

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held at 2:00pm on Thursday 6 November 2025
at **Godmersham and Crundale Village Hall, Canterbury Road, Godmersham CT4 7DR.**

PRESENT

Mr G Steed (Chair), Mr P Dunn, Ms N Dyas, Mr D Fuller, Cllr C Hallett, Cllr A Hicks (Vice Chair), Mr G Holdstock, Mr P Howard, Cllr D Ledger, Ms A Lynch, Cllr R McGeever, Cllr G Meaden, Mr T Pont, Cllr W Scobie (Deputy Vice Chair), Mr M Wilkinson, Mr L Woollorton and Cllr L Wright (online).

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 Mr J Shelton (KSCP), Dr D Price and Mr S McGlashan (Environment Agency). He further welcomed Mr A Hope (Member of Public).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R Carnac.

ABSENT

Cllr D Parks and Mr T Queded.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

ELECTIONS/RE-ELECTIONS

The Chair noted that in accordance with the Land Drainage Act 1991 and the Board's Rules and Standing Orders the Board is required to:

- Confirm the Chairs' appointments
- Appoint a Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee
- Appoint a Health & Safety Committee
- Appoint an Internal Audit Review Team
- Confirm the Internal Auditor's Appointment

The Chair, Vice Chair and Deputy Vice Chair each confirmed their willingness to continue in their respective roles for the 2025-26 financial year, being the second year of their current three-year appointment.

ELECTION OF A FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES & WORKS COMMITTEE
FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2026

The Chair reported that the previous Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee comprised the following Members: Mr P Dunn, Mr D Fuller, Cllr A Hicks, Cllr D Ledger, Cllr D Parks, Cllr W Scobie, Mr G Steed, Mr L Woollorton, and Mr M Wilkinson—five Appointed Members and four Elected Members.

All Members present confirmed their willingness to continue serving on the Committee. As no objections or alternative preferences had been received from the absent Members, it was assumed they were also content to remain. There being no further nominations, it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Ledger and resolved that the Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee for the year ending November 2026 be constituted as follows: Mr P Dunn (Minster), Mr D Fuller (Wye), Cllr A Hicks (ABC), Cllr D Ledger (ABC), Cllr D Parks (DDC), Cllr W Scobie (TDC), Mr G Steed (Lydden), Mr M Wilkinson (Chislet) and Mr L Wooltorton (CCC). This was agreed by all present.

TO ELECT/RE-ELECT A HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2026

The Chair invited volunteers to join the Health & Safety Committee. With no further nominations, it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Mr Fuller and resolved that the Committee for the period to November 2026 comprise the Chair, Vice Chair, Deputy Vice Chair and Cllr D Ledger. This was unanimously agreed by all present.

TO CONFIRM INTERNAL AUDITOR'S APPOINTMENT

The Chair stated that Mr D Griffiths is appointed as the Board's Internal Auditor until November 2027, with the requirement that his appointment be confirmed annually. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr McGeever and confirmed that Mr Griffiths is to continue as the Board's Internal Auditor for the forthcoming year.

ELECTION OF AN INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW TEAM FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2026

The Chair advised that, in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, the Board is required to review its Internal Audit arrangements annually. This review is undertaken by the Board's Internal Audit Review Team, which comprises three Board Members. The current members are Mr Holdstock, Cllr Scobie and Cllr Carnac. This team operates on a three-year rotation and Mr Holdstock has now completed his term, the Chair thanked him for his service and contribution and asked for a volunteer to fill the vacancy, and Cllr Hallett offered to join the team.

It was therefore proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr McGeever, and resolved that Cllr Scobie, Cllr Carnac, and Cllr Hallett be appointed as the Board's Internal Audit Review Team for the 2025-2026 year. This was unanimously agreed by all present.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON MONDAY 21 AUGUST 2025

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on Thursday 21 August 2025 were received. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Mr Fuller, and resolved that the minutes be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record of the proceedings at that meeting.

Ref: A10-21 Beaver Activity

Cllr Hallett asked who is responsible for repairing beaver damage. The Chair explained responsibility currently falls to riparian owners. Funding sources may emerge, but currently these are difficult to identify and obtain. Mr T Pont added that limited funding is available for capital works, primarily relating to protection of individual trees (e.g. guards) and in some cases, for relocation or modification of dams.

Ref: W7G

Environment Agency Works

Monkton Engine Weed Screen – Mr Fuller asked for an update on this. Dr Price reported that the situation will continue to be monitored but there have been no reports of accumulations at the feed.

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES & WORKS COMMITTEE HELD
20 OCTOBER 2025

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

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Ref: F1-2 Interim Internal Audit of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2026

The Interim Internal Audit was undertaken by Mr D Griffiths on 16 October. The Chair noted that the Internal Auditor highlighted an increase in drainage rates arrears compared with the previous year. The Finance & Rating Officer confirmed that two significant payments have since been received, reducing the arrears to approximately £1,800.

Cllr Hicks referred to the Auditor's comments on the Board's bank accounts, which were considered appropriate and he did not recommend diversifying the Board's cash reserves further. The Chair agreed, noting that the current review of banking options was prompted by Metrobank's introduction of bank charges from December. The Board is therefore considering closing this account in favour of a provider offering free banking.

