
PUBLIC SECTOR COOPERATION AGREEMENT (PSCA) – THE VEHICLE FOR CLOSER PARTNERSHIP WORKING ON MAINTENANCE AND SIMILAR ACTIVITIES

Summary

The Public Sector Cooperation Agreement (PSCA) provides arrangements for the Environment Agency (EA) and an Internal Drainage Board (IDB), Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), District Council (DC) or other Risk Management Authority (RMA) to deliver flood risk maintenance works and similar activities by a partnership approach. This is a major step forward in securing efficient work practices at a local level. The agreement places both parties on a sound legal basis to deliver work as agreed – either party may undertake work for the other. PSCAs ensure consistency of approach to partnership working across the country and should be considered the first approach before bespoke agreements for individual works are pursued.

The first PSCA was signed in October 2013. By February 2016, EA have 45 PSCAs in place comprising 42 with IDBs, 1 with a County Council, 1 with a District Council and 1 with a Navigation Authority. 25 others are currently in development and EA intend to agree additional PSCAs where there are potential benefits.

The Benefits of PSCAs

Based on section 13(4) of the Floods and Water Management Act, a PSCA can cover any maintenance or similar activity such as inspections, obstruction removal, weed control, grass cutting, tree work, vermin control, dredging, pump operation etc. It also provides for mutual RMA support in managing flood incidents. In some cases it can be used for capital asset improvement or replacement works.

Benefits to a PSCA include:

- Securing efficient local working arrangements which will achieve value for money in delivering operational maintenance activities.
- Taking advantage of local skills and experience including local knowledge of geography, associated river/ drainage systems and operational practices, to benefit local communities.
- Sound legal basis for either party to undertake work for the other party , as agreed
- Having flexible partnership working arrangements. Agreements typically cover a period of up to 5 years, with annual reviews to discuss/agree the specific extent of activities to be carried out under the PSCA.
- Standardised documents which are simple to apply to local needs.

PSCA Documents

A guidance document and national template agreement were initially developed in 2013 by the Environment Agency, Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) and pilot IDBs – Black Sluice, Trent Valley, Lindsey Marsh, Upper Witham, Witham 1st and 3rd. Taking account of subsequent user feedback , these documents have been revised and improved as follows.

[PSCA AGREEMENT TEMPLATE – updated March 2016](#)

[PSCA USER GUIDE – updated March 2016](#)



Changes in the updated documents include:-

- Documents now provide for EA/Local Authority RMA agreements as well as EA/IDB agreements
- Now cover coastal/ tidal as well as inland works with greater clarity
- Revised clauses in agreement template regarding insurance and indemnity
- Schedule 3 added, to help clarify roles and responsibilities for specific items of work / activity undertaken under the PSCA
- User Guide extended to cover both setting up a PSCA and good practice in its use.

All new PSCAs will use the new national template format. Existing PSCAs will be varied to the new template format this summer to ensure national consistency, but can continue to be used until the variation occurs.

The documents are available on the EA Easinet pages and on the ADA website. The documents can also be obtained directly from Ian Russell, who will set up all EA new agreements and oversee the variations to existing PSCAs.

Use of the PSCA

The wide range of works completed to date under PSCAs has included weed control, grass cutting, dredging, tree/bushing works, vermin control, obstruction removal, bank repairs and incident response during December 2013, January 2014 and December 2015 events.

The total value of work in 2013/14 was approximately £65k when there were few PSCAs in place. For 2014/15 the total value was over £600k. Further works are ongoing this financial year and the total value is expected to rise significantly in future years as more PSCAs are developed and opportunities for efficiency gains fully explored. The majority of work to date has been funded by EA and undertaken by IDBs on EA main rivers. EA has undertaken some works for IDBs and there is scope to do more of this work, either for IDBs or other RMAs.

The aim is for EA to put in place PSCAs with all IDBs and Local Authority RMAs where there are potential benefits and efficiency savings.

Environment Agency operations teams will annually share future maintenance plans with relevant IDBs and other partners who are encouraged to share their plans also. Building positive working relationships and having open discussion on future work provide the key to identifying PSCA opportunities for successful partnership working. In some cases, considering joint funding, where funding by one party alone is an issue, may unlock the route to additional work.

The long term potential benefits of PSCAs are considerable and will increase with time. The PSCA objective is to achieve savings and additional works which contribute to EA's overall 15% efficiency target. Equally, there is scope for efficiency gains by other partner RMAs. The overall benefit is that PSCA working can result in efficiency gains being recycled into additional works for either RMA party and the communities we serve.

If you would like to discuss setting up a PSCA or require further information, please contact Ian Russell at Environment Agency, Waterside House, Waterside North, Lincoln, LN2 5HA, or at ian.russell@environment-agency.gov.uk

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