

Fenland District Council All Members Session – April 2024

*Internal Drainage Boards
Keeping Fenland dry and enabling prosperity*





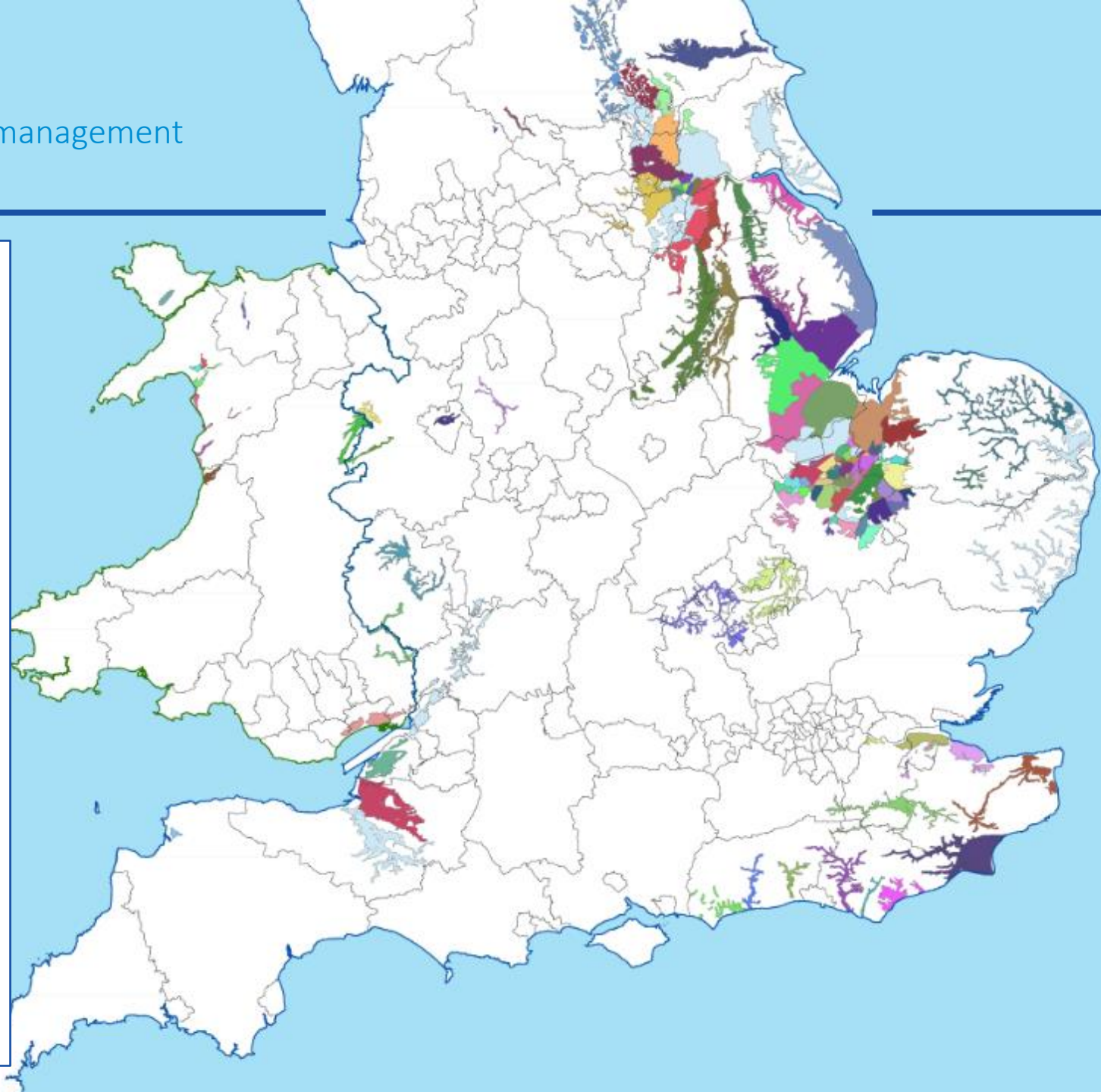
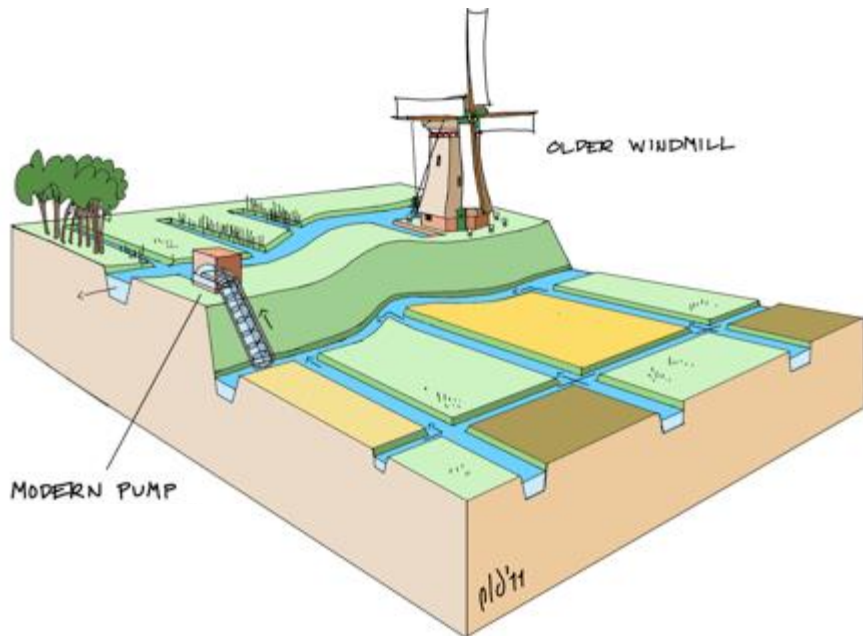
Association of Drainage Authorities
The membership body for water level management

