

# Making changes to your local watercourse

September 2017



The Environment Agency is looking at new and innovative ways to deliver more for the environment by changing our ways of working and how we use our resources.

We have been developing proposals to transfer stretches of watercourse to local flood risk management partners who wish to take more responsibility for maintaining and regulating their local watercourses and flood risk management assets.

This process is known 'de-maining' and will help ensure that the right people are managing the right watercourses and assets in the right places.

## Background

The Environment Agency carries out maintenance, construction work and regulates the activities of others on Main Rivers to manage and reduce flood risk.

To derive the most benefit and ensure value for money, the Environment Agency prioritise maintenance spend based on the level of flood risk. There are 36,000 km of Main Rivers in England with only 40% considered high flood risk. The remaining 60% of Main Rivers are considered to be low flood risk.

Other Risk Management Authorities (RMAs), such as Lead Local Flood Authorities, District Councils and Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) carry out flood risk management work on other rivers called Ordinary Watercourses.

We are proposing to re-designate some Main River to Ordinary Watercourse, where flood consequence is low, and where the watercourse in question is not associated with major rivers or major population centres. This process (de-maining) means we can transfer watercourses from the Environment Agency to willing RMAs, where there is mutual agreement and local support to do so.

## What does this mean for my community?

We want to empower our local partners and communities to make local decisions on watercourse maintenance that are better informed through greater collaboration between all local stakeholders and meet their local needs.

Many of the partners we are working with already have experience of managing and maintaining stretches of Ordinary Watercourses. By de-maining some Main River to Ordinary Watercourse, our partners can maintain more of their local watercourses for local communities.

Your local watercourses are just one of five pilots across the country where we are working with the local community on proposals to de-main watercourses.

**"In many areas, others are better placed to provide the local flood risk management required. Allowing communities to make relevant decisions based on their local needs."** Alex Bateman, Environment Agency Project Lead

We are working closely with the River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board and looking at approximately 37km of suitable watercourses in 10 locations which may be of higher priority locally. All 37km of the proposed watercourses are within the River Stour IDB's district, and there are potentially 12 Environment Agency assets (i.e. stop boards, trash screens etc) which may also be transferred.

As part of the proposals, the River Stour IDB is considering future maintenance needs of the watercourses proposed for de-maining and is aiming to undertake the additional works within normal IDB budgets by reviewing its other activities. (Further details of possible changes to IDB maintenance will be made available on the IDB's website in time for the drop-in sessions [www.riverstouridb.org.uk](http://www.riverstouridb.org.uk)).

This will streamline the current maintenance programme, allowing better strategic planning of works and will ensure that these watercourses are kept in good order. By transferring these watercourses to the River Stour IDB, the Environment Agency will be able to prioritise projects where the greatest reduction in flood risk can be achieved.

Additionally, we are working with the local community, landowners and stakeholders to identify and maximise opportunities to understand the environmental, social and economic outcomes the de-maining the pilots will bring.

By working together, we can ensure that the right people are managing the right watercourses and assets in the right places.

### **We want to hear your views**

To make sure local communities can have a say and there is local support for the change, you and members of your community will have an opportunity to find out more and influence proposals during a set of public drop-in sessions in October 2017.

These sessions will allow interested parties to find out about our proposals, how the project may affect them, and provides the opportunity to give feedback on future plans.

Your opinion on the project is important and we hope you can join us during the sessions.

Dates and locations for the drop in sessions are:

- 4 October 2017 - Minster Village Hall, 2pm - 7pm
- 19 October 2017 - Little Chart Village Hall, 2pm - 7pm
- 25 October 2017 - Great Mongeham Village Hall, 2pm - 7pm

We will use the feedback received to refine our final proposal for formal consultation, starting in December 2017.

### **How can I find out more?**

We understand that you may have some questions or concerns that you would like to discuss. If you're unable to attend the public drop-ins, please do get in touch with the local project lead's detailed below.

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### RMRN De-maining Proposal: Stour Marshes

