**EAST KENT CATCHMENT IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP**

**Stour Catchment Plan**

**last update July 2021**

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**Foreword**

The Stour Catchment in East Kent includes the River Stour and all its tributaries, as well as the River Dour, and the Oyster Coast Brooks.

Although there is no statutory requirement to produce a Catchment Plan, the East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership felt it would help to outline why the Partnership has been formed, to set out why the rivers of East Kent are not meeting environmental requirements and to summarise the solutions and work in progress.

The Stour Catchment Summary within the South East River Basin Management Plan covers much more detail of the background of the issues and possible solutions in the catchment so this has not been repeated in this document.

The Partnership has Terms of Reference and individual Waterbody Improvement Plans (WIPs) for the 20 river waterbodies. Therefore this plan brings together existing documents to produce a ‘summary’ plan. The WIPs outline measures for each river waterbody and together they form a plan for the whole catchment. Appendix D lists all active projects - Summary Ongoing and Future Projects.

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Figure 1 The Stour Management Catchment showing the Operational Catchments within it

**Introduction**

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) takes an integrated approach to managing our waters; looking at the water within the wider ecosystem and taking into account the movement of water through the hydrological cycle. It requires EU Member States to put in place River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs).

Each RBMP must apply to a “River Basin District (RBD)”. The river basin planning process involves setting environmental objectives for all groundwater and surface waters (including estuaries and coastal waters) within the RBD, and devising Programmes of Measures (PoM) to meet those objectives.

Each RBD is sub-divided into Management Catchments. There are 87 catchments across England (plus 6 cross-border catchments with Wales). The RBD that includes the Stour Catchment is the South East RBD.

As well as integration of water management issues, implementation of the WFD requires that other environmental priorities, economic considerations and social issues are considered when setting water management objectives. This is in line with Ministerial objectives of ensuring that the WFD is implemented cost-effectively, takes account of the needs and interests of different stakeholders and the need for sustainable development.

Stakeholder engagement and involvement in water management is one of the main themes of the WFD. Ensuring and enabling this participation and influence should be an integral part of the river basin planning process.

The WFD provides an overarching framework to protect and improve the aquatic environment through greater integration between water and land management, and to balance this with other environmental, economic and social priorities when setting environmental objectives. To do this, close co-operation between public, private and civil society organisations - whose activities and interests may inform or be affected by the RBMPs - will be necessary.

Catchment partnerships have been developed across England and Wales. These have been established to support river basin planning and delivery. They provide the more localised focus for engagement that is needed to support river basin planning. They provide an important opportunity to:

• understand the views of stakeholders, their priorities and the local evidence they can provide

• make links between plans at the river basin district scale and projects to deliver improvements at an Operational Catchment scale

In England, the policy framework has been developed to encourage the wider adoption of an integrated Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) to improve the quality of our water environment and secure synergies with other environmental objectives, such as halting biodiversity loss.

**The Stour Catchment**

The Stour Catchment in East Kent includes the River Stour, that rises from chalk springs at Lenham to West Stourmouth, and all its tributaries, as well as the River Dour, the North and South Streams, watercourses associated with the marshes around the Isle of Thanet and the Oyster Coast Brooks discharging into the North Sea.

The landscape is varied; from the rolling chalk hills of the North Downs to the flat marshes around Thanet. It is predominantly a rural catchment; agriculture is an important local industry and has an impact on water quality and availability. The catchment also supports a number of urban settlements including the historic city of Canterbury, the thriving port of Dover, the expanding town of Ashford and the coastal resorts of Thanet, Herne Bay and Whitstable.

Although the catchment appears quite natural, man has intervened in many ways over the years: flood management, drainage, agriculture, mining, milling, navigation, abstraction and urbanisation have all shaped the water environment.

East Kent is one of the driest parts of the country. Groundwater supplies 80% of the area’s drinking water and also provides important base-flow to the river systems. The groundwater quality across the catchment is at poor status, but the water is treated so there is no risk to drinking water supply. Water-use is among the highest in the country. The link between water use, disposal and the wider aquatic environment cannot be overstated.

