

ROMNEY MARSHES AREA INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER APRIL 2026

The 2025-26 season

It's been a challenging year for the IDB in many ways and much has been asked of Board staff and Board Members alike. At times it has been impossible to deliver our usual high standard of service across all spheres of our operation, so we thank you for your patience and understanding.

After 23 years of loyal service our dear colleague and friend, Clerk/Engineer Nick Botting retired on health grounds as did our Vice Chairman Larry Cooke. Larry devoted over 40 years of his life to Board and District and we owe him a debt of gratitude. Sadly, Board Members Frank Cooke, Cllr Mick Burgess and former member Rodney Nickerson passed away. All were active Board Members that made consistent and valuable contributions during their decades of service. They have been sorely missed.

As we continue, we are pleased to announce Andrew Cragg as our new Vice Chairman and look forward to welcoming our new Technical Officer, Christopher Gill in May 2026. The Clerk/Engineer to the Board is now Robert Monje.

Annual Maintenance – The Board's weedcutting programme was completed before ground conditions deteriorated with a variation in cutting order being trialled for efficiency. We thank Ostridge Contractors, FGS Pilcher and T&J Fencing for their combined efforts to deliver this essential work expediently and with the care and professionalism that we have come to expect from them. Desilting was successfully undertaken on the Pudding Cake Petty Sewer (Rother) and the 2nd Sedbrook Wey Street Arm Lesser Sewer (Romney).

Pumping stations – Four of the Board's five pumping stations are showing their age. Repeated failures at Kitsbridge (Romney) have necessitated full condition inspections with some remedial works completed. Further inspections are required but it's likely that programmed replacement of pump control panels will be necessary over the coming years.

Development – Planning and consenting enquiries have increased considerably in recent years. Since July 2025 Pevensy & Cuckmere IDB have been providing us with temporary ad-hoc technical support that has enabled continued delivery of our watercourse consenting system which is a key part of the Board's delivery of function. Board officers are currently engaged with two of the three large solar projects to ensure that flood risk is adequately managed, betterments are made to the land drainage system wherever possible and that the Board's operations are not compromised.

Audits – Both internal and external audits passed with no concerns being raised once again.

The 2026-27 season

Weedcutting tenders – The Board's annual maintenance contracts will be put out to tender in Summer 2026. The handcutting contract will be divided to create an additional contract that can be undertaken with a smaller machine.

Level survey – We aim to complete the level survey of water level control structures that we started two years ago.

New website – Owing to events the new website has also been on hold, but we hope to resume work on it this year and create one that provides more information and functionality.

Resilience – The absence of our Clerk/Engineer for most of the year has highlighted just how exposed the organisation is to unplanned events. We aspire to employ a second Technical Officer to provide some much-needed resilience but the feasibility of this will not be known until much later in the year.

Environment Agency update

From John Pace, Rother and Romney APT Catchment Officer

We would like to thank the Romney Marsh community for their patience and understanding during a tough year at the Agency. The loss of two colleagues has hit the team hard and left a large void in area leadership and experience. We would like to thank everyone who reached out with their condolences and words of support.

An incident on the Marshland Sewer in September pushed our weed cutting back by two months. Once we were back up and running, we prioritised our focus on the most important watercourses and by desilting uncut channels. This meant we did not fully complete the weed cuts on the 1st Hoornes and Clobden sewers upstream of the railway and only managed 3km of desilt out of a planned 8km, we would like to thank those impacted landowners for their understanding on this. Lessons have been learnt from this experience, and I would like to reassure all parties that we plan to carry out next years weed cut in its entirety. The continued cooperation from farmers to allow us to track through standing crops would greatly aid us in completing this work in a timely manner and allow us to continue with our desilting programme. As in previous years, any retained headlands / buffer strips we encounter we will assume they allow for our plant to track along. This winter we plan to carry out the desilting we could not complete last season on the Five Waterings and Sedbrook sewers with other locations being considered on the 1stNew, Marshland, Abbatridge, Brenzett and White Kemp Sewers. We are moving forward with plans to repair Woodside and Icklesham Pumping Stations, we are in regular contact with the IDB and will keep them abreast of any developments. Temporary pumps have been deployed to these locations. Storm Goretti hit in early January causing damage to the Green Wall in Lydd ranges. We have since carried out works, with help from East Kent Engineering Partnership, on the shingle crest of the beach frontage whilst plans are made to repair the wall. Plant has been placed at Jurs Gap to react to storms if required.

Our capital Scheme raising the Eastern Embankment on the Tidal Rother is near to completion, our partners VolkerStevin will be carrying out initial maintenance over the next couple of years whilst the embankments establish as well as other works around Monkbretton Bridge in Rye and at the Harbour Masters office.

