

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held at 14:00 on Thursday 8 February 2024
at Jury Room the Guildhall Sandwich Kent CT13 9AH

PRESENT

Mr G R Steed (Chairman), Cllr A Hicks (Vice Chair), Cllr S Blair, Cllr R Carnac, Mr P S Dunn, Ms N H Dyas, Mr P N Howard, Cllr D Ledger, Cllr R McGeever, Cllr G Meaden, Cllr W Scobie and Mr M P Wilkinson.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr P Dowling (Clerk & Engineer), Mr J Dilnot (Operations Officer), Ms A Eastwood (Finance & Rating Officer) and Mr J Williamson (Technical Officer).

WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Cllr R McGeever to his first Board meeting and he also welcomed Mr Rob Butson (Network Resilience Delivery Manager, Southern Water), Dr D Price (Technical Advisor, Environment Agency) and Mr S McGlashan (Upper Stour & Dour Catchment Officer, EA).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D M Botting, Mr D Fuller, Mr G Holdstock, Ms A Lynch, Mr P Williams and Mr L Woollorton.

ABSENT

Cllr A Buchanan and Cllr M Moorhouse.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman declared an interest in the LAPSIP project, due to a family member owning some land within the project area. Mr P Howard declared an interest in planning application NOT/2023/1051. Ms N Dyas declared a landownership interest in the Monkton Marshes.

PRESENTATION BY SOUTHERN WATER – UPDATE ON THE POLLUTION INCIDENT REDUCTION PLAN AND STORM OVERFLOW TASK FORCE

Mr Butson thanked the Board for giving him the opportunity to update the Board. Main points recorded below:

- **Pollution Incident Review Plan (PIRP) 2023 and Plans for 2024**

Interventions put in place during 2023 covered Asset Resilience, 3 Lines of Defence and Escape Prevention – anything that can potentially go wrong is put into the plan to ensure the assets are resilient. Analysis shows a 42% reduction in categories 1-3 pollution incidents but have however seen 8 serious pollutions this year. The Clerk & Engineer asked if these were local. Mr Buxton replied that he will enquire and reply later.

Ms Dyas asked if Southern Water is anticipating allowing public internet access to the digitalised data, akin to Anglian Water. Mr Butson replied that Beachbuoy is SW's interactive, near real-time web-app which currently covers the coastline, but the plans are to extend that to inland waters.

Lessons learned from root cause of pollutions in 2023 informed the interventions for the 2024 plan which is motioned on key areas such as prevention, detection and response. Focus will be on

renewing the ageing network and continuing improvements to pumping stations and wastewater treatment works, including holding a stock of spare key components for more rapid repairs.

Clean Seas and Rivers Task Force Update

Set up in 2021 this task force aims to reduce storm overflows to ensure a healthy environment and a resilient future for water; it is responsible for delivering pathfinder projects through an accelerated programme. As well as the obvious environmental and ethical considerations, the other factors that have contributed to this need for change are: an increase in extreme weather events, less permeable land, customer feedback and the release of the government's Storm Overflow Reduction Plan.

The main ways to reduce storm overflows and the harm they cause are source control, infrastructure optimisation, storm water treatment and by building bigger infrastructure.

Pathfinder Projects trial solutions in a community to reduce local storm overflows and by taking a holistic approach to community wastewater management (including surface and groundwater), we can ensure the installation of the most effective engineering solutions with the greatest added benefits. After detailed insight and area surveys, solutions are rolled out with some examples below:

1. Optimisation – with the optimization of Swalecliffe Treatment Works we anticipate a 20% average reduction in Long Sea Outfall events. Using AI to help reduce storm overflows.
2. Misconnections – identify and reduce joint connections between surface water and the foul system.
3. Household SuDS – slow drain water butts, raingardens and raingarden planters, permeable paving.
4. Non-household SuDS – wetlands and swales.
5. Highways SuDS – Cromwell Road, Whitstable (Permeable paving – approx 659m²).

Southern Water are being proactive:

- 21 potential opportunities identified in Whitstable with 6 priority areas being investigated.
- 10 potential opportunities being checked out in Deal.
- Targeting 3000 household water butt installations and large industrial roof spaces across the Pathfinder catchments.
- Education sessions with the schools are continuing through this year. Almost completed year 2 working with DE on reducing flood risk at schools and slowing the flow of roof runoff.
- In total, 28 Kent schools have received rain garden planters and Dane Court Grammar School has had a rain garden installed.
- Large SuDS – Cornwallis Circle Whitstable
 - Potential 1.2ha of impermeable area managed across two phases.
 - Letter submitted to CCC regarding planning, exploring the option of utilising the PD rights of both SW and KCC.
- Installed 24,000 SLM's across our network, giving us 4% coverage overall (we have around 600,000 manholes).
- Installed around 2,300 monitors in the Stour IDB area which have raised 6,000 jobs in the last 12 months.
- Proactively cleared more than 2,000 blockages preventing escapes of sewage.
- Monitor telemetry from 3,500 stations and have improved the data signals on 900 of them.
- Use an in-house developed analytical platform to identify drop in performance and issues developing.
- Raised 2,300 jobs in the last 12 months and proactively addressed 1,500 problems.

Mr Howard asked what prompts the installation of monitors. Mr Butson replied that it is a combination of where significant pollutions and serious flooding has occurred and anywhere close to a watercourse. Mr Howard further asked if locations for monitors can be suggested by others. Mr Butson replied that Southern Water will consider any requests.

