LOWER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Rethinking water management: Building Resilience

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Agenda

- Overview
- Managing water across north Kent, the role of IDB’s
- Funding
- Amalgamation
- The future of water level management: Why a holistic approach is needed
- Building a smart water strategy
- Introduction to ‘Wise Use of Water’
- Questions

The Work of

INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDS (IDBs)

Figures taken from annual data returns (IDB1 Forms) submitted by IDBs to Defra for the financial year 2017-18

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INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDS (IDBs) IN FIGURES

112
IDBs exist in England

625
pumping stations are operated by IDBs

19,400km
of watercourses are maintained by IDBs

52,757
hectares
the largest IDB district
Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board, Lincolnshire

1.18
million hectares
or approx. 9% of the total land area of England falls within IDB Districts

182
hectares
the smallest IDB district
Cawdle Fen IDB
Cambridgeshire

Managing water across north Kent, the role of IDB's

- **Protecting communities and infrastructure:** Manage 200km of watercourses and four pumping stations to reduce flood risk for homes, business and farmland
- **Balancing flood risk, conservation and agriculture:** Work across designated landscapes to protect and enhance biodiversity
- **Support sustainable development:** Ensure planning decisions consider drainage
- **Regulate and enforce:** Manage watercourse activities and compliance
- **A collaborative, strategic approach:** Partner with KCC, EA, farmers and stakeholder groups to manage water holistically.
- **Adapting to new challenges:** Responding to climate change and funding challenges with forward thinking solutions.

