllr G Hewson
 Mr R Hickling
 Mrs B Maplethorpe
 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
Miss Abi Gilbert	Engineering Services Manager
Mr Steve Larter	Director of Finance & Governance
Mr Martin Shilling	Director of Engineering & Technical Services

2797 Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Busby, Mr A Hodgson, Mr S Longmate, Mr I Mair, Mr S Maplethorpe, Mr A Means and Cllr L Sanders.

2798 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.

2799 Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman Mr David Armstrong was pleased to welcome everyone to the January Board meeting.

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 2 councils by 15th February each year.

This year officers and the Board's Executive Committee are recommending to the Board a **4.50% increase in the Penny Rate**, which pleasingly is a lower increase than in recent years.

A 4.75% increase was approved by Witham Third's Board this morning, whilst Upper Witham IDB similarly approved yesterday a 4.75% increase. North East Lindsey will tomorrow consider setting a 3.50% increase in the Penny Rate.

The Chairman reminded Members of the continuing pressures above the rate of inflation, including most notably electricity fixed costs at the 13 pumping stations, repairs and maintenance costs etc. Despite this it was a relief that the proposed increase in the Penny Rate was at a much more reasonable level.

Members would also receive an update on the ongoing Capital Schemes - both those funded under the current Flood Defence Grant in Aid arrangements that change from 01st April, and those 33 schemes funded as part of the one-off £91million IDB Fund. Members recalled that the 4 Witham & Humber Drainage Boards fared well in the IDB Fund bids and we were awarded £17.4million of the national monies, for schemes to be completed by 31st March 2026.

The Chairman proposed that the next Board meeting could be held at Witham House, as many Members had not visited the new office, constructed in 2019 and opened in 2020. There is a fully equipped meeting room for up to 35 attendees, with videoconferencing facilities for online meetings and to more easily share presentations, and it would provide an opportunity to meet Staff and view Upper Witham's Depot on the same site. Following discussion members AGREED to hold the May meeting at Witham House.

Following on from discussions regarding the annual inspection at the November meeting, the Chairman proposed and members supported an extra half day informal tour, for Witham First Board Members, visiting particular locations where IDB Fund schemes and FDGiA grant monies had been spent on Capital developments. An itinerary will be included in the May Board papers.

2800 Minutes of the previous Board meeting, incorporating the Annual Public Meeting, 27.11.25.

The Minutes of the Board's previous meeting, held on 27th November 2025 were proposed by Cllr Pat Vaughan, seconded by Peter Gilbert and APPROVED as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING:

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

2801 Minutes of the Joint Services Committee meeting, 08.12.25.

The minutes of the Joint Services Committee held on 08th December 2025 had been circulated with the agenda and were received and NOTED by members.

MATTERS ARISING:

2801.1 2025/26 Joint Services Budget Monitoring Report as at 30.09.25.
The approved JSC annual total budget for 2025/26 is £1,418,380. The profiled budget for Q2 is £728,609. Against this Q2 budget, expenditure of £726,180 had been incurred for the first 6 months, so performance is on target with a small positive variance of (£2,429) or (-0.33%).

2801.2 Joint Services Budget for 2026/27 and Estimates 2026/27.
The proposed 2026/27 JSC 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 have been used for preparation of the 2020/21 Budgets onwards.

The proposed 2026/27 Joint Services budget of £1,474,930 has 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 £2.4k.
- Additional post of Operations Administrator to be based at Woodhall Depot £20.8k, based on 6 months (Sept 26-March 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.

New LGPS Pension contribution rates had been received for the next 3 years from 01st April 2026. These have reduced for all 4 Boards from the previous rates, following the triennial review. 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 for this to be reasonable to all Boards.

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 a reduced budget.

These charges were apportioned in the agreed proportions and incorporated into each Board's Budget Estimates for 2026/27, submitted for approval to this Board meeting.

The preparation of individual Board's estimates included the following assumptions:

- Pay award at the approved 5.0% and new Pension rates for 26/27.

