

From: Wayne Chapman, Chairman, Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee

To: Scrutiny Committee – 25 November 2025

Subject: Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee Annual Report

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the work of the Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee for the period November 2024 – November 2025.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to note the Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee Annual Report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee's (KFRWMC) operates within Kent County Council's (KCC) overview and scrutiny function, alongside the Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 The KFRWMC is tasked with reviewing and scrutinising the exercise of flood risk management and coastal erosion functions by risk management authorities in Kent. These authorities include KCC as the lead local flood authority and highway authority; the Environment Agency; district councils; internal drainage boards; and water companies.
- 1.3 As required in KCC's Constitution, the Annual Report is presented to the Scrutiny Committee for noting, providing an opportunity for the KFRWMC to raise awareness of the scrutiny activity it has undertaken, scrutiny it intends to undertake in the future and to flag up any particular points of concern where required.
- 1.4 As the KFRWMC performs a scrutiny function on behalf of KCC, the Scrutiny Committee is not being asked to scrutinise their activities or scrutinise flood risk management more generally as part of this item.
- 1.5 This marks the Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee's (KFRWMC) first Annual Report to the Scrutiny Committee since the May 2025 election. The Committee has convened three times since its last report to Scrutiny on 4 December 2024, with meetings held in February, July, and October 2025.

- 1.6 The April 2025 meeting of the Committee was postponed due to KCC's elections. The next scheduled meeting will take place on 4th March 2026. Additionally, this document also captures the proceedings of the final Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee meeting of 2024.
- 1.7 Mr Wayne Chapman was elected Chair of the Committee at the July 2025 KFRWMC meeting. Mr Chapman succeeded Mr Tony Hills, who served as Chair during this report's timeframes of November 2024 through to February 2025.
- 1.8 The Committee currently comprises seven Members: five Reform UK, one Liberal Democrat, and one from the Green Group. A significant number of district councillors are also invited to attend the Committee's meetings.
- 1.9 The topics covered during this period were:
- Southern Water – Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce
 - South East Water – Water Resources Management Plan
 - South East Water – Overview of Services
 - Environment Agency – Management of water quality
 - Environment Agency – Introduction to new members
 - Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings
 - Met Office - Climate Change
 - KCC Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
 - The role of Internal Drainage Boards

2. Committee meeting on 20 November 2024

2.1 Environment Agency - River Basin Management Plans (RBMP)

The Environment Agency addressed the Committee:

- a. Functions of RBMPs, to set the legally binding locally specific environmental objectives that underpin water regulation, including permitting and planning activities.
- b. Investment programmes and future opportunities.
- c. Aims of RBMPs to enhance nature, deliver the environmental objectives that contribute towards net zero, explain what can be funded in line with the government's current policy and funding and business cases for the investment needed.
- d. An overview of the two catchments, South East and Thames, which encompassed Kent.

- e. Waterbody classifications across Kent, with it noted that none were classified 'Good' due to a one out all out policy.
- f. Catchment based approach and role of Catchment Coordinators.
- g. A summary of fish flow schemes delivered in Kent; and
- h. Partnership project delivery by default approach.

2.2 Met Office - Alerts and Warnings

The contents of the presentation included:

- a. Review of weather in winter 2022/23, summer 2023 and autumn 2023 to September.
- b. Storm Ciarán, with it noted that the highest wind speed (78mph) had been record in Kent at Langdon Bay and that in excess of 40mm of rainfall had been experienced in many areas.
- c. Storm preparation including warnings and future concerns.
- d. Role of the Met Office in warning, informing and civil contingencies, including the National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS);
- e. Weather warning criteria.
- f. Severe Weather Framework that included
- g. Flood Guidance Statement (FGS), as a 5-day outlook at whether any flooding was expected across England and Wales; and
- h. November 2023 to January 2024 3-month outlook of weather events.

3. Committee meeting on 5 February 2025

3.1 The Role of Internal Drainage Boards (IDB)

The Committee received the presentation:

- a. Managing water across North Kent and the role of the internal drainage board; and
- b. How funding was used and distributed in supporting the role of internal drainage boards noting the income and expenditures of the organisation.

- c. How the amalgamation of the North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board has enabled a more unified voice, leading to improved financial planning, more effective sharing of resources, and enhanced access to funding opportunities.
- d. Discussed how the IDB would take a holistic approach to future water level management.
- e. The local authority's role and impacts in water management and how the 'wise use of water' had taken a positive data driven collaborative approach; and
- f. Summarised Kent County Councils (KCC) lead position in supporting future water management strategies and infrastructure planning.

