

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held at 14:00 on Thursday 6 February 2025
at Bromley Green Football Club, Waterside Centre Turner Close Ashford TN24 0PQ

PRESENT

Mr G Steed (Chair), Ms N Dyas, Mr D Fuller Mr P Howard, Cllr D Ledger, Cllr G Meaden, Mr M Wilkinson and Mr L Woollorton. Online: Cllr J Bright, Cllr R Carnac, Cllr C Hallett, Mr G Holdstock and Cllr W Scobie (Deputy Vice Chair).

IN ATTENDANCE

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

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed to their first meeting Cllr J Bright (Thanet District Council), Cllr C Hallett (Ashford Borough Council) and Mr T Pont (Natural England). He further welcomed Mr I Nunn and Mr R Tournay from the Environment Agency, Mr D Godden from Rhino Plant Hire and Mr A Hope (Member of the Public).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P Dunn, Cllr A Hicks (Vice Chair), Ms A Lynch, Cllr R McGeever, Mr T Quested and Mr P Williams.

ABSENT

Cllr M Moorhouse and Cllr D Parks.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Ms N Dyas declared a landownership interest on the Monkton Marshes.

UPDATE ON THE 2025-2026 FDGIA ALLOCATIONS

– MR I NUNN (ENVIRONMENT AGENCY)

Mr Nunn explained that the EA team receive two allocations, namely the staff funding and the maintenance work funding, this latter funding also pays the field teams' staff costs.

The national budget has remained at £120 million for a few years and regions bid for their share of it which is then allocated dependent on national government priorities. The Stour allocations from 2019-20 to 2025-26 have ranged from £1.2 million in 2019-20 to just over £1.4 million for 2025-26. Cross referencing the total for 2019-20 with 2025-26 the increase does not match the experienced surge in costs.

The Kent and South London area allocations for the same period have dropped down from their highest of nearly £18 million each for 2022-23 and 2023-24 to just over £15.5 million for 2025-26. Therefore, although the Stour budget has slightly increased, the area budget has decreased, fundamentally what impacts it the most is the diversion of funds to other areas when flooding occurs.

All costs have increased with pumping costs rising 113% between 2022-23 and 2023-24 to an estimated £360,000 for 2025-26. These costs can only be reduced by having more efficient pumps or by pumping less, the latter is preferable but not always possible. There are huge efforts within the EA to cut its carbon footprint and increase fish passage.

Resource Maintenance Allocation Cycle Timeline

Mr Nunn explained that this allocation is 18 months behind what is known: April – identify the area's needs based on previous year's data; July – submit data into the asset management system; September – National prepare allocation planning scenarios; October – Indicative Allocations are released ahead of Regional Flood & Coastal Committees' (RFCC) meetings; November to January – allocations consider legal obligations, flood risk benefit and local choices; February to March – approval through EA boards and RFCCs and the allocations are finalised for April depending on the Treasury budget announcements. This year in February RFCCs' approval is still awaited as it has been delayed due to the change in government mechanisms – quite often funding for the current financial year is not finalised until July.

The programme of works for 2025-26 is still being planned but the £1.4million indicated is estimated to be spent before any watercourse maintenance costs are considered – the Stour bid for 2025-26 was £2.6million. In the past the IDB's precept has been used to balance out some of the maintenance and project works but the shortfall has been smaller. Therefore, it is planned to spend £85,901 of the precept on maintenance works in 2025-26 which leaves no spare funds to carry out additional works (which is usually the case). This will also still leave a shortfall, so some Main Rivers may not be maintained.

A 3% increase has been proposed for the 2025-26 Stour IDB precept and savings may be achievable by delivering more work through the field teams rather than through contractors. Mr Nunn stated that the local team have been trying to support the low consequence system maintenance for several years, but it is getting ever more increasingly difficult to do so.

Mr Dyas asked if Southern Water contributes towards the EA's costs and Mr Nunn replied that they do not.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that additional funding was made available to Local Authorities that had to pay higher IDB levies due to the increase in the electricity costs and asked if the EA also benefited from a similar increase. Mr Nunn replied that no additional funding was received for this, only incident response activities are funded directly by the government if there is an overspend.

Cllr Meaden asked if the EA could use volunteers, akin to the way KSCP do, to carry out tasks like river flow and water quality monitoring, as he had searched and could not find this information online. Mr Nunn replied that this information is stored on the national telemetry system and can be obtained via a request.

Ms Dyas thanked the EA and IDB staff for their quick response in relation to the serious leak at Monkton Engine over the Christmas period. She stated that whilst no funds are available to replace this structure, with only a temporary repair planned, other costs and risks should be considered, such as increased pumping and increased costs of repair/replacement should the structure fail, not to mention local flooding.

Mr Fuller asked what constitutes a temporary repair because the situation is very serious. Mr Nunn replied that when there is no funding it is difficult to plan even small projects, and the repair could last 1 to 2 years – due to the conditions there, consultation must take place, so it takes time to deliver.