- Electricity increases (assumed 01st October 2025 average unit price remains at 20p and further 10% on 01st October 2025 standing charges/KVA from 01st October 2026).
- Insurance costs - assumed last year actual renewal costs +10%.
- Servicing and Maintenance costs of plant and machinery, to reflect actual costs are rising.
- Depreciation to reflect approved plant programmes
- General inflationary cost pressures.

Due to these issues, modest increases in each Board's penny rate are required to set a balanced budget for each Board for 2026/27.

The JSC supported the JSC budget and Members recommended that each of the 4 Boards APPROVE the proposed JSC budgets, which are included in the Estimates submitted to this meeting.

Board members noted this position from the JSC meeting on 08th December 2025.

2801.3 Audit Plan 2026/27

An Internal Audit contract was procured jointly with the other Lincolnshire and Bedfordshire IDBs and was awarded to Lighthouse UK Consultancy Ltd from 01st November 2024. This covers the 5 financial years 2024/25 to 2028/29. There is an option to extend the contract for a further 2 years to 2030/31.

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.

The Audit plan for 2026/27, prepared by the Internal Auditor, was attached for approval ahead of the start of the financial year on 01st April 2026.

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 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.

Members of the JSC had APPROVED the 2026/27 Internal Audit Plan on behalf of the 4 IDBs and this was NOTED by members.

Members noted the minutes of the Joint Services Committee.

2802 Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting, 13.01.26.

The minutes of the Board's Executive Committee meeting held on Tuesday, 13th January 2026 had been circulated with the agenda and were proposed by Ron Oxby, seconded by Peter Gilbert and APPROVED as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING:

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

2803 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:

2803.1 Board Membership.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that the Board currently carried 3 vacant seats, 2 in the Blankney & Martin Fens electoral ward and 1 in the Heighington Fen & Lincoln electoral ward.

Members who were aware of colleagues who may wish to join the Board were asked to let the Chairman/CEO know.

Similarly, members were reminded about the attendance requirements for Board membership.

2803.2 All Party Parliamentary Group presentation on Wednesday 10.12.25.

Innes Thomson had invited the CEO to present to 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 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".

Leigh Edlin, the EA's Area Director, was advised 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 but the limitations to our maintenance and increased future risks as a result. Pete Reilly, Operations Manager for the EA, met beforehand to gather facts & data which the Area team would be comfortable to be used in the presentation.

This 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 the Lincolnshire and the Somerset presentations were circulated with the electronic versions of the Board Pack. The links to the two presentations are available on the 4 Boards' website at www.witham3idb.gov.uk

2803.3 **Proposed DCN press release referencing flood risk in Somerset.**

We received copy of a draft LGA SIG District Councils' Network press release about the impact of reduced EA maintenance on main river sent by Iain Sturdy, Chief Executive and Clerk for Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium.

Both Somerset and Lincolnshire have been very engaged in this issue- Iain Sturdy and I presented to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on 10.12.25 on the subject. Innes Thomson, ADA's CEO and our Director of Finance Steve Larter are the 2 ADA representatives on the DCN's Special Interest Group looking at the impact on Special Levies.

On this occasion, Nick Golding, Head of communications, District Councils' Network did not share the draft with me for comment in Lincolnshire. It refers to Horncastle in W3rd's district and to our W&HDB rising electricity standing charge costs.

Although the focus is on Somerset, where now 75% of EA main river is apparently not being maintained by the EA, we have faced reduced maintenance in Lincolnshire on low consequence and some medium consequence main rivers.

I shared this DRAFT with all Chairmen and Vice Chairmen, as the general tenant of this "cost saving" by one central government arm's length public body [the EA] in effect is "cost shifting" to other local public bodies like IDBs and we are not funded centrally but out of local taxation [special levies and drainage rates payers]. I have no problem with the message that is being conveyed, it has many of the elements that Iain and I were impressing upon the APPG.

The press release was distributed on Monday 12th January 2026, by DCN.

2803.4 **District Councils Network SIG press release 15.01.26.**

A further DCN SIG press release was published on 15.01.26 regarding Flood Risk in Lincolnshire and Somerset being shunted from a nationally funded EA to locally funded bodies like councils and IDBs.

