THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on Thursday 20 August 2026 at 2.00pm
at Chartham Village Hall, Station Road, Chartham CT4 7HZ

PRESENT

Mr G Steed (Chair), Mr E Cyster, Mr P Dunn, Ms N Dyas, Cllr A Hicks (Vice Chair), Mr A Hope, Mr P Howard, Cllr D Ledger, Cllr R McGeever, Cllr G Meaden, Cllr M Nee, Mr T Pont, Mr M Wilkinson and Mr L Wooltorton. Cllr R Carnac, Cllr C Hallet and Cllr L Wright attended the meeting online.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr P Cackett (Operations Assistant), Mr J Dilnot (Operations Officer), Mr P Dowling (Clerk & Engineer) and Mr J Williamson (Technical Officer).

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed to their first meeting the new Board Members, Mr E Cyster and Cllr M Nee. He also welcomed to the meeting Dr D Price (EA Asset Performance Team Leader) and Mr G Wooltorton (East Kent Engineering Partnership).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Fuller, Mr G Holdstock, Ms A Lynch, Cllr W Scobie and Mr P Williams. An apology was also received from Ms A Eastwood (Finance & Rating Officer).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Ms Dyas declared an interest regarding upcoming discussions on IDB310 Minster Stream and the ongoing sewage spillage from Southern Water assets, and potential access restrictions in connection with the National Grid Sea Link Project.

No further declarations of interest were made by members present in person or online.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 4 JUNE 2026

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on Thursday 4 June 2026 were received. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Hicks and resolved that the minutes be confirmed and signed by the Chair of the meeting as a true record of the proceedings at that meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Cllr R McGeever asked for more information on the trial funded by Natural England on the use of Phoslock at Fordwich Lakes. Mr Pont stated that he would be happy to look into this with Mr Williams and to provide more information. **Action: Mr Pont/Mr Williams to provide information on Phoslock.**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES AND WORKS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 3 AUGUST 2026

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee held on Monday 3 August 2026 were received. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Hicks and resolved that these minutes be received.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Ref: F2 IDB Annual Report to DEFRA

The Board reviewed the IDB Annual Report to Defra (IDB1).

Ms Dyas noted that the Preston Marshes and Stodmarsh Water Level Management Plans (WLMPs) were last updated in 1998 and therefore do not take account of the risks presented by beavers which are now prevalent across the whole area. The Clerk & Engineer replied that these EA led WLMPs detail target water levels in SSSIs and are all well overdue review. However, due to continued lack of funding, the EA has been unable to carry out these reviews.

It was agreed that, when resources permit, the Board may wish to carry out a review of these plans to ensure they remain up to date and relevant and also flag the risks presented by beaver activity. The Chair suggested the appropriate time to revisit these plans may be once there is clarity regarding the Board's request to extend its district. The Board will then be in a better position to assess its finances and operational commitments.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Ledger and resolved that the Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2026 be approved. All present agreed. **Action: Finance & Rating Officer to publish and issue the Annual Report to the required parties.**

Ref: W7 IDB Water Level Management Structures

The Board discussed the ongoing Water Level Management Structures Upgrade Programme. The Clerk & Engineer reported that orders for replacement tilting weirs were placed with an alternative supplier, yielding significant cost savings compared to the previous supplier.

However. a major operational challenge was identified regarding supplier delivery lead times, which frequently extend from an estimated 10 weeks at the time of order to 17 weeks. This delay pushes installation into late autumn/winter when ground conditions are more difficult and crops are established.

To overcome delivery lag, the FGP&W Committee recommended using savings achieved from lower unit costs, supplemented, if necessary, by the Surface Water Development Fund, to purchase five tilting weirs in advance. This would result in earlier delivery of the weirs, allowing them to be installed earlier in the year, in dryer conditions and with a lower risk of crop damage.

Ms Dyas asked if the upgrade of Ebbsfleet Stop from a stopboard structure to a weir would affect our ability to contain pollutions, as is the case at present. The Clerk & Engineer confirmed that the weirs generally have a larger range than the original stopboard arrangements, so the ability to do this will be retained. He further reported that the recent pollution in the Minster Stream, caused by a burst Southern Water sewer, was contained by the Water Level Controller and all pollutants have now been removed by Southern Water, to the satisfaction of Environment Agency staff.

In response to queries regarding telemetry and automation, the Clerk & Engineer explained that solar/electric automated control units are costly and therefore only being fitted to remote sites at present. This year's upgrades will all be manual operation but can be retrofitted with automated actuators in future, if required and funded, by removing the manual handle and bolting on the drive unit.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that local contractor AMS Engineering SE Ltd, operating under the East Kent Engineering Partnership, was awarded the contract to install this year's weirs following competitive tender.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Ms Dyas, and resolved by the Board to approve the advance procurement of a further five tilting weirs, subject to satisfactory quality inspection of the initial delivery from this new supplier. All present agreed. **Clerk & Engineer to proceed with procuring the five weirs in 2026-27 for installation in 2027-28, using any surplus from the Structures Reserve, and SWDC if additional funds are required.**

The Clerk & Engineer reported that a longer-term structures upgrade programme is being prepared, which should be available in draft at the November meeting. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to produce a long-term structures upgrade programme.**

The Chair asked the Technical Officer for an update on the map displaying all the Board's structures with details of condition and priority for upgrade. The Technical Officer replied that this will be produced in line with the above programme. **Action: Technical Officer to produce a map of structures showing priorities.**

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ref: F14 Banking Arrangements – CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund

Investment options were considered by the Board to enable closure of the Metrobank accounts, which now incur monthly charges. CCLA was identified as a viable alternative option, and it was clarified that the Board is eligible to invest only in Class 5 as other classes have a minimum investment above £1m. CCLA offers a pooled public-sector investment fund with daily liquidity, Class 5 has a minimum investment of £25,000, and a net yield of approximately 3.73%. Its dual-authority transaction controls align with the Board's existing financial procedures.

