



- 1) Defra Review investigated and commented on the traditionally perceived role of IDBs. Strengths and weaknesses were identified and the Implementation Plan was drawn up to address the issues. The review acknowledged that even in their traditional role some reorganisation of smaller IDBs would bring benefits.
- 2) The review did not and could not investigate or comment fully on the potential future role of IDBs in delivering an holistic flood risk and water level management service as required by UK Government as part of Making Space for Water and the current consultation on a Strategy for Surface Water Management.
- 3) The events of summer 2007 introduced a new dimension into local flood risk management in the form of widespread surface water flooding that had not previously been fully understood. Many IDB districts were badly affected. The role of IDBs and their relationship with and support for their Local Authorities was highlighted in many regions.
- 4) The funding issues requiring the EA to prioritise maintenance and improvement work spending for high and medium priority flood risk areas will inevitably result in a reduction in activity in low priority areas as is proposed in the Lower Trent Area. In many of these low priority areas IDBs are currently active and relying heavily on the Main River systems for evacuation of surface water. IDBs therefore are best placed to provide the services that may not be undertaken by EA in the future.
- 5) The Project Board considered these issues and concluded that in their present form many IDBs lacked the critical mass of expertise and financial strength to encompass the enhanced role. To address this they proposed larger units based on the sound principle of catchment management of water levels that is enshrined in all legislation and policy. The Board acknowledged the need to maintain the strengths of a locally based water level management service and to minimise impacts the Project Board proposed amalgamations of existing IDBs on a sub-catchment basis.

ADA's Position

- 1) ADA acknowledges and supports the principle of Water Level Management being organised on a catchment or sub-catchment wide basis.
- 2) ADA acknowledges that the role of IDBs will need to change in the way surface water is managed and has made reference to this in their response to the Pitt Report.
- 3) ADA acknowledges that IDBs are best placed and supports the principle of an enhanced role in surface water management service delivery and in areas where EA activity may reduce over time. In taking this view it is also acknowledged that as a direct consequence some reorganisation and strengthening of IDBs as suggested by the Project Board will be required.
- 4) IDBs are statutory public bodies and as such are supported financially by funding from central and local government as well as agricultural rates. As such IDBs must be able to demonstrate that they comply with all the expectations of a modern public authority that is also capable of delivering government policy of flood risk and water level management at the local level.
- 5) ADA recommends that all IDBs consider the proposals for sub-catchment IDBs and the possible future role by commencing discussions with all the members of the group in which they have been placed at the earliest opportunity. It is understood that RFDC Chairmen have been requested by Defra to facilitate these initial discussions and arrangements for meetings in some areas are already well advanced. If any group or area feels that further advice or the support of ADA at these meetings would be advantageous they should contact the ADA office.

ADA's Conclusions and Request to all Members

It is clear that all aspects of the delivery of water level management at the local level are under review via the Defra Review of IDBs, the Pitt report and consultation on the Summer 2007 Floods and the current government consultation on future surface water management. ADA strongly contends that IDBs are best placed to take on an enhanced role in delivery of what essentially should always be a locally based public service and views these current consultations as an opportunity for improvements to the current arrangements.

ADA has listed below some of the commonly expressed issues to be considered at the early stages of the debate and requests the comments of individual members, officers, current IDBs and the suggested sub-catchment IDBs on the following: -

The feasibility of the proposed new sub-catchment IDBs.

- 1) Are the boundaries hydraulically correct?
- 2) Are the proposals too limited? Should a more radical reorganisation be considered? Should boundaries be changed to give a better fit to the sub-catchment principle?
- 3) Are there better model arrangements within the sub-catchments suggested?
- 4) How do the proposals fit with Local Authority Areas and current Agricultural Electoral Districts? Can representation especially by LAs be easily accommodated? Can local representation of Urban, Environmental and Agricultural interests be accommodated within any other arrangements such as Area Advisory Panels?
- 5) Are there natural milestones such as the end of current contract arrangements or retirements during the next few years that would offer a natural opportunity for progression from current arrangements to the proposed structures?

The Future Role of IDBs

- 1) In support of the principle of catchment based water level management services should IDB boundaries be extended to the full catchment as is suggested in the consultation for surface water management?
- 2) Would the current or proposed IDBs have sufficient financial strength to take on an enhanced role especially in low priority flood risk areas where EA may need to withdraw services without boundary changes?
- 3) Should IDBs take on an enhanced role in surface water management as is suggested in the Pitt Report consultation?
- 4) What role should IDBs play in developing mitigation and adaptation measures for climate change and the potential requirements contained in the Climate Change Bill expected to be enacted during summer 2008.

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