Bathing Water Improvement Plan 2024

Improvement plans developed in 16 bathing water catchments, including a specific range of interventions identified through detailed analysis, including CCTV, sewer lining, misconnection investigations and water quality monitoring.

Ms Dyas stated that Whitstable is a key area due to the Oyster Beds and serious problems last year nearly wiped them out, so she asked what focus is SW putting on it. Mr Butson replied that they are working in conjunction with the EA carrying out water testing to get an understanding of the conditions and problems that need to be addressed. Ms Dyas asked Mr Butson to comment on Anglian Water's statement that all their treatment sites are going through reedbeds/wetlands before they discharge into rivers and they are spending a substantial sum on cleaning up the environment, hoping to have no environmental footprint, no outfalls, no phosphate going into rivers and no abstraction by 2030. Mr Butson commented that SW have similar plans on various sites.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that the IDB has previously suggested that May Street Wastewater Treatment Works would benefit from a small reedbed prior to its discharge. Currently it is pumped into the Hogwell Sewer at quite a rate and a high temperature, and it would benefit from the installation of a reedbed similar to those at Lenham and Charing. Mr Butson agreed to confirm a contact to explore this further.

Mr Butson stated that SW are focussing their resources into ensuring that all assets are working efficiently, working with the councils and the EA in a coordinated approach to try and improve bathing quality.

Mr Howard asked if this 3-month plan will be rolled forward. Mr Butson stated that this plan started about 4 months ago focusing on the misconnection investigations, aiming to be completed by May 2024 and the issues to be addressed thereon. This will be reviewed next year, adapted and changed as needs require.

Cllr McGeever stated that his Ward has quite a lot of questions regarding the long-term effectiveness of reedbeds and asked if more information could be provided. Cllr Carnac stated that she would also like further information on this and she also asked how the work is going on the local watercourse mapping. Mr Butson stated that he is unaware but will enquire and report back.

Cllr Meaden asked if the work at Swalecliffe, extending the outfall, is merely a way of negating the sewage company from having to clean up the water. Mr Butson replied that this is not the case, the very old outfall has been renewed and extended and more work has been planned to make the site more resilient.

The Chairman thanked Mr Butson for his time and presentation. He added that another annual update would be appreciated in February 2025. Mr Butson confirmed that he will be happy to return to do this. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to arrange.**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2023

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on Thursday 9 November 2023 were received. It was proposed by Cllr Ledger, seconded by Cllr W Scobie 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

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

The Chairman asked if the spoil spreading on the Wingham river has been done. The Operations Officer confirmed that this work, which was delayed due to concern about possible Parrot's Feather, has now been completed (none of this invasive weed was found to be present).

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES AND WORKS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2024

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee held on Monday 22 January 2024 were received. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr D Ledger and resolved that these minutes be received.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

ADMINISTRATION & OPERATIONS

Ref: A1-3 Review of Internal Drainage District Boundary - Update

The Clerk & Engineer stated that the Board's district was set in 1938 and is a very narrow 'ribbon' district. Most built development occurs outside of this boundary but significantly affects it. The main purpose of the proposed extension is therefore to enable the IDB to have more influence on water discharges into the district and to have the ability to carry out works in that wider area should it decide to do so under its existing permissive powers. Originally the proposal was to extend the district to the full watershed, but this has since been adjusted to exclude some large areas, mainly on chalk with little in the way of surface runoff. The proposed extension is still intended to incorporate the whole of the surface water network.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that it would be useful to set up a sub-committee to investigate this in more detail before consulting with District Councils, KCC, EA and others. Once consultation with these local authorities has been completed and if everyone agrees, the intention is to put a proposal to Defra to extend the IDB's district. Cllr Ledger asked how much work is still needed on this and asked if we might go straight to consultation. The Clerk & Engineer replied that there are several issues which still need to be investigated and a sub-committee would help to explore these in more detail to further advise the Board.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Carnac and resolved that an IDD Review Sub-Committee comprising of the Chairman, the Vice Chair, Cllr Carnac, Cllr Ledger and Cllr Mcgeever be set up to progress with the extension of the district. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to progress.**

Ref: A7-1 Employment of Staff

The Chairman reported that the Employment Sub-Committee met to discuss the possibility of employing an Operations Assistant to help improve the general level of service and to provide improved support and cross-cover for all staff. The Sub-Committee determined that there is currently a risk to the Board in terms of business continuity and resilience, especially regarding the water level control role. This is a very important role which the Board undertakes on behalf of the IDB and the EA and requires a considerable amount of experience and knowledge.

It was the view of the Sub-Committee that the Board should take on an extra member of staff to gain water level control experience, with the added benefit that they will support all other team members. This was presented to the FGP&W Committee which recommended to the Board that it employs an extra member of staff. The Chairman proposed that the Board accepts this recommendation and looks to recruit an Operations Assistant without delay, this was seconded by Cllr Ledger, all present were in agreement.

The Chairman asked the Board to consider delegating authority to the Sub-Committee to take the necessary decisions in the recruitment process. There being no comments to the contrary, it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Mr P Howard that the Sub-Committee be delegated the full authority to carry out the necessary arrangements and decisions and to employ an Operations Assistant. All present were in favour. The Chairman asked the Clerk & Engineer to make all the necessary arrangements. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to progress.**

Ref: W2-1 – WATERCOURSE MAINTENANCE ESTIMATES (2024-25)

The Chairman reported that the estimates presented reflect the extra expenditure of employing a new member of staff. He proceeded to summarise the Watercourse Maintenance Works Estimates which are detailed in the FGP&W Committee minutes. The revised total cost estimated for planned maintenance works for the year ending 31 March 2024 is £415,500 (£1,500 under budget). This includes the total cost of carrying out Water Level Control & Emergency Response for the IDB and the EA for which the EA contributes under the PSCA.

