

UPPER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD



MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the **BOARD**
held at Green Farm, Duck Lane, Shadoxhurst
Kent, TN26 1LT
on **Tuesday 17 June 2025** at **10am**.

Members of the Board Present

D Goff (Chairman)
H Rogers
C Wheeler
O Baldock
Cllr M Summersgill
Cllr T Harwood
Cllr C Coleman
W Thompson
S Highwood

In attendance

O Pantrey – Clerk
J Schuiling – Works Manager
B Thomson – Sustainable Development Officer
T Reid (Environment Agency)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from M Davis, C Hosmer, Cllr Crane, Cllr King, and L Young.
The Chairman wished the Finance Officer well in her recovery.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations were made
(Interests of Mr Wheeler and Mr Highwood were made in previous meetings with no noted changes of circumstance).

3. REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS 2025/26

Members were reminded that the Register of Interests is a legal requirement. While no longer required annually, any member who has not yet submitted their form was requested to do so via the Clerk.

ACTION – Members who have not submitted their Register of Interests to contact the Clerk to complete the form.

4. ELECTION OF NEW MEMBER

On proposal from the Chairman, all AGREED that Mrs Susan McAll was formally elected as a new member of the Board under the casual vacancy system. Mrs McAll will be the elected representative for Electoral District 6 (Sussex).

Mrs McAll introduced herself, outlining her background in law and her experience in environmental farming.

Board members introduced themselves in turn.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2025

The minutes were approved as a true record, subject to a noted amendment that Cllr Summersgill abstained from a decision on Item 15.

ACTION – Clerk to amend January minutes to reflect Cllr Summersgill’s abstention.

6. ACTION LIST & MATTERS ARISING

No new matters were raised.

The Clerk confirmed the offer to meet with Borough Council officers remains open. The Chairman confirmed the meeting with EA's Sally Harvey was postponed due to her ongoing sick leave.

7. PRESENTATION: WRSE MINK ERADICATION PROJECT

Tom Reid presented on the WRSE project, explaining the impacts of invasive mink species and the national initiative to eradicate them. The project uses smart traps and genetic monitoring.

Board members asked about habitat impacts, water vole and other species rebound, and costs.

Board discussed:

- Support for invasive species control in principle.
- Possibility of contributing £4,000 for 12 traps in the UMIDB area.
- Need for hotspot data and further information before committing.

ACTION – Clerk to liaise with WRSE to obtain further data on local mink hotspots and project officer funding.

On proposal by Stuart Highwood, seconded by Will Thomson, it was **AGREED** in principle to continue engagement and revisit a decision on financial support in November 2025.

8. MEMBERS' ROUND TABLE REPORT

Positive feedback was received from a previously critical landowner regarding the Board's work on giant hogweed.

Point was raised about the Sherway NFM proposal. The outcome was that engagement was limited and had essentially stopped progress. Clerk asked that confirmation was forthcoming as the Board had committed to aid this financially in principle last year.

A concern raised about glyphosate spraying and its impact on other ecology. The Clerk confirmed best practices and compliance with permits were maintained by the Works Manager.

ACTION – Clerk to continue discussions with EA and monitor spraying practices.

9. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman reported positive site visits with the ground team and the increase in community engagement.

He acknowledged Mr Wheeler’s retirement from Finance Committee with thanks for all his efforts to aid this vital committee.

He then highlighted:

- DEFRA consultation on IDB and Flood funding, urging members to see if it is relevant to their councils.
- ADA’s updated Good Governance Guide, put together by ADA and Wilkin Chapman. He said there would be training on this later in the year.
- New EA flood maps had been released and showed new areas affected by flood zones; Councillors encouraged to publicise changes via newsletters where possible to improve public interaction.

ACTION – Members to review ADA governance guide and submit questions to Clerk ahead of November meeting.

10. CLERK'S REPORT

Report received for information. No questions raised.

11. WORKS REPORT

Comprehensive report delivered.

The Works Manager clarified 'pioneering' refers to tree work for conveyance. The Clerk said that the Board is taking a more strategic and conservation-minded approach, with invasive species work (hogweed, knotweed) significantly increased for this year.