A link to the DCN's press release was provided, as follows:

<https://www.districtcouncils.info/cuts-to-flood-protection-force-councils-to-step-in/>

Cllr Hagues asked 3 questions:

What % of rivers in Somerset had less maintenance for 4/5 years

What was the effect of this reduced maintenance?

Will it happen in Lincolnshire?

Val Stanton asked what the cost was of the lack of maintenance.

Much discussion took place, for example regarding the degradation of main river asset condition like raised flood defence banks if maintenance is neglected year-on-year. This then impacts upon IDB systems, and our systems were designed to operate on the premise that EA main rivers would be maintained and IDBs can discharge effectively into them. It is difficult to quantify those costs, but in terms of flood risk this certainly increases.

Cllr Ian Carrington asked the Chief Executive to please continue to pursue the issue of reduced EA maintenance and its consequences with the EA and ADA.

2803.5 National Study on IDB Funding & Costs.

Defra and MHCLG have jointly 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 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 wished 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 17th February. They want to speak with a variety of people involved in running the IDB, including anyone involved in the day-to-day running, managing, administration and operational activities, as well as other relevant stakeholders that we work closely with.

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 DIDB, Witham Third DIDB, Upper Witham IDB and North East Lindsey DB).

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

2804 2025/26 Financial Report to month 9, as at 31st December 2025.

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

The financial performance as at 31st December 2025 was summarised as:

Profiled Budget P7 £	Actual (Surplus)/Deficit £	Variance £
(712,473)	(770,525)	(65,052)

The Board is in a reasonable financial position for 2025/26 to date with a positive variance of (£65k) on budget profile after the impact of one-off funds like IDB Fund monies was netted off. However, some of the 'high risk' spend areas may increase (especially electricity) over the remainder of this financial year. The Board is also delivering several IDB Fund schemes of significant value, so financial risks remain.

Income (£513k)

The main income streams had been posted in terms of Drainage Rates raised (not necessarily paid) at (£893k), and Special Levies received at (£718k) for the full year from the 2 relevant councils. Ongoing action is taking place against unpaid drainage rate account holders.

No further grant income has been received for FDGIA schemes to date, but a further (£467k) had been received for IDB Fund schemes.

Rechargeable Works are being undertaken, mainly for the EA through the PSCA. Invoices had been raised up to the end of November (£39.6k) for PSCA works, which is much less than in previous years due to the withdrawal of maintenance by the EA on some main rivers, and (£4k) in other recharges, with expenditure incurred to date to offset this shown in Rechargeable Works.

Highland Water claims were submitted to the EA in May 2025 for the balance of the 2024/25 actual costs incurred (£704) and for the 2025/26 Estimated claim of (£33,000). The EA was due to pay 80% of the estimated claim for 2025/26 (£26,400) along with the balance for 2024/25 actual costs incurred (£704), i.e., a **total of (£33,704)** by 30.09.25 and did so. Correspondingly, the balance adjusted for the actual 2025/26 costs incurred will be submitted in May 2025 and is payable by the EA in September 2026 together with 80% of the estimated claim for 2026/27.

The current position on the **Drainage Rates collected** for 2025/26, including previous years' arrears, as of 31st December 2025 was presented to Members. The collection rate stands at **97.9%** (94.5% @P7 2024/25), so it is ahead of 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.

Nationwide accounts: due to operational difficulties with these accounts notice was served to close them for all 4 Boards. The funds held in the Instant Access accounts

were returned immediately and the notice period on the 95-day Notice Account expired on 24th November 2025. It was confirmed that all 6 accounts are now closed.

Interest Achieved Per Board from Nationwide Accounts (2025/26)					
	Instant Access		95 Day Notice		Total
NEL	£	1,543.78		n/a	£ 1,543.78
UW	£	5,132.16	£	372.84	£ 5,505.00
W1	£	7,138.07		n/a	£ 7,138.07
W3	£	9,829.71	£	10,936.54	£ 20,766.25
Total	£	23,643.72	£	11,309.38	£ 34,953.10

CCLA: the Boards agreed to set up some Public Sector Deposit Fund Money Market Funds with CCLA. These were opened on 28th August 2025 and are being utilised to ensure the Boards have enough liquidity to pay for the IDB Fund works. The interest rates and interest received to date are as follows:

	Current Balance	CCLA Interest 2025/26		
NEL	£ 500,000.00	£ 6,265.92	Aug-25	4.11%
UW	£ 2,000,000.00	£ 14,627.53	Sep-25	4.03%
W1	£ 900,000.00	£ 8,811.15	Oct-25	4.01%
W3	£ 2,450,000.00	£ 16,318.41	Nov-25	3.98%
Total	£ 5,850,000.00	£ 46,023.01	Dec-25	3.91%

Public Works Loans Board (PWLB).

