



Representing Drainage Water Level & Flood Risk Management Authorities

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Branch Vice Chairman: Edward Greenwell
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Association of Drainage Authorities Eastern Branch AGM and Meeting

Date: 7 October 2020

Time: 10.00-12.30

Venue: ZOOM

In attendance: Giles Bloomfield (WMA), Robin Buxton (BIDB), John Carrick (NRIDB), Sue Cook (WMA), Emma Dixon (WMA), Edward Greenwell (ESIDB), Matt Hullis (SCC), David Kemp (EA), Jamie Manners (WMA), Janey Marson (ESIDB), Barny Richardson (Essex Coastal Organisation), Karen Thomas (CPE), Innes Thomson (ADA), Rob Wise (NFU)

10.00 Branch AGM

1. Welcome and introductions: RB introduced group.
2. Apologies for absence: - Phil Camamile (WMA), Ben Blowers & Debbie Lovegrove (WLYL IDB), Michael Paul (ESIDB), Mark Johnson & Pete Denham (EA), Andrew St Joseph (Essex Coastal Organisation), Rob Goodliffe (CPE)
3. Announcements: - Waveney, Lower Yare & Lothingland Board have joined WMA
4. Election of Post:-
 - a. Chairman : - Robin Buxton was voted in as Branch Chairman
 - b. Vice Chair:- Edward Greenwell was voted in as Branch Vice Chairman
 - c. Secretary:- Emma Dixon was voted in as Branch Vice Chairman
 - d. Treasurer:- Emma Dixon was voted in as Branch Treasurer
5. Minutes of previous AGM: - All agreed.
6. Matters arising: - none
7. Approval of Branch Accounts – £569.15

10.30 Branch Meeting

8. Partners presentations were given
 - a. CPE - Karen Thomas gave a presentation on the Bacton Landscaping project. Powerpoint attached separately due to size.

www.coasteast.org.uk

b. ADA – Innes Thomson gave the following update from ADA:

Despite COVID19, ADA has had a very productive year with a full complement of staff all equipped to work from home. Although the ADA offices are now open again, they are COVID19 compliant and some staff are still continuing to work from home. The main items of work ADA has focussed on this year have been;

- Completing and publishing full GIS mapping data for all English IDBs – the access link can be seen on the ADA website
- Defra provided a grant to ADA to support the preparation and publication of an Environmental Good Governance Guide for IDBs. This should be ready for publication later this year.
- Review and updating of the Biodiversity Action Plan templates and consideration of a range of environmental metrics for public reporting
- Preparation of materials for a suite of IDB-related infographics, for wider PR and educational use
- Undertaking a project with educational and farming consultants LEAF to prepare a suite of educational materials for key stage exams.
- Preparing a number of strategic Health, Safety and Welfare presentations for dissemination to IDB Board members – this will continue with a further set of modular presentations through 2021.

Going forward into 2021, two additional work streams will be commenced, covering;

- Climate change resilience and adaptation
- Siltation and water conveyance issues

ADA has played an active part in the update process for the Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy refresh process, the results of which have now been formally adopted by Parliament. At the same time, Defra published its FCERM policy statement in which ADA was very pleased to see reference to the value of the work that IDBs do and, the recognition of the importance of maintenance works.

The ADA Conference is online this year for obvious reasons and will take place on 11th November from 1030 to 1230. The event will be free to attend this year but participants must pre-register. Registration for the event is now open via the ADA website. The keynote speakers will be Floods Minister Rebecca Pow, MP, the EA's Operations Exec Director, Toby Willison and Chris Stoate from the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust.

FLOODDEX 2021, has been rescheduled to take place on 6th and 7th April 2021, immediately following the Easter weekend and ADA is starting to plan forward for a national demonstration event in 2022.

www.ada.org.uk

c. Environment Agency – David Kemp gave the following update from the Environment Agency:

The EA have been developing working practices over the summer which will allow them to pursue their three priorities of;

1. Protecting the health, safety and well-being of our staff, the public, and the businesses and partners with whom we work;
2. Preventing loss of life and serious harm to the environment;
3. Keeping our critical operations running.

