UPPER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES OF THE WORKS COMMITTEE
Held at Bullen Court, East Peckham
On Tuesday 7th July 2027 at 10:00am

Members of the Committee in Attendance
O Baldock – Works Chairman
D Goth – Board Chairman
J Schuiling – Works Manager
Cllr D Kent
S McCall
R Lingham
B Thomson – Sustainability Officer
K Saunders
W Elliott
P Watson
P Venn

1. **Apologies for absence.**
   Apologies were received from Lorna Carey, O Pantrey and O Brunning, who were unable to attend.

2. **Minutes of previous Meeting – March 2026**
   The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. All agreed the minutes were approved.

3. **Actions from Previous Meeting**
   The Committee reviewed outstanding actions.
   It was noted that:
- Parrot's Feather inspections at Sherway had been completed.
- No significant Parrot's Feather growth was identified.
- The investigation into alternative methods of invasive species control remains ongoing.
- A meeting had been arranged with the Tweed Invasive Species Project regarding giant hogweed eradication.
- All Safe Systems of Work and procedures had now been updated into the new format.

   The Committee noted that information gained from the Tweed Project would be used when considering future invasive species management strategies.

4. **Maintenance Season and Safe Systems of Work**
   The Committee received an update on preparations for the 2026 maintenance season.
   It was noted that:
- Maintenance operations were due to commence the following week.
- One tractor had been serviced and was ready for operation.
- The second tractor was undergoing final maintenance.
- Weed-cutting buckets had been inspected and prepared for use.
- The whacker excavator was ready for operation.
- A contractor-supplied excavator operator was now available for the season.
- A replacement 15.5 tonne Hitachi excavator would be supplied in place of the previous 17 tonne JCB machine.

The proposed rotating maintenance system for tractor operators was discussed:

- Two operators would undertake mowing duties.
- One operator would undertake strimming duties.
- Roles would rotate daily.
- Existing arrangements involving excavator and whacker operations would continue.

No concerns were raised by operational staff regarding commencement of the maintenance season.

5. **Works Plan 2026**
   The Committee reviewed progress against the 2026 Works Plan. **It was noted that:**
- Winter pioneering works had progressed exceptionally well.
- Approximately seven reaches remained outstanding.
- Remaining pioneering works would be completed following the maintenance season.
- Digital reporting systems continue to provide real-time updates of completed works.

   The Committee received an update on INNS management operations.
   It was noted that:
- Approximately 42,500 giant hogweed plants and 26,000 Japanese Knotweed plants had been treated during the current season.
- One further site remains to be revisited.
- Significant infestations had been identified at previously unknown locations.
- Staff had completed extensive walking surveys and treatment works over recent weeks.
- The work had been undertaken during exceptionally high temperatures.

   Members formally recognised the significant effort undertaken by operational staff and commended the team for the results achieved.

   A detailed discussion took place regarding working practices during periods of extreme heat.
   Key points identified:
- Operational staff were regularly working in temperatures exceeding 30°C.
- Hydration and heat management were becoming increasingly important.
- Earlier start times may provide a safer working environment during periods of extreme weather.

- Existing work locations would need to be assessed before early starts due to noise considerations near residential properties.

The Committee agreed:

- Flexible start times should be considered during periods of extreme heat where operationally practical.
- Options for cool boxes or vehicle refrigeration units should be explored to improve welfare arrangements.

6. Creation of In-House Certification, Courses and SSoW

The Committee reviewed progress with in-house training and competency programmes.

It was noted that:

- All operational Safe Systems of Work had now been updated into the new format.
- Manual handling refresher training is scheduled to take place.
- Existing in-house manual handling training had proven effective.

Members discussed:

- Safe lifting limits and guidance.
- Manual handling of heavy timber.

7. Safety Report – May 2026

The Committee reviewed the monthly safety report. **It was noted that:**

- Safety reporting continues to be effective.
- Defects and near misses are being reported appropriately.
- A recent near miss involving a landowner opening a gate near an operator had been reported.