The Chairman summarised that the overall estimated cost for routine watercourse maintenance and in-house water level control activities in 2024-2025 is £442,000. This total includes a budget for Structures Maintenance of £26,000 mainly to be used on the upkeep of the Board's structures and a further £44,000 proposed for the renewal of another old timber stop, Harrison's Stop on IDB47 Wickham Main Stream, which is to be funded from the Structures Reserve as previously approved by the Board.

The Chairman further reported that the Weed Cutting and Biodiversity budgets of £176,500 and £12,500 respectively were discussed by the FGP&W Committee. In the past biodiversity actions that directly affect the routine maintenance have been charged to them, with a further £4,500 having been spent during the current year. The FGP&W Committee considered that the Board's commitment to biodiversity improvements would be best represented if all Biodiversity expenditure were reported as such. These biodiversity measures have also resulted in savings to maintenance costs. Therefore, the FGP&W Committee recommends to the Board that the Weed Cutting budget be reduced by £10,000 to £166,500 and the Biodiversity budget be increased by the same amount to £23,000. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Mr Dunn and resolved that the above changes be made to the 2024-25 Weed Cutting and Biodiversity budgets.

Ref: W2-1 – COMBINED FINANCE ESTIMATES (2024-2025)

The Chairman presented the Combined Finance Estimates for the 2024-25 financial year, summarised below:

- Estimated Income at £572,461 (includes the LAPSIP Grant, the SWDC and PSCA income)
- EA Precept £100,686 – 3% increase on last year's total
- Maintenance Works Expenditure £398,000 – does not include the £44,000 to be drawn from the Structures Reserve
- Administration and Engineering Expenditure is estimated to be £405,332
- Rechargeable Works £100,000 expenditure (estimated £112,500 on income)
- 10,000 to be added to the Old Thrustbore Reserve
- £20,100 has been added to the Structures Reserve
- Surface Water Development Contributions have been entered both on the income and the expenditure totals at £100,000 – this income is currently ring fenced to carry out works that are necessary but do not attract funding
- The £195,461 LAPSIP Grant has also been entered on both income and expenditure

The Chairman concluded that the net estimated sum needed to be raised from rates and levies (without including the £44,000 to be drawn from the Structures Reserve) to carry out the Board's activities for the year ending 31 March 2025 is £757,118, which is an increase of 7.18% on last year's total raised amount and the effect of this is shown on Option 1 on page 8 of the estimates. Several other options ranging from annual increases from 2.00% to 7.00% were also presented. The Chairman reported that following a lengthy discussion, the FGP&W Committee recommended Option 1 to the Board which is an increase of 7.18% on last year's rates and levies and it would raise the exact estimated requirement to carry out the Board's activities during 2024-25.

Ms Dyas stated that she represents the Minster and Monkton Marshes which have been under water most of the winter and whilst she considers the IDB as having done a fantastic job, she feels that the EA are handicapping water level control in the area. Therefore, she feels that farmers are not getting value for their drainage rates as crops are being lost due to poor drainage. Ms Dyas further stated that last year there was more of a proactive approach, which allowed water levels to be lowered in advance of rain, and this worked well. Kingfisher Sluice is an integral part of the marshes and should be used to discharge water under normal conditions but with the increasing amount and intensity of rainfall during the winter we also need to be able to use the pumps.

The Chairman stated that the problem on the marshes is relevant and will be discussed later but the current item is to set next year's rates and levies which are being set by the Board and not the EA and with that in mind he asked if Ms Dyas supported the proposal or would like to propose an alternative. Ms Dyas stated that farmers pay drainage rates for good drainage but water levels are being held too high, so discussions need to be had with the EA to resolve this problem. Ms Dyas stated that she does not want the IDB to be underfunded so she supports Option 1, but reiterated that this situation is not sustainable into the future and the EA will need to allow water levels to be managed more proactively, and take farmers livelihoods into consideration.

Cllr Scobie stated that he sympathises with the farmers at Minster and Monkton Marshes, but the situation will not be helped by reducing the IDB's spending power. Cllr Scobie further reported that additional funding for Councils to support IDB expenditure has been announced by the Secretary of State. Cllr Carnac stated that last year the scheme was just for Councils in financial difficulty, and she believes that again this year Councils must meet certain criteria to qualify. The Clerk & Engineer stated that last year's additional funding was directed to Councils with high Levies with massively increased costs of IDB pumping due to sharp energy cost increases.

Cllr Hicks stated that the various options were discussed by the FGP&W Committee and it was concluded that the IDB needs to maintain its level of service. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Scobie, and resolved that the Board will adopt Option 1 for the financial year ending 31 March 2025 and:

- a) A total sum £757,118 be raised.
- b) A rate 16.77151p in the pound be made for the year ending 31 March 2025, raising £79,346 from Drainage Ratepayers.
- c) Special Levies be made on Local Billing Authorities for the year ending 31 March 2025 as follows:

Ashford Borough Council	£319,434
Canterbury City Council	£154,193
Dover District Council	£ 93,668
Folkestone & Hythe District Council	£ 678
Thanet District Council	<u>£109,799</u>
	<u>£677,772</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 present voted in favour.

RESERVES BALANCES

Ref: F3-1 General Reserve

The Chairman reported that the General Reserve's balance is targeted at approximately 4-6 months of annual net expenditure (estimated to be £757k in 2024-25, so a range between 252-378k) and its estimated balance on 31 March 2024 is £318,493.

