

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the BOARD
held at the **Board's Offices, 13 Conqueror Court, Sittingbourne**
on **Monday 20 April 2026 at 1pm**

Members of the Board Present

S Mair - Chairman
M Bonney – remotely
H Browne
D Carnell
S Curry
D Davis
G Fulton – remotely
J Hinge

J Mair
P Marchington
E Stickings
B Stone
J Wallace – remotely (part of meeting)
D Wooster – remotely
B Wright

In attendance

P Haselhurst – Clerk
L Rowland – Office Manager

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting.

It was noted that D Long has stood down from the Board. Members recorded their thanks for his contribution.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from A Bates, G Etheridge, R Hall, T Malpas, J Nash, J Nottage and T Winckless. No response received from T Thompson.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman declared an interest, confirming the catering for today's meetings had been supplied by his wife's company, Sarah Serves and confirmed he had recently submitted some new personal interests by email.

The Office Manager confirmed that new Register of Members' Interests forms will be circulated for completion shortly to capture personal interests for all Members on the new North Kent Marshes WLMB forms.

4. MINUTES

RECEIVED (Appendix 1) The Minutes from the Meeting of the NKMWLMB held on 1 April 2026.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the NKMWLMB Minutes of 1 April 2026 be approved.

5. ACTION LIST & MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

RECEIVED (Appendix 2) the latest Action List of the Board.

The Action List was noted.

6. GOVERNANCE – ADOPTION OF REMAINING POLICIES

RECEIVED the following governance documents:

Financial and asset governance

- Investment Policy **(Appendix 3)**.
- Fixed Asset Register Policy **(Appendix 4)**.
- Mobile Plant Replacement Policy **(Appendix 5)**.

Operational and asset management

- Adoption and Abandonment of Watercourses Policy **(Appendix 6)**.
- Watercourse Maintenance Policy **(Appendix 7)**.
- Water Level Control Structures Policy **(Appendix 8)**.
- Culverting Policy **(Appendix 9)**.
- Rechargeable Works Policy **(Appendix 10)**.
- Enforcement Policy **(Appendix 11)**.

Risk, environment and resilience

- Emergency Plan **(Appendix 12)**.
- Biosecurity Policy **(Appendix 13)**.
- Environmental Policy **(Appendix 14)**.
- Drought Policy **(Appendix 15)**.
- Flood Policy **(Appendix 16)**.

Corporate governance and conduct

- Anti-Bribery Policy **(Appendix 17)**.
- Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy **(Appendix 18)**.
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy **(Appendix 19)**.
- Whistle Blowing Policy **(Appendix 20)**.
- Members Code of Conduct **(Appendix 21)**.
- Complaints Policy **(Appendix 22)**.
- Standing Orders **(Appendix 23)**.
- Corporate Risk Register **(Appendix 24)**.

Data and communications

- Data Retention and Disposal Policy **(Appendix 25)**.
- ICO Model Publication Scheme **(Appendix 26)**.
- Social Media Policy **(Appendix 27)**.

J Wallace joined the meeting.

M Bonney raised that some policies were too vague, particularly where they overlap. She requested greater detail on Ramsar sites, SPAs, and SSSIs, highlighting their hydrological connectivity, and suggested that policies should explicitly reference this, with strengthened safeguards and non-deterioration principles.

She also emphasised the importance of the Environmental Policy in relation to maintenance activities, including water quality, culverting, and related works. In particular, she highlighted the need for specific protections for chalk streams and groundwater-fed systems, with a presumption against modification. She proposed that any works should be required to demonstrate no deterioration and be supported by ecological assessment, noting the ecological significance of chalk streams in the area.

The Clerk explained that such detail is typically contained within supporting procedures rather than the policies themselves but invited identification of any specific gaps requiring further clarification.

M Bonney agreed to email the Clerk with a list of points.

It was **AGREED** that any policies that are identified that require review/subsequent changes should be brought back to the Board within 3 months.

Financial and asset governance

It was **RESOLVED** that the Investment Policy, Fixed Asset Register Policy and Mobile Plant Replacement Policy be approved subject to the following amendments:

- Investment Policy – point 3.3 the value should be removed and explanation that the protection for private investors is not extended to IDBs.
- Fixed Asset Register Policy – amended to state that we record assets with a value over £5,000

(Proposed by S Mair; Seconded by J Mair; carried unanimously.)