Cllr Wright suggested exploring financial incentives offered by banks, which might benefit the Board. The Finance & Rating Officer opined that such incentives typically apply to fully operational current accounts. Switching would require substantial administrative effort, including updating signatories and providing ID documentation.

In response to a query from Cllr Scobie, the Clerk & Engineer confirmed that the reserves review will form part of the 2026–27 annual estimates process. The Internal Auditor considered the current reserves adequate but emphasised the importance of regularly reviewing and justifying reserve levels. The Chair reiterated that the Board had previously set its reserves to cover a major event, including the replacement of five or six structures if necessary. The recent Asset Improvement Grants awarded to the Board have substantially accelerated its structures renewal programme and as a result, funds previously ring-fenced for the relining of the Old Thrustbore are now available for reallocation, since the works were completed using this grant. Cllr Scobie stressed the importance of clearly allocating reserves and expressed support for using some of these funds to support further structure upgrades, community engagement or biodiversity initiatives.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Scobie, and resolved that the Interim Internal Audit Report for the year ending 31 March 2026 be received and approved by the Board. All attending agreed.

The Chair drew attention to the Internal Auditor's Declaration of Independence, included at the end of the report. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Meaden, and resolved that the declaration be noted and approved by the Board. All in attendance agreed.

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

The Board's external auditors (PKF Littlejohn LLP) completed their review of the Board's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ended 31 March 2025. The external auditor's certificate and report is given at Section 3, page 6 of the AGAR and outlines any matters arising. The AGAR was approved with no recommendations or actions required and was published on the Board's website and noticeboard outside the office, in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Chair highlighted that the significant grant funding received in 2024–25 increased the Board's financial activity, resulting in greater scrutiny during the audit. Nonetheless the auditors raised no concerns. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Ledger and resolved that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2025 be received and approved by the Board. All in attendance agreed.

Ref: F1-6 Risk Register

The Chair reported that the Risk Register was reviewed with some minor changes. The Finance & Rating Officer stated she passed on Cllr Hicks' previous query about the potential risks to pensions administration arising from the structural changes at KCC and is awaiting a reply.

Mr Hope referred to the Legislative Risk and stated that the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 are now incorporated in the Data Protection Act 2018. He also referred to the Loss of Rental Income Risk and suggested that the new legislation should be added – the Renters' Rights Act 2025 – and risks evaluated under this new legislation.

Cllr Scobie noted that local government reorganisation is currently included under the Board's Funding Risk but suggested it should be identified as a separate standalone risk as implementation draws nearer. He emphasised that the Board's membership structure and funding arrangements are closely tied to the existing local government framework, and with changes potentially commencing as early as 2026, it warrants distinct consideration. In time, when more information is available, the Board should explore the potential implications of the Local Government Reform and develop a plan to prepare for the changes.

It was agreed that the proposed amendments would be incorporated into the Risk Register, enabling it to be presented to the Board for approval at its next meeting. **Action: Finance & Rating Officer to update and finalise the Risk Register.**

Report for the period August to October 2025

Actions from previous meeting:

Ref: Southern Water Presentation – Mr Butson provided the information on the number and durations of storm overflow discharges to river and sea. The total number of recorded spills in the Southern Water area in 2024 was 30,367 (6,541 in Kent). Volumes are not recorded, but detailed information can be viewed on Southern Water's website: www.southernwater.co.uk/about-us/environmental-performance/healthy-rivers-and-seas/flow-and-spill-reporting/#flowdata. The Technical Officer subsequently produced some maps showing this information more clearly and related to the Stour catchment. It was agreed that these would be issued to all members. **Action: Technical Officer to issue maps with an explanation.**

Ref: F8-6 Technical Officer implemented the TEDC policy and information was added to the website with discussions underway with a number of developers.

Ref: A7-3 Staff training – Training Repayment Agreement was signed, and the Operations Assistant has started the engineering course.

Ref: A10-21 Beaver Activity – the Operations Officer continues to record all activity and report back to the national practitioners group. Several actions trialled successfully on IDB structures may be incorporated into national best practice.

Ref: W7 Monkton Engine – Operations Assistant to monitor feed for debris and Dr Price to raise safety concerns with KCC – ongoing.

Ref: W4/WSR Rainfall & River Flow Data

Rainfall across the Stour catchment was higher than average in July due to intense storms ranging from 76.6mm (Broadstairs) to 127.1mm (Canterbury) and averaged 95.8mm – 87% above Long-Term Average, (LTA). August was very dry with rainfall ranging from 9.6mm (Broadstairs) to 22.0mm (Barham), averaging 15.9mm – 31% of LTA. September had near-normal rainfall, ranging between 57.4mm (Sevenscore) to 99.8mm (Sholden), averaging 75.7mm – 18% above LTA with a notable rainfall on 23 September of 35mm. October saw more prolonged rainfall with approximately 35–45mm falling across the catchment on 23rd of this month, triggering a Flood Alert for the Upper Stour. See appendix 1 for rainfall data.