Ms Dyas mentioned that following the two recent storms there were problems with eels which are abundant this year, so the pumps have not been running during the night leading to a build-up of water which then blocks the nets up when both pumps are run together during the day. She stated that it would be helpful to have a set level agreed to where the levels can be dropped

to so that extra capacity can be created quickly prior to heavy rainfall events. The Clerk & Engineer stated that a level and procedure has been agreed but the Water Level Controller always likes to consult with the EA first.

Mr Nunn stated that due to a few eel deaths at Minster, it has been agreed to reassess the system. Last year only four eels were caught, but this year there have been hundreds. The use of Kingfisher Outfall continues to be prioritised.

Ms Dyas stated that she was approached by one of the Minster Marshes leaders who wanted to know, following the submission of the plans by National Grid, if the EA and the IDB are happy with the water situation, in terms of flood risk and water quality. Mr Tournay replied yes as he has been directly involved with these plans and discussions. The Board's Technical Officer is also in contact with National Grid's consultants.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that it is frustrating to repeatedly hear that the Government is prioritising river maintenance, as it recognises it has a higher return than capital spending, yet they continue to cut maintenance funding to an extent that the EA is unable to deliver its routine maintenance programme. He further stated that it would be interesting to receive more information on the recently announced £2.65 billion to be spent on flood defences (new and existing).

Mr Nunn replied that unfortunately there is no further information on this yet. He further commented that there will always be high, medium and low consequence systems and most if not all funds will be restricted to high priority assets. The key points for high priority assets are legal obligations and the number of houses protected. Sometimes it does not even relate to major infrastructure, agricultural land and most remote communities are low on the list of priorities.

The Chair thanked Mr Nunn for his presentation.

UPDATE ON THE AZOLLA PROJECT

– MS A THURGARLAND (KENTISH STOUR COUNTRYSIDE PARTNERSHIP)

Ms Thurgarland explained that azolla filiculoides is a non-native invasive species from the American tropics which has been here since the early 1900s. It becomes active around April/May and can double its size in just a week, sometimes completely smothering waterways. It is very dense, reducing light and other plant growth, diminishing the oxygen in waterways; it can block drains and is a risk to livestock when mistaken for a solid surface. It is however considered beneficial in some areas of the world and is used as a weed suppressant and a nitrogen fixer.

This project has been funded by the IDB (£10,000) and the EA (£18,000) since 2021 and it has helped to establish and evaluate monitoring and treatment of azolla. Within this time, 52 days of staff time were spent on this project and 21,500 weevils have been released. The five waterbody catchments covered are the North & South Streams (west of A258), Gosshall Valley, Richborough Stream, Chislet Marsh (South), River Wantsum and the Lower Wingham River.

The Non-Native Species Secretariat (NNSS) advises that early identification and early treatment with the weevils is key, though it is difficult to obtain the weevils on time due to high demand. UK weather is not conducive for the weevils long-term, however, there is a resident weevil population from historic releases which has been augmented by recent releases, and this has helped to combat the azolla.

In 2023 there was significantly less azolla reported and only 1,000 weevils were released at East Street Farm in September following reports. In 2024 the largest patch was at Stourmouth, Plucks Gutter and 5,000 weevils were released with another 4,000 at North & South Streams at Hacklinge.

All 5 catchments are to be surveyed in the spring, and it is suggested that landowners feedback where they see it over the summer. Treatment is recommended with the further release of weevils if expanses of azolla are still present, as soon as possible.

Ms Thurgarland pointed out that it is important to be aware of the presence of azolla when doing maintenance works on the watercourses as it can spread across areas this way. The Operations Officer confirmed that all plant and equipment is cleaned between sites. The Clerk & Engineer asked if there has been any long-term success in eradicating azolla. Ms Thurgarland responded that augmenting the weevil population each year will help long term, but so far we have ended up with tiny pockets of it which have thrived, but it vanishes when weevils are introduced.

Ms Thurgarland opined that a continued release of weevils, possibly every other year, will be necessary to keep azolla at bay because the natural weevil population declines through the winter.

There being no further questions the Chair thanked Ms Thurgarland for her presentation.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON MONDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2024

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on Thursday 7 November 2024 were received. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Ms Dyas and resolved that the minutes be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record of the proceedings at that meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from these minutes.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES AND WORKS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 20 JANUARY 2025

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee held on Monday 20 January 2025 were received. It was proposed Cllr Ledger, seconded by the Chair and resolved that these minutes be received.

Joint Report for the period October to December 2024

FINANCE

Ref: F1-6

Risk Management

The updated Risk Management Strategy & Policy and the Risk Register were presented to the Board. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Ms Dyas and resolved that the Risk Management & Policy be approved. It was further proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Ledger and resolved that the Risk Register be approved.