ADA – representing drainage, water level and flood risk management authorities

Member of EUWMA- the European Union of Water Management Associations

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The National Picture

The National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy was published on 14th July 2020. This was the culmination of a long and involved process with large amounts of consultation. It runs to 118 pages (without appendices) and sets the EAs direction for the future.

The Strategy sets out the blueprint for how the EA will work with partners and other organisations to manage flood and coastal erosion risk and increase the nation's resilience to climate change. The Strategy affirms that the EA will need to continue to provide protection through building world class flood and coastal defences. And it also recognises that in the face of changing climate they need to make places more resilient so that when flooding does happen, it causes less harm to people and does less damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure.

It has three core values;

1. Climate resilient places
2. Today's growth and infrastructure resilient in tomorrow's climate
3. A nation ready to respond and adapt to flooding and coastal change

Six Year programme 2016- 2021

This is the final year of the current six year programme. By July 2020 244,700 properties were better protected and they still expect to hit the target of 315,000 by the 31st March 2021.

Six Year programme 2021- 2027

On 23rd March 2020 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the funding for the next 6 year programme; £5.2 billion.

£170 million addition funding for 2020/21

On 14th July the secretary of State announced an additional £170 million of funding for this year, a significant amount is heading to flood risk projects here in the east.

Innovative resilience funding

£200 million led by a LLFA or CPA

SMP Review

The SMP review/ health check continues.

Local Focus

The EA local programme for this year is dominated by the large projects at Tilbury, at Great Yarmouth and the ongoing work on the Thames estuary. There are also smaller but significant projects on the Essex sea walls. In total there are 70 projects of which 40 are EA led.

Revenue Spend/ General Drainage Charge

The EAs revenue budget of around £8-10 million is not enough to maintain rural watercourses and defences in the manner in which this was once done. This is primarily due to the focus on protecting homes. The 2.1 million of GDC which they spend in the Eastern RFCC area is used to augment this revenue money and benefit the rural areas where the charge is raised.

The money is spent across 58 rural catchments in Essex and a further 47 catchments in Norfolk and Suffolk, so wherever a charge is paid there is a good chance the money is spent relatively nearby. It's used for mundane but significant work, primarily for grass cutting, channel clearance, weed clearance and de-silting where this is an effective and environmentally acceptable solution.

Flood Events

The winter of 2019/20 saw significant flooding across England, particularly in the West and the north. Mercifully the most extreme effects were not seen in our area.

Since 1st January the EA has issued 209 flood alerts, the majority of them being tidal, either on the coast or in Broadland. More importantly, they have issued 25 flood warnings. Only two of these were for fluvial flooding. The majority were tidal and were associated with Storm Ciara on 9/ 10th February 2020. Although this storm caused much disruption, there were few properties flooded. More significant was the damage caused, at Walberswick, at Wolsey Bridge and at Felixstowe Ferry. At Felixstowe the EA had to quickly deploy temporary defences to protect an eroded bank before the arrival of Storm Dennis on 23rd February. These defences are still in place. However, the EA has been awarded recovery funding for all three sites.

The EA continues to function despite the pandemic. They are winter ready and prepared for whatever the coming flood season may bring. Their procedures may have changed to protect us all in the current circumstances, but their ability to respond to incidents, to maintain defences and to build new ones continues unabated.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency

- d. WMA - Giles Bloomfield gave an update on the work on the WMA:

Norfolk Rivers IDB

- The final phase of River Restoration completed on the River Nar covering Castle Acre Common to Westacre Mill

Broads IDB

- Upper Thurne Integrated water Management review underway, assessing the future configuration of 14 pumping stations managing internationally designated habitats.
- National Lottery Bid in for c. 30hec of wetland creation
- The Halvergate Marshes project has been shortlisted for a British Construction Industry Award for Environmental and Sustainability Initiative of the Year. This project has also been successful in receiving funding for Phase 3 from Highways England.
- Interreg/EA grant bid to create 2 hectare of test beds to test various alternative potential commercial wetland cropping
- River Bure Water Level Management Improvements evaluating 12 pumping stations
- River Yare Water Level Management Improvements evaluating 17 pumping stations and associated high level carriers and storage solutions

Waveney, Lower Yare & Lothingland IDB

- Benacre & Kessingland Flood Risk Management Scheme- business Case (OBC) nears completion. Officers successful in securing c.£3.2m contribution from National Recovery Fund as additional Partnership contribution.
- Lower Waveney water level management improvements evaluating 16 pumping stations 7 Assets

Jamie Manners gave an update from the Environmental Team. Powerpoint attached.

