



Water Management Consortium

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Newsletter

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Drainage Rates and Special Levies

Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) manage water levels in areas of special drainage need, e.g. low-lying land, which, without drainage would be temporarily or permanently waterlogged. There are 112 IDBs in England covering 1.2 million hectares (9.7% England's landmass) and they play a key role in reducing flood risk to over 600,000 people and nearly 900,000 properties, operating and maintaining over 500 pumping stations and 22,000km of watercourse.

All land and property within a drainage district is deemed to derive benefit from the activities of an IDB and landowners/occupiers are required to contribute towards its expenses, either via drainage rates or the special levy. Drainage rates are levied directly on occupiers of agricultural land and buildings. Occupiers of other land (for example domestic properties, businesses, etc.) pay council tax or business rates to their local authority; IDBs charge a special levy in proportion to the annual value of that land.

Historically, drainage rates were collected directly by IDBs from *everyone* within an IDB area (e.g. domestic properties, businesses, landowners, etc), however, in the interest of efficiency, in the 1970s and 1980s IDBs entered into local agreements with councils who would collect the money from householders and businesses and pay this to the drainage board as 'special levies' (these agreements were made under the Land Drainage Act 1976, Section 81). Special Levies are now paid by councils under Section 75 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 in accordance with Section 36 of the Land Drainage Act 1991.

Initially, councils were reimbursed 100% of IDB special levies by the Government through the Revenue Support Grant, however, since 2014, reimbursement has gradually diminished and become less transparent due to the way councils are now funded through a combination of retained Business Rates, Revenue Support Grant (reduced) and Council Tax. This only affects those councils within an IDB district and lobbying has been ongoing for several years for this to be recognised and addressed by central Government.

In 2023/24 the Government allocated £3M in additional grant funding to 15 authorities in England; those where IDB special levies accounted for over 3% of their average core spending power over five years. In the Water Management Consortium area, this included Bassetlaw (£181,977), East Lindsey (£927,373), Newark and Sherwood (£239,690) and West Lindsey (£64,082).

Although initially a one-off payment, this was extended with a further £3M allocated in 2024/25 and has been uplifted to £5M for 2025/26 although we have not yet had clarification on where this is to be allocated. Local IDBs, the Association of Drainage Authorities and local authorities continue to pursue this with central Government, lobbying for additional support for local authorities within areas of special drainage need (IDB areas).

Increasing costs over the last few years (in particular, electricity and construction) have been challenging for everyone and in the DE, LM and TV areas resulted in the Boards agreeing a significant increase in the drainage rates and special levies in 2023/24. This prudent approach does, however, mean that for 2025/26, LM and TV Boards have been able to approve a 0% increase and the DE Board a 1% increase (required to ensure there are sufficient funds to deliver the DE long-term capital works programme).

In the AX area, rate increases over the last few years have been lower and in order to maintain service delivery, complete the capital works programme and ensure sufficient reserves to cover a heavy rainfall event, the rate has been increased by 14% this year; this equates to additional income from drainage rates and special levies of £261,536.

The AX Board also tasked Officers with undertaking a benchmarking and efficiencies review and this will be extended across the whole of the Consortium to ensure we continue to provide an efficient and cost-effective service.

Maintenance

Annual Summer Maintenance

Annual maintenance will commence as usual on 15th July and will involve flailing of the drain bank and removal of weed from the channel. In the meantime, strategic Board maintained watercourses are monitored and, where weedgrowth is excessive, the centre of the channel will be cleared to ensure conveyance.

Regular maintenance is vital to ensure that water flows freely and our systems operate effectively. Your cooperation and support to ensure we have access to these watercourses is appreciated.

Our work is undertaken in compliance with environmental legislation and the wildlife recorded within Board maintained watercourses evidences that systems can be well maintained without adversely affecting the environment.

*Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board (LM)
Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire Water Level Management Board (AX)
Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board (TV)
Doncaster East Internal Drainage Board (DE)*

IDB Storm Recovery and Asset Improvement Fund

Last year the Government allocated a total of £91M to help internal drainage boards recover from the floods of 2023/24 and upgrade assets. This was split into two tranches - Tranche 1 funds for operational costs already incurred such as increased pumping costs and emergency repairs, and Tranche 2 for modernising and improving assets for the future. Across the Consortium, bids totalling £7,262,689.13 were submitted with the following amounts being awarded:

	AX	DE	LM	TV
Tranche 1 Flood Recovery	£212,730.31	£416,498.73	£670,891.39	£623,419.10
Tranche 2 Asset Improvements (work initially to be completed before 31st March 2025 but extended as Tranche 2B for work before 31st March 2026)	£81,262.50	£672,986.00	£156,975.00	£498,739.20
	£293,992.81	£1,089,484.73	£827,866.39	£1,122,158.30

Major Capital Projects

Some of our Major Projects

Below is an overview of ongoing and planned projects for this year. IDBs can apply for Flood Defence Grant in Aid (a central Government fund for managing flood risk in England). This fund is administered by the Environment Agency and IDBs can apply for money towards capital works where there is benefit to land, people and property with a positive cost-benefit ratio.

