

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held at 10.00 on Thursday 8 November 2018
at the Guildhall, Castle Market, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9AH

PRESENT

Mr M J G Tapp (Chairman), Mr A D Linfoot OBE (Vice Chairman), Mr G R Steed (Deputy Vice Chairman), Mr D M Botting, Cllr M J Burgess, Mr P S Dunn, Mr D J Fuller, Mr P N Howard, Cllr A Hicks, Cllr H Stummer-Schmertzing, Mr M P Wilkinson, Mr P Williams and Mrs G Wyant.

ATTENDANCE

Mr P Dowling (Clerk & Engineer to the Board), Mr J Dilnot (Engineering Assistant) and Ms A Eastwood (Finance & Rating Officer).

TRIBUTE

The Chairman stated that he would like to pay tribute to the late Mr P E Dyas who served the Board for 50 years with today being the actual 50th anniversary of his first meeting. All present stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

WELCOMING

The Chairman welcomed to the Board Mr M Thomas (KSCP – delivering the Board’s Biodiversity Action Plan), Mr J Shelton (KSCP), Mr J Kelly (EA Asset Performance Team (Swale & Stour) Team Leader), Mr A Bateman (EA Main River Rationalisation Project Lead) and Mr D Godden (Rhino Plant Hire, IDB Contracts Manager).

The Chairman also welcomed Mr D Fuller to his first Board meeting and reported that besides Mr Fuller there are another two new members on the Board, Ms N H Dyas and Cllr N Ovenden who are unfortunately unable to be present today.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr M D Conolly, Ms N H Dyas, Cllr M Martin, Cllr M Ovenden, Cllr N Ovenden, Cllr D O Smith and Mr L Wooldorton.

ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2019

In accordance with the Land Drainage Act 1991 and the Board’s Rules and Standing Orders there is a requirement for the Board to elect a Chairman for the ensuing year. Mr A D Linfoot proposed that Mr M J G Tapp be re-elected to the post of Chairman, this proposal was seconded by Cllr A Hicks. There being no other nominations, it was resolved that Mr M J G Tapp be elected to the post of Chairman for the period ending November 2019.

ELECTION OF A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2019

The Chairman stated that in accordance with the Board’s Rules and Standing Orders, there is a requirement for the Board to elect a Vice Chairman for the ensuing year. The Chairman proposed Mr A D Linfoot for the post

of Vice Chairman, this proposal was seconded by Mr P N Howard. There being no other nominations, it was resolved that Mr A D Linfoot be elected to the post of Vice Chairman for the period ending November 2019.

ELECTION OF A DEPUTY VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2019

The Chairman proposed that Mr G Steed be re-elected as Deputy Vice Chairman, this proposal was seconded by Mr P S Dunn. There being no other nominations, it was resolved that Mr G R Steed be elected Deputy Vice Chairman for the period ending November 2019.

ELECTION OF A FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES AND WORKS COMMITTEE FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2019

The Chairman stated that the Board's Rules and Standing Orders also require the Board to elect a Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee for the ensuing year. The Chairman stated that last year's committee consisted of himself, the Vice Chairman, the Deputy Vice Chairman, Mr P S Dunn, Mr P E Dyas, Cllr A Hicks, Cllr M Ovenden, Cllr D Smith, Cllr H Stummer-Schmertzing and Mr M P Wilkinson. As Mr P E Dyas is no longer with us this leaves the F & G P with a total of 9 Members (4 Elected and 5 Appointed). The Chairman stated that this is considered to be a fair representation and with there being no other nominations, the Chairman proposed that the same Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee be re-elected for the year ending November 2019. The proposal was seconded by Mrs G Wyant and agreed by all present. It was therefore resolved that the Chairman, the Vice Chairman (Canterbury City Council), the Deputy Vice Chairman, Mr P S Dunn, Cllr A Hicks (Ashford Borough Council), Cllr M Ovenden (Dover District Council), Cllr D O Smith (Ashford Borough Council), Cllr H Stummer-Schmertzing (Thanet District Council) and Mr M P Wilkinson be elected to form the Board's Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee for the period ending November 2019.

APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2019

The Accounts and Audit Regulations require the Board to appoint/re-appoint an Internal Auditor for the ensuing year. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Mr Howard and resolved that Mr D Griffiths of D G Consultancy, the current Board's Internal Auditor, be re-appointed as the Board's Internal Auditor for the period ending November 2019. The Chairman further stated that this will bring Mr Griffiths to the completion of his term as the Board's Internal Auditor (initial 5 years with a 2 year extension) as agreed at the November 2017 AGM. A new Internal Auditor will need to be appointed at the November 2019 AGM.

ELECTION OF AN INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW TEAM FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2019

The Chairman stated that the Accounts and Audit Regulations require the Board to review its Internal Audit arrangements annually. This review is carried out by the Board's Internal Audit Review Team which consists of three Board Members. The current Internal Audit Review Team consists of Mr P S Dunn, Cllr D Smith and Mr G R Steed. It was proposed to replace Mr P S Dunn on the Internal Audit Review Team due to him having been on the committee the longest (run on a 3-year rotation). The Chairman thanked Mr P S Dunn for all his assistance and time on the Internal Audit Review Team and asked for another volunteer to join the team. Cllr M J Burgess volunteered to join as the third member of the team. It was therefore proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr H Stummer-Schmertzing and resolved that Cllr M J Burgess, Councillor D Smith and Mr G Steed be elected as the Board's Internal Audit Review Team for 2018-2019.

PRESENTATION BY MR MARTIN THOMAS (KSCP) ON THE BOARD'S BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS

The Chairman introduced Mr Thomas stating that he, on behalf of KSCP, has taken over from Carol Donaldson Associates and will continue to deliver the Board's Biodiversity Action Plan. Mr Thomas thanked the Clerk & Engineer, the Engineering Assistant and the Water Level Controller for all the help they have provided him during this initial adjustment period familiarising himself with the IDB's operations. He reported that to date he has: surveyed 7 watercourses (13km total length); carried out enhancement surveys on 3 watercourses (2km total length) specific to past recommendations and carried out 2 ad-hoc surveys.

One of the watercourses surveyed was the Stonelees Stream (IDB173) after weed cutting. Signs of water voles were found and it was assessed that the vegetation control was too severe, not leaving enough vegetation to create a safe habitat. On further discussion it was found that the landowner had carried out some maintenance. Mr Thomas stated that the Board's maintenance standards are good but that more liaison is required with landowners, to explain the benefits of sensitive maintenance, and the risks of more severe works.

Buxford Stream (IDB25) was also surveyed and the priority here is White-Clawed Crayfish which are in serious decline but were known to be present here some time ago. The main concerns are excessive silt, low water levels and bankside poaching. Following this survey additional tree work was recommended at Buxford Meadow and Godinton Estate and channel narrowing is under discussion to increase the flowrate and reduce the amount of silt.

Manual removal of the invasive weed Parrot's Feather has continued at Wade Marsh with 3 volunteer task days resulting in 1km of newly cleared watercourse. Mr Thomas reported that 700m has remained clear after last year's manual clearance. The Engineering Assistant agreed that the results of this work are very encouraging.

One of the ad-hoc surveys was for water vole at Ware Lead Dyke (IDB) in relation to access improvements. An extensive burrow system, latrines and runs were found, and a licensed ecological consultant was contacted to clarify the legal requirements for work. The other ad-hoc survey was carried out on the Delf Stream (Main River) for nesting birds ahead of vegetation management under the PSCA.

Mr Thomas reported that he next plans to analyse the survey results and modify management sheets accordingly and focus enhancements on streams with most natural character. He further stated that his overall impression is that most of the work carried out by the IDB has been optimised to benefit wildlife which is a great achievement and he thanked the Board for its ongoing actions.

Mr Thomas stated that he will continue to engage with external organisations and landowners to influence them in the way they manage their land. He reported that he has been in consultation with the EA over White-Clawed Crayfish survey data and he is hoping that this will result in detailed measures to improve the repopulation of this species in the Buxford Stream (IDB25).

Mr Thomas reported that there is a problem with silt at Port Rill (IDB111) which in turn creates high levels of nitrate and he has arranged a site visit with Natural England's Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer to look at possible options for improvement, including liaising with landowners about land management.

A longer-term goal is to eradicate Water Fern (Azolla) from the lower Stour Marshes which will require a joint approach, therefore he has started consulting with EA and others to establish a coordinated plan.

Mr Thomas distributed copies of Defra's leaflet on Farming Rules for Water as a reminder of the new rules introduced by Defra in April 2018 affecting the use of fertilisers, manure storage and application, cultivation methods to prevent topsoil loss and prevention of soil erosion by livestock.