Cllr Nee endorsed the use of CCLA, citing Dover District Council's significant investments with the organisation, strong returns achieved, and prompt, efficient service. The Chair thanked Cllr Nee for this insight. It was then proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Hicks and resolved that the Board's Metro Bank accounts be closed, that an investment account be opened with CCLA, and that all funds currently held with Metro Bank be transferred to the new CCLA account accordingly. As previously agreed by the Board, the Chairs – Mr Gary R Steed and Cllr/Mrs Aline Hicks – the Clerk & Engineer of the Board – Mr Peter N Dowling – and the Finance & Rating Officer – Ms Ana I T P Eastwood – will serve as the account signatories. All present agreed. **Action: Finance & Rating Officer to open an account with CCLA and close the Metrobank accounts.**

Ref: A1-1 Board Members

The Chair stated that the FGP&W Committee is currently one member short and nominated Cllr M Nee, the newly appointed representative for Dover District Council, for this position. There being no other nominations, it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Ledger, and resolved that Cllr M Nee be appointed to the FGP&W Committee. All present agreed.

Distribution of Board Papers: Concerns were raised by members regarding the non-receipt of bulky attachments when physical papers are posted. The Clerk & Engineer stated that all documents are emailed to all members but only the main documents are sent by post, in order to reduce wastage and costs. He undertook to issue a communication to all members to review distribution preferences (full electronic vs. posted hard copies) to establish a clear register of everyone's preferences. **Clerk & Engineer to email Members.**

Ref: W1-45 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

The Board discussed the forthcoming Local Government Reorganisation in Kent where the Stour IDB's district will fall within two unitary authorities: East Kent (covering Canterbury, Dover and Thanet) and Mid Kent (covering Ashford, Folkestone & Hythe, Maidstone, and Swale).

Cllr Nee observed that, under the current arrangements, IDBs have representatives from all district councils within their catchment. He noted that, once the new unitary authorities are established, it may become both possible and necessary to reduce the number of appointed members, as representatives will be representing wider unitary areas.

The Chair explained that, historically, the Board has ensured that each district is represented by an elected member, reflecting the importance of local knowledge and accountability to ratepayers. Accordingly, the Board has nine elected members, one for each of the nine electoral districts. He further noted that legislation requires Boards to have at least one more appointed member than elected members, which is why the Board currently has ten appointed members. The Chair emphasised that appointed members also contribute a valuable and diverse range of skills, complementing the elected members.

To manage early engagement, review practical and legal implications, and explore widening future membership to include parish councils and co-opted specialist bodies, the Board resolved to establish a dedicated LGR Working Subcommittee.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Ledger, and resolved to formally establish the LGR Subcommittee. The agreed composition of the subcommittee is as follows:

- Mr G Steed (Chair of the Board)
- Cllr R McGeever (Ashford Borough Council)
- Mr L Wooltorton (Canterbury City Council)
- Cllr M Nee (Dover District Council)
- Cllr W Scobie (Thanet District Council) – elected in his absence, confirmation to be sought with Cllr Wright as backup
- Ms N Dyas (Elected - Minster)

Action: Clerk & Engineer to email committee to arrange meeting prior to next Board meeting.

Report for the period May to July 2026

Actions from previous meeting:

Ref: W15 Clerk & Engineer to produce a list of watercourses for adoption/unadoption – ongoing.

Ref: A1-1 Clerk & Engineer to inform Mr Cyster of the Board's decision to appoint him to represent the Wye electoral district until the next IDB election (October 2027) – done and accepted.

Ref: A1-3 Clerk & Engineer to provide additional clarification on the Board's proposal to extend its IDD – further clarification provided to the EA and copied to Defra, now awaiting further response (in report).

Ref: A3-6 Dr Price to share information on overhead cable strike – the national review into this incident is still ongoing (in report).

Ref: A7-1 Finance & Rating Officer to arrange membership of Benenden Health Care for all staff – completed. Mr Hope requested that an email be issued in 24 months' time to report on the cost–benefit achieved for the Board.

Ref: F8-6 Technical Officer to update and align SWDC & TEDC fee schedule with WMA – done.

Ref: W4/WSR Rainfall & River Flow Data

Rainfall across the Stour catchment remained highly variable through late spring and summer. May was notably dry at 25.0 mm (54% of LTA), followed by some welcome rainfall in June averaging 68.5 mm (35% above LTA). July then became the driest on record locally, with virtually no rainfall (0–0.2 mm, just 0.2% of the LTA).

Soil moisture deficits reached record levels due to prolonged hot and dry conditions. River flows across the Stour catchment are below normal to exceptionally low, although the Great Stour remains comparatively healthier due to spring inputs. Groundwater and reservoir levels continue to fall, with Bewl Reservoir at 68% capacity at the end of July (LTA 77%).

The Chair reported that the RSPB's wetland site at Worth appears extremely dry and asked whether this is a result of the recent weather or an intentional management decision. The Clerk & Engineer explained that the RSPB aims to manage the site as naturally as possible, allowing or causing it to flood in the winter but to dry out, to a degree, during the summer. He added that the RSPB currently lack an abstraction/transfer licence to top up the site from the Delf Stream. However, IDB staff are assisting where possible, by feeding water onto the site and by assisting with their licence application. It will be most important that any licence issued includes a formal requirement to work with the IDB's Water Level Controller to ensure any abstractions can be properly managed and the system properly balanced.

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

Weed Cutting

The 2026 weed cutting programme started on 16 July focussing on the highest priority watercourses, whilst aiming to minimise the risk of disturbing nesting birds and is progressing well and ahead of schedule. Pre-cutting environmental risk assessments and bird nesting surveys were completed across 38km of priority watercourses.

In response to Chair and Member queries regarding drought conditions and machinery fire risks, the Operations Officer confirmed that all contractor's machinery is equipped with cab fire extinguishers and undergo daily engine bay cleaning to eliminate dry chaff accumulation. It was also stated that the contractors know the best exit routes and fire brigade access points, including the use of What3Words for precise location reporting. Dr Price noted that the EA's field teams have received specific advice on wildfire risks during grass-cutting operations, and cutting was temporarily paused for several days following that guidance. He agreed to share any advice issued to EA Operations teams, so that working practices can be aligned where appropriate.

