

LOWER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD



MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the **BOARD**
held at **The Boards Offices, 13 Conqueror Court, Sittingbourne**
on **Monday 25 November 2024 at 1pm**

Members of the Board Present

Chairman: S Mair
Cllr H Browne
Cllr D Carnell
Cllr S Curry (remotely – part of the meeting)
Cllr D Davis
Cllr G Etheridge (remotely)
G Fulton
R Hall
J Hinge
J Mair
T Malpas
Cllr P Marchington
Cllr R Palmer
Cllr T Thompson
Cllr D Wooster (remotely – part of the meeting)
Cllr T Winckless

In attendance

P Haselhurst – Clerk
C Longden – Finance Officer
L Rowland – Office Manager
W Smith – Works Manager
A Soloman – Sustainable Development Officer
J Horner – Technical Officer

Mark Gilbert – Environment Agency (remotely)
Richard Westcott – Environment Agency (remotely)
Lisa Fillery – Swale Borough Council

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed Members, M Gilbert and R Westcott from the Environment Agency, L Fillery from Swale Borough Council and a new member of staff, J Horner.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from E Stickings and B Stone.

3. **ITEMS OF INTEREST DECLARATION**

The Chairman declared an interest confirming the catering for today's meetings had been supplied by his wife's company, Sarah Serves.

4. **ELECTION 2024**

The Clerk confirmed that every 3 years we have to undergo a landowner's election, and she was pleased to report there are no changes to our current landowners representation and no poll was required. She confirmed that our Standing Orders state that at a Board Meeting after an election the Chairman and Vice Chairman are also elected, however, due to the upcoming amalgamation she suggested we keep our current Chairman and Vice Chairman in place and revisit this in the pre-amalgamation Board meeting in March.

Members were fully supportive of this suggestion, and all were in favour of S Mair to remain as the Chairman and J Mair to remain as Vice Chairman until the March 2025 Board meeting.

5. **MINUTES**

RECEIVED (Appendix 1) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 10 June 2024.

These minutes were circulated to Members via email on 16 July 2024 with a request for any amendments to be advised by 12 August 2024. They were then added to the website.

It was **AGREED** that the Minutes of 10 June 2024 were correctly recorded and should be considered officially approved.

6. **ACTION LIST & MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

RECEIVED (Appendix 2) a copy of the Action List of the Board held on 16 July 2024.

The outstanding items on the action list were updated as follows:

Culverts Leading to Windmill Creek – still outstanding, site revisit required.

Hybrid Meetings – still outstanding, as other items have taken priority.

Annual Management Accounts Report – not started for 2025-2026, context surrounding the general reserves on the next report.

Risk Register Amendment – amendment required for Clerk to approve contracts up to £25,000 on the procurement section, has now been completed.

Risk Register Addition – to be covered at a later agenda item.

Harty & Leysdown Site Visit – this has not been actioned because of the uncertainty when the pumps were put in. Pumps are due to be commissioned later this week, date to be confirmed.

G Etheridge suggested adding a red, amber and green system to the action list.

Action – Action list to be improved to display the priority of the action plus the completed actions.

R Hall and D Wooster joined the meeting.

7. CHAIRMAN REPORT

The Chairman gave the following report:

I'd like to start by expressing thanks to our Works Manager and ground team for their dedication and hard work this season. Despite access challenges and equipment issues, they have made impressive progress across both Boards Districts, keeping us on track to meet our maintenance targets and delivering vital biodiversity enhancements. Their proactive approach to addressing pump station faults, upholding high safety standards, and fostering strong relationships with contractors and landowners deserves recognition.

Their efforts have also extended to our Public Sector Cooperation Agreement (PSCA) work. This has included maintenance on Environment Agency main rivers, ensuring these critical watercourses remain functional. We have also used PSCA to undertake small-scale coastal protection repairs on the South Swale.

This week marks a milestone with the commissioning of the Harty and Leysdown Pump Stations. Construction began in June and concluded in October. The new stations are not only more efficient and fish-friendly but will continue to drain a significant portion of land on the island for years to come. I'm pleased to report that DEFRA has confirmed £420,000 in grant funding for this project, which will be allocated to our pump station and plant reserves. I'd also like to welcome Jennifer Horner, who joined us last week as our new Technical Officer. Jennifer will support the delivery of our environmental responsibilities and work with the team to identify former Board assets where replacement could provide strategic environmental or agricultural benefits. Projects will focus on securing external funding contributions, and working in collaboration with landowners.