Ref: F2

IDB Annual Reports to DEFRA

The completed IDB Annual Report (IDB1 form) for year ended 31 March 2024 was presented to the Board. There being no comments it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Ledger

and resolved that the IDB Annual Report for year ended 31 March 2024 be approved and submitted to all the necessary entities.

Ref: F3 The Board's Reserves – General, Old Thrustbore and Structures

The Clerk & Engineer stated that the Board's Reserves' balances, targets and purposes as well as the annual increments to the Structures Reserve are listed in the FGP&W Committee minutes. These have previously been approved and the Board is required to acknowledge this information and reassess to either change any details or affirm its previous agreement. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Ledger and resolved that the Board's Reserves' balances, targets and purposes be confirmed and approved.

Ref: F.5-4 Watercourse Maintenance Contract Review

It was reported that the Board's Contract Committee which consists of the Chairs, Mr Dunn and Mr Wilkinson met to consider options for the Watercourse Maintenance Contract – scheduled to end on 31 March 2026 – and decided to explore the possibility of a 3 year contract extension by joint agreement (until 31 March 2029). Rhino Plant Hire has therefore been advised and asked to confirm if they would wish to extend and to confirm any proposed changes to contract rates.

Due to the timing of Board meetings and a need to make decisions on the contract extension it was suggested that authority to make decisions be delegated to the Contract Committee, as in previous years. It was proposed by Cllr Ledger, seconded by Mr Howard and resolved that authority to make decisions on the contract extension be delegated to the Contracts Committee. This was agreed by all present.

Ref: F6-1 Environment Agency Precept & Report

The Clerk & Engineer stated that the EA precept for 2025-26 is £103,706 (3% increase) and the Precept report confirms the PSCA works delivered by the IDB on behalf of the EA including WLC, the final allocations for 2024-25 and proposes allocations for 2025-26. In previous years the precept has been used to contribute towards one off works, but next year's allocation differs due to the EA's budget shortfall. It is proposed to use approximately £86,000 of the precept to support the 2025-26 routine weed cutting programme, carried out by the IDB under the PSCA, leaving no funds for one-off projects. Despite this there will still be a funding gap because during 2024-25 the cost of the routine weed cutting programme carried out under the PSCA was just over £123,000.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that discussions need to be had between the IDB and the EA to decide which main river watercourses will be maintained – deciding on where work is best targeted for minimum impact. Though another two options could be considered: reducing the Board's own maintenance programme to support the main river programme or the Board could fund the EA's shortfall to support a full IDB and EA weed cutting programme.

Rhino Plant Hire also needs to be advised about the expected workload as we will be into the second year of what was expected to be a five-year programme. The Chair asked for opinions around the table and proceeded to say that a decision needs to be made on how to proceed.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that IDB watercourses are reliant on main rivers being maintained, therefore a reduced EA's programme will have a knock-on effect on IDB watercourses. This is one of the reasons why the de-maining project occurred and the IDB took on 37km of waterways which were considered low priority for the EA and not being maintained. Mr Fuller

stated that the main river system disperses the water, so if only the IDB watercourses are cleaned it will just create a bottle neck.

Mr Tournay referred to the de-maining point, stating that nationally there is currently no drive for more transfers but if the Board feels strongly about it, it can lobby its views as there are areas which might be better managed by external bodies that are not constrained by so many factors. Ms Dyas commented that it has worked well where the IDB has taken on main river, but adopting more watercourses would naturally increase annual costs that would have to be covered by Agricultural Rate Payers and Local Authorities.

The Chair agreed that this maintenance work is critical in terms of the work the IDB is doing but we do not want to create a situation where the IDB is funding EA's work. He further stated that there is a lot to discuss, and he proposed that the Board delegate authority to the Chairs to review this later and to implement the review's outcome. This was seconded by Ms Dyas and approved by all present.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that if the funds are allocated to routine maintenance, there is no pot available for one off projects which have been funded in the past and this will be likely to be an issue going forward. Mr Howard stated that if we have funds available within the Reserves, it would be preferable to use them and not cut down on maintenance. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to progress.**

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Mr Wilkinson and resolved that the EA's Precept Report and the Precept's 3% increase be approved. All present agreed.

Ref: F14 Banking Arrangements

The Finance & Rating Officer reported that efforts have continued to activate the account with Flagstone as approved by the Board at their meeting on 7 November 2024. Further information has been requested, and it is required that the Board approve the account Administrators/Operators.