Matthews Close Dyke in Deal was heavily vegetated and has been cut to ensure capacity for any summer storm events. As in previous years, it will be cut again later in the season to prepare the channel for winter flows.

Approximately 120km of Main Rivers are scheduled to be cut under the PSCA, funded by the IDB Precept and EA funds (hopefully without the need for the Board to contribute further).

De-silting

The 2026-27 de-silting programme, after some alterations, totals 18.4km and includes works on:

IDB114 Wademarsh Stream (Thanet Way to Brooksend Outfall)
IDB124 Marshside
IDB170 South Poulders Main Stream (Ropewalk)

IDB172 Elmstone Stream
IDB175 Stourmouth Stream
IDB196 Ware Lead Dyke (with possible enhancements)
IDB207 Ash Level Feed Dyke (Goldstone Drove to Horseshoe & Providence Feed)
IDB291 Kennel's Farm Lead Dyke
IDB295 Old North Stream
IDB306 General Valley Dyke
IDB307 Hogwell Sewer
IDB311 Richborough Stream (Potts Farm to Richborough Sluice)
IDB312 Gosshall Stream
IDB313 Gosshall Northern Arm

Mr Dunn commented that the previous section desilted only extended to Goldstone Drove, not Potts Farm as proposed. **Action: Operations Officer to include this section (to desilt from Goldstone Drove).**

There are no Main Rivers planned to be de-silted under the PSCA this year.

Spoil Spreading
Spoil from last year's de-silted watercourses will be spread in liaison with affected landowners, in August/September.

Tree & Shrub Maintenance
The detailed programme for tree maintenance will be finalised during the weed-cutting season, using feedback from Rhino staff. The scheduled works are planned for completion in late 2026 to early 2027, with initial tasks already identified on IDB19 Bockhanger Dyke, IDB29 Swanton Mill Dyke, and IDB297 Deal Town Dyke (recharged).

No tree works are planned under the PSCA this year due to lack of funding.

Structures Maintenance
As reported at the FGP&W Committee meeting, the following structures are planned for upgrade this year:

IDB143 Fowler's Feed
IDB172 Kelseys Stop
IDB175 Stourmouth Feed
IDB196 Rubery Drove Stop
IDB306 General Valley Stop (incl screen)
IDB310 Ebbsfleet Stop

Other miscellaneous minor repairs and upgrades are also being planned.

Water Level Control
The Clerk & Engineer reported that due to the prolonged dry and hot period, the Water Level Controller has retained as much water as possible throughout the summer to support levels aiding local environment and allowing for ongoing crop irrigation.

The leak between Saltwater Stop and Ebbsfleet Stop on the Minster Stream has now been fixed. The Water Level Controller took immediate emergency measures to contain the pollution and the EA supervised the tankering and clearance of contaminated water, allowing controlled flushing to commence.

The automatic weed rake at Hacklinge Pumping Station has finally been repaired.

The Board discussed the ongoing obstruction at Moles Hole Culvert, an EA asset immediately upstream of the A258 Sandwich-Deal Road where the South Stream passes over the North Stream – a lodged timber is causing a restriction to flow. There remains an unresolved ownership dispute between KCC Highways and the EA. KCC believes the road culvert is an EA asset, while EA records list it as a KCC highway structure. Dr Price confirmed that historical analysis by the EA confirms that the watercourse pre-dates the 1800s road construction, indicating that the culvert/bridge is a highway responsibility. Ownership must be confirmed before responsibility for works can be established.

The Operations Officer stated that it is still unknown whether the timber has floated down or whether it is part of the structure that has become dislodged. If it has floated down, removal would be more straightforward; however, if it is part of the structure, attempting to remove it could cause a collapse of the culvert. The Chair also noted that if the obstruction remains locked in place, water may back up and flood the marshes. Operations staff will undertake another camera survey in the coming weeks, to establish exactly what needs to be done.

Cllr McGeever noted that similar discussions took place at the previous meeting and requested a clear plan of action and progress towards a conclusion. Cllr Nee emphasised that the bridge may become unstable and that potential collapse risk must be considered. He stated that KCC is responsible for the bridge and that, if the forthcoming survey is inconclusive, a specialist structural survey should be arranged, with clarity required on who would fund it. The Chair highlighted that the forthcoming transition to unitary authorities may complicate responsibility, and ownership must be firmly established before those changes take effect. **Action: Dr Price to progress and report back.**

Ref: A4-3 Biodiversity

Surveys:
Work has started on this year's watercourse surveys, which are now to include IDBs **34**, 47, 48, 52, 53, **54**, 65, 82, **83**, 84, 85, **90**, 91, **109**, 110 (those in **bold** completed). These now include a general ecological assessment of each watercourse and its wider network.

Enhancement projects for delivery in 2026-27 are being progressed:

IDB10 Cowlees Dyke
Creation of an offline pond to store excess water during high-flow events, which will reduce downstream flood risk. The feature will also trap sediment, lowering the amount transported through the system. The wetter conditions will expand wet woodland habitat and improve suitability for a more diverse range of flora and fauna. Site inspections have taken place and discussions had with affected landowners and this project is expected to be completed by mid-October.

IDB111 Port Rill
The proposed works at Port Rill involve installing large check dams to slow water movement and retain flows on site for longer. This will provide additional storage during high-rainfall events, helping to reduce downstream flood risk while also improving drought resilience by holding water back in dry periods. Although smaller in scale, the site functions similarly to the LAPSIP peatland site at Northbourne. To ensure surrounding land is not adversely affected, a secondary channel will be enlarged and reconnected downstream to safely convey excess flows around the works. Overall, the enhancement will reduce downstream flood risk, improve drought resilience, and create conditions that support a richer diversity of local flora and fauna. Site inspections have taken place and discussions had with affected landowners and this project is expected to be completed in September.

IDB 196 Ware Lead Dyke
A new proposal has been developed, on a section of Ware Lead Dyke, for restoration and enhancement of approximately 115m of channel. Until very recently the site largely consisted of large green houses which have been removed. The channel has been degrading for many years due to over abstraction and poor water quality from field and road runoff and the watercourse has recently stopped flowing for the first time in over 60 years. It is proposed to re-meander the artificially straightened channel, as part of planned de-silting works, to create larger marginal shelfs and install small natural weirs to improve the overall condition of the water course. Further site inspections are planned and, if ecological risks are confirmed to be acceptable, the work will be scheduled for completion in October.