**Catchment Summary**

The Stour Management catchment includes river waterbodies, lake waterbodies, estuarine and coastal waterbodies, as well as groundwater bodies.

In 2009 the Stour catchment was initially divided up into 26 river waterbodies, 5 lakes, 3 estuaries and coastal waters and 4 groundwater bodies. Under Cycle 2 the number of waterbodies changes as follows: 20 river waterbodies, 5 lakes, 3 estuaries and coastal waters and 4 groundwater bodies. In addition to the change in overall numbers, some waterbody boundaries change.

Each waterbody is given a WFD status based on the most recent investigations (2019) and using the Cycle 2 boundaries:

Surface waterbodies (25):

Bad 2; Poor 4; Moderate 17; Good 2 and High 0.

Estuaries and coastal waters (3)

Bad 0; Poor 1; Moderate 2; Good 0 and High 0.

Groundwater bodies (4)

Quality: Poor 3, Good: 1

Quantity: Poor 4, Good: 0

**Key Issues in the Stour Catchment**

**River waterbodies:**

* Low fish populations, due to structures, such as weirs and dams, which obstruct fish migration.
* High phosphate levels due to point-source discharges from wastewater treatment works, and diffuse run-off from urban areas and agriculture.
* Low flows due to abstraction for public supply, commerce and agriculture.
* Modifications to natural conditions due to human intervention, such as flood risk management, milling and urbanisation.

**Tidal and coastal waters:**

* Discharges from coastal wastewater treatment works, and diffuse run-off from urban resort towns and agriculture.
* High levels of dissolved inorganic nitrogen, but no evidence of eutrophication.
* Flood defences along the coast and estuary have modified much of the area.
* Invasive species such as ‘Carpet Sea-squirt’ are a growing threat around the North Kent coast.
* Partnership working to monitor and improve local bathing and shellfish waters.

**Groundwater:**

* Elevated levels of nitrate across the catchment.
* Impact on groundwater from historic mining activities.
* Localised impact of pesticides from many uses including agricultural, highways and amenity.
* Point source pollution, for example petrol filling stations, domestic oil tanks and industrial sites.

**Pathway to Good (P2G)**

Across the catchment a number of projects, activities and initiatives have been identified which will help us to achieve good status.

* Reduce phosphate from treated wastewater discharges.
* Catchment Sensitive Farming to tackle diffuse pollution, promote winter storage schemes and enhance riparian habitats.
* Improve fish passage at mills, weirs and other obstructions.
* Drive down domestic and commercial water use.
* Pollution prevention measures at industrial areas.
* Wide-scale use of sustainable drainage in new development.
* Tackle misconnections.
* In-channel and riparian habitat enhancements.
* Creation of flood meadows.
* Remove non-native invasive species.
* Promote ‘Love your River’ initiatives.
* Educate and inform user groups.
* Use sensitive management practices.
* Remediation of land and groundwater at contaminated brownfield sites.
* Raise awareness of groundwater.

More detail on individual projects is included in the Waterbody Improvement Plans (WIPs).

**The East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership**

**Background**

In East Kent, public, private and third-sector organisations have a history of working closely together, including in the water sector. As early as 2000, many organisations came together to undertake a capacity assessment for the growth town of Ashford, where water was seen as a potential constraint to growth. It was recognised early on that the growth of Ashford was likely to have impacts for the whole of East Kent.

From these early beginnings a steering group was formed – the Ashford Water Group (AWG) - to oversee the production of the Ashford Integrated Water Management Study (AIWMS) – one of the first of such studies to be completed in the country. This led to the Ashford Water Management Strategy which set priorities for the water environment. The strategy was translated into actions via Water Action Plans (WAPs) which set the agenda for 5 year time horizons. The first WAP covered the years 2006 to 2011. The AWG monitored the delivery of the actions in the WAP. It should be noted that this process pre-dated the requirements of the WFD which were not defined locally until the publication of the Cycle1 RBMPs in 2009.