The outstanding balance on the PWLB is £36,669. This loan will be fully repaid on 17th June 2027.

Electricity:

The Board was updated in detail at the last meeting on the potential future large increases to fixed costs (Standing Charges and KVA allowance). This continues to present a significant financial risk to the Board’s 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. Members noted there had been an increase in November following an increase in rainfall.

Following discussion Members were content to:

- **NOTE** the 2025/26 financial performance for the period 01st April to 31st December 2025.
- **REVIEW** the schedules of expenditure as presented.
- **NOTE** the corporate governance update report.

2805 Capital Programme Report

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

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

Flood Defence Grant in Aid 2025/26.

There has been no change to the allocation for 2025/26.

Flood Defence Grant in Aid Indicative Allocation 2026/27.

There has been no change to the indicative allocations for 2026/27, detailed as follows:

Project	Board	Funding Requested	Indicative Allocation	Local Choices Request
Timberland & Billingham PS Refurbishment	W1st	£3,905,721	£3,905,721	£3,905,721
Chapel Hill PS Refurbishment	W1st	£100,000	£0	£0
Burton Broxholme & Thorpe PS Refurbishments	UW	£1,349,938	£0	£0
Immingham PS Refurbishment	NEL	£2,000,000	£2,000,000	£900,000
Mawmbridge PS Refurbishment	NEL	£4,000,000	£0	£1,000,000

Project development on Burton, Broxholme and Thorpe Pumping Stations in UW has not started yet, as no funding was received last year. The funding requested for Chapel Hill in W1st was to start the development of the project. The development of both these projects will be reviewed in 2026/27.

Flood Defence Grant In Aid New Funding Rules.

Detailed guidance on the application of new Defra funding rules announced on 14.10.25 has been delayed, the EA announced this month and is now expected before April 2026. As soon as it is received, we will review it with a view to applying it to all 4 Boards' projects.

Timberland & Billingham PS Refurbishment (Ongoing):

IDB No	FD 533-2020-PRO
EA National Project No	ANC403I/002A/051A
GIA Claim No	IDB 0408 & IDB 0633
GIA Approval Amount	£3,131,000
GIA Contingency Amount	£1,729,211
Project Stage	Design

The Board instructed Onsite to conduct CCTV surveys of the discharge pipes at both sites. All surveyed pipes were found to be in good condition with no defects. Aquatic Control Engineering and Sweeting Bros (Fen Group) have been appointed as the M&E and Civils

contractors for these two sites, following an invitation to tenders process. The EA fisheries team has approved the pumps selected for the scheme. The scheme is now within the civils design stage, with the pumps already on order from ACE. A summary of the key information is as follows:

	Combined Scheme
Total Project Cost	£4,860,211
GIA approval amount (including contingency)	£4,660,211
Department for Education funding	£200,000
OM1A Benefits	£76,077,049
Duration of Benefits	5 years
OM1B (People related)	£1,041,504
OM2A (Residential properties)	80
Cost Benefit Ratio	15.4
Raw Partnership Funding Score	99%
Adjusted Partnership Funding Score	103%

Income and spend as at 31st December 2025:

<i>Billingham & Timberland Catchment Study (Phase 2)</i>	Budget	Actual	Variance
Income	(£4,860,211)	(£183,000)	£4,677,211
Expenditure	£4,860,211	£81,385	(£4,778,826)
Net	£0	(£101,615)	(£101,615)

Farroway Pumping station (Ongoing):

The pump control panel had 2 x doors overheat and burnt out the electronics within the doors; these have both been replaced at a cost of @£18,210. The motor has been refurbished at £22,750 and the second motor refurbished for £24,055. Some civils work undertaken, with some civils work outstanding and the track has also been levelled. Spend to date £74,895.

