

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Meeting of the Board held on Thursday 6 June 2024 at 2.00pm
at Chartham Village Hall, Station Road, Chartham Kent CT4 7HZ

PRESENT

Mr G Steed (Chairman), Cllr R Carnac, Mr P Dunn, Mr D Fuller, Cllr D Ledger, Ms A Lynch, Cllr R McGeever, Cllr G Meaden, Cllr W Scobie (remote) and Mr M Wilkinson.

IN ATTENDANCE

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

WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed the following EA Officers: Mr R Tournay (Stour & Swale Team Leader Asset Performance Team), Mr S Boyce (Catchment Officer) and Mr B Morris (Beaver Technical Specialist, Southeast). He further welcomed Mr Alasdair Hope (Member of the Public).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr A Hicks (Vice Chair), Ms N Dyas, Mr G Holdstock, Mr P Howard and Mr P Williams.

ABSENT

Mr D Botting, Cllr A Buchannan, Cllr M Moorhouse, Cllr D Parks and Mr L Woollorton.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

PRESENTATION ON LOCAL BEAVER ACTIVITY – UPDATE

Mr Morris stated that he covers Kent, London and East Anglia with most of his work currently being in Kent where beavers have been for over 20 years. They are territorial so manage their own numbers by moving away and finding new territories sometimes dispersing quite far.

Beavers are now a fully protected species, and they benefit some places, but they also come with some challenges. Natural England commissioned an area wide survey for which a report is available online showing the distribution of beavers in Kent, but this is already out of date as beaver signs are being found at other locations. The University of Exeter produced a map showing habitat suitability, largely based on tree cover demonstrating that where the beavers are in Kent is currently deemed as unsuitable, yet they are doing well – beavers are adapting, and it appears they may settle in any location where there is water and some sort of vegetation.

Beavers are a native species and what they do should be considered natural processes where possible, though potential restoration areas have been identified. Natural England have a five-step approach to beaver management decisions which should be followed, and a Beaver Class Licence is needed for taking actions that will affect beavers.

The burrows are a protected feature, but work can be carried out around them, within reason, if it does not impact them, so an ongoing project can continue without it being a problem. In many cases it is advisable to make necessary repairs that encourage the beavers to stay and use the features they have already created rather than encourage them to move on and create new damage elsewhere. Repairs are being carried out at Newnham Pipe (culvert repair works), KWP

Hoplands Farm (beaver canal), KWCT Westbere (access track/footpath) and at Hacklinge (collapsed burrow), Stodmarsh NNR Grove Wall.

Mr Fuller asked who is liable for the repair costs of beaver damage and Mr Morris replied that it is landowners' responsibility. If it's a burrow the work must be consented by Natural England, but if it is an open channel and it can be clearly seen that there are no beavers, repairs can be carried out without delay. Mr Fuller stated that he is in Minster Marshes where the key flood defence asset is the ancient Abbots Wall and there are beavers in the field next to it. He asked if they were to burrow through Abbots Wall who would be responsible for the repairs, because if this structure fails, flooding would be inevitable to the low-lying areas in Minster. Mr Morris offered to visit the site to ascertain if there are any measures that can be put in place to mitigate damage and prevent flooding. He further stated that the EA is trying to work out a method for assessing and monitoring flood banks and assets.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that he will keep highlighting the need for specific funding for Risk Management Authorities (EA, IDBs, Councils) to cover repairs to flood risk assets, as it is unfair to burden individuals with this financial responsibility when the assets are for the benefit of whole communities. Mr Morris agreed and stated that currently there is limited funding for things like tree protection and dam management, but burrowing is more complicated and costly so more funding will be needed.

Mr Fuller stated that beavers undermined the integrity of one of his neighbour's reservoirs who had to strip all the tree cover to remove the food source, so what was a nice nature reserve with lots of wildlife is now a denuded area. Cllr Meaden stated that beavers demolished fruit trees in his friend's garden, backing onto the Stour at Broad Oak Road Canterbury, and enquired about compensation and what the best way is to keep them out of the garden. Mr Morris advised them to contact Natural England and check the website for advice, he further stated that he is happy to advise people directly so will circulate his details. The Chairman stated that a stock fence mesh around the tree should prevent a lot of the damage. Mr Morris advised to dig down and put a 'skirt' on the fencing, so beavers encounter a hard surface as they dig down.

Mr Morris reported that when there has been damage in public footpaths the council have stepped up and taken responsibility due to public safety, which they did at Hacklinge and Westbere, on the latter they became difficult to get hold of and the landowner needed access to the area so pavement slabs were used to cover the cavities – in theory this is okay, technically this is main river on a designated site so it could be seen as fly tipping but more of a concern here is the evidence that the beavers are just walking around the covered area, making the problem go wider. Mr Morris reported that it took about 1.2 tons of clay to repair the collapsed burrow at Hacklinge and nothing was done here to protect the bank because it is such a big embankment they could be burrowing anywhere, therefore this could be an ongoing task filling of holes or something else depending on funds and ideas. There is also the concern at Stodmarsh Grove Wall – Natural England – where the beavers go up and over, it gets steeper and steeper so there are a lot of repairs needed, again this is a public footpath and the council have offered to help. The Clerk & Engineer and the Operations Officer have also been helping to look for solutions at this site, trying to repair the bank in a lasting, natural way.

Ms Lynch asked how close the Stour is to full capacity, before the beavers start moving elsewhere. Mr Morris replied that the main stem of the Stour from Canterbury to the coast is pretty much at capacity and possibly the Worth Marshes, so beavers are starting to appear in the Ash Levels, and we will probably start seeing them in the Monkton Marshes soon. It appears that they are being held up at Canterbury by the impassable sluice gates, so they are spreading onto the marshes.

Mr Dunn commented that beavers are promoted to provide environmental benefits, but there is no recognition of damage, repairs and costs. Mr Morris confirmed that they are good for wildlife, water quality and management, but agreed that the risks need to be managed. Mr Fuller agreed that beavers are beneficial in an upland environment as they hold back water but when in heavily managed low-lying areas, they cause all sorts of problems.

