
TITLE: APPOINTMENT TO CAWDLE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Committee: Finance & Assets Committee

Date: 22nd July 2021

Author: Democratic Services Officer (Committees)

[W45]

1.0 ISSUE

1.1 Representation on Cawdle Fen Internal Drainage Board.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That City of Ely Parish Councillor Ian Lindsay be appointed to fill one of the vacancies on the Cawdle Fen Internal Drainage Board.

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

3.1 The annual reports from Council representatives on Outside Bodies were presented to the Finance & Assets Committee on 7th June 2021. Several vacancies on two Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) were highlighted in that report: one on the Padnal & Waterden IDB and three on the Cawdle Fen IDB. No nominations were received from District Councillors and therefore, in accordance with the previously-agreed process, City of Ely Council was invited to submit nominations for all vacancies and nominations for the Padnal & Waterden vacancy were requested from Littleport Parish Council.

3.2 City of Ely Council has nominated Cllr Ian Lindsay to fill one of the vacancies on the Cawdle Fen IDB. Cllr Lindsay supplied the following statement to demonstrate his suitability:

“I live in the Cawdle Drain catchment area and am chairman of the Climate & Environment Committee on the City Council, as well as Chairman of the Planning Committee. I therefore have an ongoing interest in supporting and monitoring the activities of the drainage boards as part of my council work.”

3.3 Littleport Parish Council will be including the Padnal & Waterden IDB vacancy as an item on a forthcoming meeting agenda and any nominations received will be brought to a future meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee for consideration.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT/CARBON IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

4.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required.

4.3 Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) not required

5.0 APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix 1: Relevant pages of Representation on Outside Bodies 2021-22 Booklet

<u>Background Documents</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>
Agenda Item 10, Finance & Assets Committee, 7 th June 2021	Room 214 The Grange, Ely	Caroline Evans Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (01353) 616457 E-mail: caroline.evans@eastcambs.gov.uk

Section 2INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDS

	Page no.
Burnt Fen.....	34
Cawdle Fen.....	35
Haddenham Level.....	38
Littleport and Downham	40
Middle Fen and Mere	44
Padnal and Waterden	46
Swaffham.....	49
Waterbeach Level.....	51

Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) are public bodies that manage water levels in areas where there is a special need for drainage. They reduce flood risk to people and property and they manage water levels for agricultural and environmental needs. IDBs are funded by a combination of drainage rates levied on the owners of farmland, and special levies on District and Unitary Councils. District Councils appoint representatives to IDBs, the number of representatives being determined by the IDBs by consideration of the percentage of the Board's income being paid by each Council.

Haddenham Level IDB is part of the Middle Level Commissioners, all other IDBs on which ECDC is represented are part of the Ely Group of Internal Drainage Boards.

Appointment of ECDC representatives to Internal Drainage Boards has been discussed at various Council and Committee meetings² and the following process has been agreed:

1. Nominations should be invited from the Members of Council.
2. If vacancies cannot all be filled from within the District Council then;
 - a. former District Councillors who are willing to continue in their IDB role could be nominated as a layperson, and;
 - b. the relevant Parish Council(s) should be invited to submit nominations.

If there are more nominations than vacancies then consideration should be given to the candidates' prior knowledge and experience of both the geographical area and the issues relevant to IDBs. In all cases, the final decision on each appointment rests with the Finance & Assets Committee.

² Resources & Finance Committee: 29 March 2018 (Agenda Item 11, Minute 94); 26 July 2018 (Agenda Item 12, Minute 35).
 Council: 19 April 2018 (Agenda Item 10, Minute 89).
 Finance & Assets Committee: 20 June 2019 (Agenda Item 13, Minute 17); 26 September 2019 (Agenda Item 18, Minute 56).

CAWDLE FEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

District Wards covered	Parish Councils covered
Ely West	City of Ely Council

Representation	Meetings per year	Status of Member
Seven Members	3	Board Member

Expenses paid by Organisation	Insurance Provision
No, paid by the Council	Yes

Category of Officer Support	Contact Officer	Representative(s) for 2020/21
3	Finance Manager, Ian Smith	Cllr Christine Whelan Cllr Simon Harries Parish Cllr Michael Rouse Rupert Moss-Eccardt 3 x Vacancy

2020/21 Report from Cllr Christine Whelan

(Attended two of three meetings.)

