

Roles and responsibilities of Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs)

What is an IDB?

An Internal Drainage Board (IDB) is a body that manages water levels. Working with key partners such as the Environment Agency and **Lead Local Flood Authorities (such as your County Council)**, IDBs are a fundamental part of managing flood risk and land drainage within England and Wales.

Each IDB has a certain amount of control, in the form of permissive powers, which allows them to undertake work to reduce flood risk to people and property and manage water levels within their local area or 'Internal Drainage District.'

What are IDBs responsible for?

The primary role of IDBs is to manage water levels and reduce the risk posed from flooding within their districts. Much of their work involves the maintenance and improvement of rivers, drainage channels, outfalls and pumping stations. They also oversee drainage issues in connection with new developments and advise on planning applications. This means that anyone constructing or altering a weir, bridge, embankment, culvert or similar obstruction must first seek the consent of the IDB before undertaking works.

In total, IDB responsibility covers 1.2 million hectares of England (9.7% of the total land area) and 28,500 hectares of Wales (1.4% of the total land area). This gives IDBs permissive powers for the maintenance of more than 22,000km of watercourses located within their districts.

IDBs are not, however, responsible for watercourses designated as main rivers within their drainage districts; the supervision of these watercourses is undertaken by the Environment Agency.

In addition to the responsibilities listed above, IDBs also have a significant operational role within the following areas:

- **ENVIRONMENT** - IDBs conduct their work in accordance with a number of environmental duties, and aim to promote sustainability and ecological wellbeing within their districts.
- **AGRICULTURE** - There are approximately 50,000 farms or land-holdings within Internal Drainage Districts in England & Wales. Water level management by IDBs is an essential component to continuing the food security of the UK.
- **PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES** - IDBs play a key role in directly reducing flood risk to 600,000 people who live and/or work within IDB boundaries, and 879,000 properties (domestic and commercial). Local Authorities pay a 'special levy' to IDBs for people, property and infrastructure, benefitting from their work.

Who do IDBs answer to?

Defra is the Government department responsible for IDBs and the work of an IDB is closely linked with that of the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authorities (and Local Authorities over planning issues).