The Chairman thanked Mr Morris for his presentation and stated that this is an issue that will continue to be at the forefront of our minds for some time to come. Mr Morris agreed and stated that nationally Kent is at the forefront of events, which is exciting for some and clearly frustrating and worrying for others, so we all need to work together.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON MONDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2024

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on Thursday 8 February 2024 were received. It was proposed by Cllr Ledger, seconded by Cllr McGeever and resolved that the minutes be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the proceedings at that meeting.

PRESENTATION BY SOUTHERN WATER

The Chairman asked if Mr Butson had come back with answers to the enquiries made at the last Board meeting. The Clerk & Engineer replied that Mr Butson has sent links to the Clean Rivers and Seas and Beachbuoy websites which will show discharge records and planned improvements, but we are still waiting for some other queries to be answered. The Clerk & Engineer stated that he will email all Members once all the information is received. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to chase.**

The Chairman pointed out that there are quite a lot of abbreviations in the Board's documents and as some terms are not generally known it may be helpful to compile a list. The Clerk & Engineer stated that this point was raised by Cllr McGeever and a list has been compiled and will be uploaded on the Board's website. **Action: Technical Officer to upload.**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES AND WORKS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 20 MAY 2024

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee held on Monday 20 May 2024 were received. It was proposed by the Cllr Ledger, seconded by Mr Fuller and resolved that these minutes be received.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Ref: F3-3 The Old Thrustbore

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the Thrustbore Reserve balance is currently £110,000 (£10,000 added annually with a target of £140,000). Regular surveys are carried out with the last two highlighting a few leaking joints which are not considered to be a problem. The Clerk & Engineer obtained updated quotes to repair them (£11,000) and also to re-line the whole culvert (£43,000). The Chairman added that access costs may bring this cost to £55,000.

Location maps and photos were shown and the survey CCTV footage was previously shared by email, and it was reported that there are several options for the re-lining of the Thrustbore and possible additional costs may increase the current quote of £55,000.

The Chairman stated that the originally estimated costs for which the Board has been setting aside funds appear to be higher than what is necessary to undertake the reported repairs. He further stated that if the Board goes ahead with these repairs, it would be useful to know how long they are likely to last and does the Board need to continue setting aside funds for future works. The Clerk & Engineer stated that the life expectancy for the liner is 100 years.

Cllr Scobie stated that we need to look at the potential risks, such as possible disruption if it fails and the associated reputational effect on the Board, as it is always preferable to prevent rather than to respond to situations and to ensure adequate insurance is in place. The Finance & Rating Officer stated that the Board's insurers have advised the Board that they will not cover the structure itself, but the Board is covered under Public Liability for costs if the structure were to fail. **Action: Finance & Rating Officer to clarify current level of cover.**

The Chairman stated that this also has an impact on whether the Board keeps raising funds for this structure or just amalgamates it with the general Structures Reserve. Cllr McGeever suggested that a joint survey of the structure with Network Rail would be beneficial as it would improve awareness and highlight responsibilities. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to contact Network Rail to enquire about a joint survey.**

The Chairman deferred the decision on any works and on the reserve until the joint survey has been completed.

Cllr William Scobie made his apologies and left the meeting.

Ref: F1-2a Final Internal Audit Inspection of the 2023-24 Accounts

The Chairman reported that the Board's Internal Auditor, Mr David Griffiths, carried out his inspection of the Board's 2023-24 accounts and accounting records on 8 May 2024. The Chairman stated that the report indicates that the Board is doing everything it needs to do to meet the standards required. There being no questions it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded Mr Fuller and resolved that Final Internal Audit Report be received and approved.

Ref: F1-2b Review of the Internal Control and Internal Audit Arrangements 2023-24

The Chairman reported that the Board's Internal Audit Team for 2022-23, consisting of Mr Dunn, Mr Holdstock and Mr Wilkinson, carried out its review of the Board's accounts and accounting records for 2023-24 on 8 May with Mr Griffiths assisting. Mr Dunn stated that the Team completed its review and the only item of concern raised was member attendance at meetings. The Chairman stated that the challenge is for the Board to find a way of achieving the best attendance by all members, but the actions below are proposed in relation to Council Appointed Members:

- Action 1 – Annual newsletter be sent to the Councils' Democratic Services highlighting the IDB's work and to confirm dates and times of Board meetings – target Councils just before re-appointment dates (end of March, beginning of April) so that the information is timely.
- Action 2 – Inform Councils' Democratic Services that according to the Good Governance Guide, a Member who fails to attend a meeting for 6 months, without the Board's approval, will cease to be a Member.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Ms A Lynch and resolved that the above actions be approved and the Internal Audit Team's Report be received and approved. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to write to all Councils.**

Ref: F1-5a Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023-24 (AGAR)

The Chairman reported that the AGAR 2023-24 was completed with 3 documents to be received and approved by the Board in the correct sequence. The first one of these being the Annual Internal Audit Report 2023-24 (page 3 of the AGAR) which was completed and signed by the Internal Auditor. There being no comments it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Ledger and resolved that the Annual Internal Audit Report 2023-24 be received and approved.

Ref: F1-5b Accounts for Financial Year Ended 31st March 2024

The Chairman presented the completed Board's accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 and asked for any comments or queries. There being no queries it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Ledger, and resolved that the accounts for the Financial Year ended 31 March 2024 be received and approved.

Ref: F1-5c Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) – SECTION 1 (Annual Governance Statement 2023-24)

The Chairman reported that the requirement to review the effectiveness of the system of internal control as per Section 1 of the AGAR (page 4) was 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 2023-24) and the review of the Internal Control and Internal Audit Arrangements by the Internal Audit Team, both carried out on 8 May 2024. This section (page 4 of the AGAR) was completed by the Clerk & Engineer to the Board and considered by the Board. There being no comments it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Ms Lynch and resolved that the Annual Governance Statement 2023-24 be received and approved by the Board and signed by the Clerk & Engineer and the Chairman.