With the emergence of WFD, the AWG expanded to cover the whole of East Kent by bringing in much wider representation. Ultimately this became the East Kent Catchment Improvement Group (CIG), initiated and administered by the Environment Agency, the first meeting being in August 2011. A core group of the AWG, to oversee the delivery local activities in Ashford, remained in place. This set the model for working: the CIG covering the Management Catchment, and more local groups working at a sub-catchment (Operational Catchment) scale.

One of the early decisions of the CIG was to be called the ‘East Kent CIG’ rather than the ‘Stour CIG’ as this better reflected the geographic coverage of the group which included the Dour and Oyster Coast Brooks, neither of which were in the Stour catchment.

In the winter 2013/14 Defra made funds available to develop partnerships led by third party organisations. The East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnership (CIP) was formed, superseding the CIG.

A partnership between the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) – who chair the CIP - and the South East Rivers Trust (SERT) was formed in 2013 which helped to deliver the Defra funding, which was only made available to Trusts. The SERT adds valuable knowledge and experience to the CIP.

The East Kent CIP brings together partners (co-deliverers) to work collaboratively, applying the CaBA, to improve the health of surface and ground waterbodies. **It builds on the excellent partnership working already underway in our area.** The collective Strategic Vision (Mission Statement) of the Partnership is:

We will work together to ensure the health (quality) of waterbodies (surface and ground) in East Kent is continually improved so that by 2027 they are all ‘**Good**’ status / potential as required by the Water Framework Directive. In the short term, we will collaborate to ensure that none of our rivers are ‘**Bad**’ status / potential by 2022.

The stated aim of the East Kent CIP is to improve the local water environment so that there are multiple benefits for society including:

* more biodiversity through improving habitat and controlling invasive species;
* safeguarded water resources – surface and ground water, quantity and quality;
* less flood risk;
* sustainable farming;
* better tourism and recreation opportunities, such as access, fishing, boating leading to improvements in health and wellbeing;
* reducing pollution in rivers, on the coast and beaches;
* community engagement leading to more knowledgeable, responsible, healthier communities;
* and a better chance to adapt to climate change.

This makes economic sense and the partnership wants to involve local organisations, communities and businesses in the identification of realistic, sustainable solutions, securing funding and carrying out agreed actions.

The CIP will look for long term self-sustaining funding for the activity of the partnership.

**Geographic coverage**



The WFD Management Catchment covered by this partnership is the Stour Catchment, within the South East River Basin District. The Management Catchment is sub-divided into seven Operational Catchments:

1. Upper Stour
2. Lower Stour, including lakes
3. Little Stour and River Wingham
4. North and South Streams
5. Stour Marshes
6. River Dour
7. Oyster Coast Brooks

This incorporates (parts of) Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Maidstone, Shepway, Swale and Thanet local council areas. Kent County Council are the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for the catchment.

**Governance**

The East Kent CIP is chaired by the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) with support from the Environment Agency’s Catchment Co-ordinator and the South East Rivers Trust (SERT).

The purpose of the East Kent CIP is to secure the Strategic Vision for the catchment and to ensure it is developed and owned by key co-deliverers and local people. The Vision should underpin, and be integral to, all aspects of service delivery across the catchment.

**Membership**

The East Kent CIP is intended to operate strategically across the whole Management Catchment. It is therefore intended that those organisations that have a strategic over-sight of the catchment are involved at this level. This is also an efficient way of working as it reduces the need for these organisations to attend Operational Catchment groups or even more local interest groups.

It is recommended that local councils are represented on the CIP even though they will only have an interest in part of the Management Catchment. This will demonstrate that they are committed to the Duty to Co-operate and it also enables the sharing of lessons learned.

Ideally each of the Operational Catchments would have representation on the CIP. Furthermore, it would be good if all Sectors were represented. Lastly, we would wish at least one member of the CIP to also be a representative on the South East River Basin District Panel.

For a list of organisations represented on the East Kent CIP see Appendix A.

**Ways of working**

## The CIP will meet quarterly - though additional meetings may be arranged as necessary. It is recognised that not all representatives will be able to attend every meeting. It is further recognised that local authorities – in particular - may cover more than one CIP and that they may not be able to be represented on each one.