Today, we'll discuss two key proposals that will shape the future direction of the Board's work and add value for local authorities and landowners in addressing evolving weather patterns and water management challenges.

The first proposal focuses on delivering the initial phases of a water level management strategy that will help us understand freshwater availability for the environment and agriculture, now and in the future. It marks a significant step forward, reflecting our shift from traditional 'drainage' to broader water level management in service to the community.

The second is a project addressing the management of pennywort, an invasive species causing significant environmental degradation in Seasalter. This initiative is being led by

Anita, and I extend my thanks for her efforts in tackling an issue which has been a problem for a number of years.

At our last meeting, you supported the Luddenham Sluice replacement project, and I'm pleased to update you that ecological surveys are underway in preparation to deliver the project next year.

Following our collaboration with Kent County Council to host a visit from Belgian polder organisations, we have been invited to join an interregional group of polder organisations from Belgium, Holland, and France. This partnership aims to tackle shared water management challenges through knowledge exchange, workshops, pilot projects, and stakeholder engagement. We plan to use external funding available through this initiative for an innovative pilot project at Bells Pump Station, using machine learning to reduce energy use, and improve efficiency. This trial's findings will be shared locally and internationally.

We also hosted a visit from FENACORE, the Spanish National Federation of Irrigation Communities. The visit included tours within the District, highlighting integrated water management for biodiversity and flood risk. This exchange fostered valuable discussions on shared water management challenges and sustainable solutions.

Finally, as we look ahead, the amalgamation process is progressing, and we aim to operate as one Board—the North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board by 1 April 2025. Our next Board meeting in March will prepare us for the transition.

None of this would be possible without the support of the office team. Lisa and Carrie ensure the smooth running of operations and provide critical support for our governance and accounting processes. My sincere thanks to them, the rest of the office team and Priscilla for their invaluable contributions.

8. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY UPDATE

RECEIVED (Appendix 3) Proposed LMIDB Precept Expenditure for 2025/26.

M Gilbert gave an update on the 2024-25 precept, confirming this was expected to be £355,000 and spend confirmed the proposed spend as follows:

- £90,000 - Contribution towards Swale Operations Team labour, plant hire and fuel costs to carry out maintenance in the drainage district. All spent to date.
- £175,000 – Contribution towards MEASS programme wide appraisal work (18 separate schemes).
- £90,000 - IDB PSCA Spend breakdown as follows:
 - £30,000 – Bells pumping station - Contribution towards annual running costs of Bells pumping station.
 - £30,000 – Contribution towards IDB projects.
 - £5,000 – Pennywort removal.
 - £25,000 - Embankment repair works (delivered through PSCA at Elmley between Bellmarsh Creek and Spitend). Slight overspend, but this has been sorted out.

M Gilbert confirmed in addition to the above maintenance programme works that are planned to be carried out by Flood Defence Grant in Aid in our IDB district (subject to funding) in 2024/25 include:

- Revenue Maintenance Programme funded works:
 - Annual grass mowing, hand and mechanical weedcut and weed spraying.
 - MEICA asset maintenance/PPMs (Planned Preventative Maintenance).
 - Concrete and Expansion joint repairs.
 - Embankment Repairs.
 - Desilting.
 - Outfall access improvement and tidal flap replacements.
- Capital Reconditioning funded projects - continuation of design and pre-construction work, and construction:
 - Horseshoe outfall refurbishment at Faversham (currently at tender submission stage).
 - Clay reach (Elmley) embankment repairs (currently at tender submission stage).
 - Iwade outfall repairs (should be delivered in summer 2025).
 - Spitend (Elmley) outfall repairs (should be delivered in summer 2025).
 - Bayford embankment repairs (in design stage).

R Wescott gave an update on the MEASS Programme confirming 2 projects began last year, the South Sheppey project at Elmley and the Sheerness and Queenborough project. He confirmed both projects are progressing well and the contribution from the IDB precept is very valuable. He said he is forecasting both projects will reach full business case over the course of the next year.