Ref: F1-5d Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) – SECTION 2 (Accounting Statement 2023-24)

The Chairman presented Section 2 of the AGAR (page 5), the Accounting Statements 2023-24 which was prepared, signed and dated by the Finance & Rating Officer – Responsible Financial Officer – and checked by the Internal Auditor. This document was considered by the Board and it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Mr Wilkinson and resolved that the Accounting Statements 2023-24 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

Ref: F1-5e Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Unaudited Annual Return Accounts for the Financial Year Ended 31st March 2024

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records to be made available for inspection by any person interested, during a period of 30 working days set by the Board. It was proposed that the dates for the period of exercise of public rights be set as follows:

- Commencing on Monday 10 June 2024
- Ending on Friday 19 July 2024

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Mr D Fuller and resolved that the above dates be set as the period for the Exercise of Public Rights and published on the Board's website and on the Board's outdoor noticeboard. **Action: Technical Officer to publish.**

Ref: F3 Reserves

The Chairman noted the information on Reserves and the need to review these, but suggested the review take place once the details on the Thrustbore and its reserve funds are finalised. All present agreed.

Ref: F6-1 Environment Agency Precept

The Clerk & Engineer presented the Environment Agency's latest Precept Report confirming the final allocations for 2023-24 (£97,753) and proposed allocations for 2024-25 (£100,686).

The amount spent this year on the Boiling Spot was listed to have been 100% funded by the precept but also incorrectly listed to have been revenue funded, this has now been amended. The total spent on the Black Sluice will be 65% from precept over 4 years (including current year) and 35% from FDGiA, but during 2023-24 the total of £50,463.50 spent came from the precept hence the 100% contribution listed. The total cost of this improvement was £259,334.

The Clerk & Engineer further reported a slight change to the allocations for 2024-25. The EA plan to carry out shingle recycling work on the Northern Sea Wall and £5,000 of the precept has now been allocated to this work which reduces the Pioneering/Blockage removal from £17,989 to £12,989.

Mr Dunn asked about the repairs to Stonar Cut, Mr Tournay reported that they should be finalised in the first week of July. He apologised for the delays but said that they will now hold spare parts which will make repairs faster if this problem reoccurs. The Clerk & Engineer asked if any of these costs are to be recovered from the previous contractor who caused the problem. Mr Tournay stated that he is hopeful but it is a difficult situation so the priority is to make sure it does not happen again in the future.

There being no further comments it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Ledger and resolved that the EA's Precept Report be received and approved.

Ref: W7G Watercourses for possible IDB Adoption

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the Operations Officer and Rhino Plant Contracts Manager visited the watercourses proposed for IDB adoption to detail the works required to bring them up to an acceptable condition and to also confirm details of future routine maintenance. A summary of proposed works with approximate costs is listed below:

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|--|---|
| <p>1. Church Lane Dyke, Sellindge (345m):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial works £3,500 • Routine maintenance £670 | <p>5. Blackhole Dyke, Wickhambreaux (317m):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial works £9,000 • Routine maintenance £620 |
| <p>2. Norman Road Dyke, Ashford (70m):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial works £4,500 • Routine maintenance £140 | <p>6. Minster Crossing Dyke, Minster (305m):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial works £5,000 • Routine maintenance £600 |
| <p>3. Blackwall Road Dyke, Willesborough Lees (297m):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial works £4,000 • Routine maintenance £580 | <p>7. Brook Street Dyke, Eastry (310m):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial works £3,500 • Routine maintenance £600 |
| <p>4. Harville Road Stream, Wye (345m):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial works £500 • Routine maintenance £670 | <p><u>Total estimate to bring up to standard:</u>
<u>£30,000</u></p> <p><u>Total estimate for annual maintenance:</u>
<u>£3,880</u></p> |

The Chairman asked why the initial works on the Harville Road Stream are lower than the routine maintenance. The Operations Officer explained that this watercourse is already in a

good condition so just a small sum included for minor tree maintenance. Ms Lynch asked why these watercourses were chosen, the Clerk & Engineer replied that they have been problematic in the past and we can, for a relatively low cost, do regular maintenance which will reduce the frequency and severity of flooding in these areas. It was suggested that SWDC funds be used for the initial work, at an estimated cost of £30,000, to bring these watercourses into a good condition and that the continued routine maintenance of these watercourses, at an estimated cost of £3,880, be incorporated into the annual maintenance budget.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Mr Dunn and resolved that the Board adopt the above watercourses. It was further proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Mr Fuller and resolved that the initial works be funded by SWDCs and the continued annual maintenance will be included in the annual maintenance programme. All present agreed. **Action: Clerk & Engineer and Operations Officer to implement.**

Report for the period February to April 2024

Ref: W4/WSR Rainfall & River Flow Data

It was reported that rainfall across the Stour catchment in January ranged from 41.2mm at Broadstairs to 66.0mm at Barham, averaging 55.4mm (81% of the Long-Term Average). February was extremely wet again, with rainfall ranging from 92.6mm at Broadstairs to 158.4mm at Bybrook, averaging 121.6mm (265% of the LTA). March improved, with totals ranging from 46.6mm at Broadstairs to 83.9mm at Bybrook, averaging 63.2mm (115% of the LTA). Rain persisted through April, with 59.4mm at Broadstairs to 84.2mm at Barham, averaging 73.2mm (146 of the LTA).

At the end of April, the Environment Agency still categorised river flows in the Stour catchment as notably high. The average flows in and around Ashford in April were 212% of the LTA. Groundwater levels ranged from notably high to exceptionally high across the area, although the Groundwater Flood Alert for East Kent has now been removed. Nearly all reservoirs are at full capacity.

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

Weed Cutting

It was reported that this year's weed cutting programme is scheduled to commence in mid-July as usual and joint IDB-EA land entry notices were issued to all landowners/occupiers. Details of works to be carried out on behalf of the Environment Agency and DDC under PSCAs have been reviewed and some additional routine Main River maintenance has been included. Again, this will enable more efficient working and will also allow the EA Operations Team to focus on high-risk systems and assets. DDC requested that Mathews Close Dyke in Deal is also cut twice this year.

De-silting

The 2023-24 de-silting programme, after some alterations, totalled 19.6km. This included work on IDB1 Hart Dyke, IDB23 Park Farm Dyke, IDB30 Long Reaches, IDB48 Upper Wickham Stream, IDB51 Monkton Valley Stream, IDB52 Preston & Deerson Main Stream, IDB83 Stourmouth Valley Lead Dyke, IDB84 Stourmouth Valley Dyke, IDB90 Preston Stream, IDB106 Seaton Lead Dyke, IDB110 Blackhole Dyke, IDB116 Walmer's Hill Lead Dyke, IDB125 Tipper Drove Dyke, IDB145 Brooksend Feed Dyke, IDB188 Cooper Street Pumping Drain, IDB194 Valley Wall Lead Dyke, IDB214 Watchester Drove Lead Dyke, IDB218 Minster Station Lead Dyke and IDB309 Shelvington Stream. The 2024-25 de-silting programme, 18km of IDB watercourses, will be checked and confirmed over the summer.