Funding

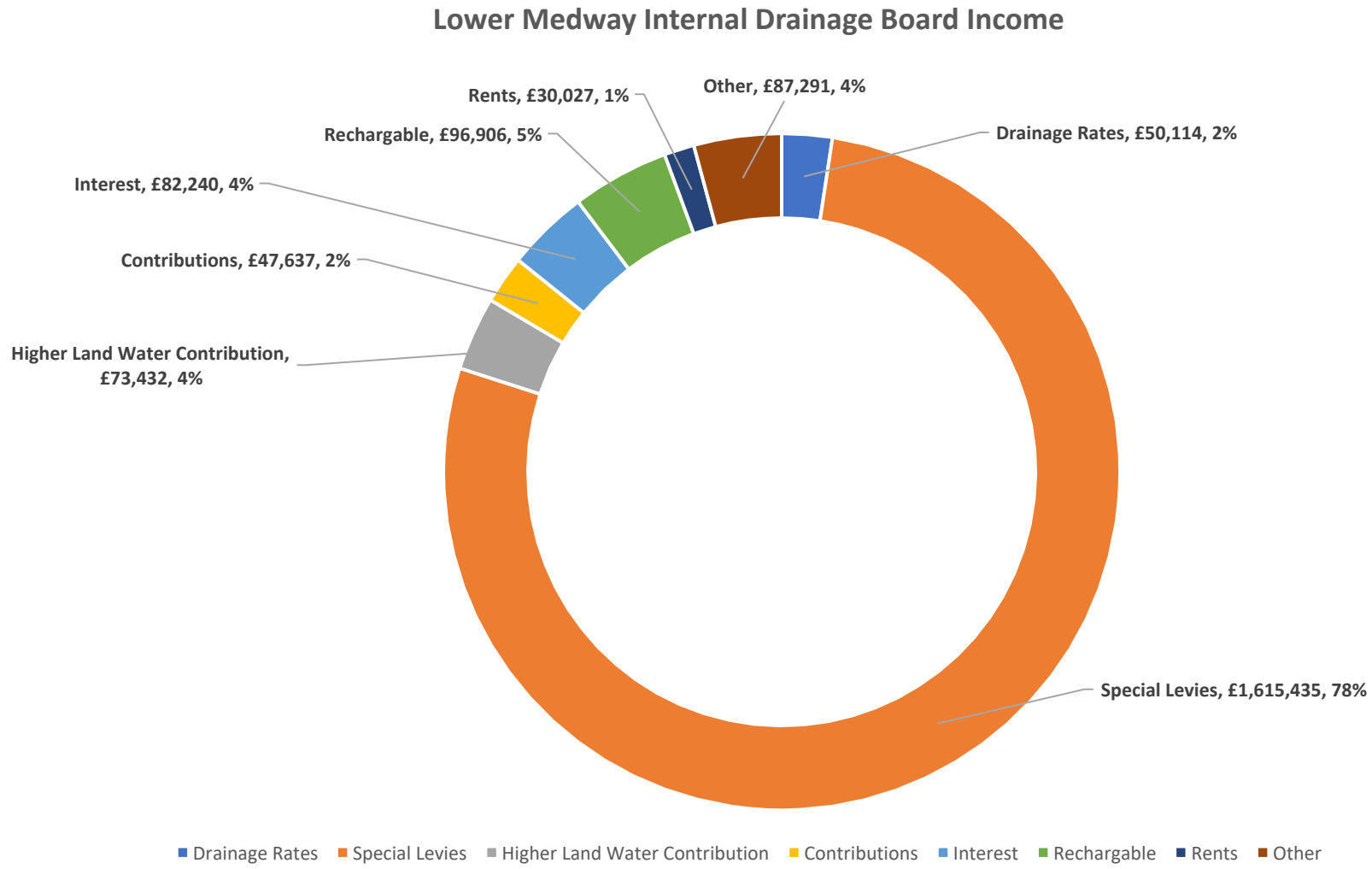
Key Income

- Special Levies collected by Local Authority's
- Drainage Rates on Agricultural Landowners
- EA S57 payment

