UPPER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

held at Bullen Court, East Peckham

on Tuesday 27th October 2026 at 10:00am

Members of the Committee in Attendance
Cllr T Harwood –Chair
Cllr D Kent – Board Member
Cllr D King – Board Member
B Thomson – Sustainability Manager
O Pantrey – Clerk to the Board

1. Apologies for Absence
The apologies reported at the beginning of the meeting were noted as S McAll, S Highwood, H Rogers, O Baldock, and P Watson.

2. Declarations of Interest
No declarations were made when this item was first considered. During discussion of the Pen Stream, Dennis King stated that the site was within his ward; this interest was noted.

3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 2 June 2026
Members considered the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were agreed. It was also identified that circulation of the previous minutes to all Committee members needed to be checked.

4. Biodiversity Action Plan Objectives 2026 – Project Update
Pen Stream: The Clerk updated members on the Environment Agency project to remove six weirs and improve habitat. Previously unidentified sheet piling prevented removal with the planned equipment. Around 400 metres of dead hedging had been installed, while some enhancements were deferred to fund an approximately £1,200 trial of a compact excavator-mounted vibro hammer. A further footpath closure would be required. If the trial fails, the scope and funding will be reconsidered with the Environment Agency as a larger capital project. Members discussed water levels, access and site condition. Cllr King relayed residents' concerns about exposed metalwork, debris and temporary silt curtains. The Clerk will arrange a site visit with Dennis King, local representatives and the Environment Agency to identify snagging and reinstatement works. The silt curtains were expected to be removed sequentially after the works.
Other BAP activity: Members discussed a proposed enhancement scheme at Eridge Stream, including water-crowfoot rafts, pinch points and deflectors over about 600 metres, subject to safe access and working conditions.

5. Conservation and Natural Flood Management Fund – 2026 Update
The updated Fund flyer, FAQs and expression-of-interest form were live on the Board website. An email-routing issue had been fixed, and the first prospective applicant was being followed up.
Shepherds Field/Crow Plain Farm: Excavation of the palaeochannel and ponds was complete, with planting planned for winter. Connection to the Board watercourse remained subject to satisfactory details and consent, potentially in spring or summer 2027. A further site review was suggested after the ground and planting were established. [Project/site identification to confirm.]
South East Rivers Trust: Members discussed possible funding and partnership opportunities, including water-quality monitoring equipment and small natural flood management schemes. Any funding should deliver clear local benefits and not replace other organisations' responsibilities. Use and reporting of monitoring data would need agreement.

6. Invasive Non-Native Species
2026 delivery and evidence: Giant hogweed treatment was reported at 1.82 times the 2025 level, with 16 additional sprayed sites. The increase partly reflected more staff, monitoring and newly identified sites. Inconsistent site names limited comparison, so a standardised dataset was needed. New and under-surveyed upstream areas, including parts of the Eden, were highlighted.
Staff time for the 2026 programme was approximately £70,000, yet estimated coverage remained around 30–40%. Comprehensive treatment under the current model could exceed £150,000 annually and was considered unsustainable. Members discussed effectiveness, seed-bank replenishment, funding, staff capacity and opportunity costs.
Tweed Invasives Project: Members noted lessons from the long-running programme, including sustained funding, coordinated permissions, volunteers, landowner engagement and dedicated management. The Scottish model was informative but not fully transferable to the Medway catchment.
Strategic direction: The Committee agreed that the Board lacked the resources to lead a catchment-wide INNS programme alone. Members supported convening the Environment Agency, Natural England and other stakeholders to establish a coordinated, properly funded approach under a suitable lead organisation. They also discussed an indicative multi-year transition, potentially reducing main-river treatment over two or more years while focusing Board resources on maintained watercourses, surveillance and preventing spread. No withdrawal date or final programme was approved. Bailey

Thomson was asked to prepare a broad five-year outline for stakeholder and Board consideration.

7. Any Other Business

A member raised concerns about car-park runoff, possible oil contamination and delayed or inadequate drainage associated with nearby development. The Clerk outlined the respective roles of the Board, planning enforcement and the Environment Agency. Members also noted potential downstream flood risk where site levels had been raised before all drainage measures were installed. Details will be sent to Bailey Thomson to assess any Board interest. The Clerk confirmed that the Board did not own the culvert discussed.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held online on Tuesday 15 December 2026, primarily to consider policy matters and updates.

9. Close

The meeting closed after completion of the business at 11:15am.

Action List – 27 October 2026

1. Circulate the minutes of 2 June 2026. **Sustainability Officer**
2. Arrange a Pen Stream site visit with Dennis King, local representatives and the Environment Agency; identify snagging and clearance requirements. **Clerk**
3. Arrange the technical trial for removal of Pen Stream sheet piling, securing appropriate footpath closure and liaison with EA. **Clerk / Works Manager.**
4. Continue follow-up with the first Fund applicant and prospective partner organisations. **Sustainability Officer**
5. Review and standardise INNS site names and year-on-year records. **Sustainability Officer / INNS team.**
6. Convene stakeholder discussions on strategic catchment-scale INNS management and suitable lead organisation. **Sustainability Officer / Clerk.**
7. Prepare an indicative five-year INNS transition/strategic outline for Committee and Board consideration. **Sustainability Officer**
8. Provide information on development runoff and drainage concerns to Bailey Thomson. **Cllr Kent**