It was proposed by Mr Wilkinson, seconded by Cllr Ledger and approved that Mr G Steed (the Chair), Mr P Dowling (the Clerk & Engineer) and Ms A Eastwood (the Finance & Rating Officer) be authorised to manage the day-to-day activities of this account. All present agreed. **Action: Finance & Rating Officer to progress.**

ADMINISTRATION & OPERATIONS

Ref: A1-1 Board Meetings 2025

Please note the changes to the meeting venues for the remaining 2025 meetings:

Finance Meetings (10:30)

Monday 19th May 2025
Littlebourne Village Hall

Monday 4th August 2025
Littlebourne Village Hall

Monday 20th October 2025

Board Meetings (14:00)

Thursday 5th June 2025
Godmersham & Crundale V Hall

Thursday 21st August 2025
Chartham Village Hall

Thursday 6th November 2025

Littlebourne Village Hall

Godmersham & Crundale V Hall

Ref: A3-4 Council Appointed Members

It was reported that Thanet District Council appointed Cllr Joanne Bright to the IDB, but Dover District Council is still to confirm its representative (now reduced to one). **Action: Clerk & Engineer to seek clarification.**

Ref: W8-26 Lowland Agricultural Peat Small Infrastructure Pilot

It was reported that this project has been substantially completed despite deteriorating ground conditions and some local beaver activity. The Operations Officer stated that these works will make a substantial difference to the valley and the Chair reported that it looks fantastic.

Ref: W8-27 IDB Asset Improvement Grants

It was reported that the application for funding to replace six timber stops with new, improved structures was approved and the IDB was awarded a total of £660k, works have continued, and all efforts are being made to finalise them by the extremely tight deadline of 31 March 2025.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that he submitted a further two applications for Tranche 2B of this grant: £810k for nine structures, including the relining of the Old Thrustbore culvert, and £670k for another eight structures.

Ref: W2-1 Watercourse Maintenance Works Estimates (2025-2026)

The Chairman summarised the Watercourse Maintenance Works Estimates which are detailed on the FGP&W Committee Minutes. The revised total cost estimated for planned maintenance works for the year ending 31 March 2025 is £395,500 (£46,500 under budget, mainly due to the cost for Harrison's Stop Renewal – £44,000 – which has been funded by the Asset Improvement Grant rather than by the Structures Reserve). 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 overall estimated cost for routine Watercourse Maintenance and in-house Water Level Control activities in 2025-2026 is £410,500.

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

The Chair presented the Combined Finance Estimates for the 2025-26 financial year, summarised below:

- Estimated Income at £361,740 (includes SWDC and PSCA income)
- EA Precept £103,706 – 3% increase on last year's total
- Maintenance Works Expenditure estimated at £410,500
- Administration and Engineering Expenditure is estimated to be £440,202
- Rechargeable Works £80,000 expenditure (estimated £90,000 on income)
- £18,000 to be 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 Chair concluded that the net estimated sum needed to be raised from rates and levies to carry out the Board's activities for the year ending 31 March 2026 is £790,668, which is an increase of 4.86% 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 Chair reported that following a lengthy discussion, the FGP&W Committee recommended Option 1 to the Board which is an increase of 4.86% on last year's rates and levies and it raises the exact estimated requirement to carry out the Board's activities during 2025-26.

Ms Dyas noted the sharp rise on the estimated costs for the 2026-27 Maintenance Works Expenditure which is 7.67% compared to the 3.8% for 2025-26. The Chair explained that this estimated rise is due to the unknown cost of the maintenance contract extension or renewal which will start April 2026.

Cllr Meaden mentioned the rise in rainfall and asked if the Board is factoring this into their estimates as there is bound to be more serious flooding in the future. The Chair replied that this is not ignored but it is difficult to predict as there have not been two years the same in the last ten years. The Clerk & Engineer stated that this is a long-term issue and the best we can do is maintain the river system as best as we can year on year. One thing that we are doing directly in relation to climate change is trying to reduce the effects of high rainfall through Natural Flood Management (NFM) and over the coming years we plan to put in more leaky dams in the upper reaches of the catchment to slow the flow. Furthermore, the extension of the IDB district would give the Board the ability to work and advise on a wider area and possibly help to reduce flood risks.

There being no further comments, it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Ledger, and resolved that the Board will adopt Option 1 for the financial year ending 31 March 2026 and:

- a) A total sum £790,668 be raised.
- b) A rate 17.58779p in the pound be made for the year ending 31 March 2026, raising £79,937 from Drainage Ratepayers.
- c) Special Levies be made on Local Billing Authorities for the year ending 31 March 2026 as follows:

Ashford Borough Council	£334,968
Canterbury City Council	£161,691
Dover District Council	£ 98,223
Folkestone & Hythe District Council	£ 711
Thanet District Council	£115,138
	<u>£710,731</u>
- d) The Chair 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 of Option 1.

Action: Clerk & Engineer and Finance & Rating Officer to implement.

Report for the period November 2024 to January 2025

Ref: W4/WSR Rainfall & River Flow Data

It was reported that the rainfall across the Stour catchment in October ranged from 73.4mm at Broadstairs to 108.5mm at Bybrook and averaged 89.4mm (16% above the LTA); November ranged from 49.0mm at Broadstairs to 66.6mm at Barham, averaging 58.9mm (69% of the LTA); December ranged from 32.6mm at Broadstairs to 62mm at Sholden, averaging 50.6mm (73% of the LTA).