3.2. Environment Agency -Managing Water Quality

The Committee received the Environment Agency's presentation:

- a. Highlighted the designated bathing areas across Kent, along with the current monitoring status and the annually published classification criteria used to assess water quality; and
- b. Emphasised the duty of care to inform the public of water quality monitoring results, while noting that not all beaches are officially designated as bathing waters under current regulations.
- c. Bathing water classifications were expanded upon with a particular focus on the impact of Enterococci and Escherichia Coli bacteria.
- d. Improvements in Kents bathing waters had indicated that 92% had met the minimum standard of sufficient. 2024s results showed that 85% had achieved the highest standard of good and excellent.
- e. Sources of pollution and what actions presently and in the future that the Environment Agency would take; and
- f. Discussed the planned actions for 2025 including the additional monitoring of surrounding of impacted areas and Microbial source tracking.
- g. The priority bathing waters of 2025 were named as, St Marys Bay, Littlestone, Dymchurch, Deal and Folkestone.
- h. Members were briefed on the submission process for proposed new bathing waters which included the criteria required for designation under current regulatory frameworks.

3.3 Met Office - Changing Weather Risks

The Committee received a presentation. The contents of presentation included:

- a. An overview of the global average of temperatures from 1850-2024 was provided, with a particular focus on the impact to the United Kingdom during the period of 1961-2020; and
- b. The impact of extreme heat and extreme weather events that had been observed at a global, regional and local level.
- c. Future temperature changes throughout the Summer and Winter were highlighted, with the modelling on 2020-39 and 2060-2079 trajectories being of particular note.
- d. Climate impact on coastal, fluvial and surface water flooding was discussed with supplemental information on the projected precipitation rates of 2020-2039 and 2060-2070 being provided.
- e. Sea level rise and glacial isostatic adjustment impact on the United Kingdom and the regional impact to Kent that could potentially occur during a rise of sea levels.
- f. The increase of wildfires, storm events and destructive infrastructure impacts were discussed; and
- g. Links were provided to the Met office's Climate Data Portal (CDP) and the Local Authority Climate Service (LACS).

4. Committee meeting on 7 July 2025

4.1 Environment agency and Met Office Alerts and warnings and KCC Severe Response Activity

The contents of the presentation included:

- a. The impact of named storm and storm-like events that had occurred in the first part of 2025.
- b. A breakout of the report differentiating KCC, the Environment Agency and Met Office; and
- c. Members agreed on the formal breaking out of the report for partner agencies to attend and present a more tailored response and allow for more robust questioning.

- d. An overview of flood zones 1 and 2 and the recommendation to make the reporting more comprehensive in the specific areas it was to cover.
- e. All Members agreed that all major external partners should be present at November's Committee as July had seen significant flooding in the coastal regions of Kent and a significant amount of water supply impacts throughout the Summer.

5. Committee meeting on 29 October 2025

5.1 Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

The verbal update was presented to the committee:

- a. Explained the role of Kent County Council as the local lead flood authority and its respective areas of authority.
- b. Highlighted the 2024-2034 third local strategy that was built upon past strategies and lessons learnt.
- c. The targets of improving the safety and wellbeing of Kent's residents being a catalyst of the current trajectory of the management strategy.
- d. The Committee discussed the role of Section 19 flood investigations following flooding events, including how the data collected is used to inform future mitigation strategies and improve infrastructure resilience.
- e. The impacts of recent flooding in Headcorn, Swanley, Gravesend, Folkestone, and Snodland were examined in detail and highlighted local challenges and response efforts; and
- f. Discussed the ongoing collaborative efforts with Southern Water, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), and the Environment Agency that had aimed at enhancing flood resilience and water management across Kent. Particular attention was given to the continued work with the National Flood Forum (NFF), which had played a key role in community engagement and providing support for flood impacted areas.

5.2 South East Water - Overview of Services

South East Water presented to the committee an overview of services:

- a. Provided the new Members an overview of South East Water's current functions throughout Kent.
- b. Discussed the water resource management plan for 2025-2030 and the adaptive planning that would be used to deliver critical resources.

- c. Addressed the current supply-demand balance for water resources in Kent and outlined the key challenges anticipated in the coming years.
- d. Acknowledged concerns on current hosepipe bans, water extraction and the role of Temporary use Bans (TUBs); and
- e. The actions in place to reduce leaks and the discovery of leaks incorporating the response time goals, costs and technologies that had been utilised to aid in bringing repair timeframes down.
- f. Presenters provided a detailed brief on South East Waters response to water supply impacts that had occurred in Herne Bay, Whitstable and Sea salter during the period of July 1-8th. This included a breakdown of the response, lesson learnt and aspects of compensation.
- g. Future investments, the priority register, compensation arrangements and the enhancement expenditure for 2025-2030 for the entirety of Kent were presented and discussed.

