

## THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held at 14:00 on Thursday 28 May 2020 by Online Platform

---

### 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, Mr P N Howard, Cllr P D Jull, Cllr D Ledger, Cllr G B Sparks, Mr M P Wilkinson and Mr P Williams.

### IN ATTENDANCE

Mr J Dilnot (Engineering Assistant), Mr P Dowling (Clerk & Engineer) and Ms A Eastwood (Finance & Rating Officer).

### WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Dr D Price (EA Technical Advisor) and Ms G Mitri Renner (EA Asset Performance Team Leader).

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D M Botting, Mr P S Dunn, Ms N H Dyas, Cllr N Ovenden, Cllr D O Smith, Mr L Woollorton and Mrs G Wyant. Apologies were also received from Mr D Godden (Rhino Plant Hire), Mr I Nunn (FCRM Operations Manager for KSL, EA) and Ms D Thompson (EA Stour Field Team Leader).

### CONDOLENCES

The Chairman asked all attending the meeting to observe a moment of silence as a mark of respect for Mr D Lewis who passed away on 3 March. The Chairman stated that Mr Lewis was the Clerk of the Board from February 1992 to March 2016.

### Ref: A2-2      RULES & STANDING ORDERS OF THE BOARD

The Chairman reported that the updated Rules & Standing Orders which include the following additional statements must be received and approved by the Board before initiating this meeting:

#### ***Special Circumstances - Coronavirus***

29. *In relation to any meeting held before 7th May 2021, "presence" at a meeting includes physical attendance and being present through remote attendance. "Remote attendance" means attending or participating in a meeting by electronic means, including by one or more of the following:*

- i) telephone conference,*
- ii) video conference,*
- iii) live webcast,*
- iv) live interactive streaming.*

30. *In relation to any meeting held before 7th May 2021, regulation 5 is suspended, and the Board shall instead provide members with relevant details to enable members to attend and participate in meetings, including remotely. The board shall provide confirmation of these details in the agenda. For these purposes, "details" includes one or more of the following:*

- i) the venue,*
- ii) the availability of a telephone conference facility and the manner of accessing such facility,*
- iii) the availability of a video conference facility and the manner of accessing such facility,*
- iv) the availability of a live webcast facility and the manner of accessing such facility,*
- v) the availability of a live interactive streaming facility and the manner of accessing such facility.*

It was proposed by the Deputy Vice Chairman, seconded by the Vice Chairman and resolved that the updated Rules & Standing Orders of the Board be received and approved. The Chairman confirmed that he will sign these after the meeting.

#### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman requested any declarations of interest and reiterated the importance of recording these. There were no declarations of interest.

#### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2020

The minutes of the Board held on Thursday 6 February 2020 were received. It was proposed by Cllr M D Conolly, 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 11 MAY 2020

It was proposed by Cllr M J Burgess, seconded by Cllr D Crow-Brown and resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee held on Monday 11 May be received.

#### MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES

Ref: W5            Planning Applications

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

The Clerk & Engineer reported that he had checked with the EA about this application and it was confirmed that the EA had been consulted and had raised no objection, subject to their usual conditions in relation to ecology and abstraction licencing.

## **Joint Report of the Clerk & Engineer and Finance & Rating Officer for the period 1 January to 31 March 2020**

Ref: A3-6      Health & Safety – Covid-19

The Chairman reported that the IDB staff are following the Government guidelines on social distancing with office staff mostly working from home, but with some lone-working at the office when necessary. The Board's Water Level Controller and Engineering Assistant are delivering the water level management function and asset inspections between them, again with appropriate controls including physical distancing. The 'key' elements of work, including water level management, consenting, financial reporting and audit, have continued with appropriate controls.

This year's works programme will be reviewed and prioritised and more detailed risk assessments and procedures will be developed prior to commencement.

Ref: W4/WSR      Rainfall & River Flow Data

The Clerk & Engineer stated that the rainfall data reported was up to the end of March when there was a groundwater flood alert for east Kent and by the end of March the levels were still ranging from exceptionally high to notably high. It should be noted that groundwater levels rapidly receded and Hands-Off flow has recently been declared on the Upper Stour, forcing restrictions on water abstractions.

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

The Clerk & Engineer reported that ADA is discussing with Defra the way forward for river maintenance during Covid-19 restrictions and the Board's programme of works may need to be reviewed to accommodate any limitations.