Blankney Pumping Station (complete):

This PS has particularly old and awkward motors. 1 x motor has been refurbished at a cost of £25,884 the second motor has now also been away and refurbished at a cost of circa £15,000. The windings are not available in the UK and have been sourced from the US. The fence around the station has been replaced with a palisade fence at a cost of £9,115 and the track has been levelled. Spend to date £58,169.

Heighington Pumping Station (Ongoing):

The 2 x pumps and motors needed refurbishment at Heighington. 1 x pump and motor have been refurbished @£37,760, and the second has now been away and repaired at a cost of £36,280. Both pumps have also been converted from grease lubricated bearings to water lubricated bearings, this was done due to the amount of time the pumps spend in high water levels (above the grease points). The compound has been refenced @ a cost of £5,763 and the track has been levelled. Spend to date £90,691.

Automated Weedscreen Cleaners [AWC] (ALL (UW) - T2 Extended to 31/03/2026):

Orders have been placed for new AWC's at the following sites: Ingleby (UW), Boultham (UW), Hykeham (UW), **Heighington (W1), Branston (W1)**.

Branston and Heighington were installed in December 2025. Hykeham, Ingelby and Boultham are due to be installed Q1 2026. Hykeham and Boultham have had some new structural support pads installed as the current structures were not suitable. Cost to date £705,064.

Due to a projected underspend on this project due to not being able to agree works with the EA for Aubourn and Sand Syke joint stations, £200k has been offered back to the IDB Fund to utilise on other projects.

Sandhill Beck Pumping Station (W1– T2 Extended to 31/12/2025):

A 12" electric mobile pump c/w pipework, fish screen (both delivered) and electric panel will 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 help prevent the land flooding, only aid its recovery.

The concrete pad, platform, pump and pipework have all been installed along with a new inlet headwall. The compound fence has been installed. The next phase will include the electrical works and auxiliary works within the compound. These works are to be completed in Q1 of 2026. Cost to date £311,271.

Due to a projected underspend on this scheme of @£150k we contacted the IDB Fund team to see if they will support the installation of a permanent mobile pump at Heighington Pumping Station, with a dedicated intake and outfall (similar concept to works undertaken at Sandhill Pumping Station). This has been supported by the IDB Fund, so works will be undertaken before 31st March 2026. However, an EA FRAP will be required to install the discharge pipe through the EA main river embankment.

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

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. North Kyme electrical disconnection and demolition will progress in February. Procurement of MCCs is progressing, with the panels now approved for manufacture. Cost to date £707,979.

William Grantham asked about the North Kyme flap, stating that he had taken a look and it appeared to be rusting solid. He was concerned that it would be jammed open. The flap was limiting the flow from the bypass in the last storm, and he requested that it be serviced. It was confirmed by Abi Gilbert that they are indeed serviced annually but in this case a new flap has been purchased as part of the scheme.

Water Level Control Structures & Penstock Automation at various locations (W1, UW, NEL) AT2B-062.

The Board was awarded money for the supply and installation of various control structures to be installed across all 4 Boards.

The two penstocks within the Timberland and Billingham catchment have been ordered and are due to be installed in Q1 2026. (W1) Cost to date £55,033.

Due to a projected underspend on this project £400k has been offered back to the IDB Fund to utilise on other projects.

Members discussed and NOTED the capital programme report update.

2806 Operations Report, including Health & Safety.

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

There had been only one reported Health & Safety incident for the Board since the November report. An Operative was undoing a nut/bolt with an Allen key which slipped and caused a small cut to the hand.

All the Boards' Operational staff and contractors had started de-silting, reforming or bushing works across their districts, Witham First still have Operatives finishing the vegetation maintenance programme.

Work is on-going for the schemes that are part of the IDB fund works and must be completed by 31/03/26. It has been necessary to over-pump at several of the pumping station refurbishment sites, requiring several mobile pumps to be set up and therefore fuelling and maintaining takes place seven days a week. Extra pumps have also been set up at sites where pump failures have been experienced.

Staffing:

One member of Operations team on long-term sickness absence.

