

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board
held on Thursday 23 July 2015
at 2.00 pm in the Board's Offices at
34 Gordon Road, Canterbury

PRESENT

Mr M J G Tapp Esq (Chairman), Mr A D Linfoot, O.B.E. (Vice Chairman), Councillor M J Burgess, Councillor M D Conolly, Councillor Mrs A K Hicks and Councillor Mrs M Martin.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr P Dowling (Engineer to the Board), Mrs A I Eastwood (Finance and Rating Officer), Mr J Kelly (Asset Team Technical Advisor (Stour & Swale Areas), Environment Agency and Mr D Lewis (Clerk of the Board).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P E Dyas, Mr P S Dunn, Mr G Ellis, Councillor Mrs M Ovenden, Councillor H Stummer-Schmertzing, Councillor D O Smith and Mr I G Steed.

WELCOMING

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Michael Burgess to his first Board meeting. The Chairman also welcomed Mr John Kelly (Asset Team Technical Advisor (Stour & Swale Areas), Environment Agency to the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 28 MAY 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on Thursday 28 May 2015 were received. It was proposed by Mr A D Linfoot, seconded by Councillor Mrs Marion Martin and resolved that minutes be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the proceedings at that meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Ref: W.7-7 Public Services Co-operation Agreements (PSCAs)

Councillor M D Conolly (Dover District Council) asked if there had been any meetings or discussions with Dover District Council regarding entering into a Public Services Co-operation Agreement (PSCA) with the Board. The Clerk stated that he had only received an acknowledgement from Dover District Council and that was back in early December 2014.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES AND WORKS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 6 JULY 2015

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee held on Monday 6 July 2015 were received. It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Marion Martin, seconded by Mr A D Linfoot and resolved that the minutes be received.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Engineer's Report for the period 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015

Weedcutting

The Engineer reported that the Board's contractor (Rhino Plant Hire Ltd) had now commenced weedcutting operations. The Engineer further reported that Oxney Land Services will commence manual hand-weedcutting on Main Rivers in the Ashford area on Monday 10 August 2015 under the EA/IDB PSCA Agreement.

De-silting

The Chairman asked the Engineer if the additional de-silting of Main River channels under the EA/IDB PSCA Agreement had yet been decided. The Engineer stated that the possibility of additional de-silting works under the EA/IDB PSCA Agreement had not yet been discussed nor decided, as both he and the EA were concentrating on getting the IDB and EA weedcutting programme under way.

Structure Maintenance

The Chairman asked the Engineer if he had talked to the local EA staff about the installation and setting of the additional gauge boards. The Engineer stated that he had discussed this with the local EA staff and had been advised that this type of works was in future probably going out to contractors. Mr John Kelly (Asset Team Technical Adviser (Stour & Swale Areas), Environment Agency stated that the EA now mainly uses Maltby Surveys to do this type of work but that he would discuss this with Mr Simon Beal and get back to the Board's Engineer.

Biodiversity

The Engineer reported that he had spoken to Mr Jon Shelton, Partnership Manager, Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) with reference to the KSCP engaging Miss Carol Donaldson to complete a review and report in respect of the six batches of survey work that she has undertaken in accordance with the Board's Biodiversity Plan. The Engineer stated that Mr Jon Shelton had not yet confirmed that KSCP would be engaging Miss Donaldson to complete the review and report.

Environment Agency Works

Lower Stour River Bed Surveys

The Chairman asked Mr John Kelly (Asset Team Technical Advisor (Stour & Swale Areas), Environment Agency) if he was aware of the EA's plans following completion of the latest river

bed survey. Mr John Kelly stated that one more river bed survey is required before the EA is able to accurately compare the results and make de-silting plans. Mr Kelly stated that at present the EA were awaiting the results from the silt samples before finally deciding on the amount of de-silting the EA could undertake. Mr Kelly stated that if the samples showed no contamination, the silt could be disposed off to adjacent land but if the samples showed contamination the silt would have to be disposed off to landfill which would be much more expensive and therefore reduce the amount of de-silting work. Mr Kelly stated that the basic plan was to carry out de-silting operations in the 4 following areas: (1) Fordwich Bridge to 600 metres downstream; (2) Grove Ferry Bridge for 1 mile downstream; (3) Various stretches/areas in the Stodmarsh Valley; and (4) Stretches/areas of the river at Wetherlees, Gosshall Pumping Station Outlet and at the Stonar Cut Outfall. Mr Kelly stated that the EA were planning to undertake this de-silting work this winter using a small machine on a floating barge. The Engineer asked Mr Kelly if the Board could possibly have a copy of the proposed survey programme. Mr Kelly stated that he would pass a copy of the proposed survey programme to the Board's Engineer.