Enhancement proposals to be developed in 2026 for possible delivery in 2027 (subject to Board approval):

IDB25 Buxford Dyke
This proposal extends our previous enhancements on this watercourse, fencing off sections of upstream channel and creating scrapes and cattle drinks to avoid poaching and to reduce the number of silts and other pollutants entering this watercourse. This work will have to be carried out in cooperation with Godinton Estate.

IDB302 Upper Great Stour
This proposal involves a substantial programme of works, including the installation of large check-dams on the main river channel and on several smaller side-channels. The dams will slow the flow of water leaving the site and increase storage during high-flow events, thereby reducing downstream flood risk and improving drought resilience by retaining water during dry periods. The project would also create conditions that support a richer diversity of local flora and fauna. Early discussions with the landowner have been positive. A detailed site survey has been done to assess risks and opportunities, and a formal proposal will be put to the landowner.

Priority Species:
Research is being made into eDNA technology for detecting the presence of Shining Ramshorn Snail in IDB watercourses, which would indicate clean, unpolluted water quality and a stable environment.

Water Vole surveys are progressing in the Wye, Canterbury, Wingham and Little Stour Marshes areas until September. Habitat improvements are being planned to support White Clawed Crayfish.

Engagement with Partners:
KSCP has received Stour Valley Restore National Lottery Heritage Funding, future watercourse work could be part-funded through this scheme. KSCP chair East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership where the LAPSIP project was promoted through a site visit in July. KSCP attended EA Stour Catchment quarterly meeting in July where joint work with IDB work was promoted. Natural England is also promoting partner engagement in Stodmarsh Environment Delivery Plan.

Invasive Non-Native Species:
An initial survey for Crassula was carried out at Rubery Drove and returned a negative result. A follow-up survey will be undertaken later in the year to confirm any coverage.

Quotes have been obtained to eradicate Japanese Knot Weed at Pumping Station Dyke in Ashford. The cost will be approximately £4,500 for 3 treatments over a five-year period guaranteed for 10 years.

The excellent success of Parrots Feather removal on the Wade Marshes is being finalised.

New bankside trees:
Funding has been received from the EA for tree planting and river restoration works on the East Stour to Wye, to match IDB funding. Confirmation is still awaited from the EA on the Sarre Penn and River Wantsum funding and if/when confirmed contact will be made with landowners in these areas.

Ref: A10-21 Beavers

The Operations Officer reported that Tumble Bay Stop, which manages water levels on the Delf Stream and flows into IDB273 Pole Bay Dyke, continues to be regularly dammed by beavers. These dams are being cleared on an ongoing basis, and installation of a flow deceiver is being considered; however, this would require a Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP).

The Water Level Controller reported a recent decrease in beaver activity and if this continues, it may indicate that persistent removal of dams encourages beavers to abandon the site, which could be a tactic used in other areas. However, beavers may return next year, and a FRAP may still be required. The longer-term intention is to seek an exemption for this type of works, progressing it through EKBAG with a view to establishing national agreement.

Dr Price advised that a beaver guidebook is under development, which is heavily informed by the work undertaken by the RSIDB. He further noted that, under the Water Resources Act and the Environmental Permit Regulations, IDBs and certain other bodies are defined as statutory undertakers, meaning they do not require permits for such works, but he will seek legal clarification. Though due to the sensitivity surrounding beaver-related activity, some form of official approval through the local biodiversity team may still be required, and a FRAP may be the most effective mechanism to ensure this.

The Clerk & Engineer asked about the response time limits for FRAPs. Dr Price explained that although FRAPs have defined determination timescales, these can be paused, but they are processed under national KPIs aimed at reducing delays. Unfortunately delays still occur, as seen with the outstanding decision on the Grove Wall FRAP at Stodmarsh. The Operations Officer expressed concern about time constraints, noting the pressure on resources required to complete this and future FRAPs.

Beaver activity at Northbourne continues to deliver highly positive results, in ecological terms, following the success of the LAPSIP project. The beavers have constructed multiple dams along a small internal watercourse, creating a substantial wetland area and significantly increasing on-site water retention. This is only the second beaver-created wetland in the country, the first being at Ham Fen. A recent site survey, including both a walkover and a drone flyover, confirmed that the area remains exceptionally lush and thriving despite the prolonged dry conditions, demonstrating the considerable ecological and hydrological benefits of IDB works and beaver activity.

The Board discussed whether the positive outcomes at Northbourne should be promoted. The Operations Officer noted that messaging will need to be diplomatic, as perceptions may vary. The Chair emphasised that although the Board is often viewed as anti-beaver, it has delivered more practical coexistence work than any other organisation locally. The Operations Officer agreed stating that, while agencies frequently discuss coexistence, little practical work is being undertaken elsewhere and the IDB is significantly further ahead. The Chair emphasised that it is important that these successful works are promoted, even if it is through EKBAG.

Small-Scale Repairs
Repairs and improvements to around 12 sites are planned for this summer.

Landowners raised significant concerns about extensive beaver burrowing and deep nesting chambers beneath river embankments along the Lower Stour, including the Monks and Abbotts Walls, noting the risk that high winter flows could breach weakened banks.

Ms Dyas highlighted significant local concern and the need for emergency contact information, practical guidance and a clear contingency plan for the marshes and low-lying areas. The Operations Officer reported ongoing coordinated risk analysis across EA and IDB assets, alongside parallel work by EKBAG, with a joint plan to follow. Recent inspections found no visible damage to major embankments, though hidden burrows remain a significant health and safety concern.

Dr Price advised that the EA would struggle to respond effectively to an incident, citing a recent emergency repair that failed within hours and had to be completed by the landowner. He stressed that landowners and farmers should not expect rapid EA intervention due to limited funding and the low priority of the Stour, where residential flood risk is minimal. Ultimately, responsibility for maintaining watercourses and defences rests with the landowners.