The CIP provides a ‘line-of-sight’ between the South East River Basin Liaison Panel and Operational Catchment groups.

Specifically the CIP will:

* input into the Kentish Stour Catchment Summary for the South East River Basin Management Plan;
* steer, advise and assist groups working at an Operational Catchment scale (or smaller) to ensure their activities contribute to WFD objectives; whilst at the same time recognising their activities / priorities are likely to be wider than those of the CIP. For this reason ‘community groups’ are likely to be represented at an Operational level rather than on the CIP. A list of Operational Catchment Groups is included at Appendix B;
* enable partner organisations to pool their resources and prioritise activities for the most effective delivery;
* lobby to secure funding for projects and activities, develop necessary policies, and work to overcome institutional barriers;
* involve stakeholders in setting priorities, ensuring that a balance is maintained between different interest groups and that compliance with statutory requirements is not compromised;
* raise awareness of impacts that the activities of other public bodies can have on the water environment;
* ensure the engagement of public bodies in river basin planning, particularly local planning authorities in order to take account of the sustainable development needs, through the inclusion of WFD considerations in public bodies’ plans, policies, guidance, appraisal systems and casework decisions;
* set up sub-groups (task / finish) as required to concentrate on specific issues or projects;
* undertake initiatives to address Management Catchment-wide issues, such as water efficiency, abstraction, mis-connections.
* monitor and report on the status of waterbodies in East Kent;
* promote the Management Catchment through effective communications.

**Operational Catchments**

It is at an Operational Catchment level that most activities to improve waterbodies will be undertaken. It is intended that each Operational Catchment will have its own partnership arrangements to determine priorities and oversee improvement measures. It is at this scale that we hope to see most community involvement. A list of Operational Catchment groups is shown at Appendix B.

**Waterbody Improvement Plans (WIPs)**

WIPs have been prepared for each river surface waterbody in East Kent. These contain key information on the waterbody, including a timeline of the WFD status. A commentary sets the context for the waterbody in terms of geography, history and land-use. The reasons for not achieving good status are outlined along with what we need to do to get to good status (Pathway to Good (P2G)).

A Tracker is included which lists projects: completed, underway and proposed.

The WIPS will be revised at regular intervals to provide a ‘snapshot’ of the waterbody at that time.

**A summary of what we plan to do in each Operational Catchment in approximate order of priority:**

Upper Stour

* Reduce phosphate from treated wastewater discharges.
* Work with agricultural sector on diffuse pollutants / riparian habitat enhancements.
* Improve fish passage at mills and other obstructions (eg Wye, Pledges, Buxford, Sevington).
* Flow compliance schemes at WwTW.
* Further habitat improvements at Godinton Park.
* New investigations to improve confidence in classification, especially for fish.
* Drive down domestic and commercial water use.
* Ensure development has a positive impact – for instance through wide-scale sustainable drainage, rain gardens, river enhancement etc.
* Address surface water run-off issues from industrial estates.
* Implement ‘Our Stour’ river character area projects through Ashford.
* Carry out in-channel and bankside enhancements, including modifying maintenance regime.
* Ensure discharges from private sewage treatment plant are compliant.
* Ensure highway’s surface water balancing features are appropriately maintained.
* Tackle non-native invasive species.
* River and floodplain restoration associated with Cheesemans Green.
* Willesborough Dykes Nature Park river and floodplain enhancements.
* Work with transport sector to ensure run-off from the strategic road and rail network does not have a negative impact.
* Investigate and address misconnections and operation of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO) (eg South Willesborough and Aylesford Green).
* Litter picking, tackling invasive species, and other community projects.
* Enhancement works within the green corridor to reduce bank erosion and siltation.
* Open up the river by removing culverting (eg Kennington).
* Conningbrook Park riverside and in-channel improvements.
* Water meadow creation (eg Givaudan, South Park and Queen Mothers Park).
* Erosion protection and in-channel improvements at Little Burton.
* Influence Neighbourhood Plans at Wye and Boughton Aluph.
* Ulley Stream improvements.