Ref: F3-2 Structures Reserve

The Chairman stated that it was previously agreed that the Structures' Reserve balance should not fall below £250,000. Currently the Board draws from this reserve to replace one stop structure per year and a 5% of the reserve's originally projected value is also added annually. Following this trajectory this reserve's balance will fall below its minimum target in 2027-28 (£234k) and further to a low point in in 2029-30 (£174k).

Ref: F3-3 Old Thrustbore Reserve

The Chairman stated that the Old Thrustbore Reserve balance is targeted at £140k and £10,000 is added to it annually, with its balance currently at £110,000. The Clerk & Engineer provided some visual aids of this culvert's location and added that the latest routine survey advised the sealing of some leaky joints – costs for this and for a complete relining are being investigated. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to investigate costs.**

The Chairman proposed that all Reserves be considered once the costs associated with the Thrustbore are known, this was seconded by Mr Wilkinson. All present agreed.

Ref: F8-6 Surface Water Development Contributions – Review of Fees

The Technical Officer reported that the WMA carried out a review of the SWDC calculation to deal with smaller developments in a fairer way as currently these are disproportionate. He explained that there is a limit on how far a developer can practically attenuate surface water discharges in small developments, so smaller developers end up paying much more per hectare than larger developers. In the revised schedule of fees any development under half a hectare will pay a fixed fee for that discharge. The other update is a split between gravity and pumped catchments which we will have to consider when charging SWDCs.

Ms Dyas commented that these are one-off payments, and if we are allowing more water than the greenfield site, the IDB will have to maintain these waterways forever with no further funding. There is a large amount of ongoing and planned development in this district and river systems are having to cope with ever increasing amounts of water, and capacities are limited by reduced maintenance in recent years. The Chairman stated that he agrees but the purpose of this item is to review the way the IDB applies SWDCs and it is not about the logistics of the surface water discharges.

The Clerk & Engineer clarified that by charging SWDCs the Board is not allowing developers to discharge more water to the district, the details of drainage are agreed through the planning process in consultation with KCC as the lead Local Flood Authority. Charging SWDCs enables the Board to help counteract some of the potential negative impacts of already permitted developments. Also, SWDCs encourage developers to reduce their discharge rates as much as possible to minimise their contributions.

Mr Dunn asked if this is a one-off payment, what happens when the funds run out. The Chairman stated that the discharge will occur anyway and this way the Board will have some funds to deal with it in the near future, there is no mechanism for ongoing charges. Cllr Scobie added that new developments will generate council revenue which in turn will fund the management of future IDB work.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Scobie and resolved that the reviewed SWDC Charges and Fees Policy be adopted by the Board from April 2024.

Report for the period November 2023 to January 2024

Ref: W4/WSR Rainfall & River Flow Data

The Clerk & Engineer reported that rainfall across the Stour catchment in October ranged from 118.6mm at Broadstairs to 170.0mm at Bybrook, averaging 141.6mm (183% of the Long Term

Average). November was also extremely wet, with rainfall ranging from 136.0mm at Broadstairs to 167.8mm at Bybrook, averaging 150.9mm (177% of the LTA). December continued fairly wet for the beginning of the month but then became relatively dry – rainfall totals ranged from 66.4mm at Broadstairs to 113.4mm at Barham, averaging 90.1mm (131% of the LTA). Rainfall data for January is not yet available.

At the end of December, the Environment Agency categorised river flows in the Stour catchment as notably high. A substantial number of Flood Alerts and Flood Warnings were issued throughout this period. The average flow in the River Stour at Horton in November was 243% of the LTA. Groundwater levels ranged from above normal to exceptionally high across the area. Nearly all reservoirs are at full capacity.

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

Weed Cutting

The Operations Officer reported that the IDB weed cutting programme, totalling 212km, was completed in November. As usual, this included second cuts on several watercourses in the highest risk areas. Weed cutting on Main Rivers, under the PSCA with the Environment Agency, totalled 99km and Mathews Close Dyke was also cut a second time.

De-silting

The following watercourses were de-silted:

IDB1 Hart Dyke	IDB106 Seaton Lead Dyke
IDB51 Monkton Valley Stream	IDB110 Blackhole Dyke
IDB83 Stourmouth Valley Lead Dyke	IDB214 Watchester Drove Lead Dyke
IDB84 Stourmouth Valley Dyke	MR New North Stream

The EA has also de-silted the remaining sections of the North Stream at Hacklinge.

Actions on the following watercourses as detailed:

IDB23 Park Farm Dyke – to be desilted

IDB30 Long Reaches – delayed due to landowner concerns.

IDB48 Upper Wickham Stream

IDB52 Preston & Deerson Main Stream – Dog & Duck Leisure Park section postponed until next year.

IDB65 Coleman's Dyke – removed from the programme at the request of Natural England.

IDB116 Walmer's Hill Lead Dyke – works delayed due to landowner concerns.

IDB125 Tipper Drove Dyke – to be desilted

IDB145 Brooksend Feed Dyke – to be desilted

IDB188 Cooper Street Pumping Drain – to be desilted

IDB194 Valley Wall Lead Dyke – to be desilted

IDB199 Santon Lead Dyke – delayed due to landowner activity.

IDB200 Stourmouth Lead Dyke – delayed due to landowner activity.

IDB218 Minster Station Lead Dyke (including upper reach – added to programme).

