

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held at 14:00 on Thursday 7 February 2019 at
Dover District Council, White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, CT16 3PJ

PRESENT

Mr M J G Tapp (Chairman), Mr A D Linfoot OBE (Vice Chairman), Mr G R Steed (Deputy Vice Chairman), Cllr M J Burgess, Cllr M D Conolly, Mr P S Dunn, Ms N H Dyas, Cllr A Hicks, Mr P N Howard, Mr D J Fuller, Cllr M Martin, Cllr M Ovenden, Cllr N Ovenden, Cllr D Smith, Cllr H Stummer-Schmertzing, Mr P Williams, Mr M P Wilkinson, Mr L Wooltorton and Ms G Wyant.

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) and Mr Darren Godden (Rhino Plant Hire, IDB Contracts Manager).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D M Botting. and Mr J Dilnot (Engineering Assistant).

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2018

The minutes of the Board held on Thursday 8 November 2018 were received. It was proposed by Cllr Smith, seconded by Mr Wilkinson 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

Member Substitutes to Attend the Finance Committee or other Subcommittees

The Clerk & Engineer reported that Cllr M J Burgess has volunteered to be a permanent substitute for any Appointed Member to contact if they are ever unable to attend F&GP or other sub-committee meetings. He thanked Cllr Burgess for this and stated that it would be useful to have an elected member as a permanent substitute, to ensure the best balance. There were no further volunteers, but the Chairman stated that this should be raised again at a future meeting.

KSCP

The Clerk & Engineer reported that there has been a very positive response to the KCSP's offer to replace or install barn owl boxes and he believes them all to have been allocated.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES & WORKS COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 21 JANUARY 2019

It was proposed by the Deputy Vice Chairman, seconded by Cllr M Ovenden and resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee held on Monday 21 January 2019 be received.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Ref: A9-2 Mapping Update

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has continued to request further information and a formal data sharing agreement has been set up, but unfortunately no real progress has been made on obtaining the data that we require. As the alternative is to engage consultants to start this work from square one will be expensive, discussions with the RPA will continue for now.

Ref: A9-3 Computers & IT

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the new server has been installed and is working well, with daily back-ups being made.

Ref: W4 Review of Water Abstraction Licencing System

The Clerk & Engineer reported that there is a local meeting arranged for 26 February and the plan is to proceed as previously reported with the IDB holding the main licences with a Memorandum of Understanding between the IDB and the EA. Nr Nunn reported that Mr Darryl Price, EA Technical Advisor, will attend this meeting and will lead/oversee the transfer licence applications.

WATERCOURSE MAINTENANCE WORKS ESTIMATES AND
COMBINED FINANCE ESTIMATES FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2020

The Chairman ran through the Watercourse Maintenance Works Estimates. He reported that the revised estimates for the maintenance works for the year ending 31 March 2019 total £261,748 (£2,009 under the Original Budget (OB)) and it is split as follows: Weed Cutting revised to £120,000 (£1,000 over the OB); Desilting expected to be £25,547 (£299 over the OB); Spoil Spreading £1,500 (£5,058 under the OB) as some landowners chose to do their own spreading; Tree & Shrub Maintenance £12,000 (£1,750 over the OB); Obstruction Clearance, Structure Maintenance, Biodiversity and Water Level Control are still expected to be £2,400, £25,000*, £6,000 and £69,301 respectively (no changes to OBs). The figure for Water Level Control is the total cost of carrying out Water Level Control activities for the IDB and the EA. The Chairman reported that there is likely to be an underspend on Structures Maintenance because, due to various delays, it has not been possible to complete the replacement of the Cuckold's Stop. The Clerk & Engineer requested that any underspend on this budget by the end of the financial year be carried over so that these works can be carried out during the next financial year. It was proposed by the Vice Chairman, seconded by the Deputy Vice Chairman and resolved that any underspend on the Structures budget be added to the ongoing Structures Reserve.

The Chairman summarised that the 2018-2019 financial year net expenditure is estimated to be £574,470 (£1,131 more than the original estimate). The Chairman further reported that the previously set-aside reserve for the Building Maintenance Reserve at the end of the last financial year has been added onto this financial year's expenditure and at 31 March 19 there will be £60,000 in the Old Thrustbore Reserve, £3,846 on the

Maintenance Works Structures Reserve carried over from 2017-18 financial year and an estimated balance of £237,069 in the Board's Financial Reserves for which a target of £350,000 was set at the Board meeting on 3 August 2017. The Board's Financial Reserves are to be reviewed annually in accordance with the Internal Auditor's recommendations.