Ms Dyas stated that if landowners step in to carry out emergency works if required, they may then be prosecuted. Dr Price stated that in normal circumstances EA permission would be required to complete work but there are provisions for emergency works to be carried out if there is a serious risk to drainage, flooding or the environment.

Beaver and Eel Pass
Another two combined beaver-eel passes are to be fitted to Grove Road Stop (IDB) and to a private structure within the Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve this summer/autumn.

East Kent Beaver Advisory Group (EKBAG)
KWT received a grant which will be used for a Species Recovery Programme. Update and what it means for EKBAG:

- Partners – Kent Wildlife Trust (BWT), Beaver Trust (BT), South East Rivers Trust (SERT), Quex Park Estate (QPE, host for North East Kent Farmer Cluster), Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE) – University of Kent and Natural England.
- Project to run from July 2026 to March 2029.
- The purpose of the Project is to increase the genetic diversity of the beaver population within the Stour Catchment and develop a nationally significant model of best practice in beaver mitigation and human-beaver coexistence, supporting establishment of a resilient long-term national beaver population.
- Four work streams – releases up to 30 beavers including feasibility studies, coexistence programme which includes landowner engagement, best practice work (8-10 mitigation trials), develop case studies (various media outputs).
- Main input needed from EKBAG is workstreams 3 and 4 – on coexisting programme, landowner engagement, mitigation trials, capacity building, training, producing case studies and dissemination of information.
- Various funding available for these outputs including training/workshops and events as well as £60,000 for mitigation trials.
- KWT recruiting a Beaver Project and Coexistence Officer role for this project who will lead on engagement with landholders around human-beaver co-existence, oversee the trials, provide overall project management and coordinate the partnership.
- BT will hold funds in a restricted fund for EKBAG which can only be used for set outputs as outlined in the bid.

Ref: W7G Environment Agency Works

Work delivered April to July 2026
Routine structure checks; Reservoir embankment grass cutting; Reservoir embankment repairs; Rippers Cross PS outfall improvements; Sarre PS access track improvements; Hacklinge PS weed rake repairs and Ash Level PS basement column repairs

2026-27 Project updates
Annual in-channel maintenance programme, via Field Team and IDB PSCA started mid-July; Reservoir structures desilting is expected during August; Tree works and hedge cutting is expected autumn / winter; the designs for Hothfield FSR toe drain repairs are progressing; Minster PS elver pass installation started late July and works are almost completed.

Staff update
Mr R Tournay, Stour & Swale Asset Performance Team Leader, is leaving the EA late August and Dr D Price will be covering the role on an interim basis until permanent recruitment is completed. Ms Sally Carvey (Area Director) is retiring in September, and succession plans are being worked on.

The Stour Field Team Training Day held on Wednesday 17 June 2026 at Plucks Gutter Depot was successful. There were river rescue practice and plant & equipment demonstrations which included the IDB tractor pump.

Health & Safety
The EA reported a safety incident involving a ride-on, industrial grass-cutting machine which overturned while operating on raised banks elsewhere in the country. Although no injuries occurred, the incident is being treated as serious and additional safety measures are being introduced. The potential implications for operations in the Stour are not yet known. Dr Price offered to share the updated safety guidance with the IDB once available. **Action: Dr Price to provide update.**

Ref: W5 Planning Applications

Ashford Borough Council

PA/2025/1109 Conybeare Site, Torrington Road, Ashford
Erection of 28no. residential units with associated amenity space, open space, access and parking including relocation of an existing community project (re-consultation)

Following KCC's withdrawal of their objection on agreement of a hybrid attenuation strategy, we raised no objection, subject to the LLFA's detailed design and verification conditions. We strongly supported the LLFA's request for mandatory post-flood inspection and remediation works within the Drainage Management and Maintenance Plan. We confirmed that LDC and applicable Surface Water/Treated Effluent Development Contributions apply and reminded the applicant of the consent requirements for any in-channel works within the Board's 8-metre byelaw margin. Byelaw 3 applies.

PA/2025/2368 Briar Rose, Pluckley Road, Charing, TN27 0AQ
Variation of condition 6 (details of drainage works) for planning permission 18/01430/AS

We echoed the LLFA's residual concerns regarding site geology and the operational capacity of the proposed system, noting that reliance on soakaway infiltration in the underlying Gault Formation clays remains questionable without intrusive BRE Digest 365 testing. We also

queried the reliability of the proposed rainwater harvesting overflow arrangements. We supported the LLFA's recommendation that clarification on usage, hydraulic calculations and ground permeability be secured before the variation is determined, confirmed that LDC and applicable development contributions would apply to any resulting off-site discharge, and asked to be reconsulted on any further drainage submissions. Byelaw 3 applies.

NOT/2026/0040 Land between railway line and, Willesborough Road, Kennington
Reserved matters application for the approval of access, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping for Phase 2 and part Phase 3 comprising 401 dwellings and associated works pursuant to outline planning permission 19/00025/AS

We reviewed the drainage information submitted in support of these reserved matters application and raised no objection. We reminded the applicant that any specific operational or technical matters remain a separate regulatory matter for the Board, to be addressed by way of formal LDC under the Land Drainage Act 1991 and the Board's byelaws, which must be secured prior to the commencement of any works affecting watercourses or drainage assets within the District. Byelaw 3 applies.

NOT/2026/0643 Land at Ashford Road, Kingsnorth
Reserved matters application for the approval of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of the residential element comprising 15 dwellings pursuant to planning permission PA/2022/2851 (Appeal Ref APP/E2205/W/23/3322574)

We echoed KCC's (LLFA) concerns that there is presently insufficient detail on the surface water drainage proposals, and recommended that determination be deferred until a full technical package is submitted (design strategy statement, detailed layout plans, baseline runoff/infiltration data, hydraulic calculations for the 1 in 2, 1 in 30 and 1 in 100-year events with climate change allowances, an exceedance flow plan, a water quality assessment, and O&M arrangements). We reminded the applicant of the Byelaw 3 consent requirement and confirmed a TEDC will apply to the additional volumes discharged into our District. Byelaw 3 applies.