R Wescott said that we need to acknowledge that some of the precept funding will be supporting the introduction of the Biodiversity Net Gain legislation that came in earlier this year. He said this includes the planning proposals likely to include flood defence schemes and we have to ensure we are leaving areas in a more valuable biodiversity state than it was found in.

M Gilbert confirmed 2025-26 precept is proposed to be £375,000 and has so far been allocated as follows (this is to be finalised/agreed):

- £90,000 Projects - continuation of annual routine and ad-hoc projects:
 - £30,000 - Contribution towards the running of Bells Pumping Station.
 - £30,000 - South Sheppey embankment repairs (PSCA).
 - £23,000 - Pennywort removal at Seasalter (including mechanical & bio weevil trials).
 - £7,000 - Capel Fleet.
- £135,000 Flood Risk Management – contribution towards unfunded Swale operations team labour, plant, and fuel costs for maintenance work:
 - £72,000 – Projects including Faversham Front Brent's - general maintenance, Iwade - improving access to outfalls, Lower Halstow – embankment and gate works, Queenborough - expansion joints, Sheerness - concrete repairs.
 - £63,000 various maintenance.
- £150,000 – MEAS development:
 - Completing the Elmley and South Sheppey Outline Business Case (OBC) which includes preferred option and outline design for the sections of 'Hold the Line'.
 - Continue the Sheerness and Queenborough Outline Business Case (OBC) to identify the preferred option and produce outline designs for capital investment in coastal flood defences.

- Securing Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) across the strategy area to enable coastal flood schemes such as Elmely and South Sheppey to progress.

The Chairman thanked M Gilbert and R Westcott and asked Members if they had any questions.

The Clerk said that it is very challenging for the EA at the moment to undertake work across our district and how little resourcing there is available. She said this means a large chunk of the precept money is being paid to the EA towards their own works. She confirmed we are working together to look at all opportunities to work together under PSCA agreement. She confirmed we are looking at further works in South Swale and Capel Fleet which hasn't been looked at in several years for the future, and from the maintenance perspective there is a chunk of work we could share and deliver efficiently together.

The Clerk said that it would be useful to get some more information surrounding the Biodiversity Net Gate side of things and she would like to share the details of this, including what progress has been made with the Board.

Action - EA to provide some more information surrounding BNG that can be shared with at the March 2025 Board meeting.

R Palmer asked how certain are we that the precept the board pays isn't subsidising some of the things that the EA should be responsible for.

M Gilbert confirmed that the EA are in a very difficult situation at the moment, and they are aware they are asking for a significant contribution, unfortunately, there is nothing they can do locally as this is a national decision.

R Palmer asked should local authorities be subsidising a central government agency, when the central government is cutting their funds to local authorities and local government agencies.

The Chairman added that this is a very difficult question to answer as we cannot get enough background information on how the funds are allocated. He said that what we are trying to work on is delivering PSCA agreements so we can ensure that some of the money we are giving to the EA, we are receiving back, and we are delivering in our own district. He said ultimately as joint flood authorities we are responsible for mitigating and minimising as much flooding as possible.

The Clerk added that IDBs are supplementing the EA's work, and it is not direct funding from the local authority and it's a pressure on us as a public body. She confirmed that S Curry and herself had a meeting recently with the Area Director of the EA and the lack of funding is dire, which was also confirmed at the recent ADA Conference. She said there is a positive to this in that Emma Hardy, MP did announce a review of the flood funding formula, and this could be a really good opportunity to look at how flood risk management is funded and how we value and protect landscapes that don't have a lot of people and property benefiting from those defences.

An in-depth discussion took place surrounding funding.

H Browne said it was important to remember that we are here as IDB representatives and not council representatives.

S Curry said that we all have some shared outcomes, and we have legal responsibilities to protect people from flooding. He said how we deliver those is the decision making of this Board and funding for those outcomes varies and will fluctuate over time and the government may well have more money available in the future. He said the debate about where the money comes from is a difficult and challenging one and is important to keep our focus. He confirmed that behind the scenes he is lobbying MPs to talk to DEFRA on our behalf and he will continue to do that.