Internal Drainage Boards

112 IDBs in England

Cover 1.2 million hectares

9.7% of England's land area.



Water level management

What we do:

MAINTAIN



Maintain capacity and conveyance of 22,000km ordinary watercourses and function of drainage assets

CONTROL



Operate assets that control water levels like pen stocks, sluices, weirs, and 500 pumping stations

REGULATE



Use section 23 of LDA and byelaws to secure the efficient working of the drainage system, to reduce flood risk and environmental damage

IMPROVE



Build new, or improve existing, infrastructure for the management of water.

ENHANCE



Have due care for the environment and deliver improvements to aquatic habitat and species through biodiversity action plans

Internal Drainage Boards & Commissioners

Public Authorities with powers are given to us by;

- Our Byelaws
- Land Drainage Act 1991 (amended 1994)
- Floods and Water Act 2010
- Environment Act 2021 (duty to enhance the environment)
- Commissioners have specific Acts
- Middle Level Commissioners are also a Navigation Authority

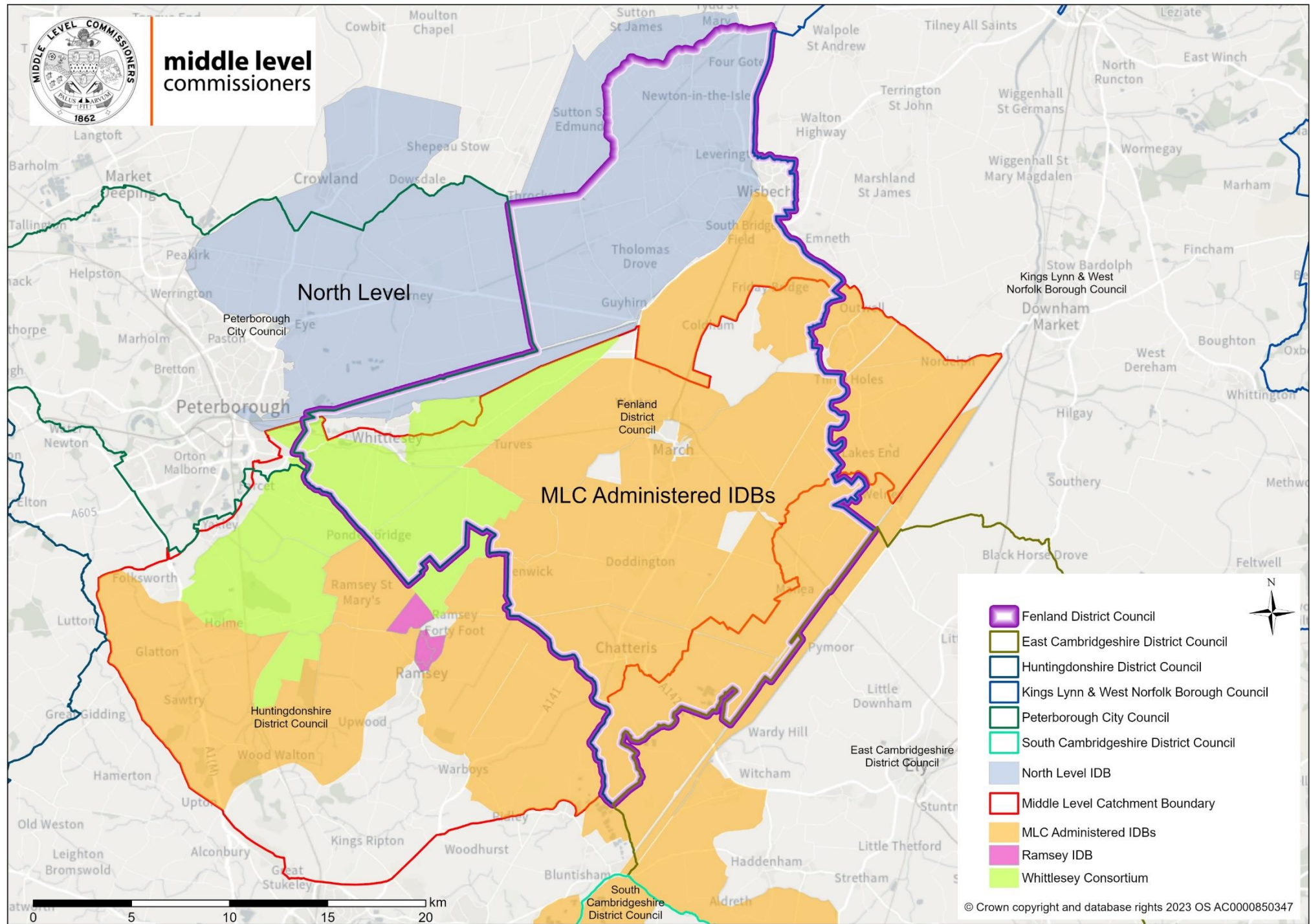
Defra are lead government dept for policy