Operational and asset management

It was **RESOLVED** that the Adoption and Abandonment of Watercourses Policy, Watercourse Maintenance Policy, Water Level Control Structures Policy, Culverting Policy, Rechargeable Works Policy and Enforcement Policy be approved subject to the following amendments:

- Adoption and Abandonment of Watercourses Policy – point 3.1 to include retaining and redirecting water as well as removing it.
- Water Level Control Structures Policy – include not adopted watercourses as an exception where there is a wider benefit in the district.
- Culverting Policy – fencing and gateways require prior approval, although treated as a low risk consent.

(Proposed by B Wright; Seconded by S Curry; carried unanimously.)

B Wright suggested that it would be beneficial to do a whole District review of adopted watercourses at some point.

B Wright asked about the Asset Register and if we had a record of who was responsible for stopboards.

The Clerk confirmed there is currently limited clear information available regarding the operation of certain water level control structures, other than that contained within historic Water Level Management Plans. It was understood that these structures are typically operated by landowners; however, in some cases they may be operated by individuals who do not own the land. It was also confirmed that a survey is being undertaken to gather more detailed information on identified assets and their operation.

Risk, environment and resilience

D Wooster raised the importance of ensuring that town and parish councils are aware of the appropriate reporting routes for issues relating to Board assets, noting that they are often the first point of contact for local concerns.

The Clerk confirmed that the Board's Emergency Plan relates to internal business continuity arrangements rather than external incident response, and that the Board is not a statutory responder under the Civil Contingencies Act.

Members were advised that all external queries should continue to be directed to the Board office via existing contact channels, including telephone, email and the website. It was noted that parish councils have not experienced difficulty in contacting the Board to date.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Environment Policy will be reviewed at the June meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Emergency Plan, Biosecurity Policy, Drought Policy and Flood Policy be approved subject to the following amendments:

- Emergency Plan – 9.1 Vice Chairman to be amended to Simon Curry and the staff telephone list to be updated.

(Proposed by D Carnell; Seconded by B Wright; carried unanimously.)

G Fulton joined the meeting.

Corporate governance and conduct

It was **RESOLVED** that the Complaints Policy be reviewed to ensure complaints are not referred solely to the Chairman, and that other Board members are included in the process. The revised policy will be brought back to the Board in June.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Standing Orders be approved and forwarded to DEFRA for their approval, using the standard DEFRA template.

(Proposed by H Browne; Seconded by J Hinge; carried unanimously.)

It was **RESOLVED** that the Anti-Bribery Policy, Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy, Gifts and Hospitality Policy, Whistle Blowing Policy, Members Code of Conduct and Corporate Risk Register be approved subject to the following amendments:

- Members Code of Conduct – Part 1, Section 3 – add 'not' before prevent in the penultimate bullet point.

(Proposed by E Stickings; Seconded by D Davis; carried unanimously.)

Data and communications

It was **AGREED** that the Social Media Policy needed to be looked at in more detail. The revised policy will be brought back to the Board in June.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Data Retention and Disposal Policy and ICO Model Publication Scheme be approved subject to the following amendments:

- Data Retention and Disposal Policy – change retention period for Finance documents to statutory.

(Proposed by D Carnell; Seconded by S Curry; carried unanimously.)

7. WISE USE OF WATER PROGRAMME

The Clerk presented an update on the Wise Use of Water Programme, confirming that Phase 1 of the work across the Hoo Peninsula had been completed. Members were informed that a 172-page consultant report had been received and would be circulated to B Wright and any other Members wishing to review it. The presentation outlined the background to the project, the work undertaken, key outputs, and how these outputs would inform future work.

S Curry highlighted the importance of the work in the context of future climate change resilience and requested a copy of the report.

S Curry also raised historic ponds and water retention features, referencing previous work under the Chalk to Coast project. It was noted that similar datasets may exist for marsh areas and could assist in identifying historic water retention locations and opportunities for future intervention.