Soil Moisture Deficit (SMD) averaged 155mm across Kent – 29% above LTA and despite September’s rainfall being within the normal range, the SMD remains relatively dry due to the relatively dry conditions from March to August. River flows and groundwater levels are categorised as normal for the time of year. Reservoir stocks declined steadily in September, but storage was still within normal range by the end of the month (Bewl at 48% capacity).

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

Weed Cutting

This year’s IDB weed cutting programme started on 16 July and again focussed on the highest priority watercourses first. Progress has been good, due to revised working and site inspections prior to works, and the programme is nearly completed.

The programme of Main River maintenance, carried out under the PSCA and funded by IDB Precept and SWDC Fund as previously agreed, has progressed well and is also near completion.

Mathews Close Dyke, Deal, was cut twice this year, with bankside brambles cleared to facilitate winter flows. The Chair noted that during the annual inspection visit there was significant garden waste obstructing the banks and queried whether this had been reported to the council. It was confirmed that the matter had been reported, but the issue persists. The Chair emphasised that Dover District Council should adopt a more robust approach towards residents depositing their rubbish in the dyke, given the history of issues in this area and the joint investment being made to improve it.

De-silting

The 2025-26 de-silting programme, after adjustments, includes works on IDBs 52, 111, 114, 170, 199, 200, 204, 207, 222, 223, 276, 277, 311 & 321 and is scheduled to commence in November.

Spoil Spreading

All the spoil from last year's de-silted IDB watercourses was spread in agreement with affected landowners. As usual, some landowners chose to do this work themselves.

Tree & Shrub Maintenance

This year's tree maintenance programme is still being finalised, using feedback from the Board's maintenance contractor. Watercourses for inclusion so far are: IDB10 Cowlees Dyke, IDB27 Waterbrook Dyke, IDB32 Air Ministry Dyke, IDB38 Fordwich Main Stream, IDB52 Preston & Deerson Stream, IDB106 Seaton Lead Dyke, IDB173 Stonelees Main Stream, IDB196 Ware Lead Dyke, IDB200 Stourmouth Lead Dyke, IDB207 Ash Level Feed Dyke, IDB222 Clapper Hill Lead Dyke, IDB296 Deal Town Dyke Lower. Works will commence in November, initially on sites scheduled for de-silting, and will be completed in late February/early March.

Structures Maintenance

As reported to the FGP&W Committee, the following structures are currently being renewed, in cooperation with the East Kent Engineering Partnership and others, funded by the Asset Improvement Grant:

IDB53 Newnham Stop	IDB114 Northern Sea Wall Stop
IDB91 Cuckolds Stop	IDB115 Netherhale Stop
IDB110 Quaives Stop	IDB115 Chalkwall Stop
IDB114 Broadley's Stop	IDB295 Old Thrustbore Stop

The relining of the Old Thrustbore culvert beneath the Sandwich–Deal railway was completed successfully. The renewals of Cuckolds Stop, Netherhale Stop and Broadley's Stop have also been completed, and work is now commencing at Northern Sea Wall Stop, to be followed by Chalkwall Stop.

The Clerk & Engineer advised that the remaining sites – Newnham Stop, Old Thrustbore Stop and Quaives Stop – are recognised as difficult to access and high-risk locations. Advice has been sought from Natural England regarding feasibility, who advised that Newnham and Quaives Stops should proceed as planned but the Old Thrustbore Stop lies within a highly sensitive European designated site. Therefore, a specific bird survey must be carried out to assess potential disturbance before works can commence. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to arrange survey.**

The Clerk & Engineer noted that the worst-case outcome would be a deferral of works until next summer. In that event, materials will be procured in advance and fabrication works completed, but the Board would need to fund the installation directly, as all grant-funded works must be completed by 31 March 2026. It was further noted that this would need to be reported in the grant return as incomplete works.

While the primary focus remains on delivery of the grant-funded works, the Operations Assistant is also coordinating a programme of miscellaneous repairs and improvements to other IDB structures, funded through the annual budget.

Water Level Control

Water levels are currently being reduced to normal winter levels, to allow for winter storms.

The automatic weed-rakes at Hacklinge and West Stourmouth Pumping Stations are still out of action but will be installed within the next couple of weeks. The EA's Field Team will be keeping the weed screens clear manually until the auto-rakes are returned. It has been suggested that the Little Stour is weed cut again to help avoid large accumulations of weed at the pumps.

Ref: A4-3 Biodiversity

The Board's BAP Sub-Committee convened in August and October. The current focus for the Biodiversity Action Plan is to agree priority actions and associated costs for the next five years. A final draft will be presented for discussion and approval at the Board's February meeting. The priority actions proposed by the Sub Committee for members to comment on and agree in principle are as below:

1. All watercourses to be surveyed at least once every 10 years (some IDB watercourses have not been surveyed for over 15 years), which equates to a target of 21 km of survey work per year.

To improve efficiency and data quality, it is proposed that surveys be concentrated geographically, dividing the district into five areas and focusing on one area per year. This would reduce the need for extensive desk-based collation and provide a more comprehensive understanding of each area.

