South West Sussex Internal Drainage District (IDD)

Questions and answers – January 2014

What are Internal Drainage Districts (IDDs) and Internal Drainage Board (IDBs)?
Internal drainage districts (IDDs) are areas where communities require and are willing to pay for a different regime of drainage management than would normally be provided. IDDs are normally administered by Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs). An IDB is a public body that undertakes work to deal with matters affecting water levels, land drainage and flood risk within its IDD.

Where are the Internal Drainage Districts in West Sussex?
Please see the enclosed maps. If you still have questions or concerns please contact the IDB project manager. Contact details can be found at the end of this document.

Why is the Environment Agency dissolving the West Sussex IDDs?
Historically, in England the Environment Agency acted as the IDB for a number of IDDs in the South East through the Regional Flood Defence Committees.

The role of the IDB is currently fulfilled by the members of the Environment Agency Board. Guidance on good practice from Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) and the Environment Agency is that IDBs should represent those who pay for and benefit from the work of the IDB. Clearly the Environment Agency Board does not meet these criteria.

This provides a unique opportunity to review and shape the future of drainage management for flood risk and other purposes in the West Sussex IDD's

Who sits on the Steering Group looking at the future of the West Sussex IDDs?
The Steering Group includes representatives of the District, Borough and County Councils within the IDDs as well as the National Farmers Union (NFU), Country Land and Business Association (CLA), South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), Natural England (NE), the Environment Agency and Rivers Trusts.

The Group has met several times to consider the costs and benefits of alternative arrangements for the IDDs in the county for each option

What were the options considered?
Option 1: Communities or other suitable organisations set-up a new independent IDB to take over some or all of the interests of the existing IDB.
Option 2: Dissolve the existing IDD so that:

- Riparian landowners become responsible for the maintenance of the watercourse and structures (including pumping stations);
- District and borough councils gain permissive powers to undertake maintenance;
- County Councils take on responsibility for enforcement and consenting.

Option 3: As Option 2 but communities and other interested parties work in partnership to establish co-operative arrangements (outside an IDB structure).

Although some District/Borough Councils also wanted the Environment Agency remaining as the IDB, adapted as necessary to provide local input, to be an Option, this was not included because the Environment Agency considers an IDB needs to be more locally accountable.

When are the West Sussex IDDs likely to be dissolved?
If the Minister approves the proposal to dissolve the River Adur IDD; the River Arun IDD and the South West Sussex IDD will be dissolved on 31 March 2015 and the Environment Agency will no longer maintain the IDD watercourses in West Sussex or operate the small number of pumping stations on those watercourses.

Which Minister will consider the proposals for the future of the West Sussex IDDs?
The Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will consider the proposals.

How do I know if I am in the South West Sussex IDD?
Please see the enclosed map. If you still have questions or concerns please contact the IDB project manager. Contact details can be found at the end of this document.

What watercourses and structures does the South West Sussex IDB manage?
The South West IDB watercourses are made up of many discrete catchments. Predominately, the majority of water is discharged into the coast through the Pagham Harbour, Ryebank, Broad and Aldingbourne Rifes and the Bosham Stream. There are 60 watercourses maintained within this IDD, with a total watercourse length of 39km. There are 5 sluices and water control structures within this system.

What operations are currently carried out by the Environment Agency as the South West Sussex IDB?
The maintained watercourses, and all other watercourses within the IDD, are currently overseen by the Environment Agency acting as IDB. The IDB also has responsibility throughout the IDD for consenting to proposed works and enforcement for correcting unpermitted works.

Along IDD maintained ditches, the banks of watercourses are reed cut annually using a tracked 360 digger and bradshaw bucket, along with a tractor and flail mower. The current maintenance ratio is to cut back 70% of reeds but leave 30% for wildlife and environmental reasons based on guidance from Natural England. Very little de-silting is carried out, also due to environmental considerations.

How much do these operations cost?
Operational costs vary year by year, but the cost in 2012/13 was approximately £100,000. This is clearly determined by the Environment Agency's operational costs and not necessarily indicative of how much it would cost to procure the services independently.