H Browne confirmed that for years this Board has been working collaboratively and successfully with the EA and we have a legal obligation to work as Board Members. She said that when she first joined the Board the complaint was that there was a lack of co-operation and projects were not going ahead as quickly as they might and therefore costing everyone more money. She said the co-operation has now been achieved and has been a benefit to the local community and taxpayers because we are now getting the projects done and she thanks the EA and others involved for making this possible.

R Hall asked what initiatives the EA are looking at to reduce the administrative and consultancy burden of delivery projects and it would be good to have some further information on this at the next meeting.

M Gilbert confirmed that they have to work within the systems they are given, and this is a national led system.

R Westcott said that as the EA is funded nationally, they have to prioritise that national funding pot to those areas that particularly people and property are most likely to benefit. He said the reality is they wouldn't be able to undertake work in rural areas without contributions from others. He said he fully takes onboard lines of efficiencies; they have national frameworks in place and will speak to national colleagues to provide feedback for the Board. He confirmed that with regards to BNG they are working closely with local authorities, and it is fair to say they are all learning with regards to how this works with flood defence schemes and there will be some information that they can feed back to the Board next year.

T Thompson asked what the gains for salt marsh are compared to freshwater in BNG.

R Westcott said the short answer is we are still working this out.

The Chairman thanked M Gilbert and R Westcott for their attendance.

M Gilbert and R Westcott left the meeting.

9. WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN BUSINESS CASE

RECEIVED (Appendix 4) The Clerk's Water Management Strategy document.

The Clerk displayed the Water Management Strategy document on screen which puts forward a business case that proposes the expansion of the "Wise Use of Water" project from the Hoo Peninsula across the entire Lower Medway IDB District. The aim is to modernise outdated Water Level Management Plans (WLMPs) by incorporating telemetry, hydrological modelling, and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

The Clerk confirmed that the North Kent Marshes IDB are already working in partnership with the RSPB on an updated Water Level Management Strategy project "Wise Use of Water", which has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. She explained that she has been unsuccessful with external funding at this point and requested approval from the Board for an initial £150,000, in addition to £30,000 from the Environment Agency precept funding, to initiate the project in January 2025. She confirmed she will continue to try to get external funding to continue the project. She also requested that the Board delegate authority to the Finance Committee to review and oversee the tender process to avoid delays until the June 2025 Board meeting.

The detailed report was welcomed by the Board and an in-depth discussion took place. The general feeling was that this was a very worthwhile project, it was our duty to move this forward as soon as possible, and doing nothing was not an option.

G Fulton was pleased to see this leadership from the Board. He confirmed that a water day was being held in February or March next year by T Malpas and himself.

R Palmer asked how we would fund the £150,000.

The Chairman confirmed that the funding for this is currently in the annual spend for the 2025-26 budget and the budget is coming up in the agenda shortly.

R Palmer felt this could be funded via our reserves.

The Chairman said would like to know if there is a general consensus that we are in support of taking the next steps of the water level management plan.

On a proposition by H Browne seconded by R Palmer, it was **AGREED** that the Board supports the water level management plan.

All Members were in favour.

10. BIODIVERSITY UPDATE

RECEIVED (Appendix 5) The Sustainable Development Officer's Biodiversity Update Report.

The Clerk shared the Biodiversity Update Report on screen and confirmed there are two proposals in the report, the first to go ahead with a pennywort trial removal and the second to take the work forward in the Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Clerk explained that we have a huge problem with pennywort in Seasalter. She said that after discussions with RSPB, it is apparent that they have been fighting the battle with pennywort for a number of years. She explained that we have tried to assist by mechanically removing the pennywort, but we are chasing our tail all the time. She confirmed that the Sustainable Development Officer has been in touch with CABI, who are the supplier (and only supplier) of weevils that we can use as a biological control. She asked the Sustainable Development Officer to give an overview.

The Sustainable Development Officer confirmed that watercourse 52 has been identified as a trial area for management of pennywort. She confirmed the plan is to have two releases of weevils (200 x 2) and said that 1 drop could go as far as 300 metres.