At the end of December (prior to the heavier January rainfall which resulted in Flood Alerts being issued), the Environment Agency categorised river flows in the Stour catchment to be normal. Groundwater levels are now categorised from normal to above normal for this time of the year. All reservoirs currently remain healthy.

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 early December, later than usual due to delays caused by the changes for nesting birds. Discussions have been ongoing to ascertain certain changes to next year's programme for a smoother delivery. Second cuts were carried out on several watercourses in the highest risk areas. Weed cutting on Main Rivers, under the PSCA with the Environment Agency, totalled 99km. Mathews Close Dyke was also cut twice.

This year's EA's weed cutting programme will be developed when the possible changes to the amount of work delivered under the PSCA is known.

De-silting

The following watercourses were de-silted:

IDB195 Snipe Dyke	IDB210 Chandlers Dyke
IDB208 Goldstone Lead Dyke	IDB212 Horseshoe West

The following watercourses are still scheduled to be de-silted:

IDB8 Whitfield Road Dyke	IDB170 South Poulders Main Stream (part)
IDB22 Withersdane Dyke	IDB300 Redsell's Dyke
IDB47 Wickham Main Stream	IDB311 Richborough Stream (Lower Reach)
IDB50 Monkton Main Stream	IDB316 Norman Road Dyke*
IDB85 Lower Newnham Stream	IDB319 Upper Blackhole Dyke*
IDB110 Blackhole Dyke	IDB320 Minster Crossing Dyke*
IDB123 May Drove Lead Dyke	

* watercourses adopted in 2024.

Another section of the Delf Stream is to be narrowed and deepened to help improve flows, under the PSCA. A 60m 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, residential gardens and public space, so spoil placement is difficult with off-site disposal not viable (due to excessive cost). This work is scheduled for late February/early March.

The Operations Officer confirmed that 50m of hand desilting is to be carried out on the South Poulders Main Stream (IDB 170) in Sandwich after surveys confirmed it clear of water voles. This will improve flows and will involve some additional planting.

Tree & Shrub Maintenance

This year's tree maintenance programme has started, with a considerable amount of work completed on:

IDB4 Charing Heath Dyke
IDB25 Buxford Dyke
IDB81 Monkton Hatfields Dyke
IDB195 Snipe Dyke

IDB208 Goldstone Lead Dyke
IDB319 Upper Blackhole Dyke*
IDB321 Brook Street Dyke*

The remainder of this programme, scheduled for completion by mid-March, includes:

IDB8 Whitfield Dyke
IDB14 Aldington Dyke
IDB48 Upper Wickham Stream
IDB114 Wademarsh Stream

IDB316 Norman Road Dyke*
IDB317 Blackwall Road Dyke*
IDB320 Minster Crossing Dyke*

* watercourses adopted in 2024.

Under the EA-IDB PSCA, work has been completed on the North Stream at Sandwich and works are planned on the East Stour at Sellindge.

Structures Maintenance

Minor repairs and improvements have been completed on a number of structures, including: IDB314 Worth Minnis Stop and IDB314 Jubilee Stop.

Replacements of the following structures are also planned for February and March, funded by the Asset Improvement Grant:

IDB47 Harrisons Stop (upgrade)
IDB85 Grove Road Stop
IDB90 Straight Length Stop

IDB133 Reculver Stop
IDB185 TV Stop
IDB266 Upper Penfield Stop

Water Level Control

Despite the recent rainfall and flood alerts, water levels across the district have been managed well and all are at normal winter levels.

There was a problem at Moles Hole, Hacklinge in early January where the culvert was partially blocked and upstream grazing land was flooded as a result for a couple of weeks. The obstruction was found to be compacted balls of reed, possibly put in place by beavers, which eventually cleared the culvert and allowed upstream water levels to subside. This problem highlighted an asset ownership issue, with KCC Highways believing the two road culverts under the A258 Hacklinge Road to be owned and maintained by the EA, which is not the case. Both culverts are considered to be the responsibility of KCC Highways and discussions are ongoing.

There is also a problem at Yule's Arch at Hacklinge, where the bank of the high-level South Stream has been breached and is leaking into the lower North Stream system. This may also be due to beaver activity, but investigations are ongoing by the EA.

The leak at Monkton Engine has worsened and the EA's local Operations Team is scheduled to carry out a temporary repair in the coming weeks, with funding to be applied for to complete

the more substantial long-term repair when possible. Mr Tournay confirmed the cost of a replacement to be £40,000 but it is not guaranteed that funding will be obtained. The Clerk & Engineer asked if a contribution from the Board would help to obtain funding. Mr Nunn confirmed that contributions always help but still do not guarantee additional funding. The situation will be monitored and discussed further with a possible contribution to be made in agreement with the Chairs.

The automatic weed-rake at Hacklinge Pumping Station failed on 3 December and is yet to be repaired (awaiting parts). The weed-screen is therefore having to be cleared manually until repair.