The New North Stream was also de-silted on behalf of the EA under the PSCA. Another section of the Delf Stream in Sandwich, 45m in length, was narrowed and deepened to help improve flows. Brushwood faggots were installed, which will help to protect the riverbank from erosion and will provide space for the placement of silts. A further section is to be completed next winter, again funded by IDB Precept.

Tree & Shrub Maintenance

A substantial amount of work was carried out over the winter, with works completed on the following watercourses: IDB1 Hart Dyke, IDB17 Horton Priory Dyke, IDB23 Park Farm Dyke, IDB31 Shalmsford Street Dyke, IDB115 Brooksend Stream, IDB116 Walmer's Hill Stream, IDB218 Minster Station Lead Dyke, IDB302 Upper Stour and IDB309 Shelvingford Stream.

Under the EA-IDB PSCA, work was completed on the Delf Stream, New North Stream and Whitewater Dyke.

Structures Maintenance

New Cut Stop (IDB268) was renewed in 2023 to maintain upstream water levels on the Hacklinge Marshes. Minor repairs and improvements were carried out on Caytor Bridge Stop (IDB52), Hulme's Stop (IDB90), Dogger Island Stop (IDB114), Wagtail Stop (IDB114), Tipper Stop (IDB122), Red Row Stop (ID127), Twelve Foot Stop (IDB136), Butterfly Cottage Stop (IDB189), Chandler's Stop (IDB210), Penfield Stop (IDB266), Pole Bay Stop (IDB273) and Minnis Farm Stop (IDB314). Unfortunately, poor ground conditions prevented access to a number of other structures.

Harrison's Stop (IDB47), which is important to maintaining water levels on Stodmarsh NNR, is to be renewed this summer. The removal of Newnham Stop is also to be investigated and implemented. Minor repairs and improvements are planned on a number of other structures.

Ref: A10-21 Beaver Activity

Bank damage has been observed at a number of the Board's water level management structures. The Operations Officer has been liaising with the EA's Beaver Specialist to agree details of repairs, which will be used to help develop best practice locally.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that Grip Feed, on the Abbots Wall defence on the southern side of the tidal Stour, had completely failed and this is thought to have been due to beaver activity. This was a complete failure which resulted in a substantial amount of water flowing onto the Ash Levels, and therefore additional pumping at Ash Level Pumping Station, but it has now been repaired by the landowner.

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, one particularly large on the Horton Priory Dyke (IDB17).

Water Level Control

Water levels across the district are being raised for the summer but continue to be adjusted to allow for rainfall events. A few issues noted by the Water Level Controller:

- The leak at Monkton Engine Feed is getting worse, but it is hoped that this will be repaired this summer – EA has applied for funding and EKEP have detailed the repairs necessary.
- Gosshall Feed is still to be replaced, so a temporary pump will be required again this summer.

- There is an issue with the Mile Feed pump, constantly alarming, this was inspected late last year but repairs are needed asap.
- Access along the track behind the Northern Sea Wall needs to be improved, as access along the top of the wall is becoming increasingly difficult – to be included in the H & S Review.
- The access track to Hacklinge Pumping Station also needs to be repaired.

Ref: A4-3 Biodiversity

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

- 1. Surveying** – Water quality monitoring on IDB 305 North Stream to provide evidence for deleterious effect of silt run-off from adjacent salad fields. iRecord (species recording app) set-up for use during summer 2024 BAP surveys. Review of survey method: indicator species/groups, especially aquatic invertebrates.
- 2. Management Prescriptions** – Review of management sheets using data collected during summer 2023 surveys. Review of relevant management sheets in light of habitat management advice for Priority Dragonfly/Damselfly species.
- 3. Enhancement Projects** – Arranged wetland plant order for newly created marginal shelf on the Delf, Sandwich. Site visit to IDB 25 and engaged with Ashford Borough Council in preparation for 2nd phase of log deflector installation – project postponed to Autumn due to heavy rainfall. Pursued tree planting funding through Kent Plan Tree (KCC) and engaged with RSPB about possible planting at Lydden Valley reserve. Updated 5-Year Enhancement plan. Site visit to IDB 31 to monitor success of 2022 enhancement project (pools and berms).
- 4. Engagement with Landowners and External Organisations** – Provided advice for Sandwich Cricket Club on management of margin alongside IDB 170. Liaised with KCC Making Space for Nature team over sharing data. Wrote up and shared 2023 survey results with landowner on Minster Marsh.
- 5. Communication and training** – Monthly work summaries. Written advice for Rhino operators concerning reed-nesting birds (action from complaint review). Planning in-field training for Rhino operators on biodiversity issues.

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

As a result of the above complaint, the Review Group met and agreed on a review of the Board's maintenance programme, to help ensure that environmental impacts are kept to a minimum. The outcomes of this review and subsequent work are as follows:

- **Clearer engagement with landowners and interested conservation groups:**
Requests for information have been included in all land entry notices and a note was included in in this year's Annual Update to all Ratepayers.
- **Investigate feasibility of delaying weed-cutting operations:**
The possibility of categorising watercourses as high (to be cut from 16th July), medium (to be cut from 16th August) and low (to be cut from 16th September) was explored. However, the practicability of this was considered too problematic and would likely result in excessive plant movements and significant delays. Therefore, all IDB maintained watercourses have been separated into high and medium priority, with the highest priority watercourses (to be cut from 16th July) as follows:

IDB2 Pumping Station Dyke
IDB8 Whitfield Road Dyke
IDB15 Pleasance Dyke
IDB17 Horton Priory Dyke
IDB19 Bockhanger Dyke
IDB32 Air Ministry Dyke

IDB219 New Watchester Lead Dyke
IDB268 Ring Sewer
IDB284 West Street Dyke
IDB297 Deal Town Dyke
IDB301 Southwall Road Dyke
IDB303 Sparrow's Bridge Loop

IDB38 Fordwich Main Stream
 IDB50 Monkton Main Stream
 IDB119 Chitty Lead Dyke
 IDB190 Wantsum Lees Dyke
 IDB195 Snipe Dyke
 IDB207 Ash Level Feed Dyke
 IDB212 Horseshoe Lead Dyke West
 IDB213 Horseshoe Lead Dyke East

IDB309 Shelvingford Stream
 IDB310 Minster Stream
 IDB311 Richborough Stream (from IDB
 213 to 205)
 All Main Rivers (except the Delf to the
 end of Pinnock Wall)

The maintenance of all other watercourses will be carried out from 16 August. The above will be implemented this year, but all watercourses and timings will need to be kept under review.