Seaton Weir

Councillor M D Conolly (Dover District Council) stated that he noted that the EA intended to let the site of the works re-vegetate naturally and considered this to be unacceptable. Councillor Conolly stated that the area by the works was already starting to be overtaken by weeds. Councillor Conolly stated that the site was regularly used by local families for picnics and family outings and that it should be brought back to what it was before the works and be re-seeded. Mr John Kelly (Asset Team Technical Advisor (Stour & Swale Areas), Environment Agency stated that he would report this back and ask the local EA Team to re-look into this and possibly re-seed the area with Natural England's wild flower grass and seed mix.

Coldharbour Outfall

The Chairman declared an interest being the owner of land adjacent to the Coldharbour Outfall.

The Chairman considered that the Coldharbour Sluice needed to have tidal flaps fitted on both sides as a matter of urgency in order to prevent any further leakages of seawater into the River Wantsum. Mr John Kelly (Asset Team Technical Advisor (Stour & Swale Areas), Environment Agency stated that there was a problem with the tidal flap but everything has been done to seal the flap and prevent any further seawater intrusion. Mr Kelly stated that the local EA staff was looking into modifying the flap to see if any further improvements could be made. The Engineer stated that in the past there always was a secondary defence with inner and outer tidal flaps and the penstock doors. The Engineer stated that when the penstocks were recently replaced, it was hoped that they would have inner and outer tidal seals fitted. Mr Kelly stated that the local EA staff was currently in the process of re-looking into the problem and trying to find a solution. Mr Kelly stated that he would update the Board on the EA's future improvement plans.

Repair Works to the Damaged Hacklinge Pumping Station Access Road

The Engineer stated that the Pumping Station Access Road at Hacklinge has been reinstated as before following the damage made by the overturned cattle trailer. The Engineer stated that there could have been an improvement there if the repair works had eased the bend and made the road more accessible for wide farm vehicles. Councillor Mrs Marion Martin (Ashford Borough Council) stated that there seemed to be a lack of consultation with local farmers by the EA. Mr

Kelly stated that the access road had been reinstated as before but that he would take the members' comments back to the local EA staff.

Seals on the Stonar Cut Gates

Mr Kelly stated that the seals on the Stonar Cut gates had now been repaired and all the gates reinstalled.

Applications for the Board's Consent

15-ST-04 Installation of a culvert in an ordinary watercourse at Stodmarsh

The Engineer reported that this consent had now been approved by the Chairman.

15-ST-05 Installation of a drainage outlet into the Preston & Deerson Stream (IDB 52) at Preston

The Engineer reported that Brand Consulting, on behalf of David Wilson Homes, has applied to the Board for Consent to construct a drainage outlet to discharge surface water from a recently approved residential development (DDC planning reference 14/00842). The Engineer stated that the drainage arrangements, including discharge rates have been/will be determined through the planning process. Details of this proposal will be assessed and a report produced for the Chairman's consideration in due course.

Councillor M D Conolly (Dover District Council) reported that Dover District Council's Planning Committee's main concern was sewerage. Councillor Conolly stated that there were 30 conditions attached to the planning application and that the application was still under discussion.