IDB309 Shelvington Stream – to be desilted

Under the PSCA, another section of the Delf Stream is to be narrowed and deepened to help improve flows. A 45m long line of brushwood faggots is to be installed, which will help to protect the riverbank from erosion and will also provide space for the placement of silt. This section is again bordered by a public highway and residential gardens, so spoil placement is difficult with

off-site disposal not viable (due to excessive cost). This work is scheduled for late February/early March.

Tree & Shrub Maintenance

The Clerk & Engineer reported that this year's tree maintenance programme has started, with a considerable amount of work already completed on IDB1 Hart Dyke, IDB17 Horton Priory Dyke and IDB218 Minster Station Lead Dyke. The remainder of this programme includes IDB23 Park Farm Dyke, IDB27 Waterbrook Dyke, IDB48 Upper Wickham Stream, IDB81 Hatfields Dyke, IDB200 Stourmouth Lead Dyke and IDB302 and should be completed by the end of February.

Under the EA-IDB PSCA, work has been completed on the Delf Stream, started on the New North Stream and planned on Whitewater Dyke.

Structures Maintenance

The Clerk & Engineer reported that weather and ground conditions have delayed minor repairs and improvements to water level management structures, but it is hoped that conditions will improve for some of these to go ahead as planned. Several stopboards are also to be renewed before water levels are raised for the summer.

Due to the deteriorating condition of Harrison's Stop on IDB47 Wickham Main Stream, and the risk it poses to the upstream Stodmarsh NNR, the renewal of this structure is planned for this summer.

Obstruction Clearance

Routine inspections continue to be carried out and obstructions cleared as necessary, particularly in the Ashford area before and after heavy rainfall. Some fallen trees have been cleared from watercourses after recent storms.

Water Level Control

Despite the recent rainfall and flood alerts, water levels across the district have been managed well. The Water Level Controller reported the following issues:

- The leak at Monkton Engine Feed is getting worse, but it is hoped that this will be repaired this summer.
- The fixing bolts on Brooksend Outfall flap came loose again but are due to be repaired.
- The automatic weed rakes at Hacklinge and Ash Level Pumping Stations were blown from their rollers and are due to be repaired.
- Temporary pumps have been installed at Stourmouth Pumping Station, but it is hoped that pump 4, which is being refurbished, will be returned soon.

Ref: W7G Watercourses for possible IDB adoption

The Clerk & Engineer reported that letters were sent to landowners and residents alongside the watercourses proposed for IDB adoption. All responses to date welcomed the proposal but expectations will need to be managed – the Board will not be able to remove flood risk, but regular maintenance of these watercourses should help to reduce the frequency and severity of localised flooding. The Board's Operations Officer and Rhino's Contracts Manager are to visit these watercourses to establish costs to bring them up to a good condition and also to confirm future routine maintenance costs. **Action: Operations Officer to progress.**

Ref: A4-3 Biodiversity

The following update was provided by Mr Martin Thomas of KSCP:

Enhancement Projects:

Liased with KCC Plan Tree team over possible funding for bankside trees and larger area planting. Substantial funding is available for both. In the process of planning a way forward and dividing actions up between IDB, Kent Plan Tree team and KSCP staff. Letter to go to landowners who may be interested in larger planting schemes. IDB30 – Updated AONB FIPL contact on temporary shelving of project over land ownership issues. FIPL likely to continue over several years so we may be able to proceed again once issues are resolved. Planning upcoming project implementation with the Operations Officer.

Engagement with Landowners and External Organisations:

Follow-up actions from complaint review meeting: reviewed ecology of reed-nesting birds with respect to identifying hotspots for breeding and postponing start of cutting season. Attempted to contact local bird surveying groups and individuals. Reviewed Sea Link consultation documents.

Ref: A4-5-07-23 Complaint (Richborough Stream)

The Clerk & Engineer reported that as a result of the above complaint, a maintenance review is underway and a summary of progress to date is below:

- Requests for information has been included in land entry notices and a note will be included in in this year's Annual Update to all Ratepayers.
- In an attempt to identify high risk areas, discussions have been had with various interest groups. Unfortunately, it is not considered possible to highlight specific watercourses or locations, as most watercourses have the potential for nesting birds. It was therefore agreed that the maintenance programme will need to be prioritised on drainage/flood risk.
- All IDB maintained watercourses have been separated into high, medium and low priority, with high to be cut from 16th July, medium from 16th August and low from 16th September. The practical implications of this are still to be explored and discussed with Rhino's Contracts Manager. It was agreed that this level of prioritisation is extremely ambitious and although it was agreed it should be pursued, it was recognised that this may cause difficulties in delivery so may need to be revised into simply high and low priority.
- More detailed maintenance specifications/cross-sections are to be developed for 2024 – all to remain aligned with EA standards.
- Further guidance/training is to be given to all site staff prior to the commencement of the 2024 programme.
- The Complaint Review Group/Board is to be updated on progress prior to implementation.
- The Complainant is to be updated on agreed actions prior to the commencement of the 2024 programme.

