

ROMNEY MARSHES AREA INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

A meeting of the Board was held at Appledore Village Hall on Wednesday 29th January 2025 at 2.30 pm.

PRESENT.

Elected Members:

P Boulden Esq., A Clifton Esq., L Cooke Esq.,(Vice-Chairman), E Langrish Esq., Mrs H Langrish, A Wellsted Esq. S Wright Esq.and M Wrout Esq.

Appointed Members:

Cllr P Carey, Cllr P Coe, A Cragg Esq., Cllr Mrs C Creaser, Cllr Mrs A Hicks, Cllr C Hoggart, D Lovejoy Esq. (Chairman), Cllr A Mier, D Oliver Esq., Cllr Mrs S Prochak, Mrs C Solly and Cllr D Wimble.

Staff:

N. Botting (Clerk/Engineer to the Board), Mrs D Chalcroft (Financial Officer), R Monje (Assistant Clerk/Engineer)

In Attendance: Mr Ian Nunn (Operations Manager, Environment Agency).

883. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed those attending and introduced Ian Nunn from the Environment Agency. The Clerk then read out the list of apologies.

Apologies were received from:

Elected Members.

S Body Esq., A Clifton-Holt Esq., J Langrish Esq., E Lovejoy Esq., T Piper Esq., C Ramus Esq., and D Wheeler Esq.

Appointed Members.

Cllr G Allison, C Body Esq.,Cllr ARJ Hills, Cllr K Rye and Cllr S Scoffham.

884. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY 20th NOVEMBER 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2024, having previously been circulated to members prior to the meeting, were taken as read. The minutes were accepted as a correct record of the previous meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.

885. MATTERS ARISING

880 - The Clerk/Engineer explained that the DRS software agreements with local Boards and the Water Management Alliance were all but complete.

886. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY PRESENTATION

The Chairman explained that the EA had been requested to give a presentation to the Board to explain how the precept is used to fund certain activities in designated “low risk” systems, and how revenue funding for the coming financial year may affect the EA’s maintenance schedule. Mr Ian Nunn, Operations Manager for the area, indicated that the actual funding figure was still not clear but was likely effectively a cut compared to the previous year. He stated that the Board should be aware that there may be stretches of Main River that would not be weedcut but Agency staff were looking at ways to improve efficiencies to try to maximise output and would always prioritise main arteries and high risk areas such as Robertsbridge. Board members posed a number of questions including the allocated costs associated with seemingly simple work operations, Mr Nunn explained that some work had to be carried out using National Framework Teams which could not be

performed in-house due to EA policy. After further debate, the Clerk/Engineer suggested that Mr Nunn attend the next Board meeting in June when the funding picture would be clearer and, in the meantime, Board staff, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would continue to keep close communication to assess the financial situation and its likely impacts.

887. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The approved minutes of the last two F&GP meetings were taken as read.

888. ENGINEER'S REPORT

The Clerk/Engineer read through and elaborated on the previously distributed report. He stated that the Board's desilting programme had begun and close monitoring of deposited silt by the Assistant Engineer had allowed the safe return of over 120 eels in the Fairfield area. He also explained that, after the death of 5 eels during EA Main River desilting, the Agency had decided to self-impose a cessation of desilting activity if air temperatures were 5 degrees Celsius or less, as any unnoticed eels in deposited silt tended to die. The Board had not experienced the same issue. The Clerk informed the Board that further gearbox problems with the works Landrover had incurred another significant bill.

889. ACCOUNTS VOUCHERS

The Chairman stated that the list of vouchers had been rigorously studied by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and asked if any members had queries on the list of payments, there were no questions raised.

890. RATES TO BE WRITTEN OFF

The Finance Officer asked the Board to consider a list of rates recommended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee to be written off. She explained the case for each account and asked for any questions. With no questions raised it was PROPOSED by Cllr C Hoggart, SECONDED by Cllr A Mier and unanimously agreed that rates to the total value of £34.19 be written off.

891. INCOME & EXPENDITURE

The Finance Officer presented the income and expenditure statement to date, there were no issues raised.

892. INTERNAL CONTROL REVIEW

The Financial Officer stated that some minor wording changes had been applied to the Board's Internal Controls and Financial Risk Assessment, after explaining the changes it was PROPOSED by Cllr Mrs S Prochak, SECONDED by Mrs C Solly and unanimously agreed that the revised document be adopted by the Board.

893. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF COMMUTED SUMS

The Clerk and Financial Officer presented a document recently approved by the F&GP Committee regarding the future management of commuted sums for specific assets. It was agreed that reductions in balances currently being applied on an annual basis should be increased to allow for extra works benefitting those assets. It was subsequently PROPOSED by A Clifton Esq. SECONDED by Cllr D Wimble and agreed unanimously that the financial management of commuted sums be amended.

894. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2025-26.

The papers containing the revised estimates for 2024-25, and the proposed annual estimates for 2025-26 had been circulated to members prior to this meeting. The Clerk read through and offered further comment on the current year and following financial year's estimates. He concluded that the Finance and General Purposes Committee had recommended that the Board consider a rate rise of 3.0% for 2025-26. After further, detailed discussion it was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Mrs S Prochak **SECONDED** by Cllr A Hicks and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**:

- (i) that the financial estimates for the year ending 31st March 2026 be approved and adopted;

- (ii) (a) the Special Levy on Ashford Borough Council shall be £13,959
 (b) the Special Levy on Folkestone & Hythe District Council shall be £583,305
 (c) the Special Levy on Rother District Council shall be £159,025
- (iii) the Board do hereby make a drainage rate of 6.86p in the pound in respect of Agricultural Land and Buildings for the year commencing 1st April 2025;
- (iv) the purposes for which the said Special Levies and Drainage Rate are made and the amount in the £ for each of those purposes are as hereunder set out:-

	p	p
Expenses of Administration	2.072	
Works of Maintenance	2.360	
New and Improvement Works	-	
Environment Agency Precept	<u>2.750</u>	7.182
<u>Less:</u>		
Government Grants	-	
Environment Agency Contribution	0.324	
Other Income	<u>0.105</u>	<u>0.429</u>
		6.753
<u>Add for Adjustment to Balance</u>		<u>0.107</u>
		6.860

(v) the said rate shall be paid at Suite 7, Old Barn Offices, Salts Farm, East Guldeford, Rye, East Sussex giving the Ratepayers the option of paying by two equal instalments; the first on demand and the second on 1st October 2025, providing the total of any instalment exceeds five pounds.

(vi) notice of said rate shall be given by affixing the notice in one or more public places in the district.

895. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next Main Board meeting would be held at 2.30pm on Wednesday 25th June 2025, venue to be confirmed.

896. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr D Wimble asked if staff were aware of a mink trapping initiative in the area. The Assistant Engineer replied that we were and had signed up to the project.

There being no other business, the Chairman ended the meeting at 4.30 p.m.