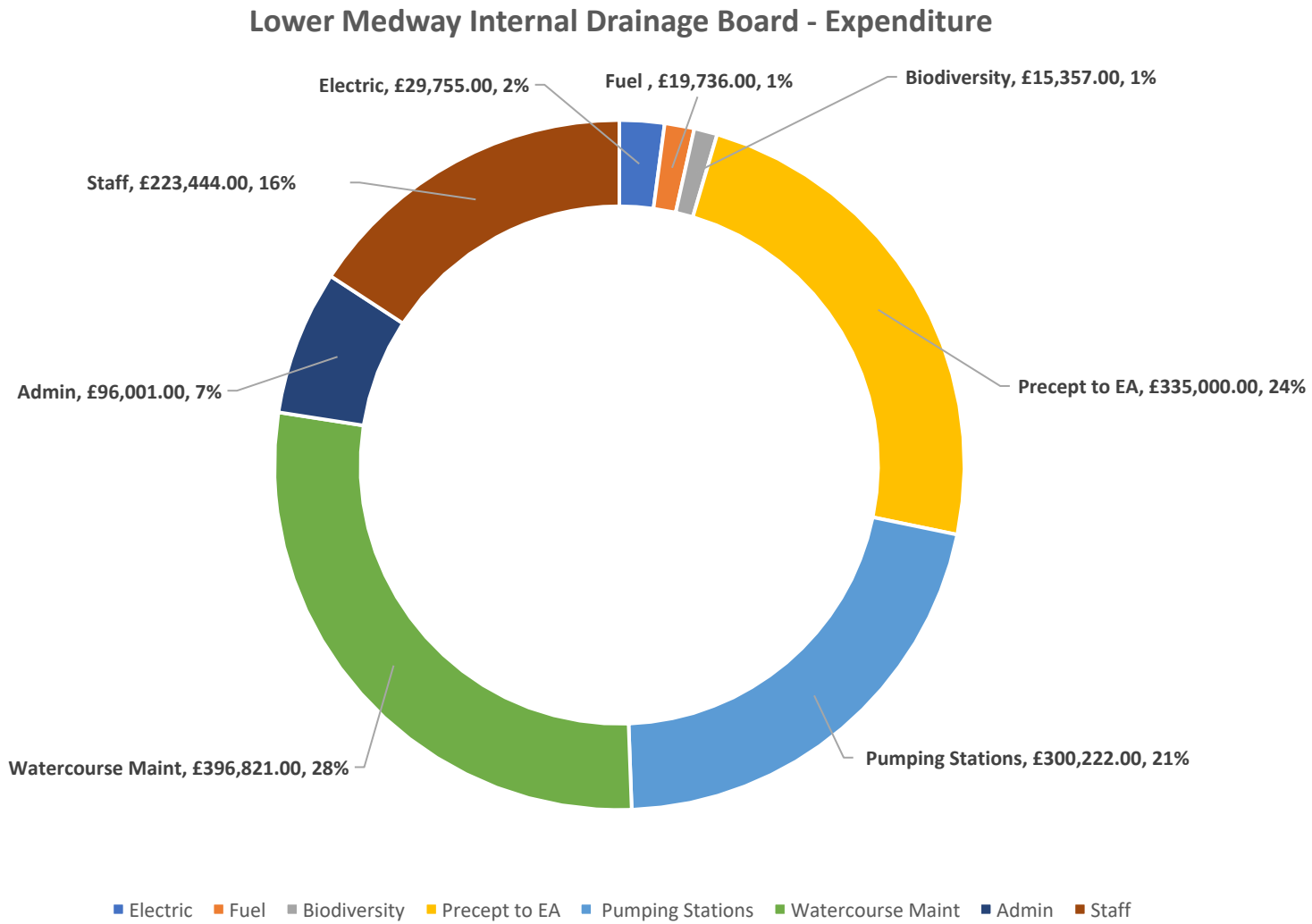
Key Expenditure

- Watercourse maintenance
- Staffing and contractors
- Asset Management
- Water Level Management
- EA Precept
- Biodiversity

Income


Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board Income
Other, £87,291, 4%
Rents, £30,027, 1%
Rechargable, £96,906, 5%
Drainage Rates, £50,114, 2%
Interest, £82,240, 4%
Contributions, £47,637, 2%
Higher Land Water Contribution, £73,432, 4%
Special Levies, £1,615,435, 78%
Drainage Rates
Special Levies
Higher Land Water Contribution
Contributions
Interest
Rechargable
Rents
Other

Expenditure



Amalgamation

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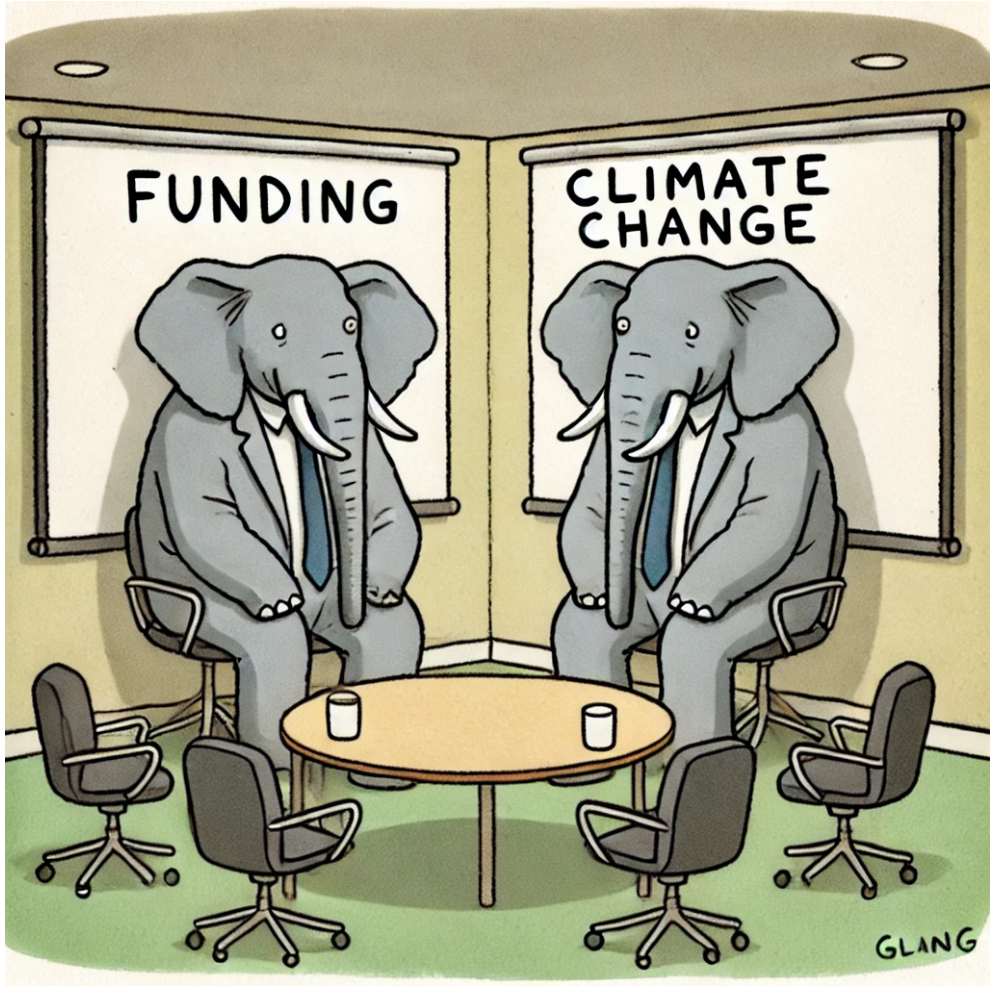
North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board

