

The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board

Annual Update – April 2024

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. Last year's local elections resulted in a number of changes to Appointed Members. There will be an election this year for Elected Members so there may be further changes. 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 S Blair – DDC
Cllr A Buchanan – ABC
Cllr R Carnac – CCC
Cllr A Hicks – ABC (Vice Chair)
Cllr D Ledger – ABC
Cllr R McGeever – ABC
Cllr G Meaden – ABC
Cllr M Moorhouse – DDC
Cllr W Scobie – TDC
Mr L Woollorton – 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 Operations Officer (james.dilnot@rsidb.org.uk) who delivers the Board's routine maintenance activities, and Joe Williamson is the Technical Officer (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:

- 6th June 2024 – 2pm at Chartham Village Hall, Station Road, Chartham CT4 7HZ
- 8th August 2024 – 2pm at Bromley Green FC Bromley Green FC, South Willesborough TN24 0PQ
- 7th November 2024 – 2pm at Chartham Village Hall, Station Road, Chartham CT4 7HZ
- 6th February 2025 – 2pm at Sandwich Guildhall, Cattle Market, Sandwich CT13 9AH (*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. Details, including any changes, can be found on the Board's website: www.rsidb.org.uk.

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 2023 approx. 212km of in-channel weed cutting was completed on IDB watercourses; 20km of IDB watercourses were de-silted (IDB1 Hart Dyke, IDB23 Park Dyke, IDB30 Long Reaches, IDB48 Upper Wickham Stream, IDB51 Monkton Valley Stream, IDB52 Preston & Deerson Stream, IDB83 Stourmouth Valley Lead Dyke, IDB84 Stourmouth Valley Dyke, IDB90 Preston Stream, IDB106 Seaton Lead Dyke, IDB110 Blackhole Dyke, IDB116 Walmer's Hill Lead Dyke, IDB125 Tipper Drove Dyke, IDB145 Brooksend Feed Dyke, IDB188 Cooper Street Pumping Drain, IDB194 Valley Wall Lead Dyke, IDB214 Watchester Drove Lead Dyke, IDB218 Minster Station Lead Dyke, IDB309 Shelvingford Stream); spoil from the 2022 de-silting programme was levelled; tree/shrub maintenance was carried out on a number of watercourses and New Cut Stop on the **Ring Sewer** was renewed. 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 2023 approximately 100km of Main Rivers were weed cut under this agreement, the New North Stream at Hacklinge was de-silted, a substantial amount of tree and shrub maintenance completed

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 (Main Rivers 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.rsidb.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@rsidb.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 2023 included works on **IDB31 Shalmsford Street Dyke** to help protect and enhance the channel, potentially for White Clawed Crayfish, and in-channel improvements on **IDB30 Long Reaches Dyke** at Chilham. Another 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. Efforts have continued to address a serious outbreak of Parrot's Feather in **Wademarsh Stream** on the Chislet Marsh 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). As a result of a complaint, raising concerns about risks to nesting birds, the Board is reviewing its routine weed cutting programme in an effort to delay works to minimise these risks. With this in mind, **it would be most helpful if landowners/occupiers/interest groups could highlight any known environmental issues or concerns** so these can be taken into account when we are planning and managing works. A grant has been obtained to carry out works on the **North and South Streams** at Northbourne to help protect and enhance an area of rare lowland peat (further details can be viewed on the website).

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/communications by email, rather than post, please confirm this by email to ana.eastwood@rsidb.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 to help avoid costly and time-consuming Court actions.

East Kent Beaver Advisory Group

In the right place beavers, which are now protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 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 Stour catchment now has a healthy and growing population of beavers so their activities must be closely monitored and managed where necessary. 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, which provides advice and support to landowners affected by beaver activity. As previously requested, in order to help improve understanding of 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@rsidb.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.