

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held at 14:00 on Thursday 6 February 2020 at
Dover District Council, White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, CT16 3PJ

PRESENT

Mr M J G Tapp (Chairman), Mr G R Steed (Vice Chairman), Mr A D Linfoot OBE (Deputy Vice Chairman), Cllr M J Burgess, Cllr M D Conolly, Cllr D Crow-Brown, Mr D J Fuller, Cllr P D Jull, Cllr D Ledger and Mr L Woollorton.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr P Dowling (Clerk & Engineer to the Board) and Ms A Eastwood (Finance & Rating Officer).

WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr I Nunn (FCRM Operations Manager for KSL, EA), Ms D Thompson (EA Incident Response Team Leader – Upper & Lower Stour Area), Dr D Price (EA Technical Advisor Swale & Stour Asset Performance Team), Ms Ghada Mitri Renner (EA Team Leader, Asset Performance Team for Swale & Stour) and Mr Darren Godden (Rhino Plant Hire, IDB Contracts Manager).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D M Botting, Mr P S Dunn, Ms N H Dyas, Mr P N Howard, Cllr N Ovenden, Cllr D O Smith, Cllr G B Sparks, Mr M P Wilkinson, Mr P Williams, Ms G Wyant and Mr J Dilnot (Engineering Assistant).

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2019

The minutes of the Board held on Thursday 7 November 2019 were received. It was proposed by Cllr Burgess, seconded by Cllr D Ledger and resolved that the minutes be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the proceedings at that meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from these minutes.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES & WORKS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 20 JANUARY 2020

It was proposed by the Vice Chairman, seconded by the Deputy Vice Chairman and resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee held on Monday 20 January 2020 be received.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

WATERCOURSE MAINTENANCE WORKS ESTIMATES AND COMBINED FINANCE ESTIMATES FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021

The Chairman ran through the Watercourse Maintenance Works Estimates which include Water Level Control & Emergency Response. He reported that the revised estimates for the maintenance works for the year ending 31 March 2020 – which includes the maintenance on the transferred Main Rivers – totals £313,603 (£4,078 under the Original Budget (OB)) and it is split as follows: Weed Cutting revised to £150,000 (£2,997 under the OB); Desilting expected to be £36,221 (£2,661 under the OB); Spoil Spreading £5,852 (£1,107 under the OB); Tree & Shrub Maintenance £16,000 (£2,000 over the OB); Obstruction Clearance, Structure Maintenance, Biodiversity and Water Level Control are still expected to be £2,800, £25,000 and £7,120 respectively (no changes to OBs).

The cost for Water Level Control & Emergency Response has been revised to £70,610 (an increase of £687 to the OB) – this figure is the total cost of carrying out Water Level Control activities for the IDB and the EA for which the EA contributes under the PSCA.

The Chairman ran through the Combined Finance Estimates and summarising the 2019-2020 financial year net expenditure is estimated to be £586,292 (£11,388 less than the original estimate). The Chairman further reported that at 31 March 2020 there will be £70,000 in the Old Thrustbore Reserve, £330,524 on the Main River Asset Transfer Fund and there is currently £20,206 on the Maintenance Works Structures Operational Reserve carried over from 2018-19 financial year of which some may still be spent with any remaining balance to be carried over again into the next financial year. The balance in the Board's Financial Reserves at the 31 March 2020 for which an eventual target of £350,000 was set at the Board meeting on 3 August 2017, is estimated to be £261,463. The Board's Financial Reserves are to be reviewed annually in accordance with the Internal Auditor's recommendations.

Mr Fuller enquired about the Reserve for the Old Thrustbore. The Chairman replied that a document was signed in the 1960s holding the Board responsible for the maintenance of this Thrustbore (culvert under the Sandwich-Deal railway line). A survey was conducted in 2015 which showed it to be in good condition, 5 yearly surveys are currently planned but inspections will be carried out more frequently if its condition deteriorates. The Chairman stated that the Board increased the target for the Old Thrustbore Reserve Fund from £80,000 to £100,000 at its Board meeting on 13 May 2019. The Clerk & Engineer reported that KCC have carried out work on one of a similar size at a cost of £140,000.

