



Water Management Consortium

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To all Special Levy Paying Councils

Dear Sir/Madam

IDB Role

The Water Management Consortium understands that this is difficult time for organisations and individuals coping with increasing costs, particularly for energy. This has also affected us, and has made the task of setting our annual special levy rate extremely difficult. Because of this, we would like to take the opportunity to outline the benefits that councils' areas receive from the work of drainage boards, and the value that this provides to the communities and businesses that we serve.

Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) are local public bodies that manage water levels and flood risk within an area of special drainage need (known as drainage districts) in England and Wales. The boundaries of these drainage districts are determined by way the watercourses work, and because of this they are not based on administrative boundaries such as counties. These areas are very low lying, in many places at or below sea level, and without constant management of local water levels they would be seasonally waterlogged or permanently flooded.

The Water Management Consortium is a group of four IDBs managing drainage districts along the Lincolnshire coast, the Trent Valley, Doncaster East and across the Isle of Axholme in northern Nottinghamshire. The main role of the Consortium is to undertake works to reduce flood risk to people, property, land and infrastructure, as well as managing water levels for local farming and environmental needs. During times of drought IDBs play a key role in keeping water levels higher and ensuring the transfer of water to locations that need it.

Much of this work involves the maintenance and improvement of watercourses and infrastructure which helps to control the flow of water, such as pumping stations, weirs, sluices, culverts and embankments. The Consortium has powers under the Land Drainage Act (1991) to prohibit the obstruction of watercourses within its drainage districts, and to provide consent for works affecting a watercourse to be undertaken.

IDBs have a role in the planning system, by helping to drain new and existing developments within their drainage districts and by advising on planning applications. They also have a legal duty to support the conservation and improvement of environmental sites within their districts, and they

Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board
Isle of Axholme and North Nottinghamshire Water Level Management Board
Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board
Doncaster East Internal Drainage Board

work closely with councils, the Environment Agency, Wildlife Trusts, River Trusts and Water Companies to make sure that their work complements and supports their activities.

Because of the low-lying and flat nature of much of the land in the Consortium's drainage districts much of the water has to be moved by using pumps, which ultimately lift it into the Environment Agency maintained main rivers, and then finally to the sea. Across the Consortium we protect directly 82,500 residential properties and nearly 147,700 hectares of land that are inside the drainage districts, and we support protection to 110,500 more properties that are in the wider catchments around the drainage districts. We maintain a network of over 2,420 km of watercourses and run 94 pumping stations to keep the water moving and make sure the communities we serve remain protected from flooding and from drought.

All of this work, especially the operation of our pumping stations, requires considerable use of electricity, especially in times of high rainfall. Like many organisations and most households we have also been affected by extremely high costs of power, which have seen our standing charges rise by between 200% and 500% all across the sites we manage. In addition, the unit rate charge for electricity has increased dramatically. In total, since September 2022 and our estimate of what we will need for the year 2023-24 our total electricity costs will have risen by around 350%.

We have not simply accepted this situation. We have actively lobbied government through local MPs, through meetings with government departments and through our national association. We have worked closely with local councils across Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Doncaster to seek ways of limiting these cost increases, and we have researched and changed supplier in a matter of weeks to achieve lower charges for the electricity that we use. While this has helped to limit the rise in our costs, it has not eliminated it, and unfortunately, if we are to maintain our levels of service and continue to keep people, property and land protected from the risk of flooding or long term waterlogging, we have had no alternative but to increase our rates to a greater degree than we have done in the past.

We understand that this is a difficult time for our ratepayers, and for the councils who support us through the payment of special levy, but having discussed this at length with councils and at our board meetings, we believe taking this action will reduce the need for further significant rises in the future, and will not compromise the safety and security of the drainage districts that depend on effective water management for their continued prosperity and longer term growth.

Yours faithfully



Dr D. Hickman
Executive Officer