Ref: W7G Environment Agency Works

Dr Price provided the following updates on EA activities:

Work delivered September to December 2023:

- Meica asset maintenance / repairs
- Weed cutting programme completed
- Desilting – sections of the North Stream in the Hacklinge / Sandwich area (EA) and the New North Stream (via IDB PSCA)
- Structure operational checks
- Tree works (EA and via IDB PSCA)
- Black Sluice automatic weed rake – new culvert installation completed
- Boiling Spot – structure repairs completed

2023-2024 Project updates

- Stourmouth pumping station – pump refurbishment – pump 4 expected reinstallation March 2024
- Rippers Cross and Paddocks Farm (Hothfield FSR) pump refurbishment – pump 2s expected reinstallation March 2024
- Brewery Sluice refurbishment – debris screen – construction started October 2023, some issues arisen, awaiting timetable for completion
- Little Stour outfall repairs – construction postponed to March 2024 due to water voles
- Ashford FSRs access improvements – designs approved, constructed expected summer / autumn 2024
- Monks Wall FSR – erosion repairs and structure maintenance – designs under review, work expected summer / autumn 2024
- Minster pumping station – pump replacement – tender return received, business case being submitted, work expected autumn 2025
- Butterfly pumping station – access improvements – delivery expected March 2024
- Major Meica projects (Ash Level, Black Sluice, Hacklinge, Sarre, Stourmouth) – initial assessments completed, work expected to start 2025 / 2026
- Delf desilting and faggoting – work has started via IDB PSCA

Incident Response

- 26 Flood Alerts were issued across the district, and 2 Flood Warnings on the Whitewater and Rucking Dykes and the Tidal Stour.
- Aldington FSR impounded between 28/10/23 – 19/11/23, 05/12/23 – 07/12/23, 10/12/23 – 14/12/23. Staff from the Stour Asset Performance and Field teams inspected the embankment each day during impounding events.
- Hothfield FSR impounded between 05/11/23 – 06/11/23, 13/12/23 – 15/12/23. Staff from the Stour Asset Performance and Field teams inspected the embankment each day during impounding events.
- Stonar Cut was operated between 31/10/23 – 08/11/23 (14 tides), 10/11/23 – 12/11/23 (5 tides), 14/11/23 – 17/11/23 (7 tides). There is an issue with one of the gates due to gear box fault, hoping to get a report on the fault soon.
- The Stour Field team has been regularly monitoring the Nailbourne and Little Stour as groundwater levels have increased and are clearing debris screens frequently and removing blockages. Two temporary pumps have been installed at Stourmouth pumping station to increase capacity when needed and further operational equipment will be deployed across the catchment if required. We are holding meetings with our partners in Canterbury City Council and KCC Highways.

- A Flood Alert for Groundwater flooding in East Kent was issued on the 19/12/2023. A Flood Alert was also issued for the Nailbourne and Little Stour on 05/01/2024. Both Alerts remain in force.
- The Field Team is checking the Nailbourne regularly and clearing debris screens. Also liaising with CCC and KCC Highways.

Dr Price reported that the eel mitigation measures implemented at Stourmouth and Minster in October 2023 have been removed following advice received from Fisheries that the migration has now ended. Any nets that were in place to keep the eels out of the pumps have been removed, the Stourmouth pump operation has been returned to normal operation, but Minster levels are still being kept higher. Ms Dyas asked how many eels have been caught, Dr Price replied that he does not know the exact number but is aware that it is a low number. He further added that low numbers do not mean that mitigation measures are not beneficial because the aim is to encourage eels to exit the marsh via Kingfisher Sluice which is not monitored so the total amount of eels moving through the system is unfortunately not known.

Ms Dyas stated that when the University tagged the eels as part of their project, it was proved that the eels return through the system, so they are always there. She continued to say that the eel friendly pumps are a must because it is not viable to continue to try to discharge water solely via gravity on a flat marsh. Dr Price stated that the EA's aim continues to be to reduce pumping overall because of all the costs associated with it – financial and environmental. Ms Dyas agreed that the system should be run on gravity as much as possible, but this is limited because it is tidal, and it is illogical to flood areas in the marsh to avoid running the pumps.

The Chairman stated that farmers in that area cannot afford to keep having land taken out of production so the challenge is how can we anticipate the problems and manage the situation in advance rather than dealing with the problems after they occur. Ms Dyas agreed and stated that in the past she would liaise with the local farmers and then inform the Water Level Controller (WLC) of the situation and there were less problems than now, where the WLC must check with the EA before acting.

Dr Price stated that there is a difference between long and short term measures, the longer term is that levels have to be maintained higher because unfortunately the EA's priority is to protect properties not farm land and he can feed back comments but is unable to challenge this national policy. He acknowledged that the EA needs to be better at forecasting local rainfall events in the shorter term, he further stated that he has put measures in place for the heavy rain coming this week – levels have been lowered and the night inhibitor on the pumps has been turned off. Ms Dyas stated that ideally the levels should be just below the outfalls for the drainage system to work.

Dr Price stated that this year at the Stourmouth where pumps were being turned off overnight, they knew the weather had to be monitored so a Local Policy was put in place. This could possibly be extended to Minster next winter with resilience back up to cover for staff absences.

The Clerk & Engineer opined that there is already good communication and agreement but agreed that we do need to be more proactive rather than reactive. He added that it would be useful to see the issues first-hand and suggested a site visit with the EA and a farmer representative.

The Chairman stated that despite everyone's views, Dr Price and other local EA staff are constrained by national EA policy. The Chairman further asked Dr Price to try and ascertain why operations this year did not run as smoothly as last year considering that the system was operated

the same way. There should also be planning on how to deal with sick leave and staff absences going forward. Dr Price agreed to do this before next winter.

Dr Price added that it has been a challenge over the past few years to get funding to replace the 3 pumps at Minster due to the EA's policy about protecting properties, though the presence of the eels has helped because more funds can be claimed when trying to protect a protected species. Discussions with contractors about the exact type of pumps needed are still ongoing, but work is expected to be completed in autumn 2025 at a cost of £1 to £1.5 million. Once the project is completed the mitigation measures will end and higher levels will be maintained, but short-term action will be taken on account of the weather. All the mitigation measures such as turning the pumps off overnight will be stopped which should be beneficial to the situation on the marshes.