- Streamlines governance, reduces duplication of administrative tasks, and improves coordination across a larger area.
- Enables better financial planning, shared resources, and improved access to funding opportunities.
- Creates a unified voice for advocacy, strengthens partnerships with government and external bodies, and improves public and landowner engagement.

North Kent Marshes WLMB

Change is the only constant



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The future of water level management: Why a holistic approach is essential

- Amalgamation streamlines governance but to truly deliver, we must rethink how we manage water
- Water management is not just about drainage – it's a resource that needs to be managed wisely
- We need smarter, multi benefit solutions that integrate flood risk, water retention and land use planning
- A smarter, integrated approach ensures long term resilience

Water Level Management Plans

- Originally required to ensure that water levels across designated sites were managed to balance conservation objectives with other land use needs
- Existing WLMPs (1990s, MAFF guidance) no longer fit today's challenges

Why is this approach now outdated?

- Climate change wasn't considered – The 1990s plans didn't account for shifting rainfall patterns, rising temperatures, or changing flood/drought cycles
- Static rather than adaptive – WLMPs were written as one-time documents rather than live strategies that can adapt to modern telemetry and real-time data
- Limited – they focused on SSSIs and designated areas, whereas today's challenges require a broader, catchment-wide approach

The problem..

The Problem: Water is being lost where we need it most.

- Water is draining away through outfalls and pumps
- National funding is reduced, making flood management harder
- If we don’t plan, we risk increasing costs and losing valuable water that could be stored

What this means in practice

- We can’t plan for future shortages or extreme weather
- Communities, farmers, and ecosystems will bear the consequences of poor water management
- National funding gap means infrastructure failures will only increase unless smarter solutions are found

Why this matters to KCC?

- KCC and IDB have shared priorities for flood risk, land use, climate adaptation and community
- National funding for water management is stretched
- Fixing failing infrastructure is expensive—we can invest in solutions now or pay more later
- A strategic, proactive approach can reduce long term costs, instead of reacting to failures, we can plan more smartly
- Kent is **classified as a "Seriously Water Stressed" area** by the Environment Agency, meaning future **water shortages could impact residents, businesses, and agriculture**.

What's at risk if we don't act?

❌ **Drought & water shortages** – Summer water scarcity threatens wildlife & farming

❌ **Flooding & missed storage** – Increasing winter rainfall wasted instead of being stored for use

❌ **Higher costs & crisis management** – Reacting to problems rather than planning ahead

❌ **Lost funding & partnerships** – No alignment with ELMS, BNG, WFD, limiting future investment

❌ Reduced community resilience

👥 **What we need: A smarter, adaptive approach to water management**

Solution: ‘Wise Use of Water’
A Data-Driven, collaborative approach

- **A smarter, long-term** approach to water management—balancing flood resilience, agriculture, and the environment
- **Hydrological modelling & real-time data** – Identifying where water is lost and where it can be stored to improve drought and flood resilience
- **Stronger partnerships** – Working with RSPB, EA, KCC, WRSE, Natural England, and farming clusters to deliver a catchment-wide strategy
- **Balancing agriculture & environment** – Supporting farmers and landowners to manage water more effectively, securing food production and biodiversity
- **A proactive approach** – Instead of reacting to asset failures, we invest in prevention and long-term resilience

This supports EA’s abstraction reform, reducing unnecessary water loss and securing long-term resilience

How KCC can support this strategy

📣 Advocate for evidence-led water management in council policy

💰 Collaborate on funding applications (ELMS, flood resilience funds)

🌊 Align strategy

🤝 Support cross-sector collaboration – to bring together farmers, conservation groups, developers, and water management bodies to ensure an integrated approach

🏗️ Ensure infrastructure planning includes water resilience – Embed water management considerations in new developments and infrastructure projects to reduce future risks and costs

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A smarter future for water management

Water is our most valuable resource – managing it wisely benefits everyone

Thank you! – Questions?