Environment Agency has supervisory duty over IDBs

Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) is membership body for IDBs (and others)



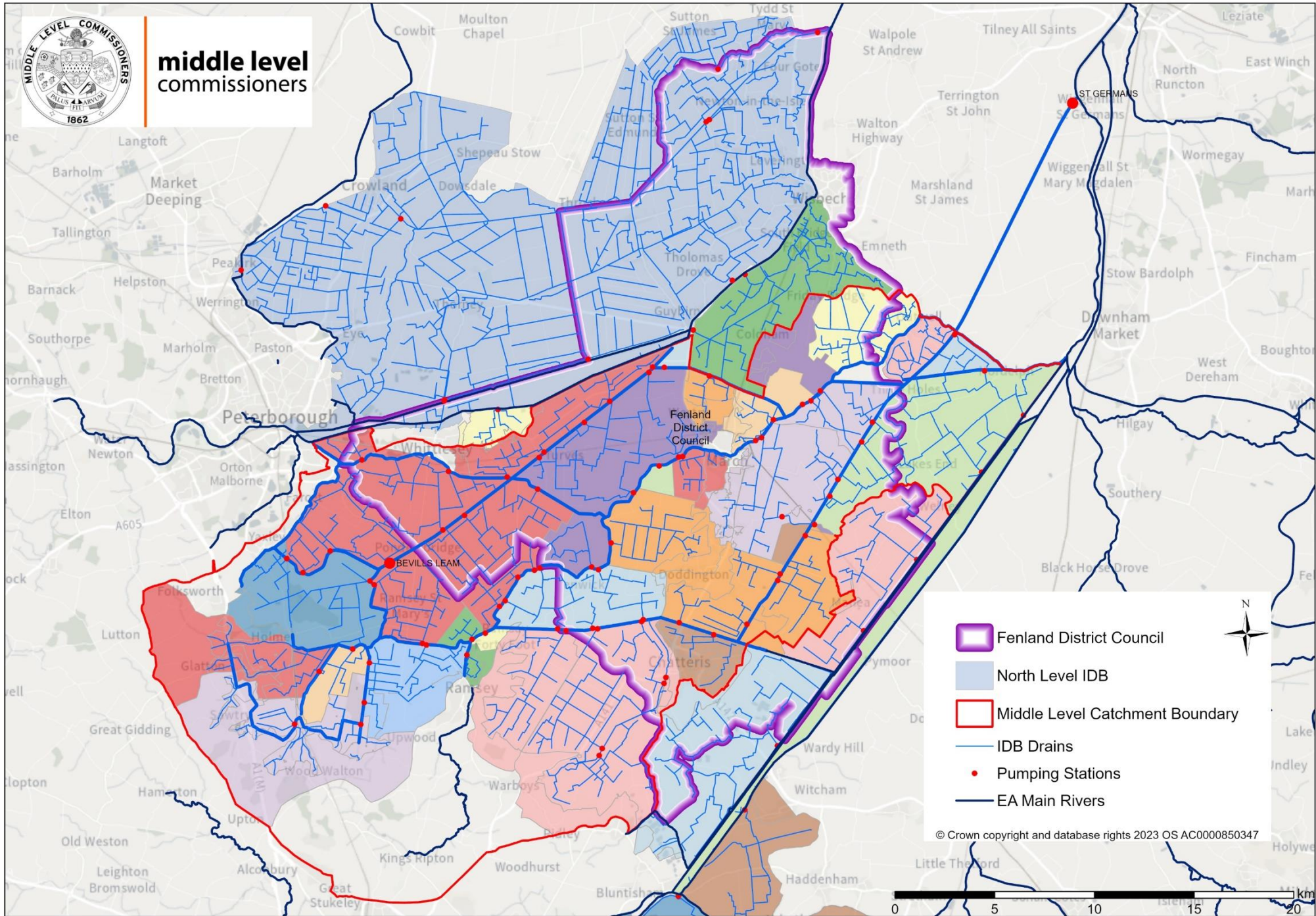
**middle level
commissioners**



- Fenland District Council
- East Cambridgeshire District Council
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council
- Peterborough City Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council
- North Level IDB
- Middle Level Catchment Boundary
- MLC Administered IDBs
- Ramsey IDB
- Whittlesey Consortium