5.3 Southern Water - Clean Rivers and Sea Taskforce

Southern Water presented to the Members an introduction to the Clean Rivers and Sea Taskforce:

- a. Discussed the history of the Clean Rivers and Sea Taskforce since its establishment in 2021.
- b. Storm overflows, the optimisation of infrastructure, fixing illegal connections and the installation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as current and future goals were noted.
- c. The Kent storm overflow reduction plan for 2025-30 was introduced to Members.
- d. The 2027 regulatory targets were presented and would focus particularly on improving water quality in shellfish waters, environmentally sensitive sites, and bathing waters
- e. Importance of the partnership of southern water and KCC was highlighted with a particular focus on joint Kent Highways SuDS programme. The collaboration would aim to enhance surface water management, reduce flood risk, and integrate sustainable infrastructure solutions across the county's road network.
- f. The Committee acknowledged recent successes in Kent, including the installation of SuDS in Margate, infrastructure improvements at Whitstable Library, and the complex rerouting of surface water in Faversham. These projects were highlighted as examples of effective collaboration and technical innovation in managing flood risk and enhancing local resilience; and
- g. The continued success of Centaur AI technology in managing flow through automated penstock floodgates. Its deployment would contribute to a predicted 20% reduction in spills at Tankerton Circus and a 30% reduction

at Diamond Road, both in Whitstable. These outcomes had demonstrated the effectiveness of smart infrastructure in enhancing flood resilience and environmental protection.

- h. Future investments of £1.5 billion to reduce storm overflows between 2025-35 and the prioritising of green solutions with the continued optimisation of existing assets closed out the presentation.

5.4 Environment Agency - Introduction of Services

The Environment Agency presented and introduction of services that captured:

- a. Provided Members with a general overview of the Environment Agency's role and functions, including its responsibilities in flood risk management, environmental regulation, water quality monitoring, and supporting sustainable development across Kent.
- b. Discussed the establishment of the Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCC) and the work undertaken with partners to address flood and coastal erosion risk management; and
- c. The role of the Volunteer Community Flood Wardens (VCW) and the support they can provide before, during and after flood events, and the awareness provided for Kents communities.
- d. A detailed look at the Leigh Expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme highlighted the £36 million pound partnership project to reduce flood risk to over 1800 homes and 575 non-residential properties; and how
- e. The Property Flood Resilience (PFR) was to target a number of properties throughout Kent and help strengthen flood awareness in those impacted communities.
- f. The importance of River Basin Management Plans in shaping regional water quality and ecological outcomes. Members also discussed the broader scope of the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP), which outlined environmental improvement commitments by water companies and included measures to reduce pollution, enhance biodiversity, and support long-term sustainability across Kent's water systems.
- g. Regulatory oversight discussions captured the Environment Agency's role in managing water abstraction, effluent discharges, and agricultural runoff. Members were briefed on how the agency enforces compliance, monitors environmental impacts, and supports sustainable water resource management across the county.
- h. The Environment Agency partnership with KCC would continue to focus on key aspects that impact the residents of Kent.

5.5 KCC Severe Weather Response

The report presented to Committee included

- a. An update on the impacts of weather from the July to September Periods was presented; and
- b. Discussed the 12 weather alerts that occurred between July and September. Ten of which comprised of Thunderstorm (6), Heath Health (2), Wind Warning (1) and Fog Warning (1).
- c. The Committee reviewed three recent test events of the Thames Barrier that had been undertaken as part of its routine operational readiness checks and discussed the implications of the barrier's operation for Kent as a county.
- d. In addition, Members were briefed on the Area Incident Teams (AIT) response actions during minor flood events, highlighting their rapid deployment, coordination with local authorities and effectiveness in mitigating impacts across vulnerable areas.
- e. Future concerns and KCC's role in responding to severe weather events were raised by Members.

6. Future activities

- 6.1 The Committee will continue to discuss areas of concern raised by the electorate. Members will also receive regular updates from external agencies, along with reports on KCC's internal responses to severe weather and be briefed on the ongoing measures taken to mitigate flood impacts. Engagement with District and Borough Councils would be further strengthened, as the Committee welcomes the ongoing involvement of these key partners.
- 6.2 The Committee's next meeting is scheduled for 4 March 2026, with planned business including but not limited to:
 - Southern Water – Investment 2025-30 and Kent initiatives
 - Southern Water – Overview of the Installation of Sustainable Drainage (SuDs)
 - Environment Agency – How water quality is managed
 - Affinity Water – Water Resources Management Plan
 - Environment Agency River Basin Management Plans
 - (KCC) Drains Update
 - Role of Internal Drainage Boards updated for 2026 (IDBs)
 - Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee will continue to fulfil its overview and scrutiny functions. A concerted effort has been made to enhance the agenda, ensuring that regular reports are presented to the Committee to better inform and educate Members and guests.

- 7.2 The Committee's role will continue to focus on addressing the threat of flooding and severe weather events that impact Kent's communities and infrastructure.

8. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee Annual Report.

9. Background Documents

None

10. Contact Details

Wayne Chapman
Chairman, Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee
Wayne.chapman@kent.gov.uk

James Willis
Democratic Services Officer
03000 417831
James.willis@kent.gov.uk