

The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board

Annual Update – April 2020

Board Membership

The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board (IDB) 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 IDB is funded by Drainage Rates paid by agricultural landowners within its 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 a Co-opted Member from Natural England. 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 (Vice Chairman) – Lydden
Ms N H Dyas – Minster & Monkton

Appointed Members

CLlr M J Burgess – ABC
CLlr D Ledger – ABC
CLlr N Ovenden – ABC
CLlr D O Smith – ABC
CLlr G B Sparks – ABC
Mr A D Linfoot OBE (Deputy Vice Chairman) - CCC
Mr L Wooltorton – CCC
CLlr M D Conolly – DDC
CLlr P Jull – DDC
CLlr D Crow-Brown – 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 so Board Members and staff can be contacted by calling 01227 462377 or emailing enquiries@riverstouridb.org.uk. The full Board meets four times each year. This year's meeting dates and locations are currently scheduled as follows (subject to Covid-19 restrictions):

- 28 May 2020 – 2pm at Godmersham Village Hall (CT4 7DR)
- 6 August 2020 – 2pm at Ashford Borough Council's offices (TN23 1PL)
- 5 November 2020 – 2pm at Canterbury City Council's offices (CT1 1YW)
- 4 February 2021 – 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 local flood risk and to allow appropriate water level management. In 2019 approx. 211km of in-channel weed cutting was carried out on IDB watercourses; 17km of IDB watercourses were de-silted (Upper Wickham Stream, Coleman's Dyke, Lope Dyke, Preston Stream, Brooksend Stream, Peak Stream, Fowler's Dyke, Grip Sewer, Ash Level Feed Dyke, Horseshoe Lead Dyke East, New Watchester Lead Dyke, Clapper Hill Lead Dyke, Sandhills Sewer and Deal Town Dyke); spoil from the 2018 de-silting programme was levelled; and tree/shrub maintenance was carried out on a number of watercourses. In addition to this we have continued to manage water levels across the 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 and can be contacted at 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 2019 approx. 45km of Main Rivers were weed cut under this agreement and the IDB has continued to manage all water levels (on Main River and IDB watercourses) 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, in particular KCC 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 planned works which may affect any watercourse, which helps to minimise the need for formal and sometimes costly enforcement action.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

The Board's BAP was introduced in 2010, then reviewed in 2015. A more thorough review is to be carried out in 2020 by the Board's BAP Committee with the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP).

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 followed. A copy of the current BAP is available on the Board's website. It is hoped that more detailed information will be made available as a result of this year's review.

The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) has delivered a number of landowner/manager events; highlighting Non-Native Invasive Species, Soil Health, Water Quality, Water Abstraction and Watercourse Maintenance. KSCP is also continuing to work on a number of possible river enhancement projects on behalf of the IDB, 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 with a good degree of success. Work is expected to continue for a few more years, again with the assistance of KSCP's excellent team of conservation volunteers (information on volunteering can be found at KSCP's website: www.kentishstour.org.uk).

Rationalisation of the Main River Network Project (RMRN)

The Stour IDB and the Environment Agency began a frontrunner project in 2016 to transfer some low-risk Main Rivers from the EA to the IDB to help deliver the levels of service required by local communities. After a considerable amount of work, approx. 37km of watercourses were de-mained and transferred in 2019. As a result of this change, these watercourses will continue to be maintained to minimise local flood risk.

The Delf Stream, Sandwich

It was previously reported that the IDB had 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 Hacklinge Marsh, through Sandwich and out in to the River Stour. The Delf Trust is now being set up to help focus efforts to improve this watercourse and to promote awareness of and access to its full length. The Trust has already engaged surveyors to carry out a detailed longitudinal survey of this watercourse from Hacklinge Pumping Station to Brewery Sluice, which should provide valuable information on what may be possible in future to improve water flows through Sandwich.

East Kent Beaver Advisory Group

As a result of increasing reports of beaver activity in the area, particularly on the Hacklinge Marshes, an East Kent Beaver Advisory Group was formed. Membership of the Group is currently the Environment Agency, Kent Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Stour IDB and Wildwood Trust and its main objective is to establish the likely number of beavers in the area and to record activity, with the intention of developing a range of mitigation measures and advice for those affected. As previously reported, the IDB's main focus will be on how beavers may affect water level management and flood risk (through their damming and burrowing). To help build up data on this [all sightings of beavers or evidence of their activities should be sent to the EK BAG at beavers@wildlifegateway.org.uk](mailto:beavers@wildlifegateway.org.uk) and ideally copied to enquiries@riverstouridb.org.uk.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Due to its timing, the IDB's operational activities to date have not been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that the main maintenance activity, in-channel weed cutting, will be able to commence in mid-July as usual. However, delays may be possible (subject to Government advice) so watercourses with the highest flood risk will be prioritised.

The Board understands that this is a difficult time for everyone. Any Ratepayers experiencing difficulties paying their Drainage Rates should contact the Board's Clerk & Engineer and we will do whatever we can to help.

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.