

Press release: Environment Agency launches consultation to give communities more say in how rivers are managed

The Environment Agency is considering proposals to transfer 'flood risk management activities' on a number of stretches of watercourses to internal drainage boards (IDBs), lead local flood authorities (LLFAs) and district councils. This will only happen where the watercourses have a low level of flood risk, are not associated with major rivers or major city centres and where the local community supports the change.

A transfer would mean that IDBs, LLFAs and district councils can take on more responsibility for their local flood risk, where appropriate – by carrying out activities such as maintenance or giving permission to carry out works.

The Environment Agency has been working with partners to consider proposals to 're-designate' sections of watercourses in a number of locations. The watercourses will be re-designated from what is currently known as a 'main river' to an 'ordinary watercourse' – a change referred to as 'de-maining'.

Rachael Hill, Flood and Coastal Risk Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

The project aims to bring more choice to communities and local organisations in how watercourses are managed and maintained. We want to strengthen local flood risk management and decision-making by ensuring the right people are managing the right watercourses.

We want to hear from anyone who is affected by, or interested in, the proposals. This consultation explains how the proposed sections of watercourse are currently managed and funded and provides details on future management and funding if de-maining goes ahead.

The project is exploring the potential to re-designate several sections of selected main rivers as ordinary watercourses in: various rivers in Suffolk (East Anglia), South Forty Foot Catchment in Lincolnshire and Stour Marshes in Kent. But if there is support for the approach it could pave the way for further de-maining in England.

For the Environment Agency, the project will also ensure resources are prioritised where the greatest impact on reducing flood risk can be achieved.

Innes Thomson Chief Executive of ADA (Association of Drainage Authorities)

added:

Despite their low flood risk to people and homes, the good management of these rivers still plays a major part in peoples' lives, and the environmental and economic wellbeing of the communities through which they flow.

It is very important for existing and potential new river managers to know what the views of local people are so we can make the right decisions together for the best future of these rivers.

The public will be able to view and give feedback between midday 15 January 2018 and midday 12 February 2018. There will be an option to view information and give feedback on each of the proposals or the de-maining project as a whole by accessing the [consultation link](#).