Mr Tournay stated that it is harder to obtain funding for some of these projects but nationally the reporting process has improved, creating awareness of them.

Ref: A10-21 Beaver Activity

Further erosion and some burrowing occurred again at a number of IDB structures, including the new timber weirs at the LAPSIP peat restoration site. Further repairs and improvements have therefore been completed, again using natural materials, to help prevent ongoing damage.

Cuckold's Stop was temporarily dammed up by beavers. The debris was removed, and the site was closely monitored, but no further activity has been detected to date. This has highlighted the need to assess and carefully manage water level changes in future, when retaining higher water levels for the summer months.

A collapsed burrow was found on Rubery Drove at Richborough. The Board's Operations Officer and the Beaver Trust's Senior Field Officer inspected the site, and it seems likely that there are several burrows under this track. Investigations ongoing.

Ref: A4-3 Biodiversity

The following update has been provided by the Board's conservation advisor:

1. **Surveys.** Water quality testing on North Stream to monitor effects of run-off from adjacent field. Retested historic samples which produced anomalous results. Sampling and testing were repeated in December.
2. **Management Prescriptions.** Created or edited Watercourse Management Sheets for IDBs 30, 106, 317, 318, 319 and 320. Provided feedback on Draft of Biosecurity Policy. Reviewed desilting programme to identify watercourses where attendance required to advise operators.
3. **Enhancements.** Initial site visit to IDB302 Upper Stour in December to scope potential for Natural Flood Management project. Prepared summary map of proposals to share with landowner and other stakeholders. Communicated with Kent Plan Tree team over their planting scheme for same site. Annie Thurgarland provided detailed written advice. Follow-up site visit to all three proposed locations for NFM in January (IDBs 10, 17 and 302). Additional expertise in ecological surveying and mitigation provided by other KSCP staff. Written proposals were updated to include amendments discussed during site visits. Ongoing desk study included research of appropriate NFM techniques and discovery of historic proposals for enhancements on Horton Priory upstream of IDB-managed section. Communication with Ashford Borough Council over proposal to restore area of wildflower meadow in public park alongside IDB27. Tree planting along banks of IDB119 was approved by the owner just before Christmas. Preparations for planting 50 trees in February are in progress.

4. **Engaging with External Stakeholders.** Commented on Kent Plan Tree planting scheme on Sandwich Leisure Park.
5. **Communication.** Presentations at November Board meeting and at East Kent Women's Institute AGM.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that unfortunately Mr Thomas is leaving KSCP to take up a new position with Canterbury City Council so still in the area. His workload is likely to be taken over by Ms Annie Thurgarland and Ms Milla Timms.

Ref: W7G Environment Agency Works

Mr Tournay reported the following EA activities:

Hothfield Flood Storage Reservoir: maintenance activities continuing, embankment repairs ongoing as needed, toe drain flushing works in process, pumps at Rippers and Paddock Farm installed and panel upgrades completed all working well. New reports being issued to FIDO's and new policies being updated to reflect recent changes.

Aldington Flood Storage Reservoir: Lorry track regrading completed, maintenance activities continuing, embankment repairs as needed, de-silt of silt traps in Aldington Dyke due to take place soon, toe drain flushing works in process.

Pledges Mill Ashford: contractors now on site following recent fire and addressing fly tipping issues from anti-social behaviours locally.

Brook screens: Removal being postponed following discussions with residents, addressing their concerns before removal takes place.

River Dour: Addressing defects with landowners from recent asset inspections, positive response from council with some vegetation management being offered.

Pioneering works have been completed this year at Monks Wall, Aldington and Minster pumping station. Plans also include works on the Great Stour, Conningbrook & Olantigh, then from Chartham to Canterbury if time allows.

Weed cutting completed at the end of November on Stour and Nailbourne; Section 10 inspections on the Sandwich reservoirs; Toe clearance at Monks Wall.

Flap valve replacement at Broad Salts.

Deformation survey taking place this financial year over the Sandwich Scheme.

Stonar Cut has 5/6 gates operational.

Northern Sea Wall recycling starting in early February.

Minster Pumping Station – pump replacement and elver pass installation. We are in contract with ECS to replace all three pumps with eel friendly pumps and to install a brand new elver pass to allow upstream passage back into the marshes. Both elements will ensure that the station is fully compliant with the Eel Regulations – date still not known.

Ms Dyas asked if the replacement is gradual with some pumps running. Mr Tournay replied that the best way to deal with it is still being investigated.

Brewery Sluice – the debris screen installation – the decision has been made not to proceed with this project due to cost (£1.4 million total has been spent) as it has been deemed not viable to continue. The Chair stated that the EA has effectively spent £1.4 million decommissioning this asset. Mr Tournay stated that the main aim of the project was to keep the Stour out and to have the Delf running through the sluice, but Defra and Treasury's guidance have made the project too expensive, and it will be filled for now and possibly addressed again in the future. The Clerk & Engineer asked what the estimate is to complete the works, Mr Tournay replied that it would be another £900,000 to finish due to the work needed on the channel bank and possibly the demolition of a building to improve access.