AX Wiseton Pumping Station and Catchment Improvements - The Wiseton catchment covers 3,344 hectares which is drained through a pumped system into the River Idle. During a storm event the River overtops and this, combined with increased discharge from the Chesterfield Canal due to urban expansion in Retford, causes widespread flooding. A complete refurbishment of the Board's pumping station including the installation of new fish friendly pumps is planned for 2026. Budget £1,650,000 (Board contribution £650,000). In the meantime, the Board's direct labour organisation is undertaking desilting, deepening and widening of five Board maintained watercourses to increase storage capacity and improve conveyance. This work will be undertaken in three phases over three years with Phase 1 (New EA Drain) already nearing completion. Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is funding and undertaking some planting work to improve the re-establishment and diversity of the channel flora and fauna and this will also help to stabilise the bank. Budget £734,356 (Board funded).



AX Heckdyke Pumping Station - Construction of a new building with fish friendly pumps, variable speed drives and new control panel will be undertaken over the next two years. Budget £2,159,644 (Board contribution £610,000). Significant drain works will commence once work at the station is complete to improve links with Four Bridges; this will be followed by improvements to the DE Langholme catchment.

DE Middle Drain (Tickhill) catchment covers 210 hectares of prime agricultural land which drains through a pumped system and outfalls into the River Torne. During storm events the system is overwhelmed due to high outfall levels and overtopping from the River. Work will be undertaken to deepen and widen four

Board maintained watercourses and repair the Tickhill outfall which was damaged during the storm events. Budget £582,661 (Tranche 2 Funding).

DE Newington Pumping Station - Funding was secured through the Storm Recovery and Asset Improvement Fund for two new fish-friendly pumps together with a new control panel and updates to the telemetry system. The automatic weedscreen cleaner is now undergoing refurbishment funded by the Mining Remediation Authority at a cost of £38,420.



LM Ingoldmells Pumping Station - Refurbishment of the building, replacement of the pumps with a fish friendly pumping arrangement, installation of variable speed drives, a new control panel and power supply transformer replacement is underway. Improvement work and desilting of the approach channel will also be undertaken by the Board's workforce. Budget £3,855,000 (Board contribution £335,000).

LM Trusthorpe Pumping Drain - Following refurbishment of Trusthorpe Pumping Station last year, the Board's workforce have commenced desilting of 3,387 metres of the approach channel to reinstate the watercourse to its original design specification and ensure the continued flow of water to the station for evacuation. Budget £37,651 (Board funded).

LM Fulbeck Pumping Station is constructed beneath the foreshore at Mablethorpe and is difficult to see from the road. A full refurbishment is planned this year including the installation of fish-friendly pumps, replacement of the gravity doors and the secondary flood defence penstock (a necessary consideration where connections exist to main rivers or the sea so we have adequate defence against water coming back into the system). Work will be undertaken outside the busy tourist season to minimise disruption as much as possible and will be complete by March 2026. Budget £2,846,728 (Board contribution £91,000).

LM Steeping River Soke Dyke North conveys water to the Board's Thorpe Culvert Pumping Station which is due for refurbishment in the next five-year Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid Programme. Agricultural land and properties in this area suffer from flooding during severe storms and the Board's direct labour organisation has started work to desilt, widen and deepen the

watercourse, and upgrade culverts to increase storage capacity and improve conveyance. Budget £335,904 (Board funded).

TV Thurgarton Village Flood Relief Scheme - Design of a scheme to increase flood protection to the village is being finalised. Work will include reforming and widening of watercourses to increase storage capacity. The use of natural flood management upstream to slow the flow of water is also being considered. We will liaise directly with the landowners who may be affected by the proposed scheme. Work is due to commence in March 2026. Budget £400,000 (Board funded).

TV Sutton-on-Trent Flood Alleviation Scheme -

Work is nearing completion on Phase 1 of a scheme to alleviate flooding in the area. This scheme was designed and delivered inhouse and involved widening and deepening of two Board maintained watercourses, the construction of a berm to



create additional storage capacity, and the installation of small culverts to slow the flow of water. The Board is liaising with Nottinghamshire County Council (the Lead Local Flood Authority) to see whether the use of natural flood management would be beneficial. (Part funded from Tranche 2).

All Boards - Solar powered water level monitoring equipment is being installed at 43 sites across the Water Management Consortium area. This will compliment the existing telemetry system, improving remote visibility of water levels across the district. Funded from Tranche 2 £417,687.50.