The Chairman reported that the Combined Finance Estimates for the year ending 31 March 2021 include the Watercourse Maintenance Works Estimates, which are estimated at £323,306 split as follows: Weed Cutting £152,997; Desilting £35,963; Spoil Spreading £8,592; Tree & Shrub Maintenance £16,000; Obstruction Clearance £2,800; Structure Maintenance £25,500; Biodiversity £9,000 and Water Level Control £72,454. There is a steeper increase in the Watercourse Works Expenditure for 2022-23 due to the renewal of the maintenance contracts (increase not yet known).

The Chairman reported that the Environment Agency has confirmed a 1.9% increase on the new Precept Base of £90,574, therefore the Precept payment for the financial year ending 31 March 2021 will be £92,295.

The Chairman summarised that the estimated total income (excluding rates and levies) for the year ending 31 March 2021 is £162,063 and the total expenditure for the same period is £765,837 resulting in a net expenditure of £603,774. He further reported that five options were presented and discussed at length at

the Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee meeting and the Finance Committee had recommended to the Board Option 3, raising a total sum of £609,574 for the financial year ending 31 March 2021. This would increase rates and levies by an average of 1.99%. These options were again discussed, and Option 3 was proposed by Cllr P Jull, seconded by the Vice Chairman meaning that:

- a) A total sum of £609,575 be raised.
- b) A rate of 13.583p in the pound be made for the year ending 31 March 2021, raising £61,994 from Drainage Ratepayers.
- c) Special Levies be made on Local Billing Authorities for the year ending 31 March 2021 as follows:

	£
Ashford Borough Council	258,075
Canterbury City Council	124,520
Dover District Council	75,511
Folkestone & Hythe District Council	548
Thanet District Council	<u>88,927</u>
Total Special Levy Income	<u>£547,581</u>

- d) The Chairman and the Clerk & Engineer be authorised to sign and seal the Rates and Special Levies on behalf of the Board.
- e) The Clerk & Engineer be instructed to advertise the Rates and Special Levies on the Board's website and noticeboard.

All Members voted in favour.

Joint Report of the Clerk & Engineer and Finance & Rating Officer for the period 1 October to 31 December 2019

Ref: W1-4.3 Defra Research into IDB Board Membership

It was reported that following their research project into factors affecting IDB membership and governance, Defra published their final report which includes the following recommendations:

- Raising the profile of IDBs among councillors
- Use of non-councillors as appointed members (AMs)
- Addressing skills gaps and ensuring diversity
- Clarification of the role of AMs
- AMs' induction and ongoing training
- Strengthening the role of AMs as facilitators of engagement between LA and IDB
- Enabling participation – timing and scheduling of meetings
- Reporting on attendance
- Fewer members on boards
- Support in dealing with regulatory requirements

The Chairman stated that there has been a movement throughout most of the councils not to appoint non-Councillor members. Councillor members are valuable but there is also a need for people with other special knowledge and interests and these appointments would help to address the 3rd recommendation above.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that this report arose due to Defra's concern about the lack of Local Authorities engagement in some areas and the report states that 20% of IDBs have more than 50% appointed members vacancies. Fortunately, the position of this Board is 100% take-up.

Ref: W7 IDB Programme of Works (Including works carried out under PSCA)

The Clerk & Engineer ran through the programme of works as detailed on the F & G P Minutes.

Desilting

The Clerk & Engineer reported that there was a problem with dead eels reportedly coming from the spoil on Brooksend Stream. The Engineering Assistant attended the site with the EA's Fisheries & Biodiversity Officer and it was agreed that it was not a reportable Category 2 Incident but it was agreed that a banksman be provided to thoroughly check through the silt and return any eels found to the water. This arrangement has been successful with approximately 30 eels being returned to the water daily.

Water Level Control

The Clerk & Engineer reported that Stonar Cut was run in the lead up to Christmas to evacuate floodwaters. Ms Thompson further reported that it was run about 10 times consecutively from 19 December. However, the EA had subsequently received a complaint about it being run too frequently. Mr Nunn reported that they are due to have a meeting to discuss the build-up of silt in the Stonar Loop and the effects this is having on navigation.

The Water Level Controller found one of the pumps at Hacklinge Pumping Station was siphoning water back, which substantially increases upstream flood risk. This was stopped manually, which risks the pumps overheating, the pump will need to be fitted with an anti-siphon valve to prevent this from occurring again in future. Ms Thompson stated that this is being assessed.

