



# Representing Drainage Water Level & Flood Risk Management Authorities

## TECHNICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING

13<sup>th</sup> September 2022

### Supporting papers

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#### 5. Key Recent Business Topics

##### a) Water resource security & volumetric data

The recent droughts across the UK have rapidly increased the focus on securing and redirecting freshwater, when and where it is plentiful, to make it available where or when it is scarce. What we don't have as an industry is accurate and consistent volumetric flow data for most pumping stations. ADA and individual IDBs are being asked more frequently for this data by a range of stakeholders including DEFRA, water companies, farmers of course, research institutes, local authorities, developers and energy providers. Many are exploring the potential for the freshwater, ordinarily pumped out to sea, to be redirected for other use or storage, as many of these stakeholders are struggling to secure a consistent and reliable sources, and realise this is only likely to be a worsening situation in the face of climate change.

There isn't a currently suitable "off the shelf" piece of technology that can be fitted, in a range of IDB situations, i.e. outfalls or sluices which can collect this data. An area at the point of measurement has to be known, controlled and calibrated, which is only usually achievable at structures such as V-notch weirs so there would need to be some adaptations to infrastructure in order to take such measurements, as well as the installation of the sensors and power for the kit and telemetry. ADA would like to seek out potential funding for the design, procurement and installation of technologies which can be installed at the IDB main pumping stations and sluices, in order to begin to collect and analyse volumetric flow information so we are better able to begin to understand and improve the management and distribution of freshwater. It would be beneficial, in terms of raising the profile of the IDB sector, to lead on this initiative also. ADA has agreed to be part of a partnership bid for some funding to progress this approach in the eastern region from DEFRA and UKRI, part of the Farming Innovation Fund, but will be looking to expand their focus to other areas with other funding.

**Discussion:** Thoughts please and we seek the Committees approval to commence this workstream.

##### b) Drought & abstraction challenges

ADA recently requested information from IDBs to better understand how the droughts had been affecting them. We heard how water quality challenges such as algal growth and salinity had rendered the water remaining, in some IDB drains, unusable for irrigation. IDBs had also been



approached to increase water transfers to other catchments. A strong response theme was the call for improved enforcement of abstraction, as many licence-holders were not adhering to the “hands-off” restrictions, and some without licences were abstracting unlawfully. Some would argue that this is understandable when the potential losses from failed crops far outweigh the cost of being fined for an abstraction offence, by tens of thousands of pounds. IDBs find themselves being very-much the middle-man at these times and the notification process and liaison between the IDBs and abstraction licence-holders is resource hungry. This is another situation which can only be expected to worsen with the recent abstraction licence reform, which could see licences revoked or licenced volumes significantly reduced, alongside the expected impacts of climate change.

### **Discussion:**

- What better guidance and assistance does the industry need to help manage abstraction?
- Would more case studies like the MLC texting service which have proven successful in making notification management more efficient be helpful?
- Do IDBs know about the EA’s new email alert system for licence holders?
- To what extent can we urge the EA to improve enforcement of abstraction, and what unintended consequences could there be of doing so?
- What low-regrets resilience options could we help to promote and develop further? I.e. more 2-stage channel creation projects to improve capacity storage, with costings?
- Are there any other drought-challenges that IDBs have faced recently which ADA could assist with?

## **6. Workstream Updates**

### **a) Environmental Workstreams**

#### **i. The Environmental Good Governance Guide**

The Guide is complete, is with DEFRA for final sign-off and will be printed on the 3rd October. Thank-you to all those who have contributed. We are extremely happy with what we have achieved and we are excited to launch the Guide on the 29th September. The on-line version will be available from this date. A preview is available upon request and we will welcome comments at the meeting from those who have opportunity to review it. Work will now focus on planning workshops to help deliver the key messages of the Guide. We are exploring the possibility of regional environment events, perhaps via ADA Branches, plus a national Environment Day with relevant guest speakers, with April looking a good month for this. We will also look at updating the template Environment Policy for IDBs.

**Discussion:** What are your thoughts on workshop delivery? Are classroom-based workshops the most preferred method of delivery? What would members hope to achieve from attending a workshop?



## ii. Biodiversity Metrics

A reminder will be sent out with links to the metrics spreadsheet and guidance to ensure that now operations are beginning to increase, the opportunities for gathering data are seized.