A whole system approach is recommended, rather than limiting surveys solely to IDB maintained watercourses. These should include observations of nearby Main River and landowner managed watercourses which may not be so regularly maintained. Taking these into account will provide a clearer picture of overall condition and highlight the role and impact of maintenance across the catchment, supporting better strategic planning and prioritisation of biodiversity and maintenance efforts.

2. Survey all the newly adopted watercourses and produce the BAP sheets registering any issues of interest or concern.
3. Complete at least one enhancement project each year and develop a second for delivery in the subsequent year. Initially a complete list of all the completed projects is needed as well as all the information gathered in previous surveys.
4. Undertake targeted surveys for Priority Species. While a comprehensive list of these species is still required, it was acknowledged that this work falls outside the scope of current commitments. To enable progress, it was proposed to allocate £2,000 for each of the top five priority species, subject to securing match funding from other interested organisations or partners.
5. Engagement with partner organisations – detail to follow.
6. Landowner engagement on a range of issues such as the presence of Priority Species, rational behind maintenance prescriptions for the channels and so on.

7. Invasive Non-Native Species, identify their location, ensure awareness amongst the workers and knowledge on how to deal with it to ensure no spread by IDB activities – and eradication where possible.
8. Evaluate the impact of reduced maintenance on watercourses resulting from the increased total channel length following demaining – lengths to be surveyed in addition to 21 km.
9. Plant diversity to be maintained and improved where possible.
10. Minimise damage and replant two trees for every one lost during routine maintenance. Proactively identify under-vegetated areas and collaborate with partners to plant trees which will mostly benefit Priority Species.
11. Assist KSCP deliver the East Kent White-Clawed Crayfish Strategy.
12. Monitor beaver impact and collaborate with landowners and East Kent Beaver Advisory Group (EKBAG) to support beaver habitat while fulfilling statutory responsibilities.

To deliver the proposed programme of work, the Biodiversity Budget for 2026–27 will need to be increased, as outlined in the table below. The current 2025–26 allocation is £23,000.

Proposal	Description	KSCP Days	Estimated Cost
1 & 2	Watercourse Surveys	30	£10,500
3	Enhancement Projects	8	£2,800
4	Priority Species Surveys		£10,000
5	Engagement with Partner Organisations	3	£1,050
6	Landowner Engagement	3	£1,050
7	Invasive Non Native Species	7	£2,450
8	Surveys on watercourses with bi annual maintenance	5	£1,750
9	Improve Plant Diversity	2	£700
10	Tree Planting	2	£700
11	East Kent White Clawed Crayfish Strategy		£0
12	Beaver Monitoring		£2,000
			£33,000

Additional costs are anticipated, as these projects will require staff time and will incur project related expenses, such as materials, not reflected in the figures above.

Mr Shelton reported that the entire BAP document has been revised, incorporating updated legislation, expanded information on beavers, and other general amendments. The priorities listed above have featured in the BAP since 2010, although it has not been possible to deliver them sufficiently to date due to limited funds.

Cllr McGeever questioned whether the proposed £2,000 allocation under proposal 12 would be sufficient, given the anticipated rise in beaver-related damage. The Clerk & Engineer explained

that such repair costs have so far been covered by the general maintenance budget, the £2,000 is an initial estimate. The Chair clarified that the proposed repairs relate solely to damage to IDB structures, noting that any other damage falls under riparian ownership and responsibility. The Board continues to support the Beaver Trust and others in trying to manage some of these challenges.

The Clerk & Engineer explained that, via the EKBAG, the Board continues to seek funding to assist others to manage beaver-related challenges and believes similar efforts should be made by other risk management authorities. He added that the National Farmers Union is now a member of EKBAG. He further noted that most members of this group are highly enthusiastic and supportive of beavers and are therefore reluctant to acknowledge the associated negative impacts. The Chair agreed and stated that it is important that the Board can support landowners, not necessarily financially but with appropriate advice on how to manage beavers' impact in the future. Cllr Hicks commented on proposal 12 as a positive step in managing beavers and their impacts.

Ms Dyas cited an example from Scotland where beaver activity compromised flood defences, resulting in widespread flooding. She urged the IDB, the EA and landowners to develop a coordinated plan to prevent breaches in flood defences, or to ensure a contingency plan is in place should such breaches occur. Given the combination of heavy rainfall, high tides, and spring tides, she warned that the river is currently at capacity and the presence of numerous beaver tunnels poses a significant risk of collapse and flooding, potentially affecting nearby villages. Mr Fuller supported this concern, highlighting Abbot's Wall as a particular vulnerability that could have serious consequences for the wider area.

Ms Dyas added that if saltwater floods the land, it will render it unfit for farming, so the concern extends beyond Abbot's Wall to the broader risk of breaches along the tidal riverbanks. The Clerk & Engineer commented that the IDB has previously suggested that EKBAG identifies vulnerable structures and develops response plans which can be agreed in advance.

Dr Price stated that while there is a recognised route for emergency response, the EA defines "emergency" differently. Landowners often assume the EA will intervene, but in most cases the EA does not act – either because the asset is not theirs, or even if it is, they may still defer responsibility to the landowner. He stressed that the EA needs to be more proactive in clarifying its role and limitations, as public expectations often exceed its operational remit. He also recommended that the EA improves how it collates and shares lessons learned, particularly regarding contingency planning for vulnerable structures and assets.