- e. Suffolk County Council – Matt Hullis have a presentation on the Holistic Water Management Project covering the Debenham Natural Flood Management and Felixstowe Hydrocycle projects. Powerpoint attached.
- f. Essex Coastal Organisation - Barny Richardson gave us an introduction to the Essex Coast Organisation.

Originally set up as a farmers group to examine and challenge the withdrawal of sea-wall maintenance policies by the Environment Agency, the group has grown into a far bigger and more influential organisation. ECO is now subscription based and represents the concerns and challenges of the majority of landowners in the coastal areas of Essex.

The original aims of ECO are:

- To support and represent the interests of private landowners and occupiers of the coast in their role as custodians of the coastal environment in Essex.
- To assist, where reasonably possible, people and rural property under threat of flooding

To achieve those aims, ECO now has further targets for the long term viability of the Essex Coastal area, including;

- Prevention of coastal and fluvial (inland) flooding.
- Working with the Environment Agency to ensure their budgets are better spent.
- Working with Essex County Council, District Councils and Parish Councils.
- Ensuring consistent maintenance regimes for coastal defences and inland waterways.
- Promoting sustainable growth in the rural economy.
- Developing public awareness of access and use of the coastal path and sea-walls

www.essexcoast.org

9. AONB: A question was raised about the Demaining project. David Kemp, EA, has provided this response since the meeting:

“Further to our conversation last week, the latest statement on the de-maining of rivers was made by Rebecca Pow on 1st September 2020 in response to a question by Michael Wild, MP for North West Norfolk, which I reproduce below”

- To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress the Environment Agency has made in its plan to de-main eleven watercourses in Norfolk, announced in 2017.

Asked 21 July 2020

Overall across the country, the de-maining pilot project resulted in the Environment Agency (EA):

- re-designating 16 stretches or 63.8 km of main river to ordinary watercourse;
- transferring 28 assets and 178 acres of land to Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs).

The statutory guidance to the EA for the designation of main rivers requires that the EA should consider relevant benefits or costs for the local community and representations from the local community and others in response to consultation.

Of the 11 watercourses in Norfolk, eight were withdrawn at an early stage due to concerns raised in May 2018 at the Environment, Development, and Transport committee of Norfolk County Council about the potential increases to special levy for District Councils.

In November 2018, the EA formally consulted on the proposal to de-main three watercourses at Tunstall Dyke, Waxham New Cut and the River Tud, which are wholly within IDB areas.

The consultation found that overall consultees did not support the proposal to de-main the River Tud due to concerns over the environmental management. Consultees were either neutral or in support of proposals to de-main the Waxham New Cut and Tunstall Dyke. The EA withdrew the River Tud from the pilot in January 2019.

In May 2019, the EA decided to pause the Norfolk pilot and withdrew the proposals for the remaining two watercourses due to an ongoing investigation into waste management irregularities, the outcome of which may be relevant to who should manage the de-mained watercourses. The EA will not comment further on this while the investigation is ongoing, nor will the de-maining pilot proceed until the investigation has been concluded.

The EA may decide at some point in the future to revisit these proposals. Until then, these two watercourses will continue to be Main River and the Environment Agency will retain its permissive powers to maintain them.

Answered 1 September 2020

By Rebecca Pow (Conservative, Taunton Deane)

10. Date and venue of next AGM and Branch meeting:

- a. ED to send out Doodle poll to arrange June 2021 visit to Bacton Landscaping Project
- b. AGM 6 October 2021 Site Visit: Felixstowe Hydrocycle project