Mr Williams asked if there have been any more sightings of beavers. Mr Shelton stated that there is evidence of their presence just below Canterbury and a recent survey indicated that it may be the second largest population in England. Mr Wilkinson asked if we should be concerned about a growing population of beavers and if so, what measures should be taken. The Chairman stated that as an IDB we do find it worrying and they have already damaged some structures and can potentially cause more problems by damaging walls and linking up dykes. The Clerk & Engineer stated that their presence has increasingly been reported by landowners in the Hacklinge area and Natural England and Kent Wildlife Trust are to look at the Ham Fen Project, in particular to assess the ability to secure the site. He further added that whilst he understands the wish of conservation groups to see them more widespread, the negative impacts must also be considered. Mr Shelton stated that there is a planned national policy meeting to discuss whether there is a need to take any action on beavers, so this is something that the government is looking into. Mr Shelton asked if there had been any damage caused by beavers recently. The Clerk & Engineer stated that there was some damage to the Hacklinge Pumps from debris that floated down into the pump about 2 years ago; there was also damage at Yules Arch where beavers burrowed between the crossover of the high and low level river systems. The Chairman stated that the other problem which has been reported is that they sharpen up tree stumps which could be fatal should anyone stumble and fall onto them. Mr Shelton agreed that there is a need to explore this further, but no one seems to be doing this at the moment. The Deputy Vice Chairman reported that he has had to replace several stopboards at Hacklinge due to beaver damage, the Engineering Assistant stated that the Board's Water Level Controller has also had to replace stopboards due to beaver damage. Mr Howard asked if beavers are protected. Mr Williams replied that he believes they are in Scotland but not yet in England. Mr Williams suggested that there is a distinction between the beaver population at Hacklinge, where all these problems have been, and the beavers at Stodmarsh where they seem to be less damaging. The Clerk & Engineer replied that the impact is greater at Hacklinge because it is a highly managed pumped system.

Mr Howard asked if evidence of the presence of mink has been found and what other water vole predators are there besides mink. Mr Thomas replied that he has not found any evidence of their presence during his surveys. Mr Shelton added that surveys are currently underway with about a dozen mink rafts which basically are covered in clay and record footprints and these are being found on most of the rafts, therefore there are mink out there and they will have an impact on the water vole population. However, where there is a good habitat water vole and mink will probably coincide. The objective of the mink rafts is to try and identify where the mink is and in what density, but it is a very time-consuming project because for an accurate recording the prints must be checked daily. Mr Shelton further stated that if any landowners would like a raft in their area and are willing to monitor it KSCP can arrange it and the results will be included on the survey. The Chairman asked if mink is found is there a culling programme. Mr Shelton reported that they have a culling programme but again it is very labour intensive because traps need to be constantly checked, therefore this may be an area that landowners could help with in the future.

The Deputy Vice Chairman said that following up on Mr Howard's question on water voles' predators, he has found that, depending on location, domestic cats have made a massive impact.

Mr Howard found it interesting that shading in the watercourse is detrimental to White-Clawed Crayfish. Mr Thomas replied that shading restricts vegetation growth within the watercourse which can be detrimental. Mr Shelton added that White-Clawed Crayfish also use cavities within the root systems of trees as well as under rocks. The Clerk & Engineer stated that the Board has looked at Pig Brook and downstream where there is no shading, there is too much vegetation for them, so a balanced habitat is needed. Mr Shelton reported that the KSCP will be conducting a study to help understand the factors behind the decline of this species. He stated that one of the main reasons for its decline is thought to have been the Crayfish Plague and that until recently they were present in the Main River at Chartham but now they seem to be restricted, in the Stour catchment, to Pig Brook (IDB7) and one other location in Folkestone. Mr Shelton further reported that there is a new technique to test water for the presence of the Plague and Crayfish and this is something that the KSCP want to try as part of the efforts to increase the White Clawed Crayfish presence in the Stour catchment.

The Clerk & Engineer asked if there are any plans to survey the historical sites to establish whether or not they are still present as a lot of the information is dated. Mr Shelton replied that is part of the project, but the main objective is to try and understand why they disappeared; if Crayfish Plague is present there is not much point in spending lots of resources trying to re-establish them. The Clerk & Engineer stated that he believes they are still present on the lower reaches of Buxford Dyke (IDB25). Mr Shelton replied that the last time they were recorded here was in 2006. The Chairman asked if it is a possibility that the remaining population may be immune to the disease. Mr Shelton replied that he does not believe so, and it is likely due to them being upstream of infected areas.