**middle level
commissioners**



North Level District IDB

Annual volume of water pumped in cubic metres

1 Cubic Metre = 1,000 Litres



North Level District IDB

2023/24 volume of water pumped in Cubic Metres

1 Cubic Metre = 1 Thousand Litres



St Germans Pumping Station

Annual volume of water pumped in Megalitres

1 Megalitre = 1 Million Litres



middle level
commissioners

Proudly managing water levels in the Fens since 1862



St Germans Pumping Station

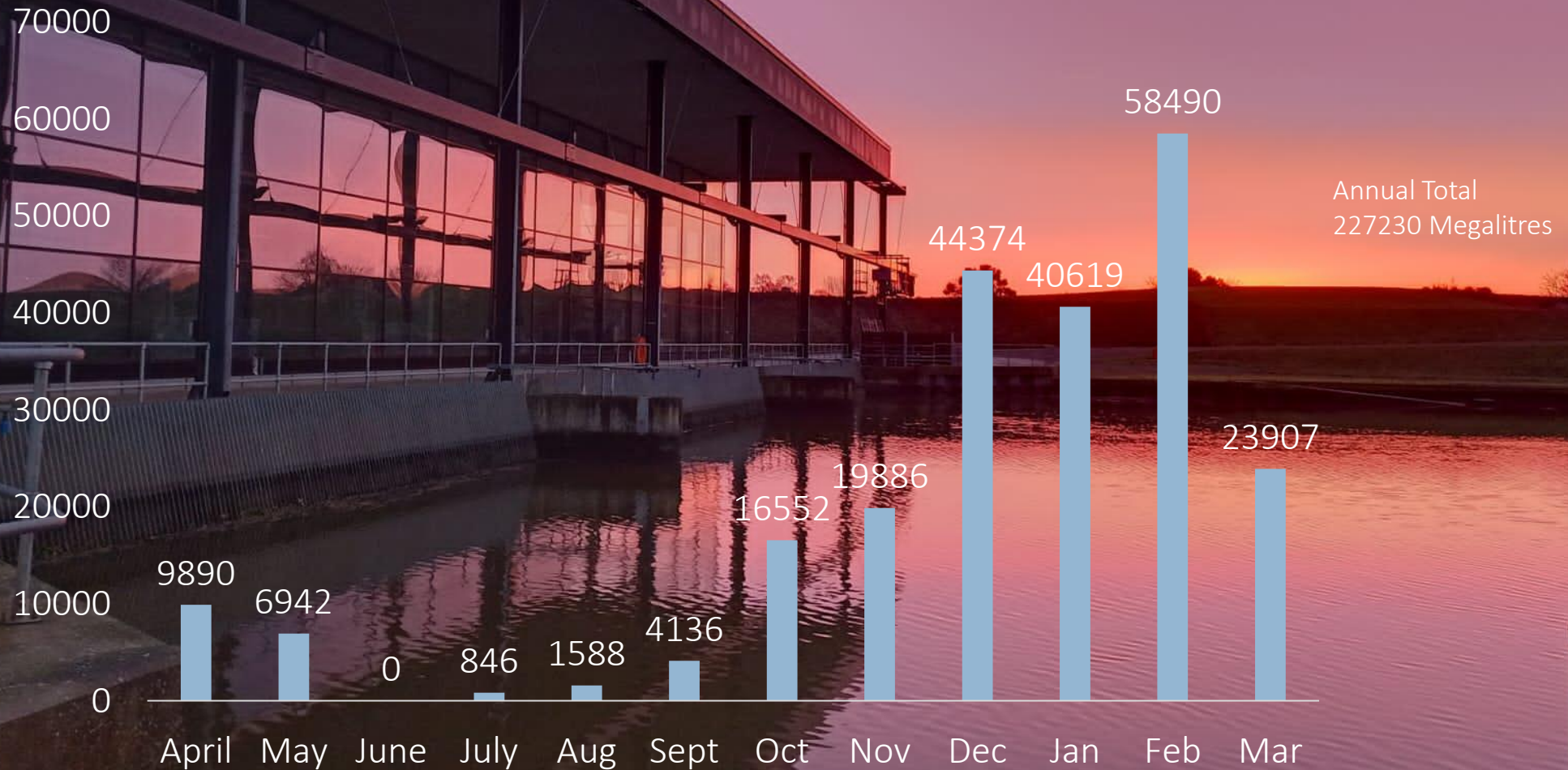
2023/24 volume of water pumped in Megalitres