Lower Stour, including lakes

* In-channel improvements at Godmersham, Olantigh and Chartham, including better fish passage.
* Implement recommendations of KSCP’s ‘The River Stour & Floodplain Restoration Plan – Shalmsford Street to A2’.
* Stewardship schemes at Olantigh and Godmersham.
* Tackle misconnections in Wye.
* Habitat improvements at Hambrook Marsh.
* Drive down domestic and commercial water use.
* Pollution prevention at industrial sites.
* Sensitive flood risk management maintenance (weed cutting).
* Catchment Sensitive Farming: diffuse pollutants / riparian habitat enhancements / reduce abstraction and encourage winter storage.
* Removal of weirs on Whitehall Dyke.
* Investigate and rectify outflow from septic tanks and pumping station failures.
* Reshaping of river bank at Gorse Meadow Farm.
* Removal / modification of concrete channel (Whitehall Road / Faulkeners Lane).
* Removal of non-native invasive species.
* Riverbank re-profiling.
* Tree-thinning, tree planting, woody debris.
* Improvements at Canterbury and Herne Bay (Maystreet) WwTW.
* Improve fish passage through Canterbury City Centre, and tackle illegal angling and predation.
* Mitigation measures to ‘naturalise’ hard engineered river banks.
* Habitat improvements through city centre.
* Tackle diffuse urban pollution through city centre – including mis-connections.
* Ensure urban growth has positive impact – for instance through wide-scale sustainable drainage.
* Encourage ‘Love Your River’ initiatives via ‘Friends of’ groups.
* Improve fish passage at water level control structures
* De-silt channel and reduce bank poaching on Lampen Stream.
* In-channel improvements to improve hydro-morphology (Lampen Stream).
* Investigate and address potential sewage pollution from Stodmarsh PS.
* Implement Improvement Plans for lakes.
* Inform landowners and the public about beavers which are present in the Lower Catchment.

Little Stour and River Wingham

* P stripping at Dambridge WwTW.
* Improve fish passage at Stourmouth Pumping Station and at mills.
* Improve flow characteristics through channel re-profiling (2-stage channels).
* Trunk sewer review (possibly leaking into base-flow) River Wingham.
* Septic tank inspection and remediation (eg Ash).
* Catchment Sensitive Farming – particularly silt management and winter storage to reduce summer abstraction.
* Pollution prevention visits to Ash industrial sites.
* Remove / replace physical obstructions – farm bridges / culverts
* Drive down domestic and commercial water use.
* River habitat improvements and sensitive river management.
* Reduce exfiltration from foul sewerage system in Nailbourne valley.
* Seaton Weir improvements.
* Inform landowners and the public about beavers which are present in the Lower Catchment.

North and South Streams

* Address fish passage at control structures and pumping stations.
* Specific fish habitat improvements.
* Control / reduce Chloride and other contaminants associated with the large spoil heap at Fowlmead.
* Reduce incidents of sewage pollution.
* Oil storage pollution prevention campaign.
* Generic habitat creation and improvements.
* Enhance the visual interest of drainage channels by restoring grasses and reeds.
* Restore the ecological diversity of ditches by sensitive management.
* Create ecologically rich wetland / marsh / grasslands.
* Restore land patterns governed by historic sea defences and land drainage, noting the hierarchy of natural drainage channels and the subsequent man-made reclamation.
* Catchment Sensitive Farming, including winter storage to reduce summer abstraction; buffer strips.
* Drive down domestic and commercial water use.
* De-silt / silt control measures.
* Control / eradication of non-native invasive plant species.
* Manage abstractions at a sustainable level.
* Manage discharges from Betteshanger Sustainable Park.
* Inform landowners and the public about beavers which are present in the Lower Catchment.

