UPPER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
held at Bullen Court, East Peckham
on Tuesday 2nd June 2026 at 10:00am

Members of the Committee in Attendance
Cllr T Harwood –Chair
S McAll –Vice Chair
H Rogers – Board Member (Finance Chair)
S Highwood – Board Member
O Baldock – Board Member (Works Chair)
D Kent – Board Member
B Thomson – Sustainability Manager
O Pantrey – Clerk to the Board
P Watson – Conservation Officer

1. Apologies for Absence
No apologies for absence were recorded in the transcript.

2. Declarations of Interest
S Highwood made a declaration of interest regarding the proposal for funding at Jarmon's Farm, Yalding.

3. BAP Objectives 2026
2026 Projects Update
Members discussed the importance of measuring environmental outcomes and ensuring that monitoring activities support practical delivery. It was noted that the Board should focus on promoting and supporting nature-based solutions that provide measurable environmental benefits and align with the Board's statutory functions.

Mission Statement Update
The Committee discussed the need to further develop the Committee mission statement and supporting documentation to reflect a more intelligence-led and evidence-based approach to environmental delivery.
Members noted that future work should focus on targeting interventions where evidence suggests the greatest environmental benefit can be achieved.

Flagship / Key Species Update
Members reviewed the draft flagship species list and noted that several species currently included were not strongly associated with the Upper Medway catchment.
The Committee considered proposed amendments to the list and discussed the increasing relevance of European beaver populations within Kent. It was noted that beavers are likely to become increasingly significant within the catchment and that the Board should prepare for future habitat and management considerations.
The Committee also discussed the growing presence of otters within the wider region and their relevance to future conservation planning.
Members further considered the inclusion of grass snake due to the positive contribution that drainage maintenance activities can make towards the creation of suitable nesting habitat.
Following discussion, it was AGREED that:

- Otter replace noctule bat.
- Beaver replace greater water parsnip
- Grass snake replace true fox sedge

The list was to be simplified to focus on primary flagship species only.

4. INNS 2026
B Thomson provided an update on the 2026 invasive non-native species programme.
It was noted that:

- Approximately 30,000 giant hogweed plants had been treated during the 2026 season to date.
- Approximately 23,000 plants were treated during the previous year.
- Treatment areas had been expanded further upstream within the catchment.
- Additional requests for treatment had been received from landowners and partner organisations.

Members discussed operational safety associated with glyphosate use and the requirement to comply with current national guidance and risk management procedures.
The Committee considered the continued use of manual removal techniques and agreed that flexibility should remain within the management approach, recognising that different sites may require different treatment methods.
Members discussed the importance of collecting and analysing treatment data in order to identify trends, prioritise resources and develop a more strategic approach to catchment-wide giant hogweed management.
It was noted that:

- The programme remains in a data collection and intelligence gathering phase.
- Further analysis is required before long-term management strategies can be developed.
- There may be value in engaging with organisations that have attempted catchment-scale eradication programmes elsewhere in the country.

The Committee agreed that future management should increasingly focus on intelligence-led targeting and evidence-based decision making.

5. Conservation & NFM Fund
Progress Update
B Thomson provided an update on the Natural Flood Management and Conservation Fund.

Members noted that an updated application had been received from Jack Highwood, including revised species information and updated project costs.
It was noted that:

- Costs had increased by approximately £800.
- The application remained within the scope of the fund.
- Funding in excess of £5,000 requires full Board approval.

Members discussed the importance of ensuring that funded projects remain in place for an appropriate period following delivery.
The Committee noted that existing fund guidance requires projects to remain in place for a minimum period of three years and discussed the potential benefit of introducing a formal agreement to support compliance and satisfy audit requirements.
Members suggested obtaining advice on a simple agreement document that could be used for future applications.

Application Update
The Committee considered the application and associated documentation.
Following discussion, it was AGREED that:

- The application be recommended to the Board for approval.
- Appropriate documentation be prepared to ensure compliance with fund requirements.
- Further consideration be given to formal agreements for future funding recipients.

Members also discussed future promotion of the fund and the importance of ensuring that funding is targeted towards projects that provide the greatest environmental and flood risk management benefits.
It was noted that website documentation requires updating before wider promotion of the fund is undertaken.
The Committee further discussed the longer-term future of the fund and noted that future consideration may be required regarding ongoing funding arrangements and strategic priorities.

6. Any Other Business
Planning and Flood Risk
Concerns were raised regarding flood risk associated with the Dandara development and related planning applications.
Members noted that discussions were ongoing with the Environment Agency regarding flood risk assessments and compliance with planning policy requirements.

Japanese Knotweed Management
The Committee discussed the future requirement for stem injection equipment to support Japanese knotweed treatment programmes.
It was noted that this matter would be progressed through the appropriate operational and Works Committee processes.

INNS Management Policy
Members noted that a draft INNS management policy had been prepared.
It was AGREED that the draft policy should be circulated to members for review ahead of submission to the Board for approval.

Future Meeting Topics
Members discussed the next scheduled Sustainability Committee meeting.
It was AGREED that future discussion should include:

- Strategic management of giant hogweed.
- Catchment-scale invasive species control.
- Engagement with organisations experienced in large-scale eradication programmes.
- Continued monitoring of the Natural Flood Management and Conservation Fund.

7. Date of Next Meeting
The next meeting was noted as being scheduled for 31 October 2026.

8. Close
The Chair thanked members for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Action List – 2 June 2026

- Update flagship species list to reflect agreed amendments.
- Revise supporting BAP documentation and mission statement to reflect an intelligence-led approach to delivery.
- Develop a strategic targeting approach for giant hogweed management using collected treatment data.
- Investigate examples of catchment-scale giant hogweed eradication projects and report findings to the Committee.
- Obtain advice regarding a simple agreement for Natural Flood Management and Conservation Fund recipients.
- Update fund documentation and website information.
- Present the Jack Highwood funding application to the Board for approval.
- Circulate the draft INNS management policy to Committee members for review.

- Continue promotion of the Natural Flood Management and Conservation Fund following document updates.
- Progress procurement of stem injection equipment for future Japanese knotweed management activities.