The Clerk confirmed that historic ponds and ditches had been considered as part of the Water Level Management Plan and formed part of the existing evidence base. It was suggested that this information could be further utilised to support future water retention strategies.

B Wright raised a query regarding the Environment Agency's approach to outfall management.

A discussion took place regarding outfall management, including the role of the Environment Agency and the extent to which a consistent approach exists for outflow control. Members were advised that outfalls had been assessed within the study, including data on levels, flows, and potential tide-locking under current and future scenarios. The report identifies locations where further investigation may be required, and continued engagement with the Environment Agency will be necessary.

It was noted that the majority of outfalls are designed primarily for flood protection rather than water retention; however, there may be opportunities to adapt existing infrastructure to support water storage within marsh areas. It was further noted that some landowners are already implementing localised water retention measures, which would need to be taken into account in any wider approach.

D Wooster raised concerns regarding the Environment Agency's 50-year coastal erosion projections and sought reassurance that there is effective coordination and feedback on long-term impacts affecting assets, landowners, and non-residential areas. A copy of the presentation was requested.

The Clerk confirmed that such concerns are raised with the Environment Agency and that coordination takes place; however, influence at officer level is limited due to wider policy and funding constraints.

G Fulton noted that current approaches remain largely funding-driven, with limited and constrained funding for marshland areas. It was further noted that the Shoreline Management Plan is advisory, while associated funding mechanisms drive delivery priorities. The approach was considered to remain broadly sustainable in the medium term, although progression of additional works would depend on securing external funding.

The Clerk confirmed that a separate presentation for the Swale area is expected to take place in the autumn.

The Clerk confirmed that the wider Lower Medway programme has recently started and a presentation for the Swale area is likely to take place in the autumn.

8. ELVERTON SLUICE

The Clerk confirmed that the sluice design is due to be finalised by the end of next week, then the project will be issued for tender. It was also confirmed that, if progress continues as expected, our first tilting weir is expected to be installed in the autumn.

9. TEYNHAM MAIN BRIDGE

The Clerk confirmed all permissions are in place, a contractor is onboard and the bridge will be installed in mid-July.

10. PUBLIC SECTOR COOPERATION AGREEMENT (PSCA) RENEWAL

The Clerk advised Members that a final draft of the Public Sector Cooperation Agreement (PSCA) had been received for review. The agreement will enable continued collaboration with the Environment Agency on a range of partnership working and operational projects.

Members were informed that planned works include piecemeal coastal repairs in the South Swale area, covering both south of Sheppey and north of Longden Marshes, together with additional main river maintenance activities.

A programme of works is being developed to maximise efficiency by aligning supplementary main river maintenance with works undertaken in specific locations. Proposed sites for the current year include Seasalter, areas around Ben Wright/Rye Street, and other locations to be confirmed.

A site visit to Seasalter is scheduled for the following week. It was noted that this area also forms part of the ongoing Pennywort eradication programme, and opportunities are being explored to align and coordinate activities where possible.

B Wright raised the ongoing issue of Environment Agency de-maining. Concerns were noted in relation to the transfer of responsibilities and associated funding arrangements. It was acknowledged that while some small-scale transfers may be feasible, larger sections of main river present significant challenges in relation to funding, asset ownership, and operational capacity for Internal Drainage Boards.

11. INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

It was confirmed that insurance has been renewed with NFU. An insurance report from the Office Manager will be presented to the Q1 Finance meeting in July, including details of a comparison quotation received.

12. FUTURE MEETINGS

RECEIVED (Appendix 28) list of future Board and Finance meetings.

Dates confirmed as follows:

EOY/Q4 Finance & Risk and Board Meeting - 15 June, 12.30pm

Q1 Finance & Risk Meeting - 20 July, 1pm

Q2 Finance & Risk Meeting - 9 November, 1pm

AGM Board Meeting - 7 December, 1pm

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

J Wallace expressed her thanks to the Clerk and her team for their work, noting that the level of commitment and quality of delivery was beyond expectation.

Members highlighted the significant work undertaken to deliver the amalgamation and associated governance and operational arrangements, noting that this had been achieved smoothly and effectively.

A formal vote of thanks to the Clerk and her team was proposed and seconded and unanimously supported by the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 14:52.