Mr Fuller raised a concern about liability, asking who is responsible if farmland floods, the EA does not intervene, the landowner takes no action, and other areas subsequently suffer flooding. Dr Price responded that the EA distinguishes between risks to property and risks to land. Where a significant number of properties are at risk, temporary defences may be justified. He cited the Nailbourne as an example of a watercourse with a basic temporary flood plan that can be activated. Ultimately, he emphasised that responsibility lies with the landowner, especially if their actions (or inaction) result in flooding that affects others.

Mr Fuller added that the presence of beavers, as a protected species, limits proactive intervention, leaving landowners in a reactive position. The Chair agreed, noting that this is a critical point and as responsibility does not rest solely with the EA, it needs raising as an issue by the EA, Natural England and EKBAG to ensure it is properly understood and managed in future. He stressed the

importance of recognising that the landscape is changing, with a growing number of smallholders who may lack the motivation or resources to undertake repairs that larger commercial farms would typically manage.

Mr Pont noted that new approaches are emerging to encourage beavers to dig in less problematic areas. However, he acknowledged the landowners' concerns who may be reliant on others who lack the capacity or willingness to act.

The Clerk & Engineer added that the environmental risks should also be highlighted, mainly because of sudden changes in water levels affecting local habitats. He suggested that these ecological impacts be fed back to the relevant agencies, as they may help incentivise more proactive management planning.

Cllr Scobie suggested that it is sensible to approve the updated BAP ahead of the reserves review. He noted that, due to the pace of progress enabled by recent government funding for the structures programme, there is a risk the Board may appear to hold excessive reserves and the BAP presents a legitimate and valuable area for future investment. The Chair agreed and stated that it would be helpful if the Board were to grant the BAP Committee authority to finalise the priority actions, and provisional budgets for the Board's final approval.

Cllr Scobie welcomed the Board's forward-looking investment aspirations, noting that it is actively considering how to make further improvements within its remit. He emphasised the importance of demonstrating that the Board is delivering additional value and suggested that a temporary reduction in rates and levies would not be a sensible approach. Instead, this is an opportunity to show how the Board is making good use of its healthy financial position.

The Chair agreed, adding that while the budget will be based on the Board's core programme of works, there is potential to utilise SWDCs to bridge any funding gaps. This would support more effective planning and provide scope to invest further in priority projects.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that the intention is to use some reserves, but it is proposed that £33,000 be incorporated in the annual budget for 2026-27.

Cllr McGeever stated that grant funding is not a reliable annual income source and the Board has to allocate resources prudently. He queried whether additional staff would be needed to deliver the BAP priorities. The Clerk & Engineer responded that the BAP work would be delivered by existing staff, KSCP support and potentially other consultants and contractors (no additional IDB staff).

Cllr Scobie noted that while it is important not to increase baseline costs, the Board could consider allocating reserve funds – potentially over the next three years – to support additional projects. He emphasised that reserve balances must be agreed and safeguarded for emergencies and unforeseen events. He also agreed that although grant funding has accelerated the structures programme, it remains incomplete. The Chair concurred, adding that the Board must decide whether to utilise specific reserves to maintain momentum of the structure's renewal programme.

Cllr Scobie asked whether it is a concern that, given a significant number of structures have been renewed concurrently, they may all require replacement again at the same time in future years. The Chair replied that could be the case, which needs to be considered in long-term reserve planning.

However, he noted that the cycle spans 50 to 70 years, and only 10 out of the 150 structures have been renewed within the same year.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Hicks and decided that authority be delegated to the BAP Committee to finalise the priority actions within the BAP, with KSCP, with a view to final approval by the Board at its February meeting. All present agreed.

Ref: A4-3 Stour Valley Restore

Mr Shelton reported that KSCP is preparing two funding bids which could align with the IDB's BAP. One major bid is for the Stour Valley Restore project, submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a substantial fund of £16m. The proposed project spans from Conningbrook, east of Ashford, down to Sandwich, and while it encompasses broader themes such as green tourism access, chalk grassland and forestry, rivers and watercourses remain a major part of it. Mr Shelton noted that, if successful, KSCP hopes to use part of the funding to match-fund with the IDB to deliver watercourse enhancements and improvements. The bid will be submitted next week, with awards expected in March 2026. If successful, an 18-month development phase will follow, with project delivery anticipated to begin in early 2028. Further details can be found on the KSCP website (www.kentishstour.org.uk).

The second funding bid is to the Species Recovery Programme (SRP) through Natural England, focused on water vole habitat restoration. This application has been submitted in partnership with Natural England, Stodmarsh and Wildwood, with the IDB identified as a potential key partner. The process begins as a 'call for action' and, if successful, will progress to a full application. Mr Shelton noted that, should any of these bids be successful, KSCP intends to approach the IDB regarding specific projects of mutual interest to explore opportunities for further partnership working.

Ms Dyas enquired whether the IDB would consider funding the Mink Eradication Project in this area. The Clerk & Engineer advised that enquiries have been made into how the IDB might assist. Mr Shelton noted that KSCP's second bid aligns closely with the work of the Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT), which has also submitted a bid to the Species Recovery Programme to provide humane traps across the Southeast, with a target of one trap every 3km. If successful, this would create greater opportunities for water vole populations to thrive.