D Davis asked about the prognosis of costs in the future.

The Sustainable Development Officer said that she hoped that the site would sustain the weevil. She said that the weevil should be established in 3-5 years and there should be no further input required from the Board.

G Etheridge raised the issue of other invasive species (Canadian/American red crayfish and Asian hornet) and if we could add those to the list to eradicate.

The Clerk confirmed that we are working closely with the Medway Estuary Swale Partnership and confirmed there is no national or local lead that tackles invasive species, but we do have legislative responsibilities to tackle these issues and monitor them. She confirmed we work very closely on a catchment basis to share information where invasive species are, and mink is another one to keep an eye on. She said in terms of the pennywort project, it is something we want to work very closely with CABI on and monitor it and look at what the outputs are.

The Clerk asked the Board to approve funding up to £20,000 for the trial pennywort project. She also asked the Board to note as CABI is the sole licenced provider of the weevil with the necessary regulatory consents, the Board is not required to go out to tender.

On a proposition by The Chairman seconded by D Carnell, it was **AGREED** to authorise the payment of £20,000 to CABI next year for the pennywort removal trial.

All Members were in favour.

11. FINANCE AND ESTIMATES

RECEIVED (Appendix 6) Bank Reconciliations for 2024-2025 Q1-Q2.

RECEIVED (Appendix 6a) 2025-2026 Estimates and Budget.

The Clerk requested approval of the Quarter 1-2 Bank Reconciliation for 2024-2025.

On a proposition by D Carnell seconded by S Mair, it was **AGREED** to confirm their approval of the Quarter 1-2 Bank Reconciliation for 2024-2025 and they are happy with the Finance Committee's findings, and noted this has been reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee.

All Members were in favour.

The Clerk asked Members to look at the 2025-2026 budget, gave a summary and highlighted the following points:

- There was an error in reserves (plant reserve fund/trade in values) which has now been corrected.

- A key consideration with the upcoming amalgamation of the two Boards was to try and set the penny rate at a consistent level, which means the NKMIDB would need to decrease its penny rate to match the LMIDB's lower rate.
- The budget does not take into account any rental income, external funding or contributions from surface water development charges as they are uncertain and cannot be relied on.
- The Clerk highlighted section 3.11 of the Estimates paper, under Table 3 which shows, if the 3% is approved the extra money local authorities would need to find where a 2% cap to council tax is applied.

	3%
Canterbury City Council	£366
Medway Council	£13,760
Swale Borough Council	£36,177
Tonbridge & Malling	£7,152
Agricultural Ratepayers	£1,578

- Due to a historical land transfer error discovered (detailed in section 3.13 of the report), Swale Borough Council has had a special levy undercharge of £33,604 since 2019. She confirmed the Board will not be retrospectively charging for this error.
- Staff salary increases have been approved with the Chairman and Vice Chairman at 5.1% which is in line with the ADA Lincolnshire White Book guidance.

The Chairman mentioned that employee salary increases have been discussed extensively in the past and after a lot of debate, we have agreed to follow the ADA Lincolnshire White Book. He said the ADA Lincolnshire White Book has identified what the pay rates are in the industry, and we have come to the conclusion it was pointless trying to go against this.

The Chairman requested the Board's approval for the 2025-2026 Budget which has been approved by the Finance Committee in their October meeting. He confirmed that the Finance Committee had gone through the budget in great detail and invited any questions.

R Palmer said that he understood the plant reserve, but did not understand why the general reserve had to be so high.

The Chairman confirmed that we are following ADA's Good Governance Guidance by holding 1 year's operational balance as a general reserve and this is also in our Reserves Policy.

R Palmer asked if we must follow that if it is only guidance.

P Marchington added that our general reserves have been built up over a very long period, and it keeps us safe from any potential risks that could occur.

H Browne said that general reserves can be used for whatever risk you may need to mitigate against and said we should be cautious in running down the general reserve.

The Chairman said that he would be very hesitant to go against the ADA guidance and the general reserves are there to cover us for any crisis that occurs.

G Etheridge questioned whether staff/workmen, vehicle fuel, and repairs and servicing costs should be higher because of increased costs.