ROMNEY MARSHES AREA INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER APRIL 2026

General information

Board membership – Would you like to become a Board Member? If you have an interest in water level management, a passion for the unique landscape that it's created and the attributes required for public service then please register your interest with us and we will let you know when a vacancy becomes available. We have the largest Board of all the IDBs which gives us a diverse pool of knowledge and experience to draw from, and this is something we are keen to maintain. Conversely, if you are a serving Board Member who is struggling to meet the commitments that Board service requires and wish to step down then also please get in touch.

Field team member vacancy – Owing to the increasing workload of our Water Bailiff we will be looking to recruit a second field team member in late spring 2026. The job description and advert will be posted on our website and the Association of Drainage Authorities jobs board in due course.

Consent fees – Having held consent application fees at £50 since 1991 we felt it was appropriate to apply an inflationary increase. Applications now cost £200 per regulated activity. A £200 cap will be in place for domestic and agricultural applicants.

Waste exemptions – During a recent EA farm inspection one of our ratepayers learnt that a waste exemption is now required for the reed waste that's generated during annual maintenance. Please ensure that you have this in place if you have any EA or IDB maintained watercourses on your land.

Tampering with water level control structures – We get most upset when ratepayers take it upon themselves to adjust our structures. It is imperative that water levels are controlled solely by our Water Bailiff. Every time a structure gets fiddled with, we have to attend site to rectify the situation which increases our lone working risks, our wage bill and everybody's drainage rates. Please do not make additional work for our Water Bailiff, he has got enough to do as it is. Interference with water level control structures breaches Byelaw 19 and the Board can legally recoup any losses incurred rectifying interference and/or tamper-proofing structures.

Conservation headlands / buffer strips – Please be mindful of our access requirements for maintenance if establishing buffer strips. We (like the EA) will assume that any buffer strips we encounter can be trafficked by our plant and have cut material placed upon them.

Natural Flood Management – If anybody is opting to install any NFM structures in watercourses please bear in mind that they require consent from the Board.

Unconsented works – A gentle reminder that works in or within 8m of an IDB adopted watercourse require Board consent, as do most works within any Ordinary Watercourse. If in doubt, please ask and we will gladly advise.

EA incident reporting – For general enquiries use 03708 506506. To report matters including flooding, pollution or failing assets use the incident reporting line 0800 807060.

Office visits – To avoid wasted journeys please ring ahead before visiting the office as staff may be out on site or attending meetings. Our office number is 01797 227000.

Mineral lick tubs – Please gather up your empties before they go free range and cause an obstruction. Bear in mind these items not only block culverts but also jam open flaps and doors which in a tidal situation especially poses a significant flood risk.

Drain markers – Unless your drains are clearly marked with posts projecting above the summer growth they may get damaged; as will our contractor's plant. We can accept no responsibility for the damage of unmarked drains or drain markers of insufficient length.

Padlocks – Should you opt to fit or change padlocks or combinations on any access used by the IDB, please make a key available to us, or pass us the combination at your earliest convenience to prevent our staff / contractors having to crop chains / padlocks.

Payment of rates – The Board appreciates that these are testing times but chasing unpaid bills ultimately incurs cost to the Board which puts an inflationary pressure on the following years rates, so we really do appreciate prompt payments. In response to requests from our ratepayers, we are now equipped to accept debit and credit card payments over the phone and in person. Please let us know if your billing address changes so that we can keep our records up to date, also check your rate demand thoroughly to ensure sure the land shown under your account accurately reflects what you own or rent. If you have any queries, please contact our office.

Environmental update

Beavers – The IDB was not engaged during the recent Natural England Expression of Interest consultation regarding the wild release of beavers into two of the most heavily engineered parts of our district. A complaint was lodged at the highest level but it was to no avail. Please be vigilant and report any signs of beaver activity so that we can act swiftly and within the constraints of our organisational Class Licence. Unfortunately, there is no compensation pot for any expenses incurred by the IDB or EA in dealing with the negative effects of beavers. The beaver related costs of the Dutch Waterschappen are truly frightening. The Board opposes all beaver releases within the catchment and will be raising the matter with our MPs in due course.

Waterlife Recovery South East mink eradication project – Thankyou to all our ratepayers who are hosting mink rafts and permitting access to the volunteers. This project is the most significant landscape scale restoration project in the history of the district and is progressing very well.

And finally.... we hope to have a stand at the Romney Marsh Ploughing Match this year to answer any queries you may have about what, where, when and why we do what we do. It will be an opportunity to put names to faces and to provide us with feedback (constructive preferred).