## iii. Biodiversity Net Gain

An initial brainstorming meeting with the LGA is scheduled to take place on the 20<sup>th</sup> September with a view to developing a workstream to strengthen the recommended data flow process between IDBs and LPAs around consenting, with a particular focus on the need to review Biodiversity Net Gain Plans at the correct stage and any other liaison improvements suggested.

There is a BNG metric consultation which ADA will be responding to on behalf of IDB members. There is still concern over the unknown Rivers & Stream metric elements of the metric, who will be able to use the metric, and when it will be needed, which will be raised as part of our consultation response on the 27<sup>th</sup> September regarding the metric.

## iv. Consultations

ADA consultations past and upcoming are as follows:

- Biodiversity Metric 3.1 Consultation – Due 27<sup>th</sup> September

## v. Environment Forum

Forums are well supported so will continue with the next meeting to take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

## vi. Other key environmental matters

- New legislation, due to come into force on 1 October, will make it an offence to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or injure beavers, or damage their breeding sites or resting places – without holding the appropriate licence. New guidance on the management and licensable activities relating to beavers has been published by Natural England on the [.gov.uk website](#). The approach is very similar to how most other protected species licencing works. ADA is working with Natural England to ensure that the management and licencing is realistic and reasonable in IDB terms and may explore the possibility of a class licence similar to the licences we already have for water voles and badgers.
- ADA continues to chase information on the progress of the release of the New Eels Regulation Process (NERP) guidance, as yet without a response. The EA are operating to the new process and this raises questions around the need for new exemptions for those that are in need of renewal.

## b) Climate & Carbon Workstreams

### i. Carbon emissions data

Some environmental groups are placing pressure on the Government, including seeking legal redress, to ensure that sufficient policy and regulation to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050 is in place. It has been highlighted that there is currently a shortfall which equates to 5%, in



the Governments plans of intended action to drive such reductions The Government may seek therefore to improve its current carbon emissions calculations by requesting more data for public bodies. ADA will continue to promote and support IDBs to begin to understand their own carbon footprint by using the Carbon Accounting Guide, published by ADA.

## ii. Carbon reduction Policy & Vision

Work is scheduled to commence on this in October and the aim is to publish the templates by the end of the year.

## c) Data & Evidence Workstreams

### i. Data collection

*“...there are massive gaps in our knowledge of UK wetlands. “We don’t even have a national wetland inventory.” It’s a basic tool we need to monitor our wetlands and it’s also a requirement under the Ramsar Convention that we have been a signatory to for 40 years.”*

Recent work at ADA and some reports in the media have highlighted some knowledge and data gaps which we could, with a little effort, begin to address and which would be beneficial for IDBs and ADA’s promotion of the industry’s contributions and to help support future funding bids.

Examples include:

- The number of electric and diesel pumps operated by the IDB,
- If the IDB uses renewable energy, generated or procured,
- How many plant machinery and vehicles the IDBs operate,
- How many fish-friendly pumps are installed,
- How many contractors (and agricultural) the IDB employs,
- How many directly employed IDB staff,
- The extent of wetlands, designated or otherwise, within the IDB that benefit from the IDB’s operations,
- Kwh of electricity used,
- Diesel used by the IDB (if possible split between pumps and other).

All of this information would have been useful recently to ADA to help progress several of ADA’s workstreams and communications, including red diesel negotiations, consultations and in support of efforts to improve funding opportunities.

**Discussion:** ADA intends to work with DEFRA to seek to include the collection of this data via the annual IDB1 process as indicated, from next year, or could be included in the biodiversity metrics survey if biodiversity-relevant. Most of this data collection could form a new carbon section in the IDB1. Is there any other data we should consider collecting? Should we exclude some?



## ii. Infographics

We have scheduled in a new project to create editable infographics for IDBs in November this year, most probably in powerpoint. Depending upon other commitments, there may also be opportunity to update the original infographic figures with the most recent IDB1 data. Committee members will be sent some comments suggesting what changes could be made to make them more individual.

**Discussion:** What data in particular would it be useful for IDBs to present? Are there any other changes or additions which you feel we need to consider? See [www.ada.org.uk/members/Internal](http://www.ada.org.uk/members/Internal) Drainage Boards for the infographics.

