Realising Our Objectives

Phase 1 March 2022

Starting as we mean to go on

Contents

Realising Our Objectives

In November 2021 the Board took a huge step forward by committing itself to a series of high-level objectives surrounding key elements of IDB management. The challenge that now faces us is how we realise these objectives, or more specifically, how we design and implement practical applications and tasks that will aid us in achieving these aspirations.

As a recap the Board set out objectives relating to 

1. **Climate Change**
2. **Education**
3. **Conservation**
4. **Development**
5. **District Management**
6. **Funding**
7. **Public Interaction**

It is unlikely with the current staffing levels that we can attack all 7 objectives in one go, but there is room for us to set out actions that might go towards achieving successes across multiple objectives. To that end I will set out the next steps we will be taking in our efforts towards a more holistic service.

Attacking Several Objectives

After discussions with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, it was clear that we would be best served by linking several objectives and working towards a task that brought them together. Since those initial discussions we are going to try and push towards improvement in the following areas first:

- **Climate Change**
- **Conservation**
- **District Management**

These objectives all share several attributes, namely the use of water, the storage of water, the need for water management and the need to address our maintenance routines and practices to accommodate them. In practical terms we are able to set up individual projects that address these issues.

In recent months we have actioned and commenced pilots on these objectives that looked within our existing budgets and capabilities.

The success of the pilot projects has been down to a mixture of Board driven meetings and the work of the ground teams to ensure safe and smooth implementation.

Climate Change

In order to start addressing the issue of climate change we have had to accept that we in the district are likely to flood and work from there. It is also worth pointing out that this objective seeks to improve our overall resilience to what appears to be an inevitable future issue.

This means that we have to understand the limitations of any works we do and what their likely requirements are. For example, does clearing a watercourse of obstruction contribute to issues downstream within the district? Do we need to readdress our attitude towards Riparian Law?

In previous times, there was a need for wet fencing and abstraction across a wide area. The change in both farming habits, processes, and needs has now led to a reduced need for this in certain circumstances, which in turn has led to a downward spiral for the overall maintenance of watercourse networks. We are now