Enforcement Filled-in Watercourse, Russell Farm, West Stourmouth

The Engineer reported that he had received a report from KCC that a watercourse in West Stourmouth has recently been filled-in. The location of the works is at Russell Farm, West Stourmouth and is just within the Board's district. The Engineer further reported that he investigated the matter, and met with the owners of Russell Farm. The Engineer stated that the situation is as follows:

Mr & Mrs Mortley have lived at Russell Farm House for 12 years but recently bought a small parcel of land and, in order to provide access across an existing watercourse and to create a continuous lawn, have recently installed a 225mm diameter, approx. 28 metre long culvert. The culvert is surrounded by clean hardcore, topped with 100mm of sand over a membrane and has a bend close to the northern/downstream end. In order to encourage positive flow the pipe has been laid at a slight gradient. However, the bed of the channel appears to be lower at the upstream end; therefore despite the pipe being set at bed-level at the downstream end, it is approximately 300-400mm above the bed-level at the upstream end.

The Engineer further reported that the matter was discussed with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and a letter was sent to Mr and Mrs Mortley informing them that the Board would not approve the works as completed, and requesting that the works be removed and the channel be reinstated to its original condition. It was also suggested that they should seek professional

assistance to allow for a more suitable proposal to be developed on which the Board would be able to make a better-informed decision.

The Engineer further reported that he had received a response from Mr Mortley stating that he will remove the unconsented structure and reinstate the watercourse back to what it was. Mr Mortley also stated that he will shortly be applying to the Board for consent to install/construct a small access bridge over the watercourse.

Councillor M D Conolly (Dover District Council) stated that Mr and Mrs Mortley's intention is to construct a small Solar Panel Array on the land.

Report of the Clerk for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 May 2015

Drainage Rates Outstanding (Update)

The Clerk reported that the amount of drainage rates outstanding as at 22 July 2015 had reduced to £9,263.64 (16% of the total). The Clerk further reported that Final Notices would be issued on 1 September 2015 and other recovery measures taken shortly after.

Flood Risk Management

Ref: W.8/25 Old Thrustbore Culvert

The Clerk reported that in response to the Board's query regarding insurance in respect of the Old Thrustbore Culvert, the Board's insurers (Zurich Municipal) have advised that the Board's policy does not cover general wear and tear of property itself. The Public Liability cover which the Board currently has in place is there to protect the Board in the event of being sued for damages for something that the Board is found negligent (for example – if the culvert, however unlikely, was to collapse due to improper maintenance). This cover does not cover the actual property itself. Zurich has advised that they could add the culvert to the Material Damage section of our policy but in order for a claim to be valid it would have to arise from a single, explicit and identifiable event and not general wear and tear.

The Chairman considered that the Old Thrustbore Culvert was another good reason for increasing the Board's balances and establishing a contingency fund for the costly future relining of the culvert. The Clerk stated that he previously suggested that it may be prudent for the Engineer to ascertain the cost of relining the culvert as this would give the Board an idea of the amount that would be needed to be placed in the contingency fund. The Engineer stated that although the recent inspection of the culvert found it to be in fairly good condition, he had made enquiries with Network Rail, who have undertaken a lot of this type of work lately, for an estimate of what would be the cost of re-lining the culvert should it be necessary. The Engineer further reported that Network Rail were unable to give him an estimate of the costs as they had not re-lined any culverts of this size and type. Network Rail however, stated that they would get back to him with the names, and contact details, of one or two companies who undertook this type of work. The Engineer stated that he still awaited the details.

Administration

Ref: A.3-2 Election of Members (Members Representing Agricultural Ratepayers)

The Clerk reported that the Register of Electors had now been produced and was available for inspection. The Clerk stated that there was a legal requirement for the Board to approve the Register of Electors.

It was therefore proposed by Mr A D Linfoot, seconded by Councillor Mrs Marion Martin, and resolved that the Register of Electors be approved.

Ref: A.3-19 The Channel Management Handbook

The Clerk reported that a new handbook promoting good practice for channel management has been developed. ADA has advised that the handbook has been written for flood risk management authorities (RMAs) and the handbook brings together over 10 years of research and practice. The handbook has been developed through Defra and the Environment Agency's Joint Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Research and Development Programme by a team of experts led by Royal Haskoning DHV. Whilst the handbook has been written and structured with RMAs in mind, other organisations with a role in watercourse management, and owners and occupiers of land adjacent to watercourses will also find the handbook of use. The handbook is a strategic, high-level guide on how to manage watercourse channels to meet the objectives of flood risk management and land drainage” The Channel Management Handbook can be downloaded from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/channel-management-handbook-for--flood-risk-management.

