



Representing Drainage Water Level & Flood Risk Management Authorities

ENVIRONMENT FORUM Meeting Note

09 September 2024
Venue: Online via Microsoft Teams
13.00 – 15.00

APPROVED

Invited					
Name	Role and organisation	Present	Name	Role and organisation	Present
Emily Askew (EA)	Environment Officer, Black Sluice IDB	Y	Abigail Leach (AL)	Ecologist, Middle Level Commissioners	Y
Phil Brewin (PB)	Ecologist for Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium	Y	Sofi Lloyd (SL)	Ecology & Environmental Services Manager, Middle Level Commissioners	Y
Nick Downing (ND)	Environment & GIS Officer, Witham & Humber Drainage Boards	Y	Ian Moodie (IM)	Technical Manager, ADA	Y
Priscilla Haselhurst (PH)	CEO, Lower Medway and North Kent Marshes IDBs	Y	Iain Turner (ITr)	Environmental Officer, Water Management Consortium	Y
Mat Jackson (MJ)	Senior Flood Risk Management Officer, West Sussex County Council	Y	Diana Ward (DW)	Ecologist for Ely and Bedford Groups of IDBs	Y
Caroline Laburn (CL)	Environmental Manager, Water Management Alliance	Y			

Ref	Notes
6	<p>Breeding birds training</p> <p>The breeding birds training from the BTO had been trialled by one group of IDBs, but would not be recommended to IDBs more widely given its general scope. One group of IDBs was working on developing more condensed and relevant guidance and was willing to share their work with other Forum Members.</p>
7	<p>Badger licences</p> <p>A group of several IDB consortia (Bedford Group of IDBs, Middle Level Commissioners, Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium, and Water Management Alliance) sought a legal opinion from Freeths LLP and their Partner, Penny Simpson, who has extensive knowledge of protected species legislation, on the <i>CL27 Licence to interfere with badger setts for watercourse and drainage purposes</i>.</p> <p>Those IDBs have reported that the advice note produced by Freeths LLP clarified several aspects of the licences, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what IDB activities are licensable, • do non-licensable activities need to be notified and/or registered, • timeframes for notifications and registrations, including re-registrations, • who must be a registered person,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what is appropriate supervision. <p>Subsequently, the group wrote to Natural England about this opinion, and consequently aspects of the CL27 licence have been amended by Natural England to remove inconsistencies. This new licence is now on the.gov website.</p> <p>A summary of the Advice Note was circulated to members of the ADA Environment Forum.</p> <p>Forum members discussed the further dissemination of the findings from this legal advice, to ensure consistency in practice across IDBs. There was also discussion around the importance of IDBs having good internal processes around record keeping in regards to badger sets and IDBs' works.</p> <p>DECISION: The further circulation of the summary of the advice note will be discussed by the commissioning group with a view to circulation to all IDB members.</p> <p>DECISION: Group of IDBs involved in legal advice to prepare a note for the ADA Gazette to highlight changes to the licence.</p>
8	<p>Beavers</p> <p>Discussion around beavers and their impacts within lowland pumped catchments. River Stour IDB in Kent had hosted a field visit by the National Beaver Management Forum set up by Natural England in June to look at the impacts of their presence on lowland water management.</p> <p>IM has been invited to join an Infrastructure sub-group of the Beaver Management Forum set up by the Environment Agency who are looking to commission guidance on the management of beavers. IM had recently attended to discuss this challenge further with the EA, Natural England, and Canal & Rivers Trust.</p> <p>Dates in late November 2024 have been proposed by Natural England to run a training course for IDB environment officers, as well as relevant staff from the Canal & Rivers Trust, with the training to be held over two days within Kent, where free living beavers are present.</p> <p>Forum members gave an indication of their intention to attend this beaver training workshop.</p> <p>DECISION: ADA to seek further details of the training to be provided, and specifically whether it cover the use/application of the CL51 licence.</p> <p>IM reported the details of an upcoming international meeting on beaver burrowing in infrastructure on 3 and 4 February 2025, in Wageningen, The Netherlands. Registration via: https://www.stowa.nl/agenda/international-meeting-beaver-burrowing-infrastructure-ibbi.</p>
9	<p>IDB biodiversity reporting</p> <p>Discussion regarding the annual reporting of biodiversity delivery by IDBs such as through Biodiversity Action Plans. Options included updating the questions within the IDB1 annual return to Defra, and a simplified version of the ADA IDB Biometrics Survey 2021. There was recognition that the previous Biometrics Survey had been overly complex and time-consuming for IDBs to complete.</p> <p>DECISION: Biodiversity reporting should continue to be voluntary for IDBs if proceeded with.</p>

	<p>DECISION: ADA would not seek to produce aggregated facts about IDB biodiversity delivery for now.</p> <p>DECISION: ADA to circulate a copy of the IDB1 Form for 2024 to Forum Members when released by Defra.</p> <p>DECISION: Forum members to suggest amendments to the IDB1 form for consideration at the next meeting.</p>
10	<p>Lowland Peat</p> <p>Update on progress of the Lowland Agricultural Peat Smaller Infrastructure Pilot projects. Discussion of the future possibility of funding to support raising water levels safely by IDBs. Benefits for IDBs to consider the scope for future schemes.</p> <p>Discussed concerns regarding the limited time for project delivery (by 31 March 2025), and time taken to receive consent on eel passage from the Environment Agency for one of the projects, making delivery within 2024/25 financial year uncertain.</p> <p>Discussion about the array of other peat related projects seeking information and data from IDBs. There was a recognition that most of the information being sought were of an engineering nature.</p>
11	<p>Buffer strips</p> <p>Meeting and field visit between ADA, Defra, Environment Agency, Natural England, and Middle Level Commissioners regarding the grant options for buffer strips and maintenance operations of IDBs had been deferred from June owing to the General Election. ADA had subsequently sought potential dates in October and November for this meeting.</p>
	<p>Next meeting</p> <p>DECISION: Next meeting to be held in January or February 2025.</p> <p>DECISION: IM to circulate options for meeting dates.</p>
	<p>Close</p>