The Chairman thanked Mr Thomas for his presentation and Mr Shelton for his assistance in some of the explanations. This was echoed by Members.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 2 AUGUST 2018

The minutes of the Board held on Thursday 2 August 2018 were received. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Hicks and resolved that the minutes be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the proceedings at that meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Ref: A10-20 Delf Working Group

The Chairman asked if there have been any developments in the Delf Group's discussions. The Clerk & Engineer replied that there is still a need to arrange a meeting to agree a more detailed and early cutting regime and this will hopefully be sorted this winter in preparation for next year's maintenance programme.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES & WORKS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 22 OCTOBER 2018

It was proposed by the Vice Chairman, seconded by Mr Wilkinson and resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee held on Monday 8 November 2018 be received.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Ref: W4 Review of Water Abstraction Licensing System

The Chairman asked if there were any developments on this. The Clerk & Engineer reported that he met with the EA Operations and Resources Teams and they had agreed what is believed to be a sensible and workable way forward; grouping the structures together according to the main feeds, which are to be licenced, with all the secondary feeds listed under the same licence. This resulted in 56 main and secondary feeds in the Stour catchment to be licenced as follows: 4 EA licences (they currently have one for the Tidal Stour) and 3 licences for the IDB. The Clerk & Engineer reported that they have not received a reply to this proposal yet but if it is accepted by the EA's National Team the cost to the IDB will be £4,500.

The Clerk & Engineer reminded Members that when this review was first announced, IDBs were advised that there would be a mechanism to allow them to recover their cost and ADA have been discussing this with Defra and the EA, but no further information has been received.

Mr Botting asked if this was another case of unnecessary bureaucracy from Defra for no real purpose or benefit. The Chairman replied that they wish to control all water uses but he believes that they should be leaving the

EA and IDBs to do their job. The Clerk & Engineer added that in most cases the Board operates these feeds to maintain agreed water levels, for environmental benefit, and he has pointed out during discussions with the EA that there could be unintended negative impacts if IDBs ceased operating these structures due to unreasonable costs or procedures. He further reported that 5 year licences were originally suggested but a case has been put forward for 12 year licences with a 5 year review.

Ref: W7 Water Level Control

Mr Kelly reported that the problems with the Sarre Tilting Weir are being addressed this winter after sorting the existing glitches with their supplier. He further reported that discussions have taken place about the possibility of replacing the adjacent Sarre Penstock using IDB precept. The Clerk & Engineer stated that this is an EA structure, but it is in a low risk system and it has completely seized up, but it allows for better water level management, particularly during times of high flows. Options for refurbishment/replacement are being investigated, with the intention of delivering this work under the PSCA and contributing towards it with the IDB precept. The Engineering Assistant and the Water Level Controller are meeting with contractors to get an idea of cost.

Mr Wilkinson asked if there were any developments on the Cold Harbour Outfall. Mr Kelly reported that the planned extension has been delayed by about a month, so it should start in early December. Beach reprofiling was going to be incorporated with this job but this has now been postponed until the new year. Mr Kelly further reported that some temporary works have been carried out on the flap, but this will need to be replaced this winter. The Chairman asked if it would not be cost effective to have all the jobs done in one go once there is machinery onsite. Mr Kelly stated that is not possible because it has been very difficult to coordinate different suppliers and contractors due to their own pressures and availability, plus from a Health & Safety point of view it is much more straightforward and safer if each job is completed at different times.

Ref: W15 Applications for Consent

The Engineering Assistant reported that he has been talking to the Richborough Connection Project Team about the problems with access to IDBs 50 and 51 and has set up a site meeting for 9 November to organise site access. He stated that because it is a CDM project it involves a very high level of Health & Safety requirements, but detailed plans will be agreed for next year's work. He further reported that materials previously impeding access have now been removed.

Ref: W15/Enf IDB202 Unconsented Works

The Clerk & Engineer reported that following the formal notice served on the owner of land at Westmarsh in relation to unconsented works on Westmarsh Drove Lead Dyke (IDB202), he has been advised that information is currently being gathered and an application for consent will soon be submitted.