- **Reduce the impact of weed-cutting works:**

It was agreed that existing maintenance standards are appropriate (which are fully aligned with EA standards) and will be implemented in line with the following principles:

- In-channel weed cutting is self-explanatory (50%, 80%).
- Only one bank to be cut for all watercourses over 2m wide, and also under 2m wide if possible (accepted that this can be impractical for very narrow channels).
- Healthy and wide marginal fringes are to be retained as much as possible, and only trimmed if absolutely necessary.
- Banktop and slope cutting is required to maintain safe access and visibility but should also be kept to a minimum.

- **Maintaining Habitat Assessments:**

We will continue to work with the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership to update habitat assessments and watercourse-specific recommendations before commencing routine maintenance works, to help identify potential nesting areas and implement mitigation measures accordingly. A number of follow-up surveys are carried out each year, in order to identify and monitor changes.

- **Education and Awareness:**

Further training and guidance will be given to all site staff prior to the commencement of the 2024 maintenance programme. This will include advice on how to spot the signs of nesting birds and instructions to record and report issues.

- **Habitat Restoration:**

We will continue to identify and implement potential enhancements, including locations where potential nesting habitat can be left untouched (upper reaches of blind ditches with no through flow).

Ref: W7G Environment Agency Works

The following summary of EA activities was as received:

Currently we are:

- Replacing stop boards on the LSRC and commencing fish rescue.
- Maintenance activities are taking place, including FSR mowing.
- Weed cutting programme due to start in mid-July.
- Seaton weir erosion protection works,
- Funding approved for additional cuts by the IDB as discussed previously.
- Improvement works at Aldington scheduled for summer.
- Nargate weed cut underway response to excessive growth due to enhanced neutrality source sewage outfall.

- Data task updating our systems with asset start dates, DQF etc may need to get info from IDB have liaised with James and Shaun already.
- Stour Mouth pump fitted not operational yet.
- Hacklinge track repair on the horizon – using the road planner from Rye.

Work delivered January to April 2024:

- MEICA asset maintenance / repairs.
- Structure operational checks.
- Tree works (EA and IDB via PSCA).
- Butterfly pumping station – access improvements.
- Delf desilting and faggoting (via IDB PSCA).

2024-2025 Project list

- Stonar Cut penstock repairs.
- Meica asset maintenance / PPMs (Planned Preventative Maintenance).
- Annual in-channel maintenance programme.
- Tree pioneering – watercourses to be determined.
- Rippers Cross and Paddocks Farm pumping stations – step replacement.
- Lower Stour bathymetry survey.
- Stourmouth Pumping Station – eel friendly pump works and elver pass installation (multi-year project expected to start in 2024/25).
- Minster Pumping Station – eel friendly pump replacement and elver pass installation (pump replacement expected autumn 2025).
- Northern Sea Wall beach management – shingle recycling.
- Rippers Cross and Paddocks Farm PS pump refurbishments – pump 2s ongoing (completion expected summer 2024).
- Brewery Sluice – trash screen replacement – ongoing (completion expected autumn 2024).
- Little Stour outfall repairs (completion expected autumn 2024).
- Ash Level Pumping Station – basement columns repairs.
- Black Sluice Pumping Station – motor refurbishment, VSD installation, screw bearings replacement.
- Black Sluice Pumping Station – eel pass pump replacement.
- Hacklinge Pumping Station – works to prevent pump 3 backflow.
- Sarre Pumping Station – screw replacement (completion expected autumn 2025).
- Monks Wall FSR – erosion repairs and structure maintenance.
- Ashford FSRs – access improvements.

The list of projects may be subject to change during the year, depending on staff resource, contractor availability, incident response activities, flood risk priorities and budget position.

Incident Response

- Aldington FSR impounded between 02/01/24 - 07/01/24, 09/02/24 - 12/02/24, 18/02/24 - 19/02/24, 23/02/24 - 06/03/24, 13/03/24, 03/04/24 - 04/04/24. Staff from the Stour Asset Performance and Field teams inspected the embankment each day during impounding events.
- Hothfield FSR impounded between 03/01/24, 05/01/24 - 08/01/24, 09/02/24 - 12/02/24, 19/02/24, 23/02/24 - 29/02/24, 02/03/24, 13/03/24. Staff from the Stour Asset Performance and Field teams inspected the embankment each day during impounding events.
- Stonar Cut was operated between 04/01/24 - 08/01/24 (7 tides), 10/02/24 - 13/02/24 (8 tides), 24/02/24 - 05/03/24 (20 tides), 13/03/24 - 17/03/24 (7 tides), 29/03/24 - 30/03/24 (2 tides), 07/04/24 - 10/04/24 (6 tides).

- The Stour Field team are still regularly monitoring the Nailbourne and Little Stour as groundwater levels remain high. The Little Stour Flood Relief Channel was opened on 09/02/24 and remains open but is now slowly being closed as flows subside.
- Groundwater levels remain high but have now past their peak. The peak groundwater level at the Little Bucket borehole was 86.8m AOD on 12/03/24. As of 08.00 on 22/05/24, the level was 84.4m AOD.
- Both the East Kent Groundwater and Nailbourne and Little Stour fluvial Flood Alerts remain in force but are being reviewed regularly.
- The temporary pumps at Stourmouth were used between late February and mid-March 2024. This was due to the removal of pump 4 for refurbishment. The temporary pumps were removed in early April 2024 as conditions improved. Pump 4 was reinstalled on w/c 8th April but is not yet operational, commissioning is expected to take place in July 2024.

The Clerk & Engineer asked about the bathymetric survey results on the River Stour which is being done annually. Mr Tournay replied that the data was collected in October/November and is with the EA's Geomorphologist but will be made available when assessed.

