

The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board

Annual Update – April 2021

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 BEM (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 (Deputy Vice Chairman)
CLlr D Ledger – ABC
CLlr N Ovenden – ABC
CLlr D O Smith – ABC
CLlr G B Sparks – ABC
Mr A D Linfoot OBE – 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), James Dilnot is the Engineering Assistant (james.dilnot@riverstouridb.org.uk) who delivers the Board's routine maintenance activities, and Joe Williamson is the Technical Assistant (joe.williamson@riverstouridb.org.uk). The Board is keen to be made aware of any drainage or 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):

- 27 May 2021 – 2pm at Godmersham Village Hall (CT4 7DR)
- 5 August 2021 – 2pm at Ashford Borough Council's offices (TN23 1PL)
- 4 November 2021 – 2pm at Canterbury City Council's offices (CT1 1YW)
- 3 February 2022 – 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 provide appropriate water level management for the benefit of the local environment. In 2020 approx. 212km of in-channel weed cutting was carried out on IDB watercourses; 19km of IDB watercourses were de-silted (IDB90 Preston Stream, IDB91 Cuckolds Lead Dyke, IDB119 Chitty Lead Dyke, IDB122 Tipper Drove Lead Dyke, IDB126 Snake Drove Lead Dyke, IDB133 Reculver Lead Dyke, IDB134 Rushbourne Wall Lead Dyke, IDB169 North Poulders Main Stream, IDB185 Cooper Street Lead Dyke, IDB192 Richborough Lead Dyke, IDB197 Sheerwater Lead Dyke, IDB198 Elmstone Lead Dyke, IDB274 Worth Drove Sewer, IDB279 Sandhills Lead Dyke, IDB281 Worth Minnis Lead Dyke, IDB284 West Street Dyke, IDB292 Red House Wall Dyke, IDB294 Cottington Lead Dyke, IDB297 Deal Town Dyke, IDB301 Southwall Road Dyke); spoil from the 2019 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 has been carried out in 2020 by the Board's BAP Committee with the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) and the new BAP will soon be finalised and made available on the IDB website.

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 manage issues of concern, and these will continue to be followed. More detailed information on IDB maintained watercourses will be made available on the Board's website this year.

The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) is also continuing to work on a number of potential river enhancement projects on behalf of the IDB, 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).

Review of Website

The Board's website is currently under review and the updates will soon go online. This will improve functionality and will include substantial improvements to mapping, which will more clearly show the extent of the IDB District and the watercourses it maintains. Improvements will continue over the coming months and we would welcome feedback.

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 Working Group and Delf Trust (currently being set up) has been working to improve this watercourse and continues to promote awareness of and access to its full length. A detailed longitudinal survey of this watercourse from Hacklinge Pumping Station to Brewery Sluice has been completed which has highlighted a number of sections to be de-silted 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, the East Kent Beaver Advisory Group (EKBAG), which includes the Environment Agency, Kent Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Stour IDB, Wildwood Trust and the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership, has arranged for a survey across the Hacklinge Marshes. Its main objective is to establish the likely number of beavers in the area and to record activities and impacts, both positive and negative, with the intention of developing a range of mitigation measures and advice for those affected. As previously reported, the IDB's main focus is 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 EKBAG at beavers@wildlifegateway.org.uk and ideally copied to enquiries@riverstouridb.org.uk.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

This year's maintenance activities are planned 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.