

## **WARD MEMBERS REPORT TO SMEETH PARISH COUNCIL MAY 2026**

### **UPDATE ON NUTRIENT NEUTRALITY AND NUTRIENT CREDIT SCHEMES**

#### **Stour Environmental Credits (SEC)**

SEC, a joint venture company set up by Ashford Borough Council and Canterbury City Council in 2024, has now begun issuing nutrient credits. This will allow new homes and mixed-use developments across the Stour catchment that have previously been delayed by nutrient neutrality rules to progress.

This initial mitigation scheme is expected to support the delivery of more than 1,500 new homes, with an initial credit release already enabling up to 30 dwellings to progress. Further credits will be released on a regular basis as existing schemes progress, and new environmental mitigation projects are explored. The company is already working with developers, landowners and other stakeholders to expand the supply of credits over time, helping ensure the scheme can respond to future housing need across the catchment.

#### **Stodmarsh Stream Enhancement Scheme (SSES)**

Approval has also been granted for a major new environmental scheme in the Stour catchment which is running in tandem with SEC. The Stodmarsh Stream Enhancement Scheme, delivered by Greenshank Environmental in partnership with Dace Environmental, is one of the UK's largest nature-based nutrient neutrality and nutrient mitigation projects.

Spread across five sites and more than 2.5 kilometres of small watercourses, the scheme uses natural interventions to reduce the levels of nitrogen and phosphorus entering the River Stour before it reaches the protected Stodmarsh wetlands.

SSES will restore heavily managed agricultural ditches into more natural streams that slow the flow of water and allow nutrients to be filtered out. This reduces pollution in the catchment while generating the credits needed to support new development. The scheme requires only narrow strips alongside existing ditches, allowing surrounding farmland to remain in production. It will also support local wildlife and help manage both drought and heavy rain by holding more water in the landscape. The mitigation work is carried out by landowners from the proceeds generated by the sale of environmental credits.

The work is secured for more than 80 years to ensure long-term environmental benefit and certainty for local planning authorities and developers.

The first phase of the scheme has now received approval and is projected to unlock between 3,000 and 5,000 homes across Ashford, Canterbury and the wider River Stour catchment. A second phase is expected to support a further 3,000 homes, bringing the total potential to up to 8,000 homes over the two phases.

## **PRESERVATION OF HERITAGE ASSETS**

There has been much publicity recently, particularly on social media, regarding the future of the Mark IV Tank in the town centre. Regrettably this publicity is based on untrue speculation rather than fact.

At the February Cabinet meeting of Ashford Borough Council, the Leader made a statement confirming that a reserve fund of £1m towards the future maintenance of listed heritage assets owned by the Council, including the tank, would be created. Councillors will then be able to decide which listed assets need to be prioritised and a working group will then decide which projects are to be funded, therefore ensuring that the limited resources can be targeted at those assets that provide the best outcomes for stakeholders.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Leader has clarified the position by confirming there are no proposals to move the tank out of the town and at this stage none are even being considered. A list of heritage assets in need of preservation, including the tank, will be put to the working group for consideration during the summer. Potential options will then be considered by councillors towards the end of the year before the public are consulted for their say on the future of the various assets.

**Cllr Simon Betty**

**Ward Member for Bircholt**