Ref: W5 Planning Applications

The Technical Officer reported that we have objected to a few applications largely on the ambiguities around the management/discharge of treated effluent – water that wouldn't naturally be in the catchment.

Cllr McGeever stated that he noted the request for clarification on several sites and he would like to see the follow up as we must keep checking that developers are doing what is asked of them. He further stated that it is important for the Council Planning Departments to have this information so they can assess it. The Technical Officer stated that this will be followed up and upheld and he always copies-in developers as well as KCC's SuDS Team and the EA to make them aware of our concerns. **Action: Technical Officer to update.**

Ashford Borough Council

OTH/2023/1069

**Land southeast of Barnfield and south of, Barnfield Road, Charing, TN27 0BN
Details submitted pursuant to conditions 5 (Sustainable surface water drainage scheme)
– Equestrian Facility**

We have **objected** to the current drainage plan submitted in pursuance of the SuDS related Condition. The site lies within our Drainage District and we have concerns about the proposed electrical pump's sustainability and the system's overall functionality. Land Drainage Consent and a Surface Water Development Contribution will also be required, and we would be unlikely to approve the current plan. We recommend using a gravity-based system with either an orifice plate or hydrobrake, (potentially requiring a different discharge point). We have requested consultation on any revised design and would only accept a pump if absolutely necessary.

18/01822/AS

**Land at Court Lodge, Pound Lane, Kingsnorth
Construction of up to 1000 new homes and associated works**

We have **objected** to this development, specifically with regard to the proposed wastewater treatment plant and its potential impact on the Whitewater Dyke. This WWTW would discharge 276 cubic meters of treated water daily (equivalent to a constant 3.2 litres per second). Combined with the surface water runoff, this would exceed the rate/volume we would be likely to accept from this site and would place additional strain on the whole network, particularly during prolonged or extreme rainfall events. These impacts have not been addressed in the flood

risk assessment or Drainage Strategy. We have recommended exploring the use of additional wetland areas for both water treatment and runoff reduction (Long Term Storage). While a wetland for nutrient neutrality is proposed, there seems to be no consideration of a combined system. We have reminded the applicant that our consent is required for any watercourse works under the Land Drainage Act and associated Byelaws. Even with planning permission, Land Drainage Consent might be denied if the risk to the catchment is deemed unmanageable; this would be significant risk to the developer. KCC, as LLFA, has supported our position and has also objected.

PA/2024/0611

Land between Waterbrook Avenue and Arrowhead Road, Arrowhead Road, Ashford, Kent, TN24 0FL

Erection of health, fitness and racquets club

We have reviewed the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Strategy, which indicates that infiltration won't be possible. While the proposal outlines an attenuated discharge strategy towards the south, the final discharge point and its capacity for additional water remain unclear. Our Land Drainage Consent will be required if the development increases the rate or volume of runoff directed into our district. We urge further investigation into the overall impact on the watercourse network, particularly regarding the final discharge point's ability to handle the additional water.

PA/2024/0260

Waterbrook Park, Waterbrook Avenue, Sevington

Mixed-use application comprising 144 dwellings, a convenience/farm shop/cafe building, wetland area, landscaping, open space, drainage, parking, and other associated infrastructure with access from Waterbrook Avenue

We have raised concerns about the potential impact of this development on drainage and downstream flooding within our district, as a large portion of the site falls within our jurisdiction (similar to application 21/01595/AS). We have reviewed the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and SuDS Strategy for this development and have shared the concerns raised by KCC in their consultation response. We have therefore placed a holding **objection** on this application until suitable revisions/explanations are submitted regarding:

- Discharge rate
- Water quality control
- Basin design
- Climate change considerations

The developer's consultants have confirmed their awareness of the requirement for a Surface Water Development Contribution to the Board (via Land Drainage Consent).

Canterbury City Council

CA/23/02046

Land At Puddledock Nethergong Hill Upstreet CT3 4DN

Siting of 12 additional caravans

We have now reviewed the revised recently submitted FRA that supports this application. There seems to be a discrepancy between the FRA mentioning a connection to the public sewer system and the application itself stating the use of cesspits. Southern Water have confirmed no known connection to their network. Given these inconsistencies, we have reiterated our previously raised concerns. Intensifying development is only acceptable if there is no detriment to the environment. To address this, we recommend attaching a clear condition to any granted permission. This condition would require a connection to the public sewer system, delivered

within a reasonable timeframe. We would also want to see decommissioning of the existing cesspits.

The Clerk & Engineer commented that this is an opportunity to try and get this drainage corrected and it helps to have Councillors' input into the Planning Department. Cllr Carnac stated that this application is yet to come through and the Technical Officer stated that if planning permission is granted, it is really important that the enforcement team are aware of what the permission is and ensure that they follow up if conditions are not adhered to.

CA/23/0225

St Martins West (Former Hospital), Littlebourne Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1TD Outline planning application with all matters reserved except for access for the erection of up to 200 dwellings

While this development site is outside of our District, we have concerns with the applicant's surface water management strategy. The submitted plan indicates that infiltration isn't feasible, and discharge will occur into a combined sewer next to the site. We understand the challenges at this location, but wherever possible, surface water should be diverted away from combined sewer networks. In this case, the additional impermeable area will likely result in more water being discharged to the system, even if the rate is reduced. Ultimately, this additional volume will end up in the River Stour network. Although classified as "brownfield," the increased water burden on the fluvial network necessitates Land Drainage Consent from the RSIDB. This approval, under Byelaw 3, would also require a Surface Water Development Contribution due to the potential rise in discharge rates or volumes directed towards our District (directly or indirectly).

Cllr Carnac stated that the use of a combined sewer is concerning especially with the existent issues and thanked the Technical Officer for highlighting these issues.

CA/23/02123

Land To The South Of Island Road (A28) Former Chislet Colliery Hersden Westbere Reserved matters application including drainage

Although this site is just outside of our District, the runoff will flow through a culvert under the railway and into an ordinary watercourse that subsequently connects to the River Stour. It is therefore crucial for the applicant to demonstrate that the entire receiving network, including culverts and ditches maintained by third parties, is in good condition and can handle the additional flow. Assuming the receiving network is suitable and the relevant infrastructure owners agree to accept the increased flow, Kent County Council (KCC), as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), will need to approve the drainage strategy and the proposed discharge rate, with a SWDC to be paid to the Board.