Minster Pumping Station continues to be operated during daylight hours only unless there is heavy rainfall when overnight pumping can resume (subject to EA agreement). Access to Worth Minnis Pumping Station has been restricted by recent RSPB works. Ms Thompson reported that this programme will still run for a couple more weeks.

Ms Thompson reported that Pump 2 at Stourmouth Pumping Station has been fixed but two submersible pumps have been put in place for the near future in anticipation of a problem.

Dr Price reported that the repairs to the Coldharbour Sluice have been pushed back to September at Natural England's request. He further added that Northmouth Sluice will be repaired in March.

The Clerk & Engineer asked if the EA has investigated the Worth Minnis access? Dr Price reported that they are liaising with the RSPB about this and the plan is still to construct a new access, but he will check the exact status.

Ref: W7-7 PSCA Renewal

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the Board's Public Sector Cooperation Agreement with the Environment Agency has been renewed and will run until 20 November 2024, when it will be reviewed again. He further reported that it was also agreed in principle that the EA will commit to the Board carrying out the Water Level Control function for the full 5 year period.

The Clerk & Engineer enquired about the likely extent of maintenance works for future years under the PSCA as he understands that the EA are being directed to use their own staff to carry out routine maintenance. Mr Nunn replied that work through the PSCA is good value, therefore an option that the EA will always consider. The Clerk & Engineer stated that it is important to the Board that the work is done and if the EA chooses to do this work through the PSCA details need to be agreed in good time so that works can be planned in with the Board's contractors. Mr Nunn agreed that this is essential to both parties.

Ms Mitri Renner stated that the planning for the 2020-21 maintenance works is underway and a meeting with the Board's Clerk & Engineer is to be scheduled to go through the details of next financial year's PSCA works. Mr Nunn added that the annualised budgeting causes problems and even though they have their indicative allocation, this can change.

Ref: A3-6 Health & Safety

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) conducted an IDB Health, Safety & Welfare Survey in 2018, to which 75% of IDBs responded and ADA produced an Advice Note for IDBs to consider – ADA intends to approach the 25% of IDBs that did not respond which should encourage future engagement across the IDBs.

The Chairman stated that Health & Safety will be an item within the Engineer's quarterly report even if there is nothing to report. The Clerk & Engineer added that this will also be included in future members' training.

Ref: A4-3 Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

The Clerk & Engineer stated that the Board needs to appoint a sub-committee to carry out a full review of the BAP during the next financial year. The Chairman asked for volunteers to join him on this subcommittee and the Vice Chairman, the Deputy Vice Chairman, Cllr D Ledger and Mr D J Fuller volunteered. The Clerk & Engineer stated that it would be beneficial for Mr Williams to be included on this sub-committee again and added that he would also enquire with other members.

Ref: A10-21 East Kent Beaver Advisory Group

The Clerk & Engineer stated that the Board is a member of the East Kent Beaver Advisory Group and has signed the Memorandum of Understanding but further to this a standard collaboration agreement has been received from the EA which requires the Board's signature – the Clerk & Engineer further stated that the Board was not involved in the preparation of this document because it is only contributing with officer time and not financially.

The Clerk & Engineer reiterated that the Board's main objective is to establish where beavers are and what problems they may be causing. Mr Nunn stated that the key document is the agreement with Kent Wildlife Trust, and the collaborative agreement does not commit the Board to anything but it needs to be in place as part of the EA's procurement process without which the EA cannot pay their contribution – and as collaborators the Board is being asked to sign it. Mr Nunn stated that he will check the minor details and advise the Clerk & Engineer and if as discussed, the Chairman will sign this document.

Cllr Conolly asked what the objective of the whole group is, the Clerk & Engineer replied each member organisation has different interests. Mr Nunn added that the initial objective was to gather more

information about beavers' whereabouts, what to establish what damage they may be causing and what can be done about it.

Ref: W7G Environment Agency Works

Ms Thompson reported that:

- Sarre Penn pioneering and blockage removal – only half was completed due to access restrictions, will try and complete it in the summer depending on the summer programme.
- Sandwich bank repair – light repairs on the new Sandwich flood scheme are still to be done when weather permits.
- Stour pioneering – light pioneering has been completed at Chilham towards Canterbury and now working from Westbere towards Canterbury.
- Desilting – from the Mill (Ashford) towards Aldington reservoir has been completed, now starting at the Mile, Sevenscore.
- Reculver PS repointing – repointing of brickwork and the renewal of access steps – starting March onwards.
- Northern Sea Wall repair works have started on the access track from Plum Pudding Island onto the beach.
- Weed Spraying NSW – starting in March depending on the weather.