The Chairman asked the Engineer if he has had time to read the new handbook yet. The Engineer stated that he was ploughing his way through it and intended to pass a copy to Miss Carol Donaldson so that she could incorporate its 'good practices' in her Biodiversity review and report.

Ref: A.7-10 Employment of Staff – Future Staff Requirements

The Clerk reported that the Sub-Committee appointed by the Board to consider the Board's future staffing requirements following the impending retirement of the Clerk on 4 March 2016 and the requirement to provide full-time assistance to the Board's Water Level Controller now that the Board is undertaking water level management for Main Rivers on behalf of the Environment Agency on a rechargeable basis, held its first meeting on Tuesday 23 June 2015. The Sub-Committee consisted of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Councillor Mrs A K Hicks, Mr M P Wilkinson, Mrs A I Eastwood (Finance and Rating Officer), Mr P N Dowling (Engineer to the Board) and Mr D Lewis (Clerk of the Board).

The Clerk reported that he had advised Sub-Committee that the Board's current staff consisted of a full-time Clerk, an Engineer (who spends 50% of his working time at the Stour IDB and 50% of his working time working for the Medway Internal Drainage Boards under a reciprocal Resources Agreement on a rechargeable basis), an Assistant Engineer (who spends 50% of his working time working for the Medway Internal Drainage Boards and the other 50% of his working time working for the Stour IDB under a reciprocal Resources Agreement on a rechargeable basis), a full-time Finance and Rating Officer, a Water Level Controller (who spends 50% of his working time managing Stour IDB water levels and the other 50% of his working time managing Main River water levels on behalf of the Environment Agency under a Public Services Co-operation Agreement (PSCA) on a rechargeable basis) and a part-time Administration Assistant. The Clerk further stated that he further advised the Sub-Committee that, with effect from 1 July 2015, it had been agreed with the Medway Internal Drainage Boards for their Assistant Engineer to work an average of 14 additional hours of overtime per month in order to assist the Board's Water level

Controller. The cost of this additional overtime work will be on a rechargeable basis to the Medway IDBs under the Engineering Resources Agreement and will be met from already budgeted Water Level Control assistance costs. (This overtime arrangement has been agreed on a temporary basis for a period between 3 and 9 months).

The Clerk stated that the Sub-Committee were also made aware of the extra workload and tasks that was required of the current staff following recent changes to the Board's operations, namely:

- 1) Additional workload, and works supervision, required in respect of undertaking Main River maintenance work on a rechargeable basis on behalf of the Environment Agency under the Public Services Co-operation Agreement (PSCA).
- 2) The requirement to carry out Main River Water Level Management on behalf of the Environment Agency, on a rechargeable basis under the Public Services Co-operation Agreement (PSCA).
- 3) The increased workload of the Board's Engineer under the Engineering Resources Agreement with the Medway IDBs.

The Clerk further reported that following a period of considerable discussion by the Sub-Committee it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Vice Chairman and resolved that it be recommended to the Finance Committee and the Board that:

- a) The Engineer should become the Board's Clerk/Engineer with effect from 1 January 2016.
- b) The Finance and Rating Officer should become the Board's Finance Officer with effect from 1 January 2016.
- c) That the Board should employ a full-time Engineering Assistant to assist the Engineer, the Assistant Engineer and the Water Level Controller as soon as possible. (The salary and employment costs of the new full-time Engineering Assistant will be partly met from the already budgeted Water Level Control Assistance costs and partly from the additional funds received from the Environment Agency under the Public Services Co-operation Agreement (PSCA).)
- d) That additional administrative support is provided by the existing part-time Administration Assistant, when required. (The part-time Administration Assistant is willing to work additional hours when required.) (The additional salary and employment costs in respect of this arrangement are expected to be quite small but an amount will need be included in future budgets.)