The Committee reiterated the importance of continued near miss reporting.

8. Accident/Near Miss Reporting

The Committee reviewed accident statistics.

It was noted that:

- One minor accident had been recorded since the previous meeting.
- The incident involved a trip on the office entrance step.
- No injury resulted from the incident.

Members were pleased to note the continued low accident rate.

9. Welfare and Wellbeing

The Committee reviewed current welfare arrangements.

It was noted that:

- Benenden Healthcare remains available to all eligible staff.
- New wellbeing seminars covering health and lifestyle topics are available.
- Staff continue to have access to GP consultation services through the scheme.

The Committee discussed hearing assessments.

It was agreed that:

- Hearing tests should be undertaken alongside annual eye examinations.
- More robust testing arrangements should be considered where possible.

The Committee encouraged all employees to make appropriate use of available wellbeing services.

10. Company H+S Achievements

The Committee noted:

- All actions arising from the recent depot inspection had been completed.
- A revised emergency assembly point sign had been designed and ordered.
- PPE requirements had been reviewed ahead of the maintenance season.
- Additional glove options would be investigated following staff feedback.

Members recognised the continued positive safety culture within the workforce.

11. Feedback or Concerns

Operational staff raised concerns regarding:

- Ongoing fly tipping adjacent to Gravelley Ways.
- Disposal of grass cuttings into watercourses.
- Dog waste being thrown over residential boundaries into drainage channels.

The Committee noted that:

- Such activities create operational difficulties and environmental concerns.
- Community engagement and awareness may help reduce occurrences.
- Further reporting to local authorities should be considered where necessary.

The Committee also discussed reports of possible pollution affecting watercourses within the Paddock Wood area and concerns regarding water quality.

It was reiterated that staff should avoid entering potentially contaminated watercourses.

12. Environmental Incidents or Concerns

- Continued recording of invasive species locations through digital mapping systems.
- Opportunities for future mink control initiatives.
- Recent national funding announcements supporting mink eradication programmes.
- The ecological value of Board watercourses.

13. **Training Completed**

The Committee noted completion of familiarisation training on the new tractor-mounted winch.

It was reported that:

- Operators had undertaken practical demonstrations.
- Safe working procedures had been implemented.
- Initial operational feedback had been positive.

14. **Upcoming/Ongoing Training**

The following training was noted:

- Manual Handling Refresher Training.

Staff again expressed support for increased training opportunities where appropriate.

15. **Any Other Business**

The Committee received a brief update regarding proposals for an additional storage building at Leeds Road**.**

It was noted that:

- Additional quotations were being obtained.
- No decision had yet been made.

The Committee discussed the frequency of future meetings.

Members agreed that:

- Future Works Committee meetings should reduce from four meetings per year to three meetings per year.
- This would reduce disruption to operational activities whilst maintaining effective governance.

A detailed discussion took place regarding:

- Flood risk management.
- Environment Agency responsibilities.
- Development pressures.
- Watercourse maintenance responsibilities.
- Planning and drainage issues across the district.

Members noted ongoing frustrations regarding ownership, maintenance responsibilities and regulatory processes affecting flood risk management regarding the Environment Agency.

It was agreed that concerns should continue to be raised through appropriate channels.

16. **Date of Next Meeting**

- Tuesday 20th October 2026

17. **Close**

- There being no further business, the meeting was closed.

Action List – 7 July 2026

- Engagement with the Tweed Invasive Species Project. Review findings from giant hogweed eradication discussions.
- Complete remaining pioneering reaches following maintenance season.
- Develop guidance for hot weather working. Investigate earlier start times during periods of extreme heat.
- Review vehicle cooling and hydration provisions.
- Raise fly tipping and grass-cutting disposal concerns with relevant authorities.
- Monitor national mink eradication initiatives.
- Obtain final quotation for Leeds Road storage building.
- Implement future Works Committee schedule of three meetings per year.
- Continue engagement with the Environment Agency regarding maintenance responsibilities and flood risk concerns.