Machinery:

The Tenders received for the replacement of the Board's Volvo 160 LR excavator had been evaluated and an order has been placed with **TC Harrison JCB for a new JCB 220XLR @** a cost (including 5 years 4000 hours Warranty and Service package) of **£174,826**. Other quotations came in at: Volvo: £206,000, Hitachi: £221,500, Develon: £171,255.

A trade in value of £30,000.00 has been offered by TCH on the existing Volvo 160 LR machine. All the used machinery will be advertised on the 4 Boards' website for sale within the next couple of weeks, using the trade in value as the Boards' benchmark lowest value.

Ringmoor Pumping Station:

Ringmoor pump has failed, the pump has been lifted to make sure nothing was stuck in the impellor (nothing was). This is a small 150mm pump, the pump needs either replacing or repairing. Currently companies are trying to source a new pump, and we are on the waiting list of pump repair companies.

A 6" Mobile pump has been installed at Ringmoor to help alleviate the water on the land. Access to this site is challenging, the bridge over the Skirth is not fit to walk on or drive over and is not the Board's responsibility. The EA say it is not their bridge and that it is a riparian responsibility. The landowner permitted access across their land, but a tractor must be used across fields (it is not a stoned track), as access is not possible by 4x4. Witham First have hired a tractor from Witham Third, as they do not have a tractor capable of towing (Witham First only have flail tractors and these have no tow hitch fitted due to having Herder flails fitted). Depending on the timescale for repairing or replacing Ringmoor pump, it may be necessary to hire in a tractor for daily refuelling as W3rd will require its tractor to be returned for winter works.

PSCA Works:

As previously reported, for 2025/26 quotes for PSCA works were submitted to the EA. However, they informed us that some medium consequence main river systems would not

be funded for maintenance in 2025/26. Low consequence main river systems had previously been removed from the EA's maintenance schedule a couple of years ago.

As agreed previously, the IDBs undertook some of the main river maintenance at each Board's expense, for one year only, on a no precedent basis for future years. It was also agreed to undertake some of the low consequence systems maintenance that had been cut in 2023/24 and in Witham First to undertake works on 11 miles of the Digby and Dorrington systems that had been cut from the EA's mainframe contractor's maintenance schedule for 2025/26. The vegetation maintenance for 2025/26 is now complete, including those reaches the IDBs did at their cost.

The EA has requested quotations from all Boards for various bits of winter bushing and reed removal; the quotes awaiting approval are for circa £80K. Clearly, there is now a time constraint to receive approval and complete any works quoted for by March 2026.

The EA has also now said it will reimburse the Boards for some of the works undertaken at each Board's expense in this financial year, to the values of:

UW- £18,637.20

W1 - £50,110.31

W3 - £36,387.00

NELDB – NIL, as the Board's PSCA programme of works was not reduced by the EA.

This reimbursement the EA has offered is towards the cost of works to medium consequence systems only, and on Witham First towards the Digby / Dorrington systems. There is no reimbursement for works undertaken on low consequence EA main rivers. It should be noted that this W1st payment has not yet been received, it is currently in query with EA National staff. Ed Applewhite asked what the cost /benefit to the Board was. It was advised that critical watercourses in the IDB area would be affected, for example Digby PS would be at increased risk if maintenance work was not undertaken.

Despite being below the value of the reduced works programme, it does go some way to cover actual IDB costs incurred.

The Board has again quoted for PSCA maintenance works in 2026/27 at the request of the EA. The EA asked the RFCC for £1.5 million from Local Levy monies to fund some of the gap in their 2026/27 maintenance budget. Following the RFCC meeting on Friday, 23.01.26 this was approved, so it may be that maintenance levels are more akin to those in 2024/25 once more for 2026/27.

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. No quote has been requested for the work on the 11 miles of the Dorrington / Digby systems again this year and those systems have a serious impact on Witham First's ability to function in those areas.

Quoted PSCA works for 2026/27.

NEL: TBC

UW: £216,947.67

W1: £ 86,698.99

W3: £285,148.08

This is a notable reduction on last year, which was a quote for £107,896.53 of W1st PSCA works.