The Clerk further reported that at the Finance Committee meeting on Monday 6 July 2015 the Chairman proposed that the Sub-Committee's proposals be recommended to the Board for approval and that it also be recommended to the Board that the Sub-Committee be authorised by the Board to make all the necessary decisions regarding finding someone suitable for the position of Engineering Assistant as soon as possible. The Chairman's proposal was seconded by the Vice Chairman and resolved.

Councillor M D Conolly (Dover District Council) asked if it was intended to carry on with the Medway Shared Engineering Arrangement after the Clerk's retirement. The Chairman stated that the Medway Shared Engineering Arrangement was planned to continue. Councillor Conolly

stated that he was slightly concerned over the Engineer's workload when he assumed the position of Clerk/Engineer. The Chairman stated that the Engineer would be assisted by the Finance Officer on a day-to-day basis and the new Engineering Assistant would also be able to take over some of the additional workload. The Vice Chairman stated that the Medway Shared Engineering Arrangement could be terminated at fairly short notice if the Clerk/Engineer's workload became too much.

It was therefore proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Mrs Marion Martin and resolved that:

- a) The Engineer should become the Board's Clerk/Engineer with effect from 1 January 2016.
- b) The Finance and Rating Officer should become the Board's Finance Officer with effect from 1 January 2016.
- c) That the Board should employ a full-time Engineering Assistant to assist the Engineer, the Assistant Engineer and the Water Level Controller as soon as possible.
- d) That additional administrative support is provided by the existing part-time Administration Assistant, when required.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ref: A.3-4 New Council Appointed Members

The Clerk reported that following the local Government elections in May, the Special Levy Councils had appointed the following new members to the Board:

Ashford Borough Council

Councillor Michael Burgess (in place of Mr Peter Howard)

Dover District Council

Councillor Mrs Marjorie Ovenden (in place of Councillor C J (Kit) Smith)

Thanet District Council

Councillor Hunter Stummer-Schmertzing (in place of Councillor Dr J Cohen)

The Clerk further reported that unfortunately this Board meeting was at too short a notice for Councillors Ovenden and Stummer-Schmertzing to attend and they therefore had tendered their apologies. The Clerk stated that he still waited to hear from Canterbury City Council who would be Councillor Tony Austin's replacement.

Councillor M D Conolly (Dover District Council) asked if the new members would be given any sort of induction training. The Clerk stated that a half-day induction training day is given to all new members but he was waiting for Canterbury City Council to nominate Councillor Austin's replacement before making the necessary arrangements. Councillor Mrs Marion Martin (Ashford

Borough Council) considered that the Board should arrange an induction evening for all members from time-to-time in order for all members to be brought up to date on various matters. The Chairman stated that he was unsure that the majority of members would be willing or be available to attend an induction evening meeting but stated that the Members' Annual Inspection/Visit was an ideal venue to bring members up-to-date on various issues. Councillor Mrs Aline Hicks (Ashford Borough Council) considered that technical and legal issues could be covered at ADA Branch Meetings in the company of members from the other Kent IDBs so that experiences can be shared. The Vice Chairman stated that ADA annually provides a Local Government Seminar for Council Appointed Board Members where technical and legal issues are discussed in detail. The Vice Chairman stated that these all Council Appointed Members are permitted to attend these seminars but numbers attending are limited for cost reasons.

Ref: A.6-9 Flooding to Cellars in Strand Street, Sandwich

Councillor M D Conolly (Dover District Council) reported that it has recently been brought to his attention that a number of cellars in Strand Street, Sandwich have recently flooded. Councillor Conolly stated that the residents affected are concerned that the cellar flooding is related to the recently completed Sandwich Town Tidal Defence Scheme works. The Chairman considered that during the works it was possible that culvert may have been blocked in error which may have resulted in flooding to the cellars. Mr John Kelly (Asset Team Technical Advisor (Stour & Swale Areas), Environment Agency) stated that he would bring this report of flooding to the attention of the Sandwich Town Tidal Defence Scheme Project Manager and Project Team and ask them to double check the works to see if it was possible for a culvert to have become blocked. Mr Kelly stated that he would ask the Project Manager to liaise with the Sandwich Town authorities in respect of this flooding report.

MEETING CLOSED

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