Ref: W1-39 Main River Rationalisation Project

The Chairman reported that a number of clarifications and variations have been requested in respect of the formal transfer agreement and he asked Mr Bateman if he could provide an update.

Mr Bateman reported that 90% of the project is complete but the last 10% involves lawyers which tend to take time. He added that the final stages should happen relatively smoothly once the EA's legal department have met with the Project Team to agree the final wording.

Mr Bateman stated that the Stour IDB has done a first-class job and it is now down to the EA to match its level of professionalism and to finalise this project.

The Engineering Assistant asked what the current situation is with the Hogwell and Minster siphons. Mr Kelly replied that the EA is still to assess this work and associated costs and he will liaise with the Clerk & Engineer. He further stated that he feels that the EA is running out of time to complete the necessary works, so it will more likely be a transfer of funds. Mr Kelly further reported that the planned fencing at the Hogwell Siphon will be completed this winter.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that the Hogwell fencing is straightforward, but the Minster siphon repairs are likely to be problematic. He reiterated that the Board would rather take on structures in a good working condition but as time is running out the EA's suggestion of an enhanced sum might be considered. He added that the Board will need more information on the siphon itself and what the costs are likely to be. The Chairman added that the Board will need to have contractors' quotes. The Vice Chairman asked if there is time for these investigations to take place. Mr Kelly stated that they intend to do this in January.

Mr Bateman stated that one of the factors which has helped this project along has been the close relationship between quite senior EA staff and the IDB and over the years this relationship has made projects tick along without too much formal oversight. The reason why we have come to a bit of a pause at the moment is because this working relationship needs to be formalised into a documented permanent record; where there have been verbal agreements in meetings which have worked very well in the past, and we hope they will continue to work in the future, there is now a requirement to clarify and record both parties' positions. Mr Bateman added that if there is a need to extend timelines or increase the capital transfer needed at local level this will be considered because the potential loss of the working relationship will be far worse than not making those minor adjustments as we go along.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that Catherine Wright had recently got involved in this again and stated that this is what is needed, because the EA's legal team understandably seeks to minimise risks to the EA whereas the EA's local and senior management teams understand that this is a partnership arrangement which needs to be fair to both sides. Mr Bateman agreed and stated that it is difficult for the legal team to recognise the intricacies of local issues and the working relationship between the EA and the IDB.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that there is a national workshop planned for 12 November and Mr Bateman added that this is an opportunity to share experiences and discuss what is good, what is bad, what has worked and what hasn't and will result in a guidance document for the future.

The Chairman stated that due to the increasingly tight timeline, to allow for budgeting and planning, it was recommended by the F&GP Committee that the Board delegates full authority to the MRR Sub-Committee to agree the final details of the transfers and for the Chairman to sign the final Transfer Agreement on behalf of the Board. It was proposed by Cllr Burgess, seconded by Mr Howard and resolved that full authority be delegated to the MRR Sub-Committee to agree the final details of the transfers and for the Chairman to sign the final Transfer Agreement on behalf of the Board.

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

Weed Cutting

The Engineering Assistant reported that the weed cutting program for the IDB is now complete and all but one section at East Stour of PSCA weed cutting has been done.

De-silting

The Engineering Assistant reported that the desilting programme has been finalised and will commence in December.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that he has agreed with the EA to meet up much earlier in the year to go through what work they require the Board to complete under the PSCA next year, to aid planning and help identify the most efficient delivery options.

Mr Kelly reported that the EA has been under a lot of pressure from Government to hand back money from their original budget on low risk systems making it very difficult to plan the maintenance programme, and this may be the case in future. The Clerk & Engineer agreed that in-year changes to budgets make it very difficult to plan the works.

Structures Maintenance

The Clerk & Engineer reported that he has met with the landowner at Cuckold's Stop (IDB91) to discuss the possibility of relocating this structure approximately 200m further south, as this might simplify the works. However, it was discovered that this land is about to be returned to arable and water vole habitat could be affected. It was therefore decided that the replacement structure should be on the same location. The Clerk & Engineer further reported that he is due to meet with members of the East Kent Engineering Partnership to produce a specification and drawings to enable quotes to be sought.

