Internal Drainage Districts (IDDs)

Changes to the River Arun IDD

September 2015

This briefing provides the latest update for anyone interested in the changes the Environment Agency is proposing to make to the River Arun Internal Drainage District (IDD).

Background

The Environment Agency currently manages eight IDDs in Sussex and Kent. These are the only remaining areas in the country where the Environment Agency still acts as an internal drainage board. Responsibility for managing local watercourses (ordinary watercourses) is more appropriately dealt with by local councils and individuals who can act effectively to achieve the outcomes communities want to see.

We are therefore seeking to transfer the management of ordinary watercourses (OWCs) within the Sussex and Kent IDDs to local ownership. To do this, we must abolish the existing IDDs, including the River Arun IDD.

What's happened so far?

In June 2012, we began talking with the county, district and borough councils in West Sussex. Together we established a steering group representing those affected by the changes. The steering group also included representatives of South Downs National Park Authority, Natural England, National Farmers Union (NFU), Country Land and Business Association (CLA), the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) and the local Rivers Trusts.

The group considered several options for how water levels in the districts should be managed when the existing IDDs in West Sussex are abolished, including setting up a replacement IDD with an Internal Drainage Board (IDB) of local council representatives and elected drainage ratepayers. Although many of the steering group would have preferred for the Environment Agency to continue managing the IDDs, this was not an option because the Environment Agency needs to focus its sources on those areas/activities which deliver the greatest overall benefit in reducing flood risk to people and property. The way forward, which was a view agreed by the majority of the group, is to abolish the existing IDDs. No new IDDs will be set up in place of these. NFU and CLA were, however, supportive of setting up new IDDs.

District councils approved the steering group's recommendation, subject to local risks being managed, including the risk to the internationally important environmental features at Amberley Wildbrooks (see separate briefing note). West Sussex County Council, which is the Lead Local Flood Authority, has formed a new steering group to facilitate a smooth transition of responsibilities during the abolition process.

We have now formally submitted a Draft Scheme to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), setting out our intention to abolish the River Arun IDD and will be consulting separately on the proposed enmainment of around 12 kms of OWCs at Amberley Wildbrooks.

What does this mean for the River Arun IDD?

Once the existing IDD is abolished:

- With the possible exception of OWCs at Amberley Wildbrooks, the Environment Agency will no longer maintain any OWCs and associated water control structures in the River Arun IDD
- riparian land owners will be responsible for maintaining and operating the small number of OWCs and associated water level management structures which we have been maintaining and operating on their behalf. This is in addition to their existing responsibility for all other OWCs on their land. (our booklet

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- Arun, Chichester and Horsham District Councils will take over our power to carry out work in order to manage any flood risk from the OWCs
- West Sussex County Council will take over our enforcement and consenting powers on the OWCs
- Agricultural landowners/tenants will no longer have to pay drainage rates and the district councils will no longer pay a special levy (on behalf of all other landowners). Many landowners and tenants in the River Arun IDD do not have IDD maintained watercourses on their land and will be otherwise unaffected by the dissolution of the IDD

Our work on main rivers, such as the River Arun, will be unaffected by this change. To find out whether a watercourse is main river go to http://ow.ly/QtApk

**What happens next?**

We will be placing a Notice to advertise the Draft Scheme in the West Sussex County Times which will appear for one week from 24 September 2015. Comments about the proposal can be made to Defra in writing until 24 October 2015, quoting reference number LDC 2505, addressed to: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Area 3C Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR.

There will be two further opportunities to comment during the statutory process, when Defra advertises the draft and confirmed orders in the London Gazette. If you would like to know when these advertisements are out, please email us at the address below and we will add you to our notifications list.

Members of the public can view the Draft Scheme at the Environment Agency's offices at Guildbourne House, Chatsworth Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1LD. If you would like to arrange an appointment to view during normal office hours, please email the address below.

We have also arranged a drop-in surgery to be held at Arundel Town Hall, Maltravers Street, Arundel, West Sussex, BN18 9AP between 8.30am and 2.00pm on 13 October 2015. Please email the address below if you wish to attend along with any specific questions you would like answered at the event.

 Depending on any comments made, we would expect the Secretary of State for Defra to make a final decision on the abolition of the River Arun IDD next spring. At that time we will write to all drainage ratepayers and other riparian landowners confirming that decision and giving further details on what will happen next. Please email the address below if you would like to be kept informed.

In the meantime, we will work closely with the steering group to:

- make sure all assets are in a reasonable condition when handed over to riparian landowners
- talk with interested parties to identify and address any outstanding concerns
- provide riparian landowners with sufficient information to be able to understand and meet their responsibilities if the IDDs are abolished.

**Any questions or concerns?**

If you have any questions, please email riverarunidb@environment-agency.gov.uk or write to: IDD Project Manager, Environment Agency, Guildbourne House, Chatsworth Road, Worthing, BN11 1LD.

Our website is frequently updated with the latest information - visit www.gov.uk/environment-agency and search for 'internal drainage districts'.

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