The Chairman asked Dr Price for more information on the Brewery Sluice. Dr Price reported that 85% to 90% of the work has been done, the outfall flap was completed last summer and the final piece is to fit the debris screen. There have been three attempts at doing this, but something always goes wrong in the channel, in October a section of concrete wall collapsed into the channel as the levels were lowered leaving a void behind it where the new screen was supposed to go and now we are waiting for a proposal to fix that void which is proving to be complicated

Dr Price informed that due to the number of eels that are in the Little Stour system there is a plan to replace the 4 pumps at Stourmouth to make them eel friendly and hopefully 1 or 2 of them will be done by Autumn 2025. Once this is done, bids will be placed for the majority of the EA's pumping stations (Black Sluice, Sarre, Ash Level and Hacklinge) with a hope of completing within 5 years.

Ref: W5 Planning Applications

Ashford Borough Council

OTH/2024/0094 Land between railway line and Willesborough Road, Kennington Details submitted pursuant to conditions 21 (Surface Water Drainage Scheme) and 49 (Arboricultural Impact Assessment) of planning permission 19/00025/AS

We have previously been consulted on various applications for development at this site and have raised the issue of Consent for any works to watercourses or ditches, along with the requirement for SWDC payment to accommodate the runoff from newly impermeable areas. The surface water strategy submitted to discharge Condition 21 states that the runoff rate from the areas of hardstanding will be in the region of 8l/s/Ha. We have queried this as it is somewhat higher than we would ordinarily expect in Ashford. We have also raised this with the LLFA.

If the LLFA is satisfied with the approach, we have reminded the applicant of the requirement for Land Drainage Consent and SWDC, with a note to inform the applicant that the amount of SWDC payable will be less if they can further reduce the rate of runoff.

PA/2023/2162 Land at Orchard Farm, Canterbury Road, Kennington Hybrid Planning Application comprising: Full planning permission for erection of 33 homes and Outline permission all matters reserved save for access for the erection of up to 64 additional homes

This application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment with a surface water strategy that directs the runoff from the developed area to a watercourse inside our District Boundary. KCC as LLFA have raised some concerns with the overall design but seem content that the final design can

be dealt with by way of Condition. We are happy with the proposed wording and have raised the issue of Land Drainage Consent and SWDC.

**PA/2023/1955 Land to the west of Sellindge Substation, Sellindge
Installation of a drainage spur**

This application is accompanied by a Drainage Strategy that proposes a discharge of surface water directly into an IDB maintained watercourse (IDB15 Pleasance Dyke). We have had several conversations with their agents and we have now received a draft application for Land Drainage Consent that deals with the detailed design of both the outfall and the associated drainage network. We therefore have no objection to this application and will liaise directly with the applicant/their agent if there are any minor, non-material functional amendments required. There will be a SWDC once Consent has been issued.

**NOT/2023/1051 Ashford Hockey Club, Canterbury Road, Ashford
Reserved matters application for the approval of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for the erection of 9no dwellings**

This site lies just outside of our Drainage District, with a Drainage Strategy that presently proposes an attenuation system that has a discharge to Southern Water's surface water sewer. Southern Water have raised concerns with this and have suggested that the applicant discharges to a watercourse/ditch. If an alternative strategy is pursued that results in a discharge to our District, we have asked that we are reconsulted and that the applicant is also informed of the requirement for Land Drainage Consent with SWDC.

**PA/2023/1423 Land between The Glenmore Centre and Tyreweb, Crowbridge Road,
Willesborough**

Proposed new industrial unit with vehicle parking and turning area

We have now been contacted by the applicant and are pleased to note that our concerns and requirements will be addressed by way of Land Drainage Consent (an application for which has been received and put on-hold, pending finalisation of design and capacity, as per KCC's comments).

Canterbury City Council

**CA/23/02046 Land At Puddledock Nethergong Hill, Upstreet
Siting of 12 additional caravans**

Having visited the site and discussed the development with the applicant, we are satisfied that there are no concerns with the management of surface water. Most of the area has a permeable surface with no formal discharge point to any boundary watercourse. The issues with watercourse management and obstruction to flow have been largely addressed. We support Southern Water's recommendation to connect to the foul sewer instead of using a cesspit owing to the proximity of a suitable sewer. On balance, we have no significant concerns with this application considering the established site use, and any potential risks can be managed through appropriate conditions, which will only serve to improve a less than ideal existing situation. We are content that the applicant will contact us if there are any future concerns.

Dover District Council

**22/01158 & 23/01095 Betteshanger Country Park, Sandwich Road, Sholden
Erection of a surfing lagoon and pools and associated facilities & Erection of a 120 bed hotel (C1) building with associated spa facilities, gym, restaurant/bar, access, landscaping and parking**

We have held pre-application discussions with the applicant's Flood Risk Consultants and are satisfied with the detailed meeting notes appended to the Flood Risk Assessment. While final foul and surface water management proposals are pending, ongoing engagement is expected, and detailed draft proposals will be consulted upon and dealt with by way of Condition. We have requested no detriment to the aquatic environment and have requested that we be contacted with draft designs prior to submission to the LPA.

The preliminary Surface Water Management Scheme involves discharge to an existing watercourse, with treatment through green roofs, rain gardens, and permeable paving, supplemented by geocellular storage tanks. We have stressed the importance of these measures in meeting discharge standards and are content with Kent County Council's suggested surface water management Conditions. We have also requested a similar Condition for foul discharge consideration, given Southern Water's response on sewer capacity. Land Drainage Consent will be required once the designs are finalised, and a SWDC will be payable.