Main River Maintenance

The Boards continue to lobby at national and local level for increased maintenance of main rivers, in particular those that adversely affect the Boards' systems and increase the risk of flooding to landowners and residents within the drainage district.

Environmental

Across the Water Management Consortium, operatives have recorded over 1,200 biological sightings this year, from water voles and swans to grass snakes and barn owls. These records give us a good picture of the biodiversity in our systems and help us to measure against some of the targets set out in our Biodiversity Action Plan. Our operatives are provided with 'flash cards' to help them to recognise different species. Recording also includes non-native invasive species such as signal crayfish and mitten crab, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam, and we have biosecurity measures in place to control and minimise the spread of these.

Annual biodiversity refresher training is undertaken prior to summer weedcutting to ensure operatives are aware of the Boards' environmental responsibilities. Licences are in place in respect of Badgers, Water Voles and Beavers to ensure we can continue to operate effectively and within the law.

Habitat mitigation is central to our delivery with works planned to protect and enhance the environment whilst ensuring effective land drainage and flood risk management. Barn Owl and Kestrel boxes, Swallow

and House Martin cups and Swift bricks continue to be installed where practical to support these species within the district.

The Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership scheme for mink trapping has received funding for a further year and we are already seeing a decline in the number of mink. In Nottinghamshire, 153 mink have been removed from across seven catchments to date.

The Board is trialling Hydroseeding on drain banks where major works have been undertaken. This process includes spraying on a gel containing a mix of slurry, fertiliser, grass and wildflower seeds. The benefits are that germination is much quicker than traditional grass seeding, and the technique used gives a more even distribution and helps prevent seeds being washed away by heavy rain. As Hydroseeding grows quickly and uniformly, it should help to eliminate the potential for weed invasion while new grass is establishing, stabilise the bank quicker, encourage water voles to recolonise the area and provide habitat for pollinators.



Lincolnshire Show

The Association of Drainage Authorities Lincolnshire Branch will be at the Lincolnshire Show on 18th and 19th June 2025. If you would like to learn more about what we do or have any questions, please come and visit us on the stand near the clock tower. Representatives of your local IDBs will be there together with officers from Lincolnshire County Council and the Environment Agency to answer any questions.

Board Meetings and Members

Meetings are held at the end of January, March, June, September and November and are open to members of the public; please contact a member of the Corporate Services Team for further details if you wish to attend.

Elections for members of the Doncaster East, Lindsey Marsh and Trent Valley boards will be held this year. If you are interested in joining your local Board and would like to know more about what this involves, please contact Carol Davies at the Manby office.

Chairmen

Giles Crust (Lindsey Marsh)
John Coggon (Isle of Axholme)
John Miller (Trent Valley)
Chris McGuinness (Doncaster East)

Officers

Andrew McGill (Chief Executive)
Robert Brown (Senior Engineer)
Antony Malin (Senior Operations Manager)

Operations

Lindsey Marsh: Steve Stones (Operations Manager) and Derrick Quickfall (Foreman).

Trent Valley: Mat Everett (Operations Manager) and Kai Creed (Foreman).

Isle of Axholme: Graham Sutton (Operations Manager) and Wayne Rowlands (Foreman).

Doncaster East: Graham Sutton (Operations Manager) and Graeme Warman (Works Supervisor).

Data Protection Statement

The Boards collect and process personal data to perform their statutory functions and to be able to deal with enquiries effectively. Information is not generally shared with external parties without prior permission but may be accessible to employees of other Water Management Consortium Boards and Board Members.

As part of system improvements and to ensure operational efficiency, all staff will be able to access land-owner/occupier contact information; this will enable them to arrange access or discuss issues directly with you. Staff will access this information on secure devices which are fully managed by the organisation to ensure maximum protection of this data.

Full details of how the Boards use your information can be located on the Governance/Data Protection page of our website. If you have any queries please contact the Boards' Data Protection Officer at the Manby office.

2025 Summer Maintenance Works

NOTICE OF ENTRY

Under Section 64 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, Notice is hereby given that the Boards' summer maintenance works will commence shortly and to carry out this work we may require access onto land owned or occupied by you. This work will involve flailing of the bank and removal of weedgrowth from the channel.

Work will commence on 15th July and is usually complete by the end of November, however, where there is excessive weedgrowth, access may be required earlier with a second cut later in the year.

The Boards will return the land to the "Cross compliance 2023" rules Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition" at the conclusion of these works. However, Countryside Stewardship options for buffer strips alongside Board maintained watercourses are likely to be affected by short term disturbance and you may wish to register a derogation with Natural England to ensure your entitlements are not jeopardised. If you require any support in making this application, please do not hesitate to contact us.

I trust you will afford the Boards' employees and contractors the required access to carry out this work which is essential to keep our systems flowing.

If you require any further information on the nature or timing of the works please telephone the Manby office 01507 328095.



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