### Weed Cutting

The Chairman asked if the weed cutting programme scheduled to commence in mid-July will be affected by the current Covid-19 restrictions. The Clerk & Engineer replied that plans are continuing as currently there are no restrictions which directly affect this work. Fortunately the majority of this work is carried out by lone workers (plant operators) or can be completed at distance (for manual cutting). Rhino Plant and other contractors will need to be assess the risks and ensure appropriate controls, but at present it is hoped that a full programme will be possible.

### Water Level Control

The Clerk & Engineer reported that Coldharbour Sluice is still leaking seawater back into the River Wantsum and the EA is still investigating repairs, which will require suitable eel passage. Dr D Price reported that he has recently visited the site with contractors to discuss works, which are due to be carried out in September.

Ref: F.11      Contract Expenditure

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the overall expenditure for water level control and maintenance activities in 2019-20 was £300,287 against an original forecast of £313,603 (£13,316 under budget).

The Structures underspend of £4,043 has been carried over to the structures reserve on the finalised accounts, as previously agreed, and the Finance Committee recommended to the Board that the 2020-2021 maintenance budget be increased by the remaining underspend (£9,273) so that the works not carried out due to Covid-19 restrictions can be completed during 2020-21.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr M D Conolly and resolved that the 2020-21 budget be increased by £9,273. All present agreed.

Ref: W5            Planning Applications

The Chairman invited comments on the Planning applications listed in the F & GP Committee meeting minutes and invited the members to comment. There were no further comments on these planning applications.

Ref: W15            Applications for Consent and Enforcement Actions

The Chairman referred to the applications for Consent listed in the F & GP Committee meeting minutes which have all been approved in consultation with local members, except the one below:

Ref: DX72a

Location: Walmer's Hill Stream (NGR 624072,164057)

Proposed: Use of an existing crossing.

Application proposing to use an existing private crossing at Wall End Farm on Walmer's Hill Stream (IDB116), an IDB maintained watercourse. Unfortunately this privately owned crossing, which contains a large diameter steel pipe, is in very poor condition with a large hole on the surface, thought to be a result of erosion, which has been filled with empty plastic containers and covered over with an old field gate.

Due to its unsafe condition and the fact that it is on a main drainage channel, following consultation with local Members an **Objection** was lodged and the applicant was requested to consider repairing/replacing the culvert in consultation and agreement with the landowner.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that National Grid subsequently confirmed that this crossing will now not be used to cross with plant or vehicles.

Ref: F1-2a            Final Internal Audit Inspection of the 2019-2020 Accounts and Accounting Records

The Chairman reported that the Board's Internal Auditor, Mr David Griffiths, carried out his inspection of the Board's 2019-2020 accounts and accounting records on 29 April 2020 and his report was included in the F & GP meeting minutes. The Chairman reported that the auditor found no matters for concern and asked for any comments on this report. There were no comments.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Vice Chairman and resolved that the Final Internal Audit Report for the 2019-2020 Accounts and Accounting Records be received and approved.

Ref: F.1-2b            Review of the Internal Control and Internal Audit Arrangements for the Financial Year Ended 31 March 2020

The Chairman reported that Cllr M Burgess and Cllr P Jull, as part of the Board's Internal Audit Review Team for 2019-2020 and in consultation with the Board's Internal Auditor, carried out the

inspection of the Board's Accounts and Accounting Records for 2019-2020. Cllr D O Smith is also part of this Team but was unable to take part due to illness. The report was included in the F & GP meeting minutes and the following points were resolved:

1. Petty Cash – float to be reduced from £300 to £100.
2. Staffing Levels – to be evaluated and discussed later in the year when the effects of Covid-19 become clearer.
3. Banking Arrangements – a further deposit account is to be opened, possibly with HSBC, and operating balances are to be spread between the existent accounts as much as practicably possible, whilst remaining accessible.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Burgess and Cllr Jull for their report and with there being no further comments or queries it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr D Ledger and resolved that the Internal Audit Review Team's Report on the Board's 2019-2020 Accounts and Accounting Records be received and approved.

Ref: F1-5a      Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019-20 (AGAR)  
Annual Internal Audit Report 2019-20

The Chairman reported that the AGAR 2019-20 has been completed and the various sections need to be approved by the Board. Following his audit, the Internal Auditor completed and signed the Annual Internal Audit Report 2019-20 (page 3 of the AGAR).