**CON/17/01530/C Land On The North East Side Of Middle Deal Road, Deal
Discharge of condition 11 (Foul drainage) and condition 12 (Surface drainage scheme)**

We have recently granted Land Drainage Consent for the construction of the proposed outfall and have approved the principle of discharging clean surface water to our Drainage District. We therefore have no objection to the discharge of the Surface Water Management related Condition.

Folkestone and Hythe District Council

23/1324/FH Land Rear Rhodes House, Main Road, Sellindge

Full planning application for Phase 2 of Grove Park, comprising 128 homes (including affordable) and 4 Self/Custom Build Plots with associated access, parking, and landscaping

As previously stated for associated developments, although this site lies outside of our IDB Drainage District, the surface water discharged from the site appears to flow towards and into our district. The applicant will therefore need Land Drainage Consent from Kent County Council for any works that has the potential to affect flow in any ditch or watercourse on or bordering the site. They will also need Land Drainage Consent from the RISDB under our Byelaw 3.

23/1935/FH Land adjoining Fencing Yard, Potten Farm, Sellinge

Outline planning application (all matters reserved) for the erection of up to 105 dwellings

This site lies outside of our IDB Drainage District, with the intent to discharge the surface water generated by the development towards and into our district. The applicant will need Land Drainage Consent from Kent County Council for any works that has the potential to affect flow in any ditch or watercourse on or bordering the site. They will also need Land Drainage Consent from ourselves under our Byelaw 3.

Notwithstanding the above, we presently support the LLFA's **objection** to this proposal, and would wish to be consulted on any documentation that may be submitted to attempt to satisfy their concerns.

**23/1610/FH Land Adjoining The Dragonfly, (Former Piggery), Main Road, Sellindge
Development for the erection of 26 houses, 24 flats and doctors surgery**

Given the site's location, it is likely that any SuDS scheme devised for the site will discharge to the wider drainage network that discharges to our District via the Horton Priory Dyke (IDB017). We note that there is no FRA/Drainage Strategy presently available, and we support KCC (as LLFA) in their **objection**, pending submission of appropriate detail. If it can be demonstrated that water can be effectively conveyed from the point of discharge to a wider receiving network, the

applicant will need Land Drainage Consent from Kent County Council for any works that has the potential to affect flow in any ditch or watercourse on the site, and we would look to work with them and the Council to apply our Byelaw 3, specifically with regard to seeking a Surface Water Development Contribution for any increase in rates/volumes of discharge that may be directed into our District.

Maidstone Borough Council (MBC)

19/504724/HYBRID Land Off Old Ashford Road, Lenham

Outline application (all matters reserved except for access) for up to 100 dwellings

Although this site lies outside of our IDB Drainage District, the surface water discharged from the site appears to flow towards and into our district. The applicant will therefore need Land Drainage Consent from Kent County Council for any works that has the potential to affect flow in any ditch or watercourse on or bordering the site. Our Byelaw 3 also applies.

Thanet District Council (TDC)

We have received no new planning consultations from TDC and have made no new representations within the Thanet District Council area.

Ref: W15 Applications for Consent

24 ST 01

Location: Grove Road, Preston

Proposal: Relining of Highways Culvert

This application for the installation of a GRP liner will support the culvert's deteriorating walls and will restore the culvert's ability to handle loads and water. This should extend the lifespan of the culvert significantly without having to excavate and replace the entire structure. Local Members have been consulted and the applicant, Kent Highways, will be informed of the decision in due course.

23 ST 11

Location: Waterbrook Park, Ashford, TN24 0LH

Proposal: Application for Consent under Byelaw 3 for a discharge of surface

This is an application for LDC under Byelaw 3, solely related to the discharge of surface water to our district from a SuDS scheme. The overall rate of discharge will be controlled to 3.5l/s. There will be a **£10,900.80** SWDC to be paid towards the management of this water.

ADMINISTRATION

Ref: A1-1

The Chairman reported that Cllr Noel Ovenden stood down from the IDB due to his workload as Leader of Ashford Borough Council and the Council has since appointed Cllr Ray McGeever as his replacement on the IDB. Cllr McGeever has experience in engineering and an understanding of local drainage matters in and around Ashford.

Ref: A3-6 Health & Safety

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the Board's Health & Safety Policy is due to be reviewed in 2024 and the review will be carried out in consultation with the Health & Safety Sub-Committee,

for approval at the November meeting of the Board, which will include a review of key site procedures.

Ref: A4-6 Environment Day 2024

The Chairman reported that Mr Dunn, Ms Dyas, Ms Lynch, Mr Wilkinson attended the ADA's Environment Day for Internal Drainage Boards in Peterborough on 2 February. Mr Wilkinson reported that it was a very well organised and enjoyable day.

Ref: A8-1 Association of Drainage Authorities – Annual Conference 2023

It was reported that the ADA's Annual Water Management Conference took place on 21 November 2023, and was attended by the Chair, Vice Chair, Clerk Engineer, Technical Officer and Finance & Rating Officer. The speakers were Emma Hardy MP – Shadow Minister for Environmental Quality & Resilience, Julia King DBE – Chair of the Climate Change Committee's Adaptation Committee, Alan Lovell – Chair of the Environment Agency, Lisa Pinney MBE – Chief Executive of the Coal Authority, Ian Titherington - Senior Adviser on Sustainable Drainage for the Welsh Government, and Adriano Battilani – Secretary General of Irrigants d'Europe and a leading expert in water level management in Italy.

MEETING CLOSED

There being no other business the Chairman thanked all for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.