Dover District Council

23/01363

Goshall Valley East Street Ash

Construction of a solar farm with associated access and infrastructure

We have previously informed the applicant that their current designs wouldn't meet our Land Drainage Consent requirements, but we believe a suitable solution can be found later without affecting their planning application. To address this, we recommend a specific condition requiring detailed design of these watercourse crossings and an informative note reminding the applicant of our Land Drainage Consent need for any ditch or watercourse work. Additionally, unimpeded access for maintenance and routine watercourse attention is essential. We have also raised concerns about the Surface Water Management Strategy's reliance solely on natural infiltration for rainwater runoff from the solar panels. The lack of specific infiltration testing and the increasingly unpredictable climate is of concern. Although solar farms aren't strictly

considered impermeable, we recommend a more cautious approach for runoff management. Following HR Wallingford's guidance and installing toe-drains and attenuation swales to capture and slow down excess surface water would be a more suitable solution. Finally, we request a detailed condition for the complete removal of solar panels, foundations, infrastructure, and fencing, as solar farms are considered a temporary land-use and the site should be restored to its original state at the end of its life.

21/00658

Land South of Ash Road, Sandwich

Part retrospective change of use of the land to 8no. pitch Gypsy & Traveller site

We have raised concerns with the applicant's flood risk assessment. Permanent caravan sites in Flood Zone 3 (an area of high flood risk) are considered unsuitable for development, and the existence of flood defences shouldn't be used to justify building there. The applicant must first demonstrate there are no lower-risk locations available before considering this site. Even if a lower-risk alternative isn't found, the development would need to pass the Exception Test. This requires proving the occupants' safety during a flood event with climate change considered, ensuring proper access/egress, and implementing flood mitigation measures. We have recommended that DDC does not disregard the Environment Agency's 'objection in principle'.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council

20/0604/FH

Land to the South of Ashford Road, Sellindge

55 Dwellings

This site located outside our Drainage District's boundaries. However, given the proximity to our District, we have echoed the concerns raised by Kent County Council over the applicant's Sustainable Drainage System and their opposition to discharging into the highway drainage network. We have requested a holding **objection**, pending confirmation from KCC Highways that they are able to accept the runoff. We have now received this confirmation and will soon be a position to remove our objection, provided connectivity to a wider network can be confirmed. KCC's consent (as LLFA) will be required for any new outfall to an internal/boundary ditch. The Board's Land Drainage Consent and a Surface Water Development Contribution will also be necessary as the proposed drainage strategy increases discharge volume directed towards our District (directly or indirectly).

23/1935/FH

Land adjoining Fencing Yard, Potten Farm, Sellindge

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

This site is adjacent to the application site above (20/0604/FH – 55 dwellings), and it is intended for them to share surface water drainage provisions. We are in contact with the developer's consultants to resolve our concerns and to begin the LDC/SWDC process.

Thanet District Council

F/TH/24/0110

Brooksend Service Station Canterbury Road Birchington

Change of use from vehicle repair workshop (Use Class B2) to restaurant

Although this site is just outside of our District, there is a pond next to the site that connects to the wider drainage network; we therefore wouldn't want to see any untreated discharge from the proposed development to enter this system. We have requested a condition requiring detailed drainage plans if the application is approved. If a soakaway is used, it must be properly designed with adequate treatment, sufficient depth, and appropriate ground permeability. Additionally, if an alternative discharge plan involves releasing water off-site, we have requested that the applicant contacts us to discuss discharge rates, volumes, and water quality.

Ref: W15 Applications for Consent

23 ST 08

Construction of a new outfall to IDB15 and discharge of surface water to the IDD Land to the west of Sellindge Substation, Sellindge

We have issued Consent for a new drainage run leading to IDB15 Pleasance Dyke and a precast headwall. The maximum discharge rate is 2 litres per second. The applicant has paid a Surface Water Development Contribution (SWDC) of £7,993.92 to help manage the discharged water. KCC as LLFA had already approved the drainage strategy associated with planning permission PA/2022/2950.

22 ST 08

White Mills Aqua Park

Various structures and activities (Retrospective)

We have now issued Land Drainage Consent for the following, largely retrospective, works:

- Infilling and Culverting of Western Ditch: This work was already completed before the applicant was aware of the need for a Land Drainage Consent
- Creation of New Ordinary Watercourses: New watercourses were created within the site boundary to compensate for the lost Western Ditch
- Watercourse Crossings: Two watercourse crossings have been consented and constructed.
- Foul and Surface Water Drainage outfalls
- Surface Water Development Contribution - A revised SWDC fee of £8,789.53 has been agreed upon, with payment due by the end of October 2024
- Lake Overflow Spillway

The Chairman stated that it is important to work collaboratively alongside the Councils to achieve good outcomes. It is unfortunate that the Board is not a statutory consultee, but the Technical Officer works hard to keep up with applications which might affect the Board's interests and if Councillors could feed into that this would be valuable.

ADMINISTRATION

Ref: A1-1 Members of the Board

It was reported that Dover District Council appointed Cllr Daniel Parks to the Board, replacing Cllr Stacey Blair. The Chairman stated that although Cllr Blair was only on the Board for a relatively short time, she was a very enthusiastic and a good representative for Dover District Council.

Ref: A1-3 Review of Internal Drainage District Boundary

The Clerk & Engineer stated that one of the main reasons driving this proposal is the aim to manage the catchment as a whole, rather than focussing solely and separately on parts of the river network. Most development takes place outside of the IDD, but has a significant impact on it, so the proposed extension should improve the Board's ability to influence and control inflows – by restricting discharges from developments and giving it the ability to carry out works in upstream watercourses. The Clerk & Engineer reported that the IDD Review Sub-Committee met on 2 May to further explore the possibility.

A range of possible extensions were considered by the IDD Review Sub-Committee (1km, 3km 5km and whole catchment). The initial suggestion was to aim to cover the whole of the open river network. However, the Committee decided the district should cover the whole catchment, rather than a simple buffer extension as this would retain the same problems.

Potential benefits considered include:

- Enhanced control of runoff from new development.
- Closer collaboration with partners and avoidance of duplication.
- Climate Change Adaptation.

