

Making changes to your local watercourses

August 2017



Welcome to the first in a series of newsletters designed to keep you up to date with our proposed changes to the way your local watercourse is maintained and regulated.

The Environment Agency is looking at new and innovative ways to deliver more for the environment by changing our ways of working and how we use our resources.

We have been developing proposals to transfer flood risk management and regulation on select stretches of watercourse to local flood risk management partners.

This process is known as ‘de-maining’ and will help ensure that the right people are managing the right watercourses and assets in the right places.

Background

The Environment Agency carries out maintenance, construction work and regulates the activities of others on Main Rivers to manage and reduce flood risk.

To derive the most benefit and ensure value for money, the Environment Agency prioritises maintenance spend based on the level of flood risk. There are 36,000 km of Main Rivers in England with only 40% considered high flood risk. The remaining 60% of Main Rivers are considered to be low flood risk.

Other Risk Management Authorities (RMAs), such as Lead Local Flood Authorities, District Councils and Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) carry out flood risk management and/or regulation on other rivers called Ordinary Watercourses in line with their current responsibilities.

We are proposing to re-designate some Main Rivers as Ordinary Watercourse, where flood consequence is low, and where the watercourse in question is not associated with major rivers or major population centres. This process (de-maining) means we can transfer watercourses from the Environment Agency to willing RMAs, where there is mutual agreement and local support to do so.

What does this mean for my community?

We want to empower our local partners, landowners and communities to make local decisions on watercourse maintenance that are better informed through greater collaboration between all local stakeholders and that better meet their local needs.

“In many areas, others are better placed to provide the local flood risk management required, allowing communities to make relevant decisions based on their local needs.”

Many of the partners we are working with already have experience of regulating, managing and/or maintaining stretches of Ordinary Watercourses. By re-designating some Main Rivers as Ordinary Watercourse, our partners can manage more of their local watercourses for local communities.

Your local watercourses make up just one of five pilots across the country where we are working with the local community on proposals to de-main watercourses.

The River Hun, River Stiffkey, River Tiffey, Tunstall Dyke, Waxham Cut and Wendling Beck in Norfolk and the River Wang and Cookley Watercourse in Suffolk have been identified as pilots for de-maining due to the low flood risk they pose to people and property.



We have been working closely with local Risk Management Authorities, including Broads IDB, East Suffolk IDB, Norfolk Rivers IDB, Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council, who are exploring the possibility of taking on the day-to-day management and/or regulation of the watercourses, to deliver project proposals in the most effective way possible. Additionally, we are working with the local community, landowners and stakeholders to identify and maximise opportunities to understand the environmental, social and economic outcomes the de-maining pilots will bring.

By working together, we can ensure that the right people are managing the right watercourses and assets in the right places.

We want to hear your views

To make sure local communities can have a say and there is local support for the change, you and members of your community will have an opportunity to find out more and influence proposals during public drop-in sessions in October 2017.

These sessions will allow interested parties to find out about our proposals, how the project may affect them, and provides the opportunity to give feedback on future plans.

Your opinion on the project is important and we hope you can join us during the sessions. Details of drop-in sessions on your local watercourses can be found below.

Pilot watercourse	Drop-in time and date	Drop-in location
River Stiffkey	Monday 16 th October - 2pm to 7pm	Kettlestone Village Hall, The Street, Kettlestone, Fakenham, Norfolk, NR21 0AU
Wendling Beck	Thursday 19 th October – 2pm to 7pm	Dereham Memorial Hall Meeting Room, 62a Norwich Street, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 1AD
River Wang	Tuesday 24 th October – 2pm to 7pm	Halesworth Methodist Church, London Road, Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 8LR
Cookley Watercourse		
River Tiffey	Thursday 26 th October – 2pm to 7pm	Wymondham Central Hall, Back Lane, Wymondham, Norfolk, NR18 0QB
River Hun	Friday 27 th October – 3pm to 7pm	Hunstanton Community Centre, Avenue Road, Hunstanton, Norfolk, PE36 5BW
Tunstall Dyke	Tuesday 31 st October – 2pm to 7pm	Sea Palling and Waxham Village Hall, Waxham Road, Sea Palling, Norfolk, NR12 0US
Waxham Cut		

We will use the feedback received to refine our final proposals for formal consultation, starting in December 2017. We will also be consulting on proposals to de-main additional local watercourses at this time.

How can I find out more?

We understand that you may have some questions or concerns that you would like to discuss. If you're unable to attend the public drop-ins, please do get in touch with the local project lead, Marie Coleman (Email: PSOENS@environment-agency.gov.uk Tel: 0203 025 8444).