Specific items discussed have been:

Increased use of pumping station and the increase water in the last year due to there being a higher rainfall than expected. This was beneficial in establishing the problems there may be at a later date when considering planning applications.

Water voles and their increase in the area.

Health and safety requirements on lone working and procedures in place for this.

Continued representation is important because it is an important part of the area due to the wet areas around the fens. It is important to understand the problems of drainage in the area and what the benefits are.

These meetings have all been virtual and a later start time for the meetings would help the increase of membership to the board. Most of these start at 2.30pm and can be quite short in duration. Keeping these as a virtual meeting would also be more beneficial than travelling to the board meeting for a very short meeting. One of the meetings I attended lasted 20 minutes.

2020/21 Report from Cllr Simon Harries

(Attended one meeting.)

Provides an important component of the conservation and environmental aspects of the Council's objectives. As with the other drainage boards, this organisation maintains water

levels, is able to raise concerns and provide alerts if water quality or quantities moves outside normal levels, and enables a (or the) key business of the District to be conducted effectively- namely farming.

I was able to take part in only one of the two scheduled meetings of the board. I regret missing the second of these but there was a clash with a long-arranged business commitment that I was unable to change.

I learned a great deal about the historical significance of drainage boards in general and about the ways in which the operations of the board provide insights to key environmental indicators. In my opinion, the ability to keep a close eye on how water levels move, and what this tells us about the health of the environment, is critically important.

Personally, I learned more about farming culture and priorities than I have ever known, and this was a much-needed insight to the ways in which the district operates.

Continued representation is important because, as stated above, the council is now fully committed to a range of environmental actions and policies which will become more challenging and more important to the life of the district and its people in the years ahead.

Membership of drainage boards provides essential insights and early warning of issues in a way that nothing else can do.

It also enables better mutual understanding between council members, especially those- like myself- who have no background in farming, and the people who dominate the boards, who are for the most part farmers of long-standing in the district.

I appreciate the professionalism and commitment of the small but able staff, especially the engineers who keep the board operating effectively.

I have some reservations about the ways in which local landowners tend to assume that the board operates for their own interests above any other factor.

The boards contribute to environmental health for every inhabitant of the district. I would like to see more participation and oversight, not less, from "ordinary" members of the council.

2020/21 Report from Rupert Moss-Eccardt

(Attended all three meetings.)

Water management is essential to support food production, protect property and underpin the local economy:-

- The CPIER report alludes to significant GVA benefit from flood protection schemes. A recent modelling exercise for the Great Ouse fens predicts 7-10 £bn of damage in the event of a significant flood control failure.
- Many planning applications are only successful because, even though they are in Flood Zone 3, the site is protected by flood defences.
- SUDSs only work if there is somewhere for the final outflow to go. IDBs move that water from catchwater drains through to the main river.
- Finally, if the IDBs didn't provide a path for water to be abstracted, the local agricultural economy would fail.

The rate has been adjusted. This has an effect on the levy.

The rainfall in 2020/21 was abnormal. Without pumping by the IDB a significant part of Ely business would have been lost (Angel Drove).

The Rivers Authorities and Land Drainage has passed recently. It may result, in the gift of the DEFRA SoS to change the basis for valuation for both agricultural and other land.

The IDBs spend a significant amount of money raised by the District. Appointment of Board members by 'charging authorities' is required by statute and the number of such appointed members is determined by the same Act – The Land Drainage Act 1991.

However the Act requires regard to:

...the desirability of appointing a person who—

(a)has knowledge or experience (including knowledge of the internal drainage district in question or commercial experience) of some matter relevant to the functions of the board; and

(b)has shown capacity in such a matter.

Which is partly, I hope, why I have been appointed.

I am very grateful to continue to be appointed by the District Council and honoured to have this opportunity to aid with the governance, effectiveness and representation of the Board.