The Clerk confirmed that costs and potential increases had been scrutinised and she was confident it is a reasonable budget.

On a proposition by The Chairman seconded by T Winkless, it was **AGREED** to confirm their approval of the 2024-2025 Budget, and noted this has been reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee.

All Members were in favour, with the exception of R Palmer who was against.

The Clerk confirmed that the Finance Committee have put forward a proposal of 3% increase in the penny rate for next year and asked Members thoughts and approval.

The Chairman asked the Board to consider and approve the Penny Rate increase of 3%.

On a proposition by The Chairman seconded by J Mair, it was **AGREED** to increase the penny rate by 3% and set the penny rate at seven point five three six zero (7.5360) and that the Clerk and the Chairman should sign the Drainage Rates and Special Levies Certificate.

All Members were in favour, with the exception of R Palmer who was against.

12. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

The Works Manager confirmed that except for an onsite incident of an escaped Shetland pony escaping from an open gate, there were no health and safety matters to report. He confirmed immediate changes to dynamic risk assessments and job specific risk assessments were implemented to ensure this does not happen again.

The Chairman thanked the Works Manager, and said it was great to have positive news on health and safety.

S Curry and D Wooster left the meeting.

13. PLANNING AND CONSENTS

RECEIVED (Appendix 7) the Sustainable Development Officer's Planning and Consenting Report.

The Clerk thanked the Sustainable Development Officer's for putting together the detailed report and confirmed that there had been 5 land drainage consents, 35 planning consultations, and 27 enquiries in the period from June to October 2024. She also confirmed that there is some Surface Water Development Charge income of £35,911.89 pending.

G Etheridge referred to the some of the larger developments in the planning applications list and asked if we can insist on a refiltration system to be put in place.

The Clerk confirmed that we don't have a legal remit over foul drainage. She explained we have investigated instances when they have gone wrong, but we are not a statutory consultee on that process.

G Etheridge asked if Members of the council's planning committee could have anything in their area highlighted to them, so they could arrange to have a condition put on.

The Clerk said this should be included in the planning committee reports and that by the time it comes to the planning committee, she would hope that all of those details would be sorted out to be able to manage those risks and this come under the remit of Southern Water and the Environment Agency.

The Chairman thanked the Sustainable Development Officer for her report.

14. WORKS MANAGER REPORT

RECEIVED (Appendix 8) the Works Supervisor Report Number.

The Works Manager thanked the workforce for their continued support and hard work. He confirmed we are now just over the 80% completion target with 14 ongoing tasks and 25 tasks not started.

He confirmed earlier in the year we completed 1.2 kilometres of desilting for the EA on the Higham Marshes under PSCA agreement.

He confirmed we are waiting for a quotation for replacement of the Pulsar system at Bells Pump Station.

The Chairman asked if the Works Manager could give some information about the robotic flail mower that was purchased earlier in the year.

The Works Manager confirmed that the new robotic flail mower has been used extensively, particularly around public footpath areas eliminating tractor use, and it has proved to be a fabulous purchase. He confirmed here have been no health and safety incidents with the machine to report and using it has cut down on the handwork/reduced HAVS risks. He also confirmed that the Finance Committee have recently authorised the purchase of a flail arm and spike tracks so the machine can be utilised even further.

15. GOVERNANCE UPDATE

RECEIVED the following policies which were emailed separately to Members from the agenda for Member's review/information:

- Capital Financing and Reserves Policy.
- Corporate Risk Register.
- Health and Safety Policy.

The Clerk confirmed that there were no changes to the Capital Financing and Reserves and Health and Safety Policy, and these policies required annual approval from the Board.

The Chairman asked Members if they were any observations Members wished to make.

H Browne noted that the Health and Safety Policy is a good policy that means that the Works Manager updates his procedures in line with the policy and thanked him for putting in place the procedures that makes the difference on the ground.

It was **AGREED** to approve the Capital Financing and Reserves and Health and Safety Policy.

All Members were in favour.

The Clerk asked Members to look at the Corporate Risk Register, she confirmed that the tracked changes were marked in the document and showed any amendments that had been made. She confirmed the areas highlighted in yellow were new sections added to the document. She talked through the following sections that had been added since the June Board meeting as follows:

- IT Failure.
- Tenancy.
- Contracted out work.
- Reputational risk.

