

The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board

Annual Update – April 2019

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. 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, Folkestone & Hythe DC & Thanet DC). The Board is made up of Elected Members (representing ratepayers), Appointed Members (appointed by District Councils) and Co-opted Members. Last year was an election year, which resulted in a couple of changes to Elected Members and the forthcoming local elections may result in changes to the list of Appointed Members. Currently IDB Membership is as follows:

Elected Members

Mr P S Dunn – Ash Levels
Mr D J Fuller – Ashford & Wye
Mr P N Howard – Ashford & Wye
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
Ms N H Dyas – Minster & Monkton

Appointed Members

Cllr M J Burgess – ABC
Cllr A Hicks – ABC
Cllr M Martin – ABC
Cllr N Ovenden – 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 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 full Board meets four times each year. This year's meeting dates and locations are as follows:

- 30 May 2019 – 2pm at Godmersham Village Hall (CT4 7DR)
- 1 August 2019 – 2pm at Ashford Borough Council's offices (TN23 1PL)
- 7 November 2019 – 2pm at Canterbury City Council's offices (CT1 1YW)
- 6 February 2020 – 2pm at Dover District Council's offices (CT16 3PJ) (*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 2018 approx. 180km of in-channel weed cutting was carried out on IDB watercourses; 14km of IDB watercourses were de-silted (Buxford Dyke, Monkton Lead Dyke, Decoy Pond, Wademarsh Stream, Decoy Lead Dyke, Island Road Dyke, Stonelees Stream, Butterfly Cottage Lead Dyke, New Watchester Lead Dyke, Pole Bay Dyke and Sandhills Sewer); spoil from the 2017 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. 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 2018 approx. 79km of Main Rivers were weed cut under this agreement and approx. 2.4km 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 Mathews Close Dyke in Middle Deal, on behalf of Dover District Council under another PSCA, in order to help reduce the risk of localised flooding.

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 obtained funding from National Grid to install 20 new barn owl boxes in the lower Stour valley, from Canterbury to Pegwell Bay, and its team of conservation volunteers will be installing them in agreement with landowners during this spring and summer. KSCP is also developing a number of minor river enhancement projects on behalf of the Board, to be incorporated into the Board's routine maintenance activities.

Efforts have continued to address a serious outbreak of Parrot's Feather in Wademarsh Stream, and early results are very encouraging. Work is expected to continue for a few more years, again with the assistance of KSCP's team of conservation volunteers.

Rationalisation of the Main River Network Project (RMRN)

The Stour IDB has finally agreed with the Environment Agency to take on some of its low-risk Main Rivers (a process known as de-maining) to help deliver the levels of service required by local communities. The paperwork is to be finalised over the coming weeks for 37km of watercourses, details as follows:

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 previously reported the IDB must work within tight budgetary constraints, so these changes will result in a number of lower-risk IDB maintained watercourses receiving bi-annual maintenance. Further details will be made available on the Board's website as soon as possible.

The Delf Stream, Sandwich

The IDB has joined the Delf Working Group, which is looking at how best to improve and manage this historic watercourse which flows from its source at Northbourne, across the marsh, through Sandwich and out in to the River Stour. Initial efforts will be to improve flows whilst maintaining stable water levels (balancing the sometimes conflicting requirements of upstream and downstream interests). The Sandwich Town Council will also be seeking to promote awareness and access to the full length of this watercourse.

Beaver Activity

The IDB has become aware of increasing activity of beavers, particularly in the Hacklinge Marshes area, and is therefore working closely with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Kent Wildlife Trust to establish the likely number of beavers in the area and to record activity, with the hope of developing a range of mitigation measures and advice for those potentially affected. The IDB's main focus will be on how beavers may affect the Board's responsibilities for water level management and flood risk (through their damming and burrowing). To help build up data on this, any reports of beaver activity can be sent to enquiries@riverstouridb.org.uk, which will be shared with the wider above mentioned group.

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.