I plan to use my experience in Cyber-resilience, fraud prevention and broader engineering knowledge to help the IDB make further progress in the next period, if my appointment continues.

2020/21 Report from Parish Cllr Michael Rouse

(Attended all three meetings.)

I enjoy being one of the Council's representatives on the Cawdle Fen IDB. It is the smallest in the group and well managed. It is prudent and never budgets for more than is necessary for its efficient operation. Like all IDBs its primary concern is water management which is essential for food production and the prevention of flooding. The appointment of council reps is very much appreciated by the other board members.

Representative(s) for 2021/22

Cllr Christine Whelan
Cllr Simon Harries
Parish Cllr Michael Rouse
Rupert Moss-Eccardt
3 x vacancy

PADNAL & WATERDEN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

District Wards covered	Town/Parish Councils covered
Ely North Littleport	City of Ely Council Littleport Parish Council

Representation	Meetings per year	Status of Member
Seven Members	3	Board Member

Expenses paid by Organisation	Insurance Provision
No, paid by the Council	Yes

Category of Officer Support	Contact Officer	Representative(s) for 2020/21
3	Finance Manager, Ian Smith	Cllr David Ambrose Smith Cllr Lis Every Cllr Alison Whelan Paul Cox (lay member) Parish Cllr Edward Carlsson Browne Debra Jordan Sue Kerridge

2020/21 Report from Cllr David Ambrose Smith

(Attended most meetings.)

IDB's are extremely important partners. ECDC planners work closely with the IDB's and value one another's contribution to the planning process. IDB's praiseworthy concerns regarding increasing their charges perhaps constrains them from carrying out more medium to long term planning.

Continued representation is worthwhile because it gives an understanding of the importance of Internal Drainage Boards within our District and the necessity of keeping drainage infrastructure in good order.

The record amount of rainfall in December highlighted system maintenance issues across the drainage boards, I joined a IDB led working party to help identify ways to overcome these problems for the future.

I believe that all our local IDB's should be amalgamated into a single board which would bring efficiencies at all levels from governance to the water courses. ECDC councillors/representation of one possibly two councillors on this single board would then give ECDC a better joined up understanding of the whole area.

2020/21 Report from Cllr Lis Every

(Attended three of four meetings.)

The internal drainage board (IDB) is the operating authority which is established in areas of special drainage need in England and Wales, eg the Fens, with permissive powers to undertake work to secure clean water drainage and water level management within drainage districts. It also has the authority to add a levy to the Council Tax. Internal Draining Boards are a statutory consultee for all Planning Applications. In this area, which seeks growth, the work of the IDB is a very important organisation which has representatives from local farmers and councillor representatives from ECDC.

As seen above, the work undertaken by the IDB is vital for the area, ensuring that there is no flood activity, that the relevant maintenance is undertaken, the right levels of water for irrigation are maintained and the protection of species, ie eels, is undertaken. It is a statutory consultee for all planning applications.

Continued representation is absolutely vital, ie as consultee for planning applications and an influence on the Ultimate Council Tax Levy.

2020/21 Report from Cllr Alison Whelan

(Attended two of three meetings.)

The IDB is presently upgrading the Padnal No 1 pumping station as it is near the end of its useful life.

The IDB contracted for the clearing of the Clayway Drain, however, this caused significant destruction of wildlife areas during the spring breeding season. The IDB has learnt from this and will avoid this in future years.

Continued representation is worthwhile because the nature of the land that surrounds Ely is such that water management is crucial to avoid flooding.

Meetings have been held virtually due to the pandemic, however, the IDB acknowledged their failure to meet equality and inclusion standards due to the location of physical meetings and this will be addressed when physical meetings restart.

2020/21 Report from Paul Cox (lay member)

(Not received.)

2020/21 Report from Parish Cllr Edward Carlsson Browne

(Not received.)

2020/21 Report from Debra Jordan

(Not received.)

2020/21 Report from Sue Kerridge

(Not received.)

Representative(s) for 2021/22

Cllr David Ambrose Smith

Cllr Lis Every

Cllr Alison Whelan

Paul Cox (lay member)

Debra Jordan

Sue Kerridge

Vacancy