It was **AGREED** to approve the Corporate Risk Register, having noted the highlighted additions and changes.

All Members were in favour.

16. FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

RECEIVED (Appendix 9, 9a, 9b) Finance minutes from 10 June, 22 July (previously circulated by email) and 14 October 2024.

The Chairman confirmed this item was for information and asked if Members had any questions.

No questions raised.

17. EXTERNAL AUDIT (COMPLETED AGAR)

RECEIVED (Appendix 10) a copy of the external auditor's report/annual return for 2023-24 (including the conclusion, parts 1 to 3).

The Chairman confirmed this item was for information and asked if Members had any questions.

No questions raised.

18. IDB1 FORM

RECEIVED (Appendix 11) a copy of the IDB form for 2023-24.

The Chairman confirmed this item was for information and asked if Members had any questions.

No questions raised.

19. CHANGE COMMITTEE

RECEIVED (Appendix 12) Change Committee minutes from 22 July 2024 (previously circulated by email).

The Chairman confirmed this item was for information and asked if Members had any questions.

No questions raised.

20. HARTY AND LEYSDOWN UPDATE

The Clerk gave a verbal update on the Harty and Leysdown Pump Station project, confirming that the whole (construction) project had cost just over £1.1 million, and the pumps are due to be commissioned later this week. She said she would communicate the date once confirmed for any Members who wish to attend the site on this date and that ACE will be testing the pump and helping us commission it. She confirmed that this is the first pump station in the UK that has used precast headwall units.

21. FORWARD LOOK & DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RECEIVED (Appendix 13) the Proposed 2025 Meeting Dates document.

The Clerk displayed the proposed meeting dates document on screen for 2025.

After a discussion regarding the new structure of the dates, particularly the last finance meeting of the year and the potential of the AGM Board meeting falling in January 2026, it was requested that the Finance meeting be moved to earlier in November and the Board meeting be moved to early December.

Action – Office Manager to circulate new meeting dates and invitations to Members as soon as the new dates have been decided.

22. ADA UPDATE

The Clerk confirmed that she had attended the ADA Conference earlier in the month with H Brown, R Hall, the Surface Development Officer and Technical Officer.

R Hall gave a summary of the conference to Members.

23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Data Sharing

The Clerk confirmed that ADA is requesting up to date address information for all Board Members to enable them to send out the ADA Gazette and asked if any Members had any objections to this to raise it in the meeting or directly to her after the meeting.

No objections were raised.

CCLA Investment Account

The Clerk confirmed that our CCLA investment account has now been opened and she is looking forward to seeing some returns over the next year.

L Fillery confirmed that Swale BC also invest with the CCLA and said whilst the monthly returns are good, the value of the asset has dropped because of it being property based.

Questions from L Fillery

L Fillery asked what the plans were for any additional income that comes in.

The Clerk confirmed that for any Surface Water Level Contributions, she would like to put that back into the district for drainage improvements, subject to the Board's approval. She said if we get any rental income, we may put that into the continuation of the water level management strategy project and towards additional telemetry. She confirmed she is still in the process of identifying and pushing our projects forward so cannot give a definite answer on this at this stage.

The Chairman confirmed working on our asset register is another area we wish to move forward on.

L Fillery asked about the £75 million EA funding that was announced.

The Clerk confirmed that we were required to fill in some surveys which asked us if we could spend the money by March 2025, we were able to confirm we could for the Harty and Leysdown pump station project but for other projects we would not be able to. She confirmed they also reduced the amount available to £50 million and they are opening up the funding for that for projects being delivered in 2025-26 and she will be putting in an application for retrospective projects.

Management Plan

T Thompson asked how we can improve/strengthen attenuation laws of runoff. He confirmed he deals with 6 villages that have field runoff issues and said Doddingtons is a good example of this.

The Clerk confirmed that the Land Drainage Act is really specific and that riparian owners have the right and responsibility to receive water for upland areas but that she is happy to discuss any specific issues outside of the meeting.

24. PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

There were no private and confidential matters to discuss.

25. CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed and thanked the Board and staff for their attendance.