Potential problems considered include:

- Increased financial burden.
- Increased resource burden.
- Governance and representation.
- Public perception.
- Unintended consequences.

If the Board decides to pursue this proposal, the following outline process is proposed:

1. Agree details with KCC (LLFA).
2. Seek support from the EA, including confirmation that the Precept and Upland Water Contributions will not be affected.
3. Confirm requirements with Defra (including no change to the DRO).
4. Consult with District Councils.
5. Consult with existing Ratepayers.
6. Consult with Water Companies.
7. Consult with Southern Regional Flood & Coastal Committee.
8. Consult with the Association of Drainage Authorities.
9. Request approval by Defra (via the EA).

Cllr Ledger asked if all the entities can be consulted at the same time. The Clerk & Engineer replied that he would initially consult with KCC, EA and Defra to confirm their general support and to check requirements, then he would consult all the others, before finally requesting Defra's formal approval. Cllr Ledger asked if there is a planned timeline. The Clerk & Engineer suggested that following the process and consulting properly will be more important than setting a fixed timeline, although if the Board decides to pursue the extension of its IDD it is hoped that this could be progressed relatively quickly. The Chairman agreed and stated that the other challenge will be governance and things could change post-election, so the Board first needs to decide if it wants to pursue it.

The Chairman opined that this is a positive step for the Board, to some extent it provides an element of future proofing and will give the Board more of an influence on planning proposals. It will also enable the Board to carry out maintenance work and improvements on watercourses currently outside the IDD, to help manage water flows into the district. The Clerk & Engineer suggested that any work outside of the current IDD could be funded from SWDCs, not from rates and levies.

It was proposed by Cllr Ledger, seconded by Ms Lynch and decided that the Board pursues Defra's approval to extend the IDD to the full catchment area. All present agreed. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to progress.**

Ref: A2-3 Annual Inspection

The Clerk & Engineer proposed to arrange this year's site visit to take place on Wednesday 18 September in the Ashford area. As usual, issues of water quality, drainage, flood risk and biodiversity will be included, and further details will be issued nearer the time.

Ref: A2-3.1 Environment Agency Stour Field Team Training Day

The Environment Agency's Stour Field Team Leader, Ms Debbie Thompson, has again kindly invited IDB members and staff to attend an open training day which is to be held on Thursday 27 June (10am – 2pm) at Plucks Gutter Depot, The Street, East Stourmouth CT3 1JB. The Chairman reported that we are also planning to demonstrate the Board's tractor pump at this event.

Ref: A3-2 Election of Members

The Clerk & Engineer reported that 2024 is an IDB Election year and the Board is required to fix a date for the Election (day or days between 24 October and 1 November). It is therefore proposed to fix the date of the IDB Election as Tuesday 29 October 2024. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Mr Fuller and resolved that the **IDB Election be on Tuesday 29 October 2024.**

The Board is also required to instruct the Clerk to prepare a Register of Electors, detailing ratepayers eligible to vote. A Notice will then be published on the Board's website and outside Noticeboard from 15 July until 2 August inviting public inspection of the Register. All comments received will be put to the Board at its meeting on 8 August, when it will be required to formally approve the Register. A further Notice will then be published to confirm that the Register of Electors has been approved. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr McGeever that the Clerk & Engineer prepare the Register of Electors. **Action: Clerk & Engineer and Finance & Rating Officer to action.**

Ref: A3-6 Health & Safety

It was reported that the Board's Health & Safety Policy is due to be reviewed in 2024 and it will be carried out in consultation with the Health & Safety Sub-Committee, for approval at the November meeting of the Board. This will include a detailed review of lone working and water level control activities.

Ref: W8-27 IDB Storm Recovery and Asset Improvement Grant

The government previously announced a new £75 million fund to support the important work of IDBs following the especially wet winter. The overall aim of the Fund is to support the resilience of farmers and rural communities from flood risk and climate change impacts. This is a one-off Fund for 2024/25 and there is no expectation that it will be repeated in future years. The Fund is made up of two parts:

Part 1: The Storm Recovery tranche – open to IDBs in England significantly affected by the winter storms (September 2023 to April 2024 inclusive) and it will support recovery from the impacts from this winter.

Part 2: The Asset Improvement tranche – open to all IDBs in England and will focus on achieving longer term benefits through modernising assets and watercourse maintenance.

The government expects IDBs to take the funding received from this fund into account when setting special levies and drainage rates for next year.

The Expression of Interest application window is now open and will close at:

- 23:59 on 7 June 2024 for the Storm Recovery tranche
- 23:59 on 28 June 2024 for the Asset Improvement tranche

It is anticipated that successful applicants will be informed by the end of June 2024 for the Storm Recovery tranche and the end of July 2024 for the Asset Improvement tranche. The IDB Storm Recovery and Asset Improvement grant scheme is available for 2024/25. Delivery of the grant funded work must be completed by 31 March 2025.

The Chairman stated that this appears to be a good opportunity, but the target dates for applying and completing the work are extremely tight. The Clerk & Engineer agreed but added that if the Board approves, he intends to apply for the Asset Improvement tranche. He further stated that he intends to contact EKEP and contractors to enquire if they could deliver the works within the specified timeframe.

The Chairman stated that this would really benefit the Board and ease the pressure on the Board's Structures Reserve, which as things stand will go below the recommended balance in the near future.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr McGeever and decided that the Clerk & Engineer put in a proposal for the Asset Improvement tranche. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to apply.**

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Cllr Ledger stated that a Planning Application relating to a wastewater treatment works on Chilmington Green, Ashford, which was previously refused, will be appealing. This application is attempting to get around the Stodmarsh Nutrient problem by sending its effluent to the river Beult, Medway. There is also another application on Chilmington Green which will not directly affect the IDB, but it is the principle of concern. He stated that he will advise the Board when this comes through.
- The Chairman thanked Mr Hope (member of public) for his time and interest. Mr Hope stated that it is the first time he has attended a RSIDB meeting and summarised it as very informative and time well spent and thanked the Board and its officers.
- The Chairman recorded his thanks to Dr Darryl Price, who has always been very supportive of the Board and has been seconded to another post for 6 months to a year and wished him well in his new position. Mr Tournay stated that he will pass on these wishes to Dr Price.

MEETING CLOSED

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