Ron Oxby commented that if the EA cannot afford the maintenance, how do they pay staff. It was advised that pay is a different pot of money, essentially coming from a different budget allocation within the EA.

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

2807 Corporate Risk Register.

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

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 (4) statutory Boards within WHDB.

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.

WHDB 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 of 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.

Bridget Maplethorpe requested that Officers please share at the IDB Funding research visit taking place on 17th February, the issue of risk regarding PSCA works and reduced EA maintenance on main rivers.

Cllr Carrington suggested we should be careful about the purpose of the IDB review, given the Local Government Reform. Is it potentially a way to disband IDBs and is there a hidden agenda.

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 Rating System.
- 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.

2808 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 projects 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 was deferred to January 2026 and has not yet been issued.

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 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 were suggested. 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 completely 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 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 reviewed the previous programme and recommended 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 a funded draft Programme hopefully being available for submission to the November Board meetings for approval.

Furthermore, once the funding criteria are 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.

2809 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 were as follows:

Electricity:

One of the most significant increases experienced over the last couple of years is in the electricity standing charges, and now KVA charges, which in cash terms had 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. The 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 IDB 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.

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.

The Pumping Station Capital Programmes were last approved by the Board in January 2025. Due to works undertaken via FDGIA and the IDB Fund and following a review of the national criteria for FDGIA funding then the programmes require a fundamental review, as just discussed.

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 £60k pa budget to £65k pa.

Summary of Revenue Budget Proposals 2026/27

After much discussion between Officers and Members of the Executive Committee at the meeting held on 13th January 2026, a balanced budget position can be achieved for 2026/27 based on these assumptions and a **recommended 4.50% penny rate increase**.

Without this proposed 4.50% 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 £16,590 for 2026/27.

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 10-15%], and that the balance be held in 'earmarked reserves' for specific requirements. This concurs with previous Member aspirations to increase the General Reserve to 20% in the coming years, as resources allow.

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

Reserve	Actual 2024/25 b/f £	Estimated 2025/26 c/f £	Estimated 2026/27 c/f £
Revenue Reserve*	(317,172)	(392,172)	(467,172)
Emergency Event	(280,663)	(345,663)	(410,663)
One Off Projects**	(652,373)	(0)	(0)
Self-Insurance	(50,000)	(50,000)	(50,000)
Commuted Sum	(105,055)	(105,055)	(105,055)
Capital Programme Funding			
Plant & Machinery	(292,191)	(423,147)	(380,480)
Pumping Station Refurbishments	(155,681)	(163,520)	(171,359)
PS Capital Programme	(90,000)	(135,000)	(185,000)
Balance	(1,943,135)	(1,614,557)	(1,769,729)

*Assumes year end balanced position for 2025/26 & 2026/27.

** Assumes all FG DGIA/IDB Fund 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 2025/26 and 2026/27.

The 2026/27 balance is estimated to be 25.22% of estimated turnover, so is slightly above the Board's updated approved Policy on Reserves of holding 15% to 20% of turnover. The actual position for 2025/26 as of 31st March 2026 will be part of the Outturn report, to be reported to the Board in May 2026.

Emergency Event:

The Board established this new reserve for 2025/26 with a budgeted contribution of £65k pa. This was 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 2025/26 but if not, any balances will be held in this Reserve until required.

Self-Insurance:

This fund was established with £50k due to the increasing cost of insurance and the reduction in cover, especially at Pumping Stations with regards flooding. In future, it is likely the Board will have less insurance cover for certain locations and will therefore have to self-insure more losses. Bridget Maplethorpe asked why there had been no increase in this budget. It was explained that this fund had only just started and it was possible that the Board may have to contribute more towards it in future.

Plant and Machinery (Capital):

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. This reserve will require additional resources in future to meet the increasing cost of Plant, Machinery & Equipment.

Pumping Stations/AWC's:

This reserve receives the depreciation charges from the Automatic Weedscreen Cleaners (AWC's). This fund will fund future one-off emergency works at Pumping Stations/AWC's

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 reserves at any time, should the need arise.

Following discussion, members were content to:

- **approve** the financially balanced Estimates for 2026/27, based upon a **4.50%**

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.