PA/2026/0250 Hothfield Brain Injury Rehabilitation & Neurological Care Centre, Bethersden Road, Hothfield, TN26 1AZ
Extensions and external alterations to existing rehabilitation centre

We echoed KCC's assessment that the surface water drainage strategy is currently incomplete and supported the recommendation that determination be deferred until full drainage details, calculations and clarification on the existing car park drainage arrangements are provided. We confirmed that LDC and applicable development contributions would apply to any increased off-site discharge. Byelaw 3 applies.

OTH/2026/0909 Swanton House, Elwick Road, Ashford, TN23 1NN
Details submitted pursuant to part discharge Conditions 3B (construction management plan), 6A (EV charging), 10A (foul water disposal), 11A (surface water drainage scheme) etc

We raised concerns regarding the revised drainage strategy, which abandons infiltration in favour of a tank-to-sewer system reliant entirely on piped infrastructure. We asked the applicant to first demonstrate that multi-stage SuDS options have been fully exhausted, to update calculations to the latest Upper End climate change allowances and noted that reliance on basic catchpits alone is often insufficient to prevent siltation and pollution of downstream watercourses. We confirmed that formal LDC is required prior to any increased discharge, and that the site will be subject to a TEDC. Byelaw 3 applies.

PA/2026/0995 Land rear of Long Barn, Ashford Road
Outline planning permission (all matters reserved except for access) for the demolition of existing buildings and construction of up to 175 dwellings

We supported the LLFA's holding objection pending assessment of the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy against Defra's National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems, sharing concerns over reliance on a single end-of-pipe attenuation basin and requesting multi-stage SuDS and volume control measures across the site. We confirmed LDC and development contributions would apply to any increased discharge. Byelaw 3 applies.

PA/2026/0999 Former Kent Wool Growers Site, Tannery Lane, Ashford
Proposed residential development of 160 homes, restoration and change of use of Whist House to Class E(g)(i) office use, a pedestrian bridge link over the River Stour, access off Tannery Lane, public open space, landscaping and other works

We raised no objection, subject to the LLFA's detailed design and verification conditions, and supported the multi-stage SuDS features proposed (permeable paving, rain gardens, tree pits and a drainage basin) together with the reduction in impermeable area, which represents a betterment on the existing baseline. As the site adjoins the River Stour and proposes two new surface water outfalls, we confirmed that LDC and Surface Water/Treated Effluent Development Contributions apply and asked to be reconsulted on future drainage submissions. Byelaw 3 applies.

PA/2026/1082 Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, TN23 9ZY
Change of use and conversion of former Council offices to provide 58 residential units with ancillary facilities, car parking, landscaping and associated works, together with retention of ground floor office space, infill extensions and creation of a kiosk

We raised no objection, subject to the LLFA's detailed design and verification conditions, and supported the sustainable drainage features proposed (rainwater harvesting, bioretention and permeable hardstanding) achieving a discharge rate of 1.6 litres per second. We echoed the LLFA's requirement for further assessment to ensure the detention basin and wider network remain operational and can drain freely to the East Stour during and after fluvial flood events. We confirmed LDC and Surface Water/Treated Effluent Development Contributions apply and asked to be reconsulted on future submissions. Byelaw 3 applies.

OTH/2026/1115 (pursuant to planning permission 18/00098/AS)
Waterbrook Park, Waterbrook Avenue, Sevington
Condition 70 (Sustainable Drainage Maintenance Plan)

Subject to the maintenance requirements being strictly adhered to for Parcel A, we raised no objection to the discharge of Condition 70. We reminded the applicant that the discharge of planning conditions does not override the Board's statutory requirements, drew attention to Byelaw 3, and confirmed that formal LDC is required for any discharge, with a TEDC applying. Byelaw 3 applies.

<u>Canterbury City Council</u>

CA/19/10011 Phase 3 Royal Parade, Howe Barracks, Littlebourne Road, Canterbury
Application for the approval of appearance, access, landscaping, layout and scale for residential development consisting of 129 dwellings

We supported KCC's holding objection pending a robust surface water drainage strategy, sharing concerns over unverified infiltration rates and the unjustified 13.8 litres per second

discharge rate proposed for the adoptable road network. We stated that discharge to a foul sewer is unacceptable, and that the applicant must demonstrate why infiltration cannot be extended to the adoptable areas. We confirmed that LDC is required for any watercourse discharge, and that the additional residential units will attract Surface Water/Treated Effluent Development Contributions. Byelaw 3 applies.

CA/25/02318 Former Chaucer School, Spring Lane, Canterbury, CT1 1SU
Erection of 34 residential dwellings with associated access, parking, landscaping, earthworks and associated infrastructure

We supported KCC's decision to remove their holding objection, subject to conditions requiring a detailed surface water drainage scheme and subsequent verification report and agreed that further design work (including the setting of drainage levels) is needed before commencement. We confirmed LDC and applicable development contributions would apply to any increased discharge. Byelaw 3 applies.

CA/26/00800 Chartham Paper Mill, Station Road, Chartham, Kent, CT4 7JA
Alterations and extensions to existing 2-storey residential terrace to facilitate the amalgamation of 12 dwellings into 8 dwellings, and erection of 2-storey buildings to create 8 further dwellings

As the site lies within our Drainage District, we raised no objection, subject to the LLFA's detailed design and verification conditions, and welcomed the reduced hardstanding area and sustainable drainage features (permeable paving and swales) achieving a restricted discharge of 0.9 litres per second to the Great Stour. We noted that the net increase of four dwellings will generate additional treated effluent and confirmed that LDC and applicable development contributions may apply. Byelaw 3 applies.

CA/26/00831 Water Meadows Primary School, Shaftesbury Road, Hersden, Kent, CT3 4HS
Erection of two-storey detached block, refurbishment of the existing Sports Hall, installation of a Multi-Use Games Area, extension of the existing car park, etc

We fully supported KCC's holding objection pending a robust, evidenced surface water drainage strategy, sharing concerns over discrepancies in the site area figures used for the greenfield runoff and hydraulic modelling calculations, and requesting full detail of the filter drains and their connection to the historic soakaway. We confirmed that LDC and development contributions apply and reminded the LPA that planning approval does not guarantee subsequent Board consent. Byelaw 3 applies.