It was proposed by the Deputy Vice Chairman, seconded by Mr M Wilkinson and resolved that the Annual Internal Audit Report 2019-2020 (page 3 of the AGAR) be received and approved.

Ref: F1-5b      Accounts for Financial Year Ended 31 March 2020

The Chairman reported that the Board's Accounts for the Financial Year Ended 31 March 2020 have been completed.

The Chairman presented the accounts and invited any comments, there being no comments it was proposed by Cllr P D Jull, seconded by the Vice Chairman and resolved that the Accounts for the Financial Year Ended 31 March 2020 be received and approved.

Ref: F1-5c      Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019-20 (AGAR)  
SECTION 1 (Annual Governance Statement 2019-20)

The Chairman reported that Section 1 of the AGAR (page 4) requires the Board to carry out a review of effectiveness of the system of internal control. This requirement has been accomplished by the Final Internal Audit carried out by Mr D Griffiths which enabled him to complete page 3 of the AGAR (Annual Internal Audit Report 2019-20) and the review of the Internal Control and Internal Audit Arrangements by Cllr M Burgess and Cllr P Jull, both carried out on 29 April 2020. This section was completed and signed by the Clerk & Engineer to the Board.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr D Crow-Brown and resolved that SECTION 1 (Annual Governance Statement 2019-20, page 4 of the AGAR) be received and approved. The Chairman signed this.



The Clerk & Engineer stated that the proposed allocations for 2020-21 are:

Item	Contribution	% of Total Cost
1. Richborough Sluice	£40,000	100%

The Board has been keen for the works on the Richborough Sluice to take place for some years and when completed it should allow, at times, for gravity discharge from the Richborough Stream and the potential for a fish pass into the Ash Level.

2. Water Level Control	£10,000	25%
------------------------	---------	-----

This contribution has been discussed previously but there is no other alternative funding source.

3. Sarre Bank Slip & Sarre Penn Pioneering	£40,000	100%
--	---------	------

The Sarre Bank Slip is on an EA defence constructed as part of the Chislet Pumping Scheme and if it were to fail during an extreme flood event, properties in the Marshside area could be adversely affected. The Board has carried out pioneering on the Sarre Penn in the past under the PSCA and is keen to see/implement more regular maintenance of this watercourse.

4. Mechanical & Electrical Maintenance Works (Sarre Pumping Station and Sarre Outfall)	£15,000	100%
---	---------	------

The Board would benefit from receiving regular reports on what is being done and works planned on EA assets.

Ms G Mitri Renner stated that she will be happy to have more regular catchup meetings on the works being carried out.

#### ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr P Howard reported that there is a byway through his farm that crosses the river Stour and there have been groups of travellers bathing their horses in the river and using soap suds. He stated that this is not only polluting the river, but it is also intimidating as they do not stay on the byway, but trespass across the fields. He asked if the EA has a policy which could address this pollution.

Ms G Mitri Renner replied that anyone causing pollution to the river would be liable and the EA would investigate and take action. She stated that she will check with the Land and Water Team to ascertain what Mr Howard needs to do but in the first instance any incident should be reported to the Incident Hotline (0800 80 70 60) as this will create a report which will be passed on to the duty officer and will serve as evidence for future prosecution. Ms Mitri Renner stated that she will investigate and will report back.

Cllr Conolly further advised that keeping a personal diary of all the incidents will also be valuable.

The Clerk & Engineer added that it is worth noting that the site in question has a history of white clawed crayfish which are very rare and protected.

- Dr D Price reported that Ms D Thompson had asked him to report that EA operatives are finding themselves locked out of several access gates. The Clerk & Engineer asked that Ms Thompson advise him of the exact locations and the Board can contact the relevant landowners.
- Cllr D Crow-Brown reported that he observed Network Rail contractors desecrating wildlife (in particular slow worms) and asked for advice on what can be done. Ms Mitri Renner advised Cllr Crow-Brown to contact Kent Wildlife Trust or Natural England as they will be better equipped to advise him. Mr P Williams advised that if there is evidence of habitat damage it should be reported to the Police and they can take action as a crime under the Wildlife & Countryside Act.

#### MEETING CLOSED

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