What will happen if these operations cease?
Land may become wetter, which may have an effect on wildlife habitats (particulalry watervoles') farming, railway, roads and utilities.

How are IDBs funded?
Agricultural properties and land owners pay a drainage rate directly to the IDB based on the value of their land. The IDB also issues a special levy on all district or unitary local authorities for all other land and property within an IDD. The special levy covers the other business properties and land, houses, roads, power stations etc in an IDD. In addition, the Environment Agency may pay IDBs for the costs of catering for water from higher areas that flows into drainage districts. IDBs can also secure grants to assist with the funding of capital and environmental works from Defra, the lottery funding agencies and the European Union where appropriate.

Can a new IDB be established without local council support?
Local authorities pay the majority of the funding and therefore it is unlikely that the Minister would approve an IDB without local authority support. The Steering Group has taken an independent look at the case for a new IDB and the majority decision of the Group is that there is not a case for establishing a new IDB. A community can establish a new group to review the evidence and present a different business case to local authorities if they so wish.

What are the alternatives to an IDB and how would they be funded?
Unless a new independent IDB is put in place, riparian landowners will become responsible for carrying out and funding the maintenance of the watercourses, sluices and structures. The relevant district or borough council would have permissive powers to carry out work to manage flood risk from the watercourses and West Sussex County Council, as Lead Local Flood Authority, would be responsible for enforcement and consenting as well as works to manage flood risk from surface run-off and groundwater within that area.

If there is no new IDD, local authorities and agricultural landowners/tenants would not have to pay towards an IDB. They would retain that funding and could determine the need for funding and undertaking the work themselves.

Where there is an agreed local need for a level of service but insufficient support for a new IDB, the Environment Agency will work in partnership with the interested parties to establish alternative arrangements (outside an IDB structure). Funding would have to be raised by the partnership from local contributions, possibly subsidised by grants from central government, the lottery funding agencies and the European Union. http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33106.aspx
http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/116703.aspx

Who is responsible for maintenance of a watercourse?
It depends how the watercourse is classified, but as a general rule:

- Main River – Landowner, supported by the Environment Agency;
- Non Main River, Open Ditches, Watercourses and Culverted Watercourses – Landowner;
- Culverted Watercourses beneath public road – Highways Agency / County Council;
- Ditches Dug to Drain the highway – Highways Agency / County Council;
- Highway Gullies and drains – Highways Agency / County Council;
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems – varies depending on local arrangements, could be either Landowner/Maintenance Company/Lead Local Flood Authority/ District Council;
- Watercourses within the Internal Drainage Board – Landowner supported by the Internal Drainage Board;
- Public Surface Water Sewer – Sewerage Company;
- Private Surface Water Sewer – Landowner / Property Owner.

Which watercourses are classified as Main River?
Main River refers to any river on the Environment Agency Main River Map. This is also shown on the Environment Agency Flood Map, which is available at Environment Agency Flood and River map

What Option 2 would mean for you
If the South West Sussex IDD is dissolved and no new IDD established, the IDB would no longer undertake maintenance of the IDB watercourses or operate structures.

Landowners would no longer have to pay drainage rates and local district/borough councils would not pay a special levy on behalf of the residents/businesses within the IDD area.

The amount of work currently undertaken is limited. Even if no-one continued these operations the impact on the majority of residents and businesses would be minimal. As the benefits of the work on agricultural land are for land drainage and primarily benefits only the riparian landowner it is unlikely that district and borough councils would exercise their powers to undertake work at their own cost.

If your question is not answered here or if you need further information please contact:

IDB Project Manager,
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Guildbourne House,
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Or email SouthWestSussexIDB@environment-agency.gov.uk

If you are a member of the National Farmers Union (NFU) or CLA you may also contact:

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.**Other useful information can be found by reading**

- Living on the Edge http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/31626.aspx
- Establishing New Internal Drainage Boards – Guidance https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/portal/ho/flood/new/idbs?pointId=1320416416931
- Working Together Consultation - http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/140088.aspx



Environment Agency

South East EA administered Internal Drainage Districts (IDDs)