Ref: A 4-3.1 Biosecurity

The Chairman reported that the Association of Drainage Authorities produced a model Biosecurity Policy and Procedures for IDBs to adopt if they wish to do so. He further stated this policy and procedures are in line with the Board's existing procedures but are more comprehensive, so it had been recommended by the F&GP Committee that the Board should adopt these procedures to promote a consistent approach by all IDBs. It was proposed by the Vice Chairman, seconded by the Deputy Vice Chairman and resolved that ADA's Biosecurity Policy and Procedures be adopted.

Ref: A10-19 Ham Fen Nature Reserve

The Clerk & Engineer stated that the situation around the licencing of the Ham Fen Beaver Project is still unclear. Mr Williams stated that he has not had a reply to his enquiries on this, but he will chase it and report back. He added that he will arrange for a meeting with the KWT to discuss this.

Ref: W7G Environment Agency Works

The Chairman asked if the work planned for the Little Stour (channel re-levelling and new gabions in the channel at the stopboard end by the Little Stour) could be done sooner than April. Mr Kelly replied that these works were planned to be done in good weather due to the location, but the project was delayed and can now only be done next Summer.

Mr Dunn asked if there have been any eel incidents this year, Mr Kelly replied that the eel nets have been installed again at Minster Puming Station but there have been no incidents reported. Funding has still not been secured for the fish-friendly pumps discussed in the past, but a proposal is still being prepared.

Mr Kelly reported that an affordable design has now been agreed for the Brewery Sluice and work will go ahead this winter.

Mr Botting asked about the Stonar Cut lights. Mr Kelly replied that it used to have a flag system which is being replaced with lights.

Ref: W5 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Chairman invited comments on the Planning Applications listed on the F&GP Committee meeting meetings. There were no comments.

Ref: W15 Applications for Consent and Enforcement Actions

The Chairman referred to the Applications for Consent listed in the F&GP Committee meeting minutes and invited any comments.

Ref: DX89a

Location: Ordinary Watercourse on Minster Marsh (NGR 629580,163518)

Proposed: Use of an existing culvert.

Mr Fuller declared an interest in this application and stated that originally a temporary culvert was going to be installed but as they could not get permission from the EA, the existing culvert was deemed suitable to take the stress, but on this application they state they could not find a culvert. Mr Fuller further reported that there is now a deep depression on the crossing and he suspects that the culvert may have collapsed. The Clerk & Engineer asked if the crossing had been protected by a trackway system. Mr Fuller replied that it had but it seems to have collapsed to one side and the hole was just filled in. The Clerk & Engineer stated that he would be happy to look into this matter and to hear of any other similar problems or concerns, which he can bring to the attention of the Richborough Connection Project Team.

DRAINAGE RATES INCOME

The Finance & Rating Officer reported that as at the 30 October 2018 there was £1,179.38 of rates outstanding.

LEVIES INCOME

The Finance & Rating Officer reported that all Levy Income for 2018-19 financial year has been received.

Ref: F.9 Banking Arrangements and Investments

The Finance & Rating Officer reported that the Current Account with Metro Bank has now been opened and the Community Fixed Term Account will be opened shortly once the cheques have cleared.

Ref: F.1-2 Interim Internal Audit of Accounts for year ending 31 March 2019

It was reported that the Internal Auditor, Mr David Griffiths, conducted his Interim Audit of the Board's accounts and accounting documentation, for the year ending 31 March 2019, on 31 October 2018 and a copy was distributed to all present.

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2018 - 2019**

I am pleased to report to Members of the Board that I have completed my interim internal audit review of the Board's records for 2018-2019.

My work is primarily an independent check on the financial systems and internal controls that are in place. Members should be aware that my work cannot be relied on to identify the occasional omission or insignificant error, nor to disclose breaches of trust or statute, neglect or fraud which may have taken place, which is the responsibility of Members of the Board to protect against.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank your Clerk and Engineer to the Board and the Finance and Rating Officer, for the assistance provided to me in order to conduct the audit, which took place on 31st October 2018.

Members will be pleased to note that I have not found anything of concern whilst undertaking the audit. All of the records I inspected were again found to be of a very good standard. During the course of the visit, financial records relating to the months of April, June and September were reviewed.

FINDINGS THIS VISIT

I inspected the cashbook, bank reconciliations, VAT returns, payroll, petty cash records, contract payments, insurance arrangements and employee expense claims. My findings are listed below:

Cashbook

Good use continues to be made of spreadsheets to record all cashbook entries, resulting in the cashbook being accurate and balanced with the correct posting of transactions.