Stourmouth Pumping Station – eel friendly pump replacement, all four pumps have been completed.

The Final bathymetric survey for the Stour has taken place, results expected in the next few weeks.

Ref: W5 Planning Applications

Ashford Borough Council

OTH/2023/1069

Land south-east of Barnfield and south of Barnfield Road, Charing, TN27 0BN

Submission pursuant to Condition 5 (Sustainable surface water drainage scheme)

We maintain our **objection** due to unresolved concerns regarding the proposed pumped drainage system, which could likely be avoided in favour of a gravity-based solution. We recommend against discharging the drainage-related Condition and advise pursuing an alternative gravity-only arrangement. Failure to address these concerns may result in us withholding Land Drainage Consent (LDC).

OTH/2024/0902

Former Houchin Playing Fields, Canterbury Road, Kennington, TN24 8QQ

Submission pursuant to Conditions 9, 11, and 32 – New Aldi store

The site lies within our Drainage District, and we support KCC's **objection** due to uncertainties regarding drainage from access roads. While we generally discourage pumped systems, we acknowledge the site's gradient may necessitate this approach. The applicant is reminded of the requirement for our LDC and a potential Surface Water Development Contribution (SWDC) for increased runoff into our District.

OTH/2024/1798

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

Submission pursuant to Condition 12 (Surface Water Drainage) - Erection of health, fitness and racquets club

The site partially lies within our Drainage District, and we reiterate the need for our LDC for any works affecting watercourses. The proposed attenuated discharge to the south must comply with Byelaw 3, which requires our consent for increased runoff volumes. We request early engagement with the applicant to assess network capacity.

PA/2024/1087

Land north of M20 Coastbound, south of Kennington Road, Willesborough

Outline application for up to 180 dwellings

We support KCC's response and reiterate the need for our LDC for any works affecting watercourses. The proposed attenuated discharge to the Ordinary Watercourse network is

generally acceptable, provided the receiving network can accommodate increased flows. We also seek clarification on foul flow rates and volumes. We highlight the need for a SWDC and a £200 fee per property for treated effluent disposal.

PA/2024/1986

Lakeside Nursing Home, Chapel Road, Hothfield, TN25 4LN

Erection of two new wings for extra care units.

Although outside our Drainage District, the proposed discharge to an off-site lake upstream of Brown Mill Dyke raises concerns. We require our LDC and a SWDC for any increased runoff. The applicant is encouraged to minimise post-development discharge rates and volumes. We highlight the need for a SWDC and a fee per property for treated effluent disposal.

NOT/2024/2343

Land between railway and Waterbrook Avenue, Sevington

Reserved matters application for a new Class E building

The proposed discharge to an off-site attenuation basin requires our LDC under Byelaw 3. We emphasise the need for effective conveyance of surface water and request early engagement to discuss SWDC requirements.

Canterbury City Council

CA/20/02627, CA/21/00829, CA/21/01597, CA/23/02015

Land Off Cockering Road, Thanington Without

Various residential/commercial developments

The site lies outside our Drainage District, but surface water discharge to the River Stour requires our LDC. We highlight the need for a SWDC and a fee per property for treated effluent disposal.

CA/24/01324, CA/24/02241, CA/24/02263

Land At Hillborough, Sweechbridge Road, Herne Bay

Phase 2C residential and commercial development

We have yet to be contacted by the applicant regarding surface water or treated effluent discharge into our District. We request a holding **objection** pending confirmation that our approval will be sought for increased runoff volumes. Early engagement is recommended to discuss our LDC process. We highlight the need for a SWDC and a fee per property for treated effluent disposal.

CA/24/01935

Goose Farm, Shalloak Road, Broad Oak, Kent

Outline application for 26 dwellings and business space

We have significant concerns about the proposal to connect foul and surface water to the foul sewer network, which could exacerbate flooding and pollution. We recommend exploring alternative drainage options and request an **objection** to the application in its current form. If off-site discharge is pursued, our LDC and a SWDC will be required. We highlight the need for an SWDC and a fee per property for treated effluent disposal.

CA/25/00025

Land North East of Woodlands Farm, Calcott Hill, Sturry, Kent

EIA Screening opinion for a 227.5MW Battery Energy Storage System

Although outside our Drainage District, we recommend a robust surface water management approach, including toe-drains and attenuation swales, to mitigate flood risk downstream.

CA/24/02283

**Formerly Part of Britton Court Farm, Hackington Road, Tyler Hill, Canterbury
Solar farm with battery energy storage**

The proposed off-site discharge into our District requires our LDC and a SWDC under Byelaw 3. We encourage the applicant to minimise increased runoff rates and volumes.