The Chairman reported that the Combined Finance Estimates for the year ending 31 March 2020 include the Watercourse Maintenance Works Estimates which do not take into consideration the Main River Rationalisation Project (MRRP) as 1 April 2019 is yet not a definite date for the transfer. The Chairman further reported that the Clerk & Engineer has produced separate figures which include the planned transfers to confirm that there will be no overall impact on the amount needed to be raised, as the changes will be financed by the reduction of the Precept and the reduction of maintenance on some IDB watercourses as previously agreed. He further reported that the maintenance works for the year ending 31 March 2020 are estimated at £274,178 split as follows: Weed Cutting £125,270; Desilting £26,506; Spoil Spreading £6,959; Tree & Shrub Maintenance £12,000; Obstruction Clearance £2,400; Structure Maintenance £25,000; Biodiversity £6,120 and Water Level Control £69,923. There is a steeper increase in the Watercourse Works Expenditure for 2019-20 which is explained by the start of the contract extension period, but these contract rates will remain the same for the next 3 years.

The Chairman reported that the Environment Agency has confirmed a 1.9% increase on the Precept, therefore the Precept payment for the financial year ending 31 March 2020 will be £133,472.

The Chairman stated that several works have been completed under Building Maintenance as previously reported but as there are still some pressing renovations to be done, £20,000 has been allowed for this item for the following financial year and to gradually reduce as works are completed.

The Chairman summarised that the estimated total income (excluding rates and levies) for the year ending 31 March 2020 is £165,455 and the total expenditure for the same period is £763,135 resulting in a net expenditure of £597,680. He further reported that six 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 1, raising a total sum of £597,680 for the financial year ending 31 March 2020. This would increase rates and levies by an average of 3.69%. These options were again discussed, and Option 1 was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr M Martin meaning that:

- a) A total sum of £597,680 be raised.
- b) A rate of 13.376p in the pound be made for the year ending 31 March 2020, raising £61,143 from Drainage Ratepayers.
- c) Special Levies be made on Local Billing Authorities for the year ending 31 March 2020 as follows:

	£
Ashford Borough Council	252,065
Canterbury City Council	122,598
Dover District Council	73,774
Folkestone & Hythe District Council	537
Thanet District Council	<u>87,563</u>
Total Special Levy Income	<u>£536,537</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.

Ref: W1-39 Main River Rationalisation Project

The Chairman asked Mr Nunn if he had any updates. Mr Nunn reported that the National Project Team (NPT) has accepted the changes to the legal agreement, requested by the Stour IDB, and the next step will be for both parties to sign. He further reported that recently the Isle of Axholme IDB had raised several detailed technical questions about the original legal agreement which are taking a while to work through, but these issues should be resolved within a couple of weeks. He further stated that he will be pushing for an outcome if he has not heard back within 2 weeks so that it is signed by 1 April 2019 as this would simplify the budget and watercourse maintenance arrangements.

The Chairman asked if the document agreed for this Board would satisfy the Isle of Axholme's concerns. Mr Nunn stated that although their concerns are largely the same as this Board's, their queries are more detailed and involve the transfer of land and a major asset (pumping station) so unfortunately not. The Clerk & Engineer suggested that being pilots, they are more likely to differ from one another but will enable a more complete, thorough and encompassing document for future transfers. Mr Nunn agreed but stated that the NPT want to leave this pilot stage with one standard document. He further added that personally he feels that there will always need to be some measure of flexibility within these documents. The Chairman agreed that it is nice to be reasonably consistent but there will always be problems in different areas which will need addressing differently.

Mr Howard asked if all the details on this project, besides the wording on the legal agreement, have now been agreed. The Chairman stated that is correct and the Board has delegated its authority for him to sign the final document on behalf of the Board.

Structures Maintenance

The Chairman declared an interest and asked Mr Nunn if he knew about the problems with the 12 Foot Dyke Feed Structure (originally installed as part of the Chislet Pumping Scheme). The Clerk & Engineer reported that this structure has been operated and maintained by the IDB for many years and is programmed to be renovated.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that with regards to the bank slip-immediately downstream of the Sarre Tilting Weir, Richard Tournay has confirmed that repairs are being planned, funding is being sought and more details will be reported soon.

Ref: A10-19 Ham Fen Nature Reserve

Cllr Connolly asked if beavers are protected by law. The Chairman replied that they have recently been given protection in Scotland, making it illegal to kill, injure or capture the animals, but this is not yet the case in England. However, there have been a number of projects in England and a public consultation is planned to decide whether or not to allow their reintroduction and afford them legal protection.

