

The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board

Annual Update – April 2023

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 – so may change after local elections) and a Co-opted Member from Natural England.

Mrs Geraldine Wyant retired in 2022, after 7 years' service to the Board and many years involved in local drainage and flooding matters. We wish her a long, happy, healthy and well-deserved retirement. Mr George Holdstock now represents ratepayers in the Canterbury, Fordwich & Ickham areas. Currently IDB Membership is as follows:

Elected Members

Mr D M Botting – General Valleys
Mr P S Dunn – Ash Levels
Ms N H Dyas – Minster & Monkton
Mr D J Fuller – Wye
Mr G Holdstock – Canterbury, Fordwich & Ickham
Mr P N Howard – Ashford
Ms A G Lynch – Chislet North
Mr G R Steed – Lydden (Chairman)
Mr M P Wilkinson – Chislet South
Mr P Williams (Co-opted Member) – Natural England

Appointed Members

Cllr A Buchanan – ABC
Cllr M J Burgess – ABC (Vice Chairman)
Cllr M D Conolly – DDC
Cllr D Crow-Brown – TDC (Deputy Vice Chairman)
Cllr P Jull – DDC
Cllr N Ovenden – ABC
Cllr D O Smith – ABC
Cllr M Sole – CCC
Cllr G B Sparks – ABC
Mr L Wooltorton – CCC

Peter Dowling is the Board's Clerk & Engineer (pete.dowling@rsidb.org.uk), Ana Eastwood is the Finance & Rating Officer (ana.eastwood@rsidb.org.uk), James Dilnot is the Engineering Assistant (james.dilnot@rsidb.org.uk) who delivers the Board's routine maintenance activities, and Joe Williamson is the Technical Assistant (joe.williamson@rsidb.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 by emailing enquiries@rsidb.org.uk. The full Board meets four times each year. **This year's meeting dates** and locations are currently scheduled as follows:

- 8 June 2023 – 2pm at Sandwich Guildhall, Cattle Market, Sandwich CT13 9AH
- 10 August 2023 – 2pm at Bromley Green FC Bromley Green FC, South Willesborough TN24 0PQ
- 9 November 2023 – 2pm at Sandwich Guildhall, Cattle Market, Sandwich CT13 9AH
- 8 February 2024 – 2pm at Chartham Village Hall, Station Road, Chartham CT4 7HZ (*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 to improve drainage and local flood risk, and to provide appropriate water level management for the benefit of the local environment. In 2022 approx. 212km of in-channel weed cutting was carried out on IDB watercourses; 18km of IDB watercourses were de-silted (IDB9 Kimberley Dyke, IDB26 Bliby Wood Dyke, IDB28 Flood Street Dyke, IDB29 Swanton Mill Dyke, IDB31 Shalmsford Street Dyke, IDB38 Fordwich Main Stream, IDB52 Preson & Deerson Main Stream, IDB86 Supperton Dyke, IDB117 Wansum Siphon Link, IDB129 Hog & Donkey Dyke, IDB136 Twelve Foot Dyke, IDB190 Wantsum Lees Dyke, IDB202 Westmarsh Drove Lead Dyke, IDB209 Guston Farm Dyke, IDB217 Minster Stream Lead Dyke, IDB267 St John's Sewer, IDB268 Ring Sewer, IDB287 Maison Dieu Dyke, IDB289 Saffrey Sewer, IDB296 Deal Town Dyke); spoil from the 2021 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, operating and 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@rsidb.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 2022 approx. 50km 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 potentially 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 **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.rsldb.org.uk. The Board is always happy to advise on planned works which may affect any watercourse, as this helps to minimise the need for formal and sometimes costly enforcement action. Contact is best made by emailing enquiries@rsldb.org.uk.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

The Board's latest BAP, produced in close liaison between the Board and the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP), is available on the IDB website. We have continued site specific maintenance standards for all IDB maintained watercourses, which aim to retain and enhance issues of particular ecological interest and also manage issues of concern. Improvements during 2022 included works on **IDB31 Shalmsford Street Dyke** to help protect and enhance the channel, potentially for White Clawed Crayfish, and investigations into possible improvements on **IDB30 Long Reaches Dyke** at Chilham. A 40m section of **the Delf** in Sandwich has also been faggoted and de-silted, in cooperation with the Environment Agency, to help improve flows in this unique watercourse. We have contributed to a local project aiming to limit the spread of Azolla, an invasive non-native aquatic weed. Efforts have continued to address a serious outbreak of Parrot's Feather in Wadmarsh Stream with a good degree of success. However, this is a painstaking task, requiring physical removal of all fragments of this invasive weed, so is expected to continue for a few more years. We are extremely grateful for the ongoing support of KSCP's excellent team of conservation volunteers (information on volunteering can be found at KSCP's website: www.kentishstour.org.uk).

Payment of Drainage Rates

In order to minimise costs and reduce wastage, it is requested that Ratepayers go paperless if possible. If you are happy to receive future notices etc by email, rather than post, please confirm this by email to ana.eastwood@rsldb.org.uk.

Court Actions

Unfortunately, the Board has had to take a number of Court actions again this year to recover unpaid Drainage Rates and to rectify unconsented works. This is most regrettable, especially when rates are sometimes for relatively small amounts and the need for consent is clearly explained on the Board's website. Ratepayers are reminded that Drainage Rates are payable 'on demand' and are needed to fund IDB activities. However, should there be any concern, query, or difficulty in paying these rates, it is requested that **contact** is made with the Board's Clerk and Engineer in order to help avoid costly and time-consuming Court actions.

East Kent Beaver Advisory Group

As of 1 October 2022, Eurasian beavers have been classed as native and are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations. In the right place beavers can bring many benefits (reduce the risk of flooding and drought, improve water quality, increase biodiversity) but not without risks if in the wrong place (through their damming and burrowing). The IDB is a member of the East Kent Beaver Advisory Group (EK BAG), which also includes the Environment Agency, Kent Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Wildwood Trust and the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership, and which plans to provide advice and support to landowners affected by beaver activity. As previously reported, in order to help understand the benefits and impacts, **all sightings of beavers or evidence of their activities should be sent to the EK BAG at beavers@wildlifegateway.org.uk and ideally copied to enquiries@rsldb.org.uk.**

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.