Dover District Council

24/01240

Elite Wash Centre, Sandwich Road, Hacklinge, CT14 0AT

Outline application for 7 dwellings

We request a Condition ensuring a detailed drainage strategy is submitted, given the site's proximity to our District. Our LDC and a SWDC will be required if increased runoff is directed into our District. We highlight the need for a SWDC and a fee per property for treated effluent disposal.

24/01331

Land Northeast of Grove Road, Preston, CT3 1HP

Outline application for 53 dwellings

The proposed discharge to an IDB-maintained watercourse requires our LDC and a SWDC. We also require consent for any infrastructure within 8m of the watercourse. We highlight the need for a SWDC and a fee per property for treated effluent disposal.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council

23/1413/FH

Land At Elmtree Farm, Main Road, Sellindge, TN25 6JY

Outline application for 105 homes

The site lies upstream of our District, and surface water discharge into our maintained watercourse requires our LDC and a SWDC. We encourage minimising increased runoff rates and volumes. We highlight the need for a SWDC and a fee per property for treated effluent disposal.

MAIDSTONE

19/504724/HYBRID

Location: Land Off Old Ashford Road, Lenham, Maidstone

Details: Outline application for 100 dwellings

Although outside our District, surface water discharge into our District requires our LDC and a SWDC. We encourage early engagement to discuss drainage proposals. We highlight the need for a SWDC and a fee per property for treated effluent disposal.

Thanet District Council

**Land Adjacent St Augustines Cross and North and South of Cottington Road, Cliffsend
Outline application (with all matters reserved except for access) for the erection of up to 200no. dwellings, with access onto Cottington Road**

Surface water discharge into our maintained watercourse requires our LDC and a SWDC. We encourage minimising increased runoff rates and volumes. We highlight the need for a SWDC and a fee per property for treated effluent disposal.

KCC

FH/24/1363 (KCC/FH/0115/2024)

Land adjacent to Ashford Road/A20, Westenhanger, Hythe
Waste transfer station with enhanced site access

The proposed discharge to the East Stour requires our LDC and a SWDC. We recommend early engagement to discuss drainage arrangements.

Ref: W15 Applications for Land Drainage Consent

25 ST 01

Location: Land off Santon Lane, Stourmouth

Proposed: Retrospective application for LDC for the infilling of a section of watercourse following removal of culvert and flow control structure

We have received an application for the retention of an obstruction to flow in IDB175 Stourmouth Stream. The applicant contends that the now-removed structure was redundant and that the infilling has made no material change to the management of water in the area. This application will be assessed and determined in consultation with local Members and Chairs.

ADMINISTRATION

Ref: A1-1 IDB Members – Attendance at Board Meetings

The Chair stated that because of worsening attendance levels, it has been agreed to report the percentage attendance for the previous four Board meetings:

8 th February 2024	63%	
6 th June 2024	53%	
8 th August 2024	58%	
7 th November 2024	58%	Annual average – 58% (2024)

Ref: A1-3 Review of Internal Drainage District Boundary

Clarification was sought from Defra on its position regarding the Board's proposed extension of its Internal Drainage District to the full catchment area. Following a number of further clarifications, Defra has now responded as follows:

In terms of supporting the proposal to expand the River Stour IDD boundaries, it is a local choice where an existing IDD is expanded. The government will only take forward proposals where there is clear local support, including from local authorities.

We would encourage you to continue to work with local stakeholders on this and engage with the EA who will have to draw up the scheme. Your proposal should also clearly set out how you have engaged with stakeholders within the IDB and the new area to get their support.

It is intended to consult on this proposal over the coming months; with District Councils, Drainage Ratepayers, local MPs, Water Companies, Southern Regional Flood & Coastal Committee, ADA and others, along with further consultation with the EA and KCC. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to progress.**

Ref: A2-3 Annual Inspection

It is proposed to arrange this year's site visits for members in the summer. This year we intend to visit sites in the Canterbury, Sandwich and Deal areas, as usual including sites of interest for drainage, flood risk, water quality and the environment. Details are still to be agreed, and a date will be confirmed in due course. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to progress.**

Ref: A3-1.8 Policy Statement

The Board's main Policy Statement on Water Level and Flood Risk Management was updated in line with the National FCERM Strategy 2020, including the main aims and expectations of Risk Management Authorities. There being no comments it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Ledger and resolved that the Policy Statement on Water Level and Flood Risk Management be approved.

Ref: A3-6 Health & Safety

The Board's Health & Safety Committee reviewed and revised the Board's Health & Safety Policy and Manual and developed a Lone & Remote Working Policy. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Ledger and resolved that the above three documents be approved.

Ref: A4-3.1 Biosecurity Policy and Procedures

The Board's Biosecurity Policy and Procedures were updated and there being no comments, it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Ms N Dyas and resolved that the Biosecurity Policy and Procedures be approved.

MEETING CLOSED

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