CA/26/01011 Land at Hillborough, Sweechbridge Road, Herne Bay
Details submitted pursuant to condition 36 (Surface Water Drainage), condition 58 (Foul Water Drainage) and condition 59 (Public Foul Sewer) for Phase 4C of planning permission CA/17/01866

We confirmed receipt of a formal Byelaw 3 application for the principle of discharging surface water and treated effluent to the wider catchment, which remains under consideration. We supported KCC's request for further information on the Catchment G ditch and possible culvert requirement, and on the detailed arrangements for the enhanced swale connecting Basins 4 and 8 and required that the Headwall 1 outfall be positioned at 45 degrees to the flow direction to prevent erosion. We welcomed the opportunity to comment on any future revisions to the strategy. Byelaw 3 applies (formal application already submitted).

Dover District Council

CON/24/00580/A Land North of Gobery Hill, Gobery Hill, Wingham
Discharge of condition 8 (Surface water drainage strategy), 10 (No infiltration without consent) and 11 (Foul sewage scheme)

We supported the discharge of Condition 8 and welcomed the revised strategy to retain surface water on site via infiltration, in place of the previously proposed off-site sewer connection, which removes the volumetric burden on the wider catchment entirely. We noted that the net increase of 17 dwellings will still generate additional treated effluent, confirming that LDC and applicable development contributions apply. Byelaw 3 applies.

25/00472 Archers Low Farm, Sandown Road, Sandwich, CT13 9NU
Erection of 35 residential dwellings with associated access, open space, landscaping, drainage, infrastructure works and earthworks

Notwithstanding KCC's removal of their holding objection, we maintained our reservations regarding a drainage strategy reliant entirely on a pumped outfall into a ditch network of unverified onward connectivity and strongly supported the LLFA's condition requiring further surveys to confirm the receiving network's condition and connectivity, together with scour protection details for the pumping station discharge. We confirmed that LDC is required, and that the 35 additional dwellings will attract Surface Water/Treated Effluent Development Contributions. Byelaw 3 applies.

Maidstone Borough Council

26/502146/EIASCO Land at Heathlands, Lenham Heath Road, Lenham Heath
EIA Scoping notification

Given the substantial scale of the proposed development (up to 5,000 residential dwellings), we advised that the forthcoming Environmental Statement must include a comprehensive Flood Risk Assessment and a robust Surface Water Drainage Strategy, thoroughly evaluating the cumulative volumetric impact of both surface water runoff and treated effluent discharges on the wider catchment and clearly demonstrating how peak flow rates and total discharge volumes will be restricted. We formally noted the Byelaw 3 advisory at this scoping stage, confirmed that significant Surface Water/Treated Effluent Development Contributions will apply, reminded the LPA that planning approval does not guarantee subsequent LDC, and asked to be consulted on all future submissions relating to surface water or treated effluent management. Byelaw 3 applies.

KCC

TH/24/401/RVARA Weatherlees Hill Wastewater Treatment Works, Jutes Lane, Weatherlees Hill, Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 5DJ
Details of Updated Approved Plans and Details (Condition 4), Updated Construction Environmental Management Plan (Condition 7), Sustainable Surface Water Drainage Scheme (Condition 8), and Biodiversity Gain Plan pursuant to planning permission TH/24/401

We accept the practical blockage risk and natural losses within the swale, but note that 2.5 l/s still greatly exceeds the greenfield equivalent of 0.17 l/s. As a pragmatic solution, we would accept a vortex flow control (e.g. Hydro-Brake) to lower the peak rate while maintaining a blockage-resistant aperture, provided the applicant formalises swale losses and demonstrates

the reduced rate is as low as practicable. We would welcome a revised submission. Byelaw 3 applies (SWDC required for any excess over greenfield).

Ref: W15 Applications for Land Drainage Consent (LDC)

26 ST 01
Location: Sturry Link Road (A28/A291), Sturry, Canterbury
Proposal: Construction of new road link

- Culverting of Sturry Dyke (IDB 034): 87m permanent culvert (450mm HDPE) on north side of A28.
- Surface water drainage: Northern and southern attenuation ponds, with additional storage via oversized pipes and cellular tank at southern roundabout. Additional impermeable area of 14,566m² draining to the district.
- Temporary works: 18m temporary culvert agreed for enabling works access; collapsed brick culvert repaired and widened from 4m to 6m.

Note: Byelaw 3 applied. SWDC of £30,879.92 has been paid.

26 ST 02
Location: Land to the south of Chart Leacon Depot, Leacon Road, Ashford
Proposal: Discharge surface water from newly impermeable area associated with construction of open storage

The applicant proposes to maintain the existing discharge rate of 11.4 l/s via pump and rising main to an existing outfall to the River Stour, with attenuation provided to accommodate the increase in impermeable area. The additional newly impermeable area totals 6,988m², with attenuation ensuring no increase in flood risk from the development.

Note: SWDC of £14,814.56 to be paid

ADMINISTRATION

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

The Chair reported that meeting attendance has improved, from 64% annual average in June 2025, to 73% in June 2026, despite having two Members who never attended meetings. The Chair thanked Members for their ongoing support and contribution.

Ref: A1-3 Review of Internal Drainage District Boundary

The Clerk & Engineer reported that, following the meeting with local EA staff – who were broadly supportive but relayed several concerns raised by the EA's legal team – the issues have subsequently been addressed and submitted to the EA, copied to Defra.

1. The Medway Letter & Boundary Flexibility:
    - Non-statutory guidance: the 1933 Medway Letter is an administrative guide, not a legal requirement.
    - Modern flexibility needed: fixed historical boundaries do not suit modern flood risks or whole-catchment management.
    - Defra policy: Defra and ADA promote boundary flexibility to address climate change and urban development.

2. Derivation of Benefit or Avoidance of Danger:

- Broader assessment of benefit: legal 'benefits' have evolved from purely protecting farmland to protecting property, infrastructure, public health, and local economies.
- Whole-catchment management: controlling the upper reaches of the river system allows the IDB to 'slow the flow' to reduce flood risks downstream.
- Expanded regulatory powers: extending the boundary expands the IDB's planning consultation, consenting, and legal enforcement powers into the upper catchment.