## d) Managing Channel Sedimentation Workstreams

### i. Managing Channel Sedimentation – Sofi Lloyd

ADA is now part of the steering group for the development of ELMS. It is also now a member of the Catchment Sensitive Farming Advisory Group. Progress with ELMS development is slow currently with little detail available at present. However to accelerate the detail development, ADA is organising a workshop with Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) regional manager and officers, Board members and IDBs in the Humber region to discuss the CSF and stewardship options and approaches currently available, relevant to the management of water levels, resources and flood risk, and what are the barriers to the greater uptake of these options currently (including the potential financial penalties for farmers if IDBs damage stewardship provisions during operations). This will help ADA be able to feed more detailed input into the ELMS development process. The workshop trial also aims to strengthen relationships between the CSF teams and IDBs, as the CSF team's flood risk remits will be increased with the ELMS so they will necessarily be working more closely together in the future. If the workshop is successful, it could be rolled out in other regions.

The workshop will also help to highlight the knowledge gap among farming advisors and from this, ADA will be able to develop a short advisory note for them detailing what IDB-relevant information they should consider when advising farmers and land-owners within Internal Drainage Boards, including the promotion and benefits of approaches which benefit IDB operations.

## 7. Other Updates & Business

### a) Health, Safety & Welfare

A draft of the HS&W survey has been issued to the H&S Committee members for review prior to the planned distribution date later this year. A copy of the survey is available upon request to



T&E Committee members for those who would also like to review it. Update on the development of further HS&W modules will be provided by IM.

## b) EUWMA

Verbal update from IT. Annual Meeting took place in Oostende, Belgium on 11th – 13th September

## c) ADA Events

- The next APPG will be held on the 18th October at Portcullis House where ELMS will be discussed in terms of its potential to deliver benefits to flood and drought risk and water resource management. More details will be available online from the APPG webpage on the ADA website.
- ADA AGM will be held online on 28th September.
- ADA to hold a combined meeting to include an ADA Board meeting with a networking overlap with an IDB Clerks Thinktank on October 12th at The Hive, Nocton, Lincs
- ADA Annual Water Management Conference to be held on 9th November, at the Hive, Nocton, Lincs.
- ADA Flood & Water Live 2023 – Full go-ahead with marketing and sales for the event, to be held on 5th and 6th July 2023 was given at a special ADA Board meeting in June. Sales and prospects for sales going well.

## 8. Key P&F Updates

To be given on the day

## 9. Summary of last ADA Board meeting

### a) Board Member Changes

New Board members Angie Fitch-Tillett replacing Chris Mutton as Eastern Branch Director, Paul Ambrose (Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council) replacing David Hickman as LA Director and James West (NRW) replacing John Markwick as ADA Cymru Director.

### b) ADA Finances

ADA's accounts for the previous financial year were signed off and have been submitted to Companies House. The confirmed operating loss for 2021 was just over £6k. The Board received a 2022 budget update and the figures presented were to the end of April 2022.

Comparing with the financial report for the same period (months 1 – 4) last year, ADA was in a very similar position in 2022, approximately £5k up on income and £4k up on expenditure



figures. Given the satisfactory outcome of ADA's lobbying on red diesel, we limited the costs allocated to potential legal support on the subject to about 25% of what was budgeted (£10,000). Staff costs remain ADA's single largest item of expenditure and, with inflationary pressures where they presently are, increases in staff costs above what has been budgeted for are inevitable. They are currently within budget but any recommendation from the Remuneration Sub Group and decision of the Board to adjust staff remuneration levels at the October Board meeting may influence the current position.

Overheads are also increasingly subject to inflationary pressures. As we return to a more normal operating regime post-covid, travel expenses will increase but ADA is committed to operating efficiently with a sensible mix of continued online meetings and face-to-face interactions with members as appropriate.

As part of this year's budget, a number of additional items of expenditure were included in the budget and subject to the Board's specific approval, as follows;

- Employment for 12 months of an extra staff member £19k
- Launch and marketing of Flood & Water Live 2023 £7k
- Preparation of guidance for IDB ratings £5k
- Preparation of further H, S & W information modules £3k

Following the special Board meeting of 26th May, the Board authorised expenditure against the launch and marketing of Flood & Water Live 2023. All other items remain subject to approval.

The Board has also approved in principle the investment of some of ADA's reserves (up to £165k) in appropriate funds, and ADA is actively looking to place the first tranche of £85k into the CCLA's Public Sector Deposit Fund.