2810 Annual Value, Drainage Rates and Special Levies 2026/27.

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

The Annual Values are brought forward from last year's rate setting, with the movements required for land that has been developed between 01.01.25 and 31.12.25. This land comes out of Drainage Rates and is allocated to Special Levies for the appropriate Council.

The Annual Values as at 31st December 2024 were:

	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

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 01.01.25 and 31.12.25 that require transfer from Drainage Rates to Special Levy are summarised as follows:

	Sub District 1	Sub District 2	Total
	£	£	£
Drainage Rates	0	-1,551	-1,551
City of Lincoln	0	0	0
North Kesteven DC	0	109,070	109,070
Total	0	107,519	107,519
Differential Rating	40%		
Adjusted Totals	0	107,519	107,519

There were no land movements 01.01.25 to 31.12.25 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 2025:

	Sub District 1	Sub District 2	Total
	£	£	£
Drainage Rates	315,817	2,017,874	2,333,691
City of Lincoln	1,418,032	0	1,418,032
North Kesteven DC	843,382	917,112	1,760,494
Total	2,577,231	2,934,986	5,512,217
Differential Rating	40%		
Adjusted Totals	1,030,892	2,934,986	3,965,878

2811 Engineering Report.

A report covering Environment Updates, Planning & Consultations and Consents & Enforcements had been circulated with the agenda and was presented by the Director of Engineering & Technical Services.

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 displacement of 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 changed the way the Boards’ eel exemptions are processed. In a positive development, they have 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. 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

ADA Environment Forum:

The Forum met in early December to discuss current environmental issues affecting Internal Drainage Boards. Topics included Water Level Management Plans (WLMPs), beavers, and updates from ADA policy representatives. Feedback from the meeting will be presented by ADA at follow-up meetings.

ADA Environment Day (04th February 2026):

ADA will be hosting its annual Environment Day on Wednesday, 04th February 2026, at Park Farm, Thorney (near Peterborough). This free, in-person event will feature a programme of talks on key issues affecting lowland watercourse and freshwater management, including eels, invasive species, beavers and landscape recovery. Members can register via the ADA

website or contact the Boards' Environmental Officer at nick.downing@witham3idb.gov.uk

Lower River Witham Resilience Review & Billingham 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, the EA advise this is now delayed until the end of 2026. 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 for capital schemes.

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 a previous 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 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/>

Members of the public can receive regular updates and be involved in the public engagement about the project. This site contains text and photos describing work in progress at Grand Sluice outfall, lower Witham embankments and Sustainable Recovery Pilot project.

Members of the recovery Pilot project visited various sites last month to learn more about the various assets important to the management of water levels within the catchment. Further visits are planned over the winter and spring.

River Witham & South Delph Embankment Repairs

No specific updates from the EA are available to report. However, the weblink provides details of the project to repair numerous sites within the system. These repairs are to sustain the current defences, not improve them.

The Boards' officers have received communication from the EA regarding some of the proposed works where they may impact upon the Board's access routes at Tyndells, Witham Bankside and Metheringham Fen PS [Witham 1st].

Members received and NOTED the Engineering report and update.

2812 Any Other Business.

The Chief Executive advised members that a claim for negligence had been received from a current serving Board Member. It was concentrated around the following issue:

- Negligence of the Board in allowing the EA to design, construct and operate a concrete weir/spillway on the EA's Sandhill Beck.

- Negligence of the Board in entering into an agreement in December 2006 with the EA for a commuted sum one-off payment [of £25,000] for potential additional pumping costs at Sandhill Beck pumping station.

This matter could not be discussed further given the legal process now underway, and the case was in the hands of solicitors and insurers.

A second potential claim from a landowner, not a Board Member, had also been received within the same area, should this become a claim Members would be advised at that point.

An update would be provided at the May meeting.

There were no further items of business, and the meeting closed at 16:05.

2813 Date, Time and Place of the Board's Next Meeting.

The Board's next meeting was confirmed for Tuesday, 19th May 2026 at 2pm in **Witham House, Meadow Lane, North Hykeham, Lincoln LN6 9GJ.**

.....  Chairman 19.5.26 Date
 W1st BM 27.01.26.