Mr Nunn reported that the impounding areas at Sandwich are going to be designated as reservoirs which will secure future funding, but it makes management more complex. Dr Price stated that the designation (high or low risk) is still to be defined but it is highly likely that it will apply to both storage areas – Monks Reserve and the Sandwich Mains Scheme. This designation is key to determine the maintenance programme and inspection requirements on the statutory undertakers (EA).

Dr Price stated that the EA will be looking at river restoration in order to reduce maintenance, a map has been produced highlighting areas thought to be suitable such as Ham Fen. Ms Thompson highlighted that funding will only be available for watercourses that have a downward flow so that work done is maintained; for areas where there is not enough gradient, as is the case in many of the marsh areas, regular maintenance will have to continue. The Chairman was sceptical about self-cleaning rivers, without any action. Mr Nunn stated that this can work if the conditions are right; with a good flow and a two-stage narrow channel. Ms Thompson added that this has worked well on the Wingham River. Dr Price stated that there are different measures which will be tailored to specific locations, but it is very early in the process to know further details. The Clerk & Engineer stated that he can see benefits on sites where maintenance is currently non-existent, but there is a concern that restoration will lead to no maintenance. Mr Nunn stated that the driver of this is the requirement for the EA to reduce their maintenance programme in the longer-term.

Ref: W5 Planning Applications

The Chairman invited comments on the Planning Applications listed in the F & G P Committee meeting minutes and asked for any declarations of interest to be made at this point. No declarations were made.

19/00886 – Construction of reservoir at Harville Road, Wye, Ashford.

Mr Nunn stated that as this reservoir is above 25,000 m³ it will be high risk so he will check that the EA has been consulted as there have been some oversights in the past. The Clerk & Engineer stated that he believes the EA has been consulted and a large capacity is below ground level.

19/01178 – Construction of access road and two dyke crossings (part retrospective) on land south of Ash Road Sandwich.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that this is the same site with which we have had problems before, at Sandwich Leisure Park, and he has written to the applicant advising him that he needs consent for the works which affect the ordinary watercourses and that he will be solely responsible for any problems that may arise from the works he conducted without consent.

The Board flagged its concerns as listed on the F & G P Minutes and the applicant's own consultant highlighted the same points, DDC are also looking into this and we wait to see what happens with the planning application.

Ref: W15 Applications for Consent and Enforcement Actions

The Chairman referred to the Applications for Consent as listed on the F & G P Committee meeting minutes and invited any comments, of which there were none.

FINANCE

DRAINAGE RATES INCOME

It was reported that as at 6 February 2020 the outstanding drainage rates balance was £792.63.

Ref: F.9 Banking Arrangements and Investments

It was reported that the Lloyds Bank Account has been opened and arrangements are underway to transfer the Board's daily banking from Natwest to Lloyds Bank. A one-year Fixed Interest Investment of £100,000 has also been placed with Hampshire Trust Bank at a rate of 1.61%. The Board also approved for a further investment to be placed with a different banking authority (possibly Aldermore Building Society) and this will be actioned once the available funds/cash flow are ascertained.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman reported that the Board has received two formal complaints regarding the alleged conduct of one of its members in relation to a planning application which the Clerk & Engineer and Chairmen have viewed and it is important for all parties that this matter is addressed and concluded in a timely fashion and without delay. With the next meeting of the Board being in May it was proposed that a sub-committee be appointed by the Board with the delegated authority to fully investigate and take action to conclude the complaints. The sub-committee will necessarily report its conclusions to the full Board and may make recommendations as it feels appropriate. Members are requested to avoid speculation or discussion on this matter.

The Chairman stated that he would like two or three local authority members preferably from Ashford and Dover area who have some planning experience to join him and the Vice Chairman in dealing with these complaints.

It was proposed by the Deputy Vice Chairman, seconded by Mr L Wooltorton and resolved that the sub-committee to deal with these two complaints be composed by the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Cllr M J Burgess, Cllr M D Conolly and Cllr P Jull. The Board will be duly updated of the proceedings.

MEETING CLOSED

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed and thanked everyone for their attendance.