Stour Marshes

* Mitigation measures to improve fish / eel passage at water control structures, including tidal outfalls.
* Encourage winter storage schemes for agriculture.
* Promote agri-environment schemes to reduce nutrients, such as buffer strips.
* Drive down domestic and commercial water use.
* Phosphate stripping at Maystreet WwTW.
* Increase treatment / dilution of effluent in Hogwell Sewer through winter storage / effluent polishing (reedbeds / willow coppicing).
* Rationalise field accesses and boundaries to reduce the amount of culverts. Inform landowners and the public about beavers which are present in the Lower Catchment.

River Dour

* Implement Dour Management Plan.
* Address fish passage at weirs / mill structures.
* Replace artificial banks with natural ones (eg Buckland Mill).
* Habitat improvements.
* De-culverting as opportunities arise.
* Silt removal / management.
* Address urban run-off issues, including misconnections.
* Drive down domestic and commercial water use.
* Regular river clean-ups.
* Educate riparian owners.
* Angling education and enforcement.
* Catchment sensitive farming initiatives.
* Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens restoration.
* Eradicate non-native invasive species.

Oyster Coast Brooks

* Work with SWS to address issues at Swalecliffe WwTW.
* Tackle nutrient inputs from rural catchment.
* Pollution prevention at industrial sites.
* Litter picking and community projects.
* Enhancement works to reduce bank erosion and siltation.
* Implement more sensitive, flood risk maintenance plan.
* Drive down domestic and commercial water use.
* Catchment Sensitive Farming.
* Remove obstructions to fish passage.
* Improve quality of highway run-off.

**APPENDIX A**

List of Organisations represented on the East Kent CIP:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Sector | Operational Catchments |
| Affinity Water | Water industry | Upper StourLittle Stour and River WinghamNorth & South Streams |
| Ashford Borough Council | Local Authority | Upper StourLower Stour |
| Bramley Associates | Nature Conservation | All |
| Canterbury City Council | Local Authority | Lower StourLittle Stour and River WinghamStour MarshesOyster Coast Brooks |
| Canterbury Riverside Group | Community | Lower Stour |
| Christchurch University | Academic | All |
| Creative Consulting Engineers | Water Industry | All |
| Dover District Council | Local Authority | North & South StreamsDour |
| Dover Society | Community | Dour |
| Environment Agency | Government | All |
| Farmers | Agriculture | All |
| Funder Films | Community | All |
| Kent Bat Group | Nature conservation | All |
| Kent County Council | Local Authority | All |
| Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership | Nature conservation/community | All |
| Kent Wildfowling and Conservation Association | Shooting/nature conservation | Upper/Lower Stour |
| Kent Wildlife Trust | Nature conservation | All |
| Little Stour & Nailbourne River Management Group | Community | Little Stour and River Wingham |
| National Farmers Union | Agriculture | All |
| Natural England | Government | All |
| River Stour Riverfly Monitoring Initiative Group/Stour Fisheries Consultation Group | Angling / Nature conservation | Upper StourLower StourLittle Stour and River WinghamStour Marshes |
| River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board | Drainage | All |
| Royal Society for the Protection of Birds | Nature conservation | All |
| South East Rivers Trust | Angling / Nature conservation | All |
| South East Water | Water industry | All |
| Southern Water | Water industry | All |
| Stour Fisheries Association | Angling | Upper StourLower Stour |
| White Cliffs Countryside Partnership | Nature conservation/community | DourNorth and South Streams |
| Wild Trout Trust | Angling | All |
|  |  |  |

**APPENDIX B**

List of Operational Catchment groups:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Operational Catchment** | **Group** | **Status** |
| Upper Stour | Ashford Water Group  | Active – lacks community involvement |
| Lower Stour (part) | Canterbury Riverside Group  | Active |
| Lower Stour Lakes | Friends of Stodmarsh | ? |
| Lakes Science Group | ? |
| Dour | Dour Partnership | Active |
| Little Stour and River Wingham | Little Stour and Nailbourne River Management Group | Active |
| Oyster Coast Brooks | Oyster Coast Partnership |  |
| North & South Streams |  |  |
| Stour Marshes |  | IDB agreed to lead |

**APPENDIX C**

Overall Waterbody Classifications. Listed as a separate Doc

**Appendix D**

Summary Ongoing and Future Projects. Listed as a separate Doc