WRT already has traps in the Kent Downs, but additional funding would enable a substantial network of traps in the Stour Valley. Mr Pont highlighted that the effectiveness of WRT's model depends on local individuals being available to check traps and dispatch mink promptly. The Chair observed that this requirement presents a challenge and may explain why the IDB has not been directly involved to date.

The Chair thanked Mr Shelton for his update.

Ref: A10-21 Beaver Activity

The Rubery Drove access track has several collapsed burrows and it remains unrepaired due to delays in the delivery of materials, which are to be supplied by the landowner. The Beaver Trust's Senior Field Officer, B Morris, is leading this work, providing guidance to the landowner, with the IDB supplying an excavator to assist.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that problems have been experienced at Cuckolds Stop at Grove and Tumble Bay Stop on the Delf Stream, where beavers have dammed the structures to raise water levels. The dammed material is being removed regularly, and cameras were installed to monitor activity. It appears that beavers desist after the dammed material has been removed three times.

Further downstream on the Delf Stream, beavers have also burrowed through the riverbank, resulting in flooding of a residential garden and nature area. The resident has expressed concern regarding the activity and potential repair costs. Mr Morris is liaising with the resident to help identify a practical solution.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that an application has been made to remove the grilles from the North & South Streams at Ham Fen, which were installed to prevent beavers from leaving the site. As these have proved ineffective and there are numerous beavers in the wider area, this proposal is likely to have no effect. He however suggested that a fairer and more inclusive consultation process is required for this and any future new beaver releases. Currently, consultation is limited to landowners in a very narrow area and is considered insufficient, given that beavers are free and able to move throughout the whole catchment when released.

Ref: W7G Environment Agency Works

Work delivered August to October 2025:

Reservoir and flood embankment grass cutting.

Routine structure checks.

Annual in-channel maintenance programme started in mid-July, completion expected shortly (including via IDB PSCA).

Minster PS – all pumps have been replaced with eel-friendly pumps, operating more efficiently. As a result, the mitigation measures that have been in place for over a decade are no longer required.

2025-26 Project updates:

Ashford reservoirs – various works including outfall improvements.

Tree pioneering – areas being assessed include Aylesford Stream, East Stour, Little Stour.

Hacklinge PS – weed rake – repairs expected this week.

Stourmouth PS – weed rake – rake removed, repairs expected by December.

Ash Level PS – basement columns – repair expected spring 2026.

Minster PS – elver pass – expected summer 2026.

Stourmouth PS – eel friendly pump replacement – options appraisal ongoing. Eel mitigation measures to continue until the end of the migration season. Over 100 eels have so far been caught and released downstream since August.

Stonar Cut – Gate 4 Rotork drive issue – no timetable for repairs.

Northern Sea Wall beach management – recycling expected February 2026.

Staff changes:

A new member of the Stour Field Team was appointed, bringing the team up to full allocation of 14: one Team Leader, two Specialist Team Members, two Lead Team Members and nine Team Members.

2026-27 Indicative funding

Indicative allocations have been received for Capital Maintenance, Capital Reconditioning, and Resource Maintenance programmes for 2026-27. All programmes remain over-subscribed,

meaning our allocations are below the levels requested. For capital projects, funding has been prioritised nationally for schemes already in construction, so no funding available to begin new projects or continue those not yet underway.

The reconditioning programme, which funds significant repairs but not major works, has been reduced to a third of its previous level. This reduction will have a major impact on planned activities, most notably the pump and elver passes at Black Sluice, pump replacements at Worth Minnis (leaving only one pump operational with temporary pumping if necessary) and works at Hothfield which are all unlikely to proceed under the reduced allocation.

The national Resource Maintenance allocation has been protected at the 2025–26 level, though this area has seen a decrease of 2%. A detailed breakdown by area and catchment is still awaited. Local prioritisation decisions will follow in the coming months, with final allocations confirmed in Q4. Dr Price stated that it is anticipated that only 10% of the required weed cutting programme will be funded.

New FCRM Investment Programme

The new programme will launch in April 2026 with significant changes to project funding criteria, supported by a 10-year allocation of £7.9bn, of which £4.2bn will be distributed in the first three years. Focus is shifting towards refurbishment or replacement of existing assets and an increase in natural flood management schemes. Capital maintenance projects will be eligible for 100% FDGiA funding, while new assets will receive full eligibility for the first £3m, with a 10% partnership contribution required for costs above this threshold. The new programme will broaden its scope beyond property flood risk reduction to include businesses, infrastructure and agriculture. Draft guidance is expected in late November, with engagement with RMAs commencing in December.

Ref: W5 Planning Applications

Ashford Borough Council

PA/2025/0186

Land West of Meadow Court, Ashford Road, Kingsnorth

Outline application for up to 36 dwellings.

We support KCC's **objection** and their request for further information because the proposed 11.3l/s discharge rate significantly exceeds the greenfield rate of 3.35-3.94 l/s. The applicant should contact us to discuss a sustainable solution. Land Drainage Consent (LDC) is required, and Byelaw 3 applies.