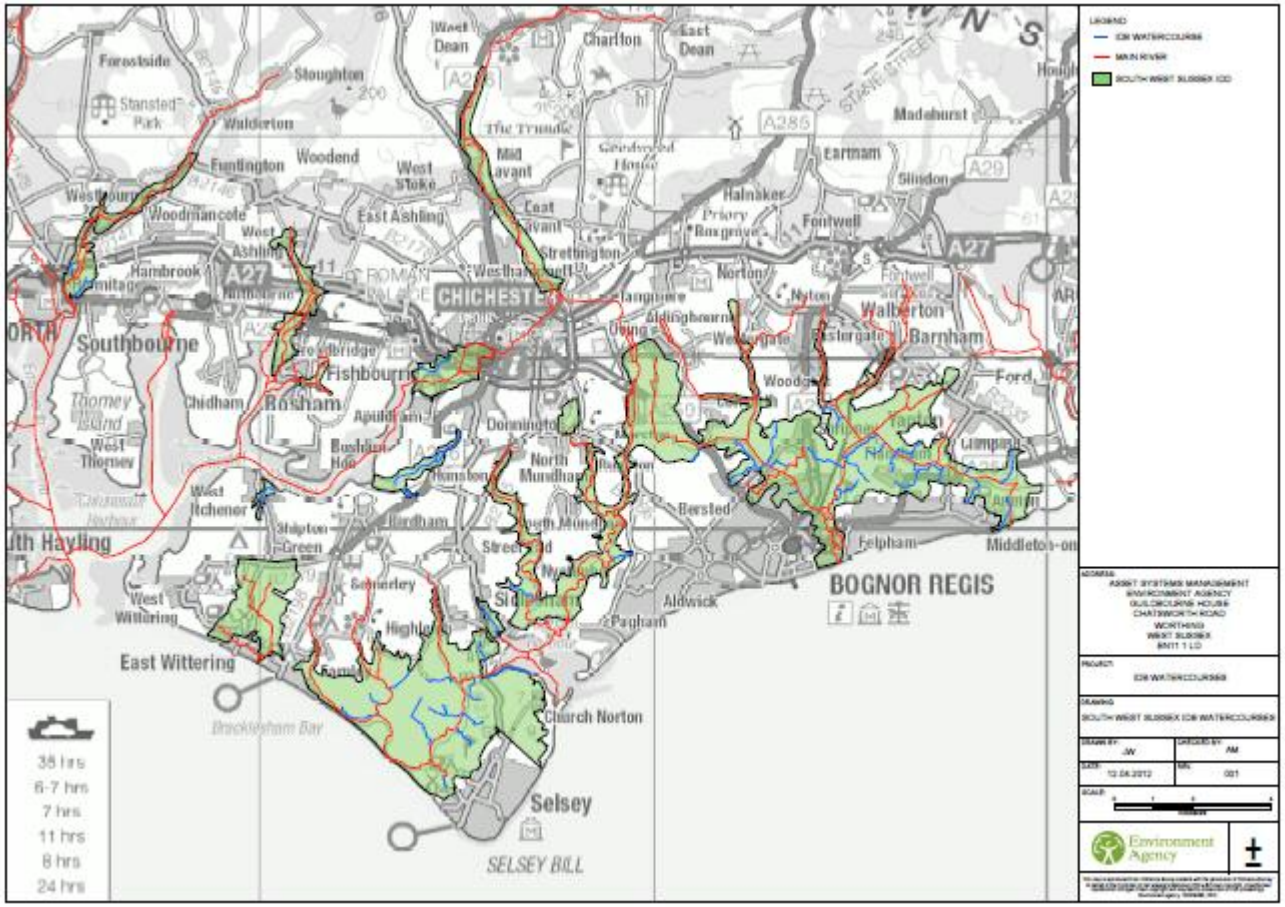
Legend

Internal Drainage Districts

- Cuckmere IDD
- Pevensey Levels IDD
- River Adur IDD
- River Arun IDD
- River Ouse (Sussex) IDD
- South West Sussex IDD
- East Gravesend IDD
- West Gravesend IDD

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South West Sussex IDD showing IDB watercourses and Main River.