Bank Reconciliations and Bank Statements

No unexplained entries were identified in the sample of bank reconciliations tested and bank statements reviewed. All entries on the bank statement were accurately reflected in the cashbook.

VAT Returns

All VAT returns tested were found to be accurate, complete and submitted on time to HMRC, with the correct repayments being received from HMRC correctly recorded in the cashbook.

Invoices from Suppliers

All invoices reviewed from suppliers of goods and services were found to have been authorised and payments were recorded correctly in the cashbook.

Petty Cash

Accurate records are being maintained to support all petty cash payments made. Cash recorded as being 'in hand' was correctly recorded and stored securely.

Payroll

Payroll was found to have been correctly calculated in line with approved salary scales. All amounts due to HMRC in respect of PAYE, and Kent County Council in respect of pension contributions, were found to have been paid across at the correct values and on time.

Employee Expenses

Suitable controls are in place to ensure that all employee expense claims are subject to review and approved prior to being paid. All expense claims reviewed were found to have been suitably authorised.

Contract Payments

I inspected a sample of payments made to the main maintenance contractor. All payments tested were found to have been suitably authorised and recorded in the cashbook.

RISK MANAGEMENT:**Risk Register**

The Risk Register which the Board has in place was reviewed. I consider that the Board has suitably identified and assessed the significant risks to it achieving its objectives.

Insurance

Suitable levels of insurance cover were found to be in place for Fidelity Guarantee, Public Liability and Employers' Liability Insurance.

Environment Agency Rationalisation Project

I have discussed the Environment Agency Rationalisation Project with the Clerk and Engineer to the Board, and I remain satisfied that the Board continues to take suitable action to reduce its exposure to any risks arising from the project, which currently remains on course for an April 2019 transfer.

Investments

The Board continues to invest its excess cash reserves in a different banking institution to its main bank accounts to reduce exposure to the collapse of a single bank. I note that the Board is currently in the process of opening another account with an alternate banking institution.

GDPR Compliance

I note that the Board has introduced a set of policies and procedures to ensure compliance with GDPR. However, discussions with staff did establish that further work is required to ensure that the Board complies with its data retention schedules. I will look at GDPR again as part of my final audit in May 2019.

David Griffiths

David Griffiths

Interim Internal Audit Report 2018-2019

The Chairman stated that the report is very complimentary, and he congratulated the staff for their work. The Chairman noted that Mr Griffiths intends to continue to check on GDPR compliance. The Clerk & Engineer reported that he believes this comment mainly refers to the need for the Board to dispose of old files, but this will take time if useful information (without personal information) is to be retained. The Chairman agreed that we need to be careful to retain useful information but must also comply with the retention schedule. He asked if there were any other queries or comments, there being no further comments, the Chairman proposed that the Interim Internal Audit Report for the year ending 31 March 2019 be received and approved, this was seconded by Cllr Smith and agreed by all present.

Ref: F.1-5 Conclusion of the Audit – Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2018

It was reported that the Board's External Auditors (PKF Littlejohn LLP) completed their review of the Board's Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2018. The External Auditor's certificate and report is given at Section 3 on page 4 of the Annual Return and details any matters arising from the review. The external auditors have approved the Annual Return with no recommendations or actions required. The completed Annual Return, which the Board is required to approve, has been published on the Board's Website and on the Board's Notice Board outside its office.

It was proposed by Mr Wilkinson, seconded by Cllr Stummer-Schmertzing and resolved that the completed Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2018 with the External Auditor's certificate and report be received and approved.

Ref: F.2 IDB Annual Reports to DEFRA

It was reported that the IDB Annual Report (IDB1 form) for year ended 31 March 2018 has been submitted to Defra, Environment Agency, County and District Councils. In accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the transparency code for smaller authorities the completed IDB1 form has been published on the Board's website and on the Board's notice board.

It was proposed by the Vice Chairman, seconded by Mr Botting and resolved that the IDB Annual Report for year ended 31 March 2018 be received and approved.

Ref: F6-1 IDB Precept – Environment Agency (EA)

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the 2017-18 report has been signed off but the details for the 2018-19 precept allocations are still to be agreed. Mr Kelly stated that this should be finalised shortly for discussion and agreement.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the proposed precept for 2019-2020 is £133,472 – an increase of 1.9% on 2018-19.