3. Future Rating & Financial Safeguards:

- Zero-rated extension: the proposed new area will be zero-rated (or exempt), meaning no drainage rates or special levies will apply to it.
- Strict legal protections: the IDB cannot simply introduce rates later; doing so would require an evidence-based proposal, formal public consultation, and direct Ministerial approval under the Land Drainage Act 1991.
- No impact on existing rates: the existing 1938 Differential Rating Order will remain unchanged.

Dr Price reported that the application is yet to be submitted to Defra, as the EA's legal team is currently in discussions with Defra's legal team to clarify legal soundness. This is to ensure the EA does not block a proposal that may ultimately be workable. Hopefully there will be a positive response from Defra.

Dr Price reported that the Area Hydrology Team also raised potential concerns from a licensing perspective. They noted that certain abstraction and transfer licence exemptions apply only within an IDB district, and a significant expansion of the district could affect these licences. They therefore wish to understand the implications of the proposed extension for licensing requirements and the EA's ability to manage water resources, as conditions can only be applied where a licence is required.

The Clerk & Engineer expressed disappointment that the EA's legal team had referred the matter to Defra before these concerns could be addressed. Hopefully Defra will advise of any remaining concerns for the IDB to address, enabling a constructive way forward. He emphasised that the Board is simply seeking to manage the system as effectively as possible in line with Defra policy.

Ref: A2-3 Annual Inspection

This year's site visit for Members took place on Thursday 23 July 2026 in the Ashford area and was well attended. This included a visit to a Lenham Wastewater Treatment Works, a river restoration project on the Great Stour at Victoria Park, a flood risk and Nutrient Neutrality scheme at Bliby, near Kingsnorth and a Sustainable Drainage facility at Conningbrook. The Chair thanked everyone who attended and passed on his thanks to everyone who organised the event.

Ref: A3-1.7 GDPR and IT Security & AI Policies

The Chair reported that a combined Information Technology, Security & Artificial Intelligence Policy is currently being developed, in conjunction with a review of GDPR Policy. The documents have been shared, and it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Hicks and resolved that documents be finalised in consultation with interested Members and put to the full Board for approval by email.

It was agreed that all Members should have training in Cyber Security and that the Chairs and all Members interested should attend GDPR Training. It was noted that some Members may

already have this in place. **Action: Members to advise of their training needs and Finance & Rating Officer to book training as needed.**

Ref: A3-6 Health & Safety

It was reported that the EA's investigation into the overhead cable strike is still ongoing, so a full report is not yet available. In the meantime, all EA teams involved in planning and delivering work underneath overhead cables have been reminded to make sure:

- Planning is robust including pre-site visits,
- Operational instructions are properly implemented,
- Ensure site information packs that detail the work and maps are up to date,
- Equipment including height limiters and wire watchers are used,
- Staff are trained and capable to carry out the works and,
- Ensure to dynamically risk assess as we go

The Operations Officer (Safety Advisor) completed site audits on many routine tasks with all IDB contractors over the last few months and nothing of concern or note was found, with good work standards being employed.

The Operations Officer has also agreed to join an ADA working group, to develop a Good Governance Guide focussed on Health, Safety & Welfare and progress updates will be shared in due course.

Ref: A8-1 Association of Drainage Authorities

Annual Conference
The ADA Flood & Water Conference will take place on Tuesday 17 November 2026 at One Great George Street, Westminster, London. The Board usually sends a small delegation to this conference, so any Members wishing to attend this event, please advise the Clerk & Engineer so that bookings can be made. The full agenda is still to be confirmed but the already confirmed speakers are:

- Robbie More MP (Shadow Minister for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
- Gavin Lane (CLA President)
- Angela Jones (Director of Thriving Places, Westmoreland & Furness Council)
- William Harrington (Rural Flood Risk Team, Defra)

Action: All Members wishing to attend to contact the Clerk & Engineer.

National Drought Group
ADA will attend the National Drought Group meetings and asked for details of issues/concerns. It has been requested that the EA's coming review of abstraction/transfer licences properly involves local EA and IDB staff (not only national), and to encourage more winter storage reservoirs with more flexible licensing arrangements.

Ref: A8-1.1 ADA South-East Branch

The ADA South-East Branch annual meeting is to take place at Amos Hall, Ashford Cattle Market on Wednesday 21 October 2026 at 10am. Suggested items for the agenda should be sent to the Finance & Rating Officer (also the SE Branch Secretary) – meeting paperwork will be issued closer to the time.

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 2026. The external auditor's certificate and report is given at Section 3 on page 6 of the AGAR, which details any matters arising from the review. The external auditors approved the AGAR with no recommendations or actions required and the completed AGAR, which the Board is required to approve, has been published on the Board's website and noticeboard outside its office. It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr McGeever and resolved that the AGAR for the year ended 31 March 2026 be received and approved. All present agreed. **Action: Finance & Rating Officer to publish.**

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT)
P Dunn reported successful results from the GPS-controlled mink traps installed across the Marshes and Ash Levels through to Quex Park at Richborough by the WRT and stated that this should improve the local water vole populations.

Ms Dyas highlighted communication issues, stating that some traps have been removed during watercourse maintenance. The Clerk & Engineer commented that despite requesting details, the IDB had not been advised of precise locations of traps. The Chair requested that WRT provide a clear point of contact to the Operations Officer and ensure the IDB is notified of all future trap locations. **Action: Ms Dyas to share WRT contact details.**

Sea Link Project – Salinity Risks

Ms Dyas reported that National Grid is now moving on to site, although the planning application is still awaiting approval. She explained that part of the proposal involves installing equipment which will require pile-driving below the water table. This raises concerns about releasing saline material into the Minster Stream. She further noted that drilling has already reached forty metres without locating bedrock, which is required for the works to proceed. Dr Price confirmed he has not been involved in this project but will pass these concerns and requests to the relevant EA team. **Action: Dr Price to raise with EA colleagues.**

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

5 November 2026 **The Chair**