The Chairman stated that although it is very difficult to trap beavers it was recently reported that nine beavers have been caught in Devon which are to be released in a more suitable area. The Deputy Vice Chairman stated that he believes that the Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) has unsuccessfully tried to trap them over the last 4 years at several locations, including Ham Fen, and added that he has also been unsuccessful in trapping them. Mr

Williams stated that some populations may have grown trap-shy. The Deputy Vice Chairman agreed and added that the initial advice from KWT is that beavers are not intelligent enough and forget very quickly but his experience indicates otherwise – on the traps set beavers have eaten around them but avoided the traps. The Chairman stated that it is believed that the best place for beavers is at the top of a catchment, but Ham Fen is at the bottom of the catchment and there are likely to be more problems as a result.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that efforts will focus on assessing and mitigating the risks to IDB structures, which is likely to involve protecting timber stopboards. However, the most significant risk is likely to be burrowing, particularly between watercourses.

The Deputy Vice Chairman stated that the formation of the East Kent Beaver Advisory Group, which includes Natural England, KWT, EA, IDB and other interested parties, is a positive step but KWT's position of completely refusing to acknowledge that any of the beavers in the Hacklinge Marshes may have originated from Ham Fen is simply not credible, especially as this was accepted by previous management. He further stated that this might have a negative effect on the Group, especially if public meetings are to be held. Mr Williams commented that some of the local beavers are most likely to have come from Ham Fen but not all of them, so KWT will be very cautious of openly accepting liability as this may leave them vulnerable to compensation claims. Mr Williams reported that he has been advised that KWT's beaver licence, which expired in July 2017, will not be renewed until the findings of this Group are known. The Deputy Vice Chairman stated that he hopes that the identification element is something that will be tightened up with KWT in the event of a licence renewal.

Ref: W7G Environment Agency Works

The EA works reported at the previous meeting have now all been completed. Ms Thompson reported that the eel net has been removed from Minster Pumping Station and the pumps are back on automatic.

The Chairman stated he is interested to see how the Coldharbour outfall extension will work. Ms Thompson replied that so far, no problems have been reported.

Mrs Wyant asked if the de-silting of the flood relief channel at Wickham Lane has been completed. Ms Thompson replied that there is a site walkover planned for next week with a view to this work being completed in April.

Cllr Smith thanked the EA for their work in identifying the contamination source of the Aylesford Stream, which has caused concern for some years. Mr Nunn replied that the EA is exploring the possibility of using a drone fitted with a heat-sensitive camera to identify illegal discharges.

Ref: W5 Planning Applications

Canterbury City Council

18/01948 – Hybrid planning application for mixed use development for leisure, commercial and tourism on land at Highland Court Farm, Coldharbour Lane, Bekesbourne.

Cllr Conolly reported that this planning application has now been refused by Canterbury City Council.

Dover District Council

18/00892 – Reserved matters in relation to 15/01290 & 18/00203.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that he had another meeting with the developer, KCC and the EA and they have agreed to all the points that have been raised.

Ref: W15 Applications for Consent and Enforcement Actions

Ref: 18-ST-05

Location: Land west of Sarre, on Chislet Marsh

Proposed: Installation of power cable beneath an ordinary watercourse

The Clerk & Engineer reported that he has been dealing with consultants, but he has received an email from UK Power Networks to say they consider the works to be satisfactory. He therefore intends to meet with them to explain why they are not acceptable.

Ref: 18-ST-27

Location: Agricultural land on Ash Level, North of Westmarsh

Proposed: Retention of a culvert in Westmarsh Drove Lead Dyke (IDB202)

Cllr Conolly reported that there are apparent breaches of planning conditions on this site as well which Dover District Council is likely to take enforcement action on.

Ref: A9-1.2 Office Premises – 34 & 34A Gordon Road

The Clerk & Engineer reported that works have been completed as reported on the F&GP Minutes. Additionally, the work on the stairway to the basement and temporary treatment of the ceiling in the front bedroom in the flat have also been completed. He further reported that the aim during the following financial year is to replace all windows (one quote received and awaiting on another two) and the kitchen in the flat. As a landlord the Board also needs to take some actions to improve energy efficiency. The Deputy Vice Chairman added that the gate in the alleyway also needs to be replaced to improve ventilation and help avoid further problems from damp.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman reported that Mrs S Allen (the Board's Administrative Assistant) has decided to retire on 31 March 2019. Mrs Allen has worked for the Board since November 1981 (37 years) and has always been a dedicated and cherished member of the team. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Vice Chairman and resolved that a total of £250 be used to purchase a suitable gift for Mrs Allen.

Cllr Martin stated that Mrs Allen has always been very helpful and added that backroom staff are often unfairly overlooked. She proposed that Members also consider adding personal donations to the Board's. The Chairman stated that he is very happy to personally contribute towards a gift, and all Members agreed. The Chairman asked the Finance & Rating Officer to give some thought to gift ideas. The Chairman wished Mrs Allen well for her well-deserved retirement, this was echoed by all Members.