ADMINISTRATION

Ref: A.1-1 Dates for 2019 Meetings

The following dates were agreed for the 2019 meetings of the Finance Committee and the Board with venues for the latter still to be confirmed.

<u>Finance Meetings (Board's Office)</u>	<u>Board Meetings</u>	<u>Venue (TBC)</u>
Mon 21 January 2019	Thurs 7 Feb 2019	DDC Offices
Mon 13 May 2019	Thurs 30 May 2019	Godmersham V Hall
Mon 15 Jul 2019	Thurs 1 Aug 2019	ABC Offices
Mon 21 Oct 2019	Thurs 7 Nov 2019	CCC Offices

Ref: A. 2-3 Members' Inspection 2018 – Monday 29 October 2018

It was reported the 2018 Members' Inspection took place on Monday 29 October 2018 which was in and around Ashford. This year's itinerary included the following:

- Finberry Park – to view SuDS
- Sevington Weir – to view recent improvements
- Catchment First – a presentation by Sothern Water
- Buxford Mill – to view a recently constructed fish-pass

The Chairman stated that it was a very interesting and enjoyable day and it all went smoothly. Members agreed and expressed their thanks to the Board's staff for arranging the day.

Ref: A3-2 Election of Agricultural Members – Thursday 25 October 2018

The Chairman reported that the Election of Agricultural Members which was scheduled to take place on Thursday 25 October 2018 was not necessary because the number of nominations received did not exceed the number of Members required – therefore it was not necessary to hold a poll. An Election Declaration Notice was therefore placed on the Board's Website and Notice Board, confirming the Election of the following as Members of the Board:

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| • Ashford & Wye Districts (combined): | Mr Peter Howard |
| • Ashford & Wye Districts (combined): | Mr David Fuller |
| • Canterbury, Fordwich and Ickham Districts (combined): | Ms Geraldine Wyant |
| • Chislet District: | Mr Martin Tapp |
| • Chislet District: | Mr Michael Wilkinson |
| • Minster District: | Mr Paul Dunn |
| • Minster District: | Ms Nicola Dyas |
| • Lydden District: | Mr Gary Steed |
| • General Valleys District: | Mr David Botting |

Ref: A3-6 Health & Safety – Policy Review

The Chairman reported that a Health & Safety Policy document and Health & Safety Manual were developed by the Health & Safety Sub-Committee and considered by the F&GP Committee who recommended that the Board adopt them.

It was proposed by the Vice Chairman, seconded by Mr Deputy Vice Chairman and resolved that the Health & Safety Policy and Manual be adopted.

Ref: A9-1.2 Office Premises – 34 & 34A Gordon Road

The Chairman reported that two quotes were received out of the four requested for the works: repairs to the roof (internally and externally) and brickwork, including the required structural repairs and the basement.

CC Kent Ltd - £16,590 + £9,650 for optional extras (£7,200 for pointing and £2,450 for the basement)

Precision Builders - £18,315 + £8,409 for optional extras (£6,075 for pointing and £2,334 for the basement)

The Chairman commented that the above quotes are higher than the budgeted figure for this year, but these works relate to essential repairs and it would be advantageous to get all the work which requires scaffolding completed in one go. He reported that the F&GP Committee had therefore recommended to the Board that the total available budget this financial year be increased from £13,896 to £25,000, which should allow some flexibility for unexpected item costs.

It was proposed by the Mr Wilkinson, seconded by Cllr Hicks and resolved that the Maintenance Works Budget be increased to £25,000.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Member Substitutes to Attend the Finance Committee or other Subcommittees

The Clerk & Engineer reminded Members of the F&GP Committee and any other sub-committees that if they cannot attend a meeting, it would be helpful if they could arrange for a like-for-like substitute as previously agreed. As this had proved difficult, it has been suggested that the Board has a list of permanent substitutes or a pool of Members that are prepared to be substitutes. Cllr Hicks stated that this is a good idea but feels that it may be a struggle to get extra Councillors due to increasing pressures on their time.

Mr Steed stated that this will hopefully add continuity to the sub-committees. The Vice Chairman proposed that a permanent substitute or a pool of Members who are prepared to be substitutes be agreed, this was seconded by the Vice Chairman.

KSCP

Mr Thomas reported that there is a small amount of money available to replace or install barn owl boxes and asked anyone interested to contact him.