

The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board

Annual Update – April 2018

Board Membership

The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board is a local flood risk management authority. Its primary functions are land drainage, flood risk and water level management. However, it also has a duty to conserve and promote biodiversity. The Board is funded by Drainage Rates paid by agricultural landowners within the Board's drainage district, and Special Levies on Local Councils (Ashford BC, Canterbury CC, Dover DC, Shepway DC & Thanet DC). The Board is made up of Elected Members (2018 is an election year – details of the coming election will be placed on the Board's website in the coming months) and Appointed Members, currently as follows:

Elected Members

Mr P S Dunn – Ash Levels
Mr P N Howard – Ashford
Ms G Wyant – Canterbury, Fordwich & Ickham
Mr M J G Tapp (**Chairman**) – Chislet North
Mr M P Wilkinson – Chislet South
Mr D M Botting – General Valleys
Mr G R Steed (**Deputy Vice Chairman**) – Lydden
Mr P E Dyas – Minster
Mr J F E Smith – Wye

Appointed Members

Cllr M J Burgess – ABC
Cllr A Hicks – ABC
Cllr M Martin – ABC
Cllr P J F Sims – ABC
Cllr D O Smith – ABC
Mr A D Linfoot OBE (**Vice Chairman**) - CCC
Mr L Woollorton – CCC
Cllr M D Conolly – DDC
Cllr M Ovenden – DDC
Cllr H Stummer-Schmertzling – TDC
Mr P Williams (Co-opted Member) – Natural England

Peter Dowling is the Board's Clerk & Engineer (pete.dowling@riverstouridb.org.uk), Ana Eastwood is the Board's Finance & Rating Officer (ana.eastwood@riverstouridb.org.uk) and James Dilnot is the Engineering Assistant (james.dilnot@riverstouridb.org.uk) who delivers the Board's routine maintenance activities. The Board is keen to be made aware of any drainage and flooding issues throughout its district and Board Members and staff can be contacted via the Board's office (34 Gordon Road, Canterbury CT1 3PW, 01227 462377) or at enquiries@riverstouridb.org.uk.

The Board meets 4 times each year. This year's meeting dates and locations are as follows:

- 17 May 2018 – 2pm at the Swan Centre, Cudworth Road, Ashford
- 2 August 2018 – 2pm at Ashford Borough Council's offices
- 8 November 2018 – 2pm at Canterbury City Council's offices
- 7 February 2019 – 2pm at Dover District Council's offices (*provisional*)

The above meetings are open to the public but prior notice of attendance to the Board's Clerk & Engineer is always appreciated to ensure adequate seating etc.

Operational Activities

The IDB's main activity is the routine maintenance of IDB designated watercourses to maintain channel flow capacities for the purpose of drainage and reduced local flood risk and to allow appropriate water level management. In 2017 approx. 180km of in-channel weed cutting was carried out; 13km of watercourses de-silted (Buxford Dyke, Wademarsh Stream, Elmstone Stream, Stourmouth Stream, Butterfly Cottage Lead Dyke, Woodnesborough Road Dyke, Ware Lead Dyke, Sheriffs Court Dyke North, Sheriffs Court Dyke South, Upper Penfield Sewer, Pole Bay Lead Dykes (East & West)); spoil from the 2016 de-silting programme was levelled; and tree/shrub maintenance was carried out on a number of watercourses. In addition to this the Board has continued to manage water levels across its district, maintaining water level management structures and clearing obstructions as necessary, particularly prior to and during periods of heavy rainfall, but also to retain water during dryer periods. More water level gauge-boards have been installed on the Lower Stour Marshes to improve the efficiency of water level management. Shaun Revell is the Board's Water Level Controller (shaun.revell@riverstouridb.org.uk).