PA/2025/1109

Coneybeare Site, Torrington Road, Ashford

Development of 28 residential units with land raising and flood compensation.

We share the EA's concerns over flawed flood storage calculations. Placing drainage features in the floodplain and SuDS in Flood Zones 2 & 3 is also contrary to best practice. We maintain our **objection** until layout and compensation are resolved. Re-consultation is requested.

OTH/2025/1626

Waterbrook Park, Waterbrook Avenue, Sevington

Discharge of Conditions 50, 59, 60 and 69 (construction methodology, foundations, sewage treatment, and drainage). This application relates to the hybrid planning permission for a major mixed use site.

We support KCC's **objection** to discharging Condition 69 due to insufficient drainage detail. We cannot recommend discharge until the final design is submitted. LDC is required and Byelaw 3 applies. Re-consultation is requested.

PA/2025/1745

Ashford College, Elwick Road, Ashford

Construction of a three storey extension to provide teaching and ancillary accommodation.

Although outside the IDB's boundary, runoff likely enters our network. We echo KCC's concerns on the lack of SuDS and water reuse. Reliance on existing capacity is unsubstantiated. We object pending evidence of capacity and a SuDS assessment. LDC is required and Byelaw 3 applies.

OTH/2025/1776

Proposed Retail Units, Fourges Way, Ashford

Discharge of Conditions 24 (sustainable drainage) and 25 (verification report). This application relates to the earlier permission for construction of retail warehousing and a detached drive through restaurant.

We consider the SuDS scheme with attenuation ponds and permeable surfaces appropriate. The report confirms compliance. We have no objection to discharge, provided the maintenance regime is adhered to. LDC was obtained and the SWDC paid.

NOT/2025/1810

Land at Pound Lane, Magpie Hall Road, Bond Lane and Ashford Road, Kingsnorth

Reserved matters application for Phase 1B (spine road infrastructure) as part of a wider development of up to 550 dwellings.

We have no objection. The scheme demonstrates adequate attenuation to greenfield rates and water quality treatment (subject to confirmation of outfall connectivity via survey; and a Construction Environmental Management Plan). LDC is required and Byelaw 3 applies.

Canterbury City Council

CA/25/01598

Hillborough Business Park, Sweechbridge Road, Herne Bay

Construction of 23 commercial units with associated parking and landscaping.

Although outside the IDB's boundary, runoff likely enters our network. We echo KCC's concerns on the conventional drainage using below-ground attenuation and a pumped outfall, which fails SuDS principles. We **object** pending a revised strategy. LDC is likely required, and Byelaw 3 applies.

Dover District Council

DO/24/01331

Land North East of Grove Road, Preston

Outline application for the construction of 53 dwellings.

We have reiterated that LDC is a separate obligation under the Land Drainage Act 1991. Financial contributions are a separate process. From a planning perspective, we have no objection.

25/00472

**Archers Low Farm, Sandown Road, Sandwich
Construction of 35 residential dwellings.**

The submitted information does not confirm the SuDS receiving watercourse's connectivity. A system reliant on pumping is questionable as sustainable drainage. We support KCC's holding **objection** pending submission of information on the existing watercourse network and an unpumped solution.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council

25/1394/FH

**Land Adjoining The Mount, Barrow Hill, Sellindge
Construction of 17 residential dwellings.**

We acknowledge this site lies outside our District boundary. LDC will be required for the TEDC and Byelaw 3 applies. We request re-consultation on planning conditions.

Maidstone Borough Council

25/501778/SUB

Land North of Old Ashford Road, Lenham

Phase 2 development of 102 dwellings. Discharge of conditions 3 (slab levels) and 5 (drainage).

Although outside the IDB's boundary, water discharges into our network. The applicant must demonstrate the receiving network is suitable and secure formal agreements. LDC is required for both surface and foul water discharges. We recommend the applicant contacts us regarding Contributions. An informative should be included on the Decision Notice.

Thanet District Council

CON/TH/25/0979

Crumps Farm, Shuart Lane, Birchington

Discharge of Conditions 7, 8, 10, 12 and 14. This application relates to the earlier permission for construction and conversion of dwellings.

We acknowledge this site lies outside the IDB's boundary. LDC will be required for the TEDC and Byelaw 3 applies. We request an informative is included on the Decision Notice.

F/TH/25/0697

Foxhunter Caravan Park, Monkton

Extension to the existing caravan park to accommodate an additional 55 caravans.

This site lies within our boundary and Flood Zone 2, requiring a Sequential Test and, if passed, an Exception Test. The red line boundary extends to an IDB maintained watercourse, and new planting is shown. Works within 8m of the bank require LDC, which we cannot grant if maintenance access is impacted. We **object** and recommend the applicant contacts us. A 5m clearance is usually required.

F/TH/25/0776

Land South of Ramsgate Road, Sarre

Construction of 20 dwellings and 1 retail unit.

This site lies partially within the IDB's boundary. LDC will be required for the TEDC and Byelaw 3 applies. We request an informative is included and re-consultation on any future drainage information.

Kent County Council

KCC/FH/0020/2025

Land at Otterpool Park, Sellindge

Construction of wastewater treatment works, primary substation and constructed wetlands.