A question was raised about whether this was a suitable use of Board resources and whether it should spend more time on its own projects.

ACTION – Staff training to be expanded; new equipment to be procured.

12. FINANCE REPORT

Reports received and noted.

On proposal from H Rogers, the top sheet reconciliations were unanimously approved.

On proposal from the Chair, the amended Financial Risk Assessment was unanimously approved.

The Board discussed a case concerning a ratepayers unpaid drainage rate. It was noted that liability lies with the landowner if the tenant defaults, subject to tenancy agreement terms.

There were thanks given to Mr C Wheeler for his service on the Finance Committee. It was requested that someone come forward as a replacement to make up the 5th member. W Thompson put himself forward.

On proposal from Cllr Summersgill, and seconded by O Baldock, all **AGREED** that W Thompson should be appointed to the Finance Committee.

The £250,000 investment was discussed as it was due for renewal. On proposal from H Rogers and seconded by W Thompson, it was **AGREED** that the Board would continue to invest as before.

ACTION – RFO to resolve payment arrangements with relevant landowner.

ACTION – RFO to contact Handelsbanken and arrange renewal of investment.

13-15. PLANNING & CONSENTS / BIODIVERSITY / HEALTH & SAFETY REPORTS

All reports received for information. No issues raised.

An update was provided by B Thomson regarding her role as the sole Sustainable Development Officer.

Regarding planning there were no consents for the members to consider on this occasion.

O Baldock wanted to praise the Works team on their safety record for the period. All members agreed it was positive to see the work completed safely.

It was requested that the Resilience Fund be addressed to make it more accessible. It was felt it needed to be improved further to allow those landowners who were interested the chance better utilise it.

ACTION – SDO to review and reboot the Resilience Fund

16. STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVE PLANNING/ACTIONS

The Board reviewed and approved:

- Updated 5-Year Strategic Plan (2025–2030)
- Business Continuity Plan

It was reminded that the data held on the Business Continuity Plan was for internal use only as it contained contact details for members. It was also requested that numbers were updated as some had changed.

17. INTERNAL AUDIT END OF YEAR REPORT

Report received for information. No issues raised.

The Chairman thanked the RFO and the Clerk for their work on this.

18. END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS YE MARCH 2025

On proposal from H Rogers, and Seconded by D Goff, all **AGREED** the End of Year Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement be approved and the Chairman should sign the Annual Governance Statement.

19. ANNUAL RETURN (AGAR) YE MARCH 2025

On proposal from H Rogers, and It was **AGREED** that the AGAR be approved and signed by the Chairman.

ACTION: RFO to submit AGAR to external auditor ahead of June 30th deadline.

20. GOVERNANCE

It was requested that the policies where it said, 'Chief Executive' were changed to 'Clerk'. All **AGREED**.

There was a question about using the word equality over equity within the EDI policy. This will be amended and submitted to the November meeting.

All updated policies and governance documents were approved in bulk.

ACTION: Clerk to make minor changes as suggest and add in elements regarding complaints against the Clerk ahead of publishing.

ACTION: Clerk to resubmit EDI policy at November meeting of the Board

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Lees Road Development: update noted; previous decision affirmed.
- Flood Zone Awareness: Board supports campaign to raise awareness among residents.

ACTION: Clerk to amend remit of Lees Road and continue with engagement with architect.

22. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Board Meeting: Tuesday 11 November 2025, 10am, Bullen Court
- Finance Committee: Tuesday 9 December 2025, 10am, Bullen Court

23. PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

There were no P&C minutes

24. CLOSE

Meeting closed at 12.45pm. Followed by site visit to view NFM works at Green Farm.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

ACTION – Members who have not submitted their Register of Interests to contact the Clerk to complete the form.

ACTION – Clerk to amend January minutes to reflect Cllr Summersgill's abstention.

ACTION – Clerk to liaise with WRSE to obtain further data on local mink hotspots and project officer funding.

ACTION – Clerk to continue discussions with EA and monitor spraying practices.

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