1 Megalitre = 1 Million Litres



middle level
commissioners

Proudly managing water levels in the Fens since 1862



An aerial photograph of a large, deep blue reservoir. The water is surrounded by lush green fields and a small town with buildings and trees. The sky is clear and blue. The text is overlaid on the water and fields.

Total volume pumped from North Level District IDB and Middle Level Commissioners' systems is 335.5 million cubic metres

That is equivalent to 2.7 Ruland Waters at 124 million cubic metres

Funding

- Direct rating of agricultural land/land with agricultural potential to occupiers
- Special Levy on 'developed' land collected by District Councils
- Eligible for FCRM grant-in-aid from Defra via the Environment Agency for certain capital studies and works
- IDBs who transfer 'highland water' eligible to claim a revenue funding contribution from the Environment Agency
- Developer contributions for discharges entering the IDB managed systems
- Middle Level Commissioners receive navigation licence fees

Composition & membership

- An IDB's composition defines the number of elected (agricultural) members on the Board.
- The proportion of drainage rates:special levy then determines the number of appointed members on the Board. *This can change with development and formal land use change as the balance of funding changes with agricultural land transfer.*
- Appointed members can only have a maximum of one more member than elected members.
- All members are equal and are there to serve the Board and make decisions in the best interest of the Board.

Appointed Members

- District Councils appoint Appointed Members
- Must have knowledge and experience relevant to the responsibility of the Board and its district
- Are part of the Board representing the non agricultural interests within the Board's district
- Councils can appoint members from beyond their Councillor and employee base to help minimise conflicts of interest and increase diversity
- If Appointed Members are Councillors, they are not part of the Board as Councillors however their experience and knowledge from their Council role can add real value to the Board and its decision making

MLC & IDBs

- There is no governance of the IDBs within the Middle Level by the Middle Level Commissioners ie there is no hierarchy
- Some land is rated/levied twice where it receives drainage services from a IDB and from the Middle Level Commissioners – *the IDB pumps or gravity discharges water into the MLC drains and then the MLC system conveys and pumps water into the Gt Ouse Tidal River*
- The Middle Level Commissioners offers a ‘pick & mix’ range of services to local IDBs via its staff structure – Clerking (inc Finance), Operational, Planning, Capital Works, Environmental, Mechanical & Electrical
- MLC and the IDBs operations and financial accounts are independent from each-other

Key messages

- Success in keeping Fenland dry has been hard-won but is on a knife-edge
- Our asset base is aging and carbon hungry
- We are highly vulnerable to climate change
- IDBs provide critical public services
- IDBs are lean bodies – income determined by those that are rated
- Expenditure significantly influenced by the weather and energy costs
- Keeping land dry in a bowl below sea level requires lots of infrastructure and continued investment
- Fens Reservoir – a transformational opportunity

Contact



middle level
commissioners

Middle Level Commissioners and administered IDBs

www.wcidb.org.uk

Contact: Paul Burrows



WCIDB

Whittlesey Consortium of IDBs

www.wcidb.org.uk

Contact: Richard Price



North Level IDB

<https://www.northlevelidb.org>

Contact: Paul Sharman

'Training' materials

[Association of Drainage Authorities – Governance videos for Board Members](#)

[Keeping Rivers Flowing; What do IDBs do? Documentary by the University of Hull](#)