The applicant's response has addressed our concerns. We are satisfied the SuDS strategy will mitigate the discharge. We withdraw our objection, subject to confirmation that measures are secured, operational before use, and monitored. LDC is required and Byelaw 3 applies.

Ref: W15 Applications for Land Drainage Consent (LDC)

We have received no new applications for Land Drainage Consent in this reporting period.

ADMINISTRATION

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

The percentage attendance for the previous four Board meetings is as follows:

7 th November 2024	58%	6 th February 2025	68%
5 th June 2025	73%	21 st August 2025	73%
Annual average – 68%			

Ref: A1-3 Review of Internal Drainage District Boundary

The Clerk & Engineer reported that consultation on the Board's proposed extension of its Internal Drainage District to the full catchment area has continued. A briefing document was issued to the EA, KCC, Ratepayers, District Councils, Southern Regional Flood & Coastal Committee Chair, Water Companies, local MPs, south-east IDBs, ADA and others. Responses to date have been supportive, although understandably District Councils sought assurances regarding potential effects on Special Levies. The Clerk & Engineer reported that ADA responded to his enquiry regarding the impact of the Board's district extension on its annual membership. ADA confirmed that membership costs, which are currently calculated based on area, will increase accordingly but it is hoped that this can be negotiated down, if the planned change to the subscription doesn't come into effect beforehand. Unfortunately, the planned meeting with Rosie Duffield MP (Canterbury) was cancelled and an alternative date is still awaited.

When a reply has been received from the RFCC, subject to there being no objection, a request will be made for the Environment Agency to submit the proposal to Defra for formal approval.

Ref: A3-6 Health & Safety

An investigation has begun into a recent cable strike incident at Rye, where an Environment Agency excavator undertaking routine weed cutting came into contact with an overhead line. The findings and recommendations will be shared once the investigation is complete, ensuring that

lessons learned can be communicated to IDB staff and contractors. **Action: Dr Price to share information when possible.**

The Board's Technical Officer, Operations Officer and Water Level Controller have all attended a 2-day Swiftwater & Flood First Responder training course. The Board's Clerk & Engineer and Operations Assistant are to be booked on this course shortly (when availability is confirmed).

Ref: A8-1 Association of Drainage Authorities – Flood & Water Annual Conference

This year's ADA Flood & Water Conference will take place on Tuesday 25 November 2025 at One Great George Street, Westminster, London. The Board's Chair, Vice Chair, Cllr McGeever, Cllr Wright and the Technical Officer are booked to attend.

Ref: A8-1 Association of Drainage Authorities – Main River Maintenance

ADA has been in correspondence with the Environment Agency regarding its recent decision to withdraw maintenance from several low-category Main Rivers in Somerset. In addition to this, ADA is engaging with Defra, Government Committees and others to highlight the economic, social and environmental dangers of ignoring basic maintenance of our flood risk assets and infrastructure.

Dr Price stated that the EA in Somerset is actively and formally withdrawing from maintenance responsibilities and stated that within the Southeast the EA has no intention of following suit, but its programme must be significantly reduced due to funding restrictions. He added that he will discuss with the IDB which areas to prioritise and choose which areas can continue to be maintained annually and others which may not. He observed that some regions may effectively withdraw from maintenance by default, as they are unable to afford the necessary works.

The Clerk & Engineer noted that, should the extension of the IDB's district proceed as planned, it would provide an opportunity to reassess which watercourses the EA and IDB will be able to maintain in the future and which they will not. The Chair stated that, at the time of the demaining process, there were additional watercourses proposed to be transferred to the IDB but these were unable to go ahead at that time as they extend beyond the Internal Drainage District (IDD). However, if and when the IDD is extended, it may be possible to reconsider these watercourses.

Dr Price observed that the demaining initiative was introduced as a national pilot and while the RSIDB was one of the successes, nationally it was not deemed successful (only two out of ten pilots completed). He expressed regret at this outcome, noting that the EA continues to face significant challenges in maintaining watercourses nationally. The Chair commented that local choices should hopefully still be possible if a case can be made.

Ref: A8-1.1 ADA South-East Branch

The ADA South-East Branch annual meeting took place in Ashford on 22 October 2025. A full agenda included updates from ADA, the EA, RFCC and others. Specific items discussed included: the Main River Maintenance Withdrawal (Somerset), Development Consent Orders, IDB Finance Regs, Solar Farms, Beavers and Invasive Species.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Hope asked how does or could AI improve IDB efficiency and effectiveness. The Chair noted that AI is increasingly at the forefront of innovation, and the Board will explore potential efficiencies it can deliver. There are certain areas that the Board has started to make use of technology such as the use of tilting weirs, deployment of remote sensors and managing water levels remotely.

Cllr Scobie emphasised the need for clear policy and guidance around AI use. He cautioned that uploading confidential/sensitive/personal information to open platforms such as ChatGPT could constitute a data breach. Microsoft Copilot offers a safer route, as it operates within the organisation's environment – a closed system approach can mitigate risks, and AI can add significant value when used correctly. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to seek advice and explore possibilities via ADA.**

MEETING CLOSED

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