Public Sector Cooperation Agreements

The IDB continues to work closely with the Environment Agency to deliver a coordinated programme of river maintenance, through a Public Sector Cooperation Agreement (PSCA). In 2017 approx. 64km of Main Rivers were weed cut under this agreement and approx. 10km of Main Rivers de-silted on behalf of the EA. The IDB has continued to manage all water levels (on Main River and IDB watercourses) under the PSCA and in close cooperation with local EA staff. The IDB also continues to maintain Matthews

Close Dyke in Middle Deal, on behalf of Dover District Council under another PSCA, and the occurrence of flooding from this watercourse has been very much reduced.

Planning and Consenting

As well as its operational activities, the Board comments on planning applications which could affect drainage and flood risk. Good working relationships have been developed with local planning authorities, KCC in particular which is the Lead Local Flood Authority. All landowners and developers should be aware that the Board's formal prior written consent is required for any proposed works which could affect any ordinary watercourse in its district (excluding Main River, as these are managed by the Environment Agency). This is in accordance with Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 and the Board's own Byelaws, which can be viewed on its website: www.riverstouridb.org.uk. The Board is always happy to advise on proposed works which may affect any watercourse, which helps to minimise the need for formal and sometimes costly enforcement action.

Biodiversity Action Plan

Work has continued in relation to the delivery of the Board's BAP, which was reviewed and updated in 2015. Site specific maintenance standards have been developed for all IDB maintained watercourses, which aim to retain and enhance issues of particular ecological interest and also to manage issues of concern, and these will continue to be implemented. A copy of the BAP is available on the Board's website.

The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) has helped to carry out some minor enhancements on Sturry Road Dyke, where debris was collected, overhanging vegetation was cut back, and wetland plants planted, and on Port Rill at Wingham which flows through woodland and had become over-widened, sluggish and silty over the years. Pioneering work was carried out to improve access and the channel was desilted. To maintain a more natural and healthy ecosystem some of the removed wood was fixed to the channel banks at a low level and the channel is already looking healthier due to faster flows. Later in the year, when the channel had stabilised, the KSCP installed small bundles of brushwood which traps silt in the channel edges. This work is helping to create a cleaner and faster flowing watercourse, gravels have been exposed and fish have returned to this watercourse for the first time in years.

Unfortunately, not all BAP work has been enhancements, as we have been dealing with a serious outbreak of Parrot's Feather, an invasive weed which spreads rapidly and completely fills the watercourse channel, with an obvious impact on drainage and flood risk. The Board's maintenance contractor, Rhino Plant, and the KSCP carried out a rigorous mechanical weed cut with a thorough manual clearance of the problem weed from the marginal fringes. Initial results are very encouraging, but the complete eradication of this invasive weed is expected to take a lot more work over a number of years.

Rationalisation of the Main River Network Project (RMRN)

The Stour IDB is still involved in a pilot project looking at the possible re-designation of some low-risk Main Rivers to IDB control (a process known as de-maining) to help deliver the levels of service required by local communities. Approximated 37km of Main Rivers are currently under consideration for transfer:

Richborough Stream (9.2km), Minster Stream (10.2km), Gosshall Stream (2.6km), Hogwell Sewer (1.3km), General Valley Lead Dyke (0.4km), Shelvingford Stream (0.8km), North & South Streams (Southern Arms) (5.1km), Lampen Stream (1.2km), Great Stour (Upper Reach) (5.6km), Great Stour (Sparrow's Bridge) (0.5km).

As the IDB must work within existing budgetary constraints, a number of lower-risk IDB maintained watercourses are being considered for bi-annual maintenance. Further details of this project, including the watercourses proposed for bi-annual maintenance can be viewed on the Board's website.

Meetings have taken place with Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council, Thanet District Council, Natural England and others, and a number of Public Drop-In Sessions were held in October last year. A formal consultation has since been held, between 15 January and 12 February 2018, on the Gov.uk website to seek the views of individuals, groups and organisations affected by or interested in these proposals. Final decisions are expected in the coming months (prior to this year's weed cutting season).

Association of Drainage Authorities

The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board is a member of the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA), which is the national association for water level management organisations in the UK with over 230 members. ADA continues to work closely with the Environment Agency and the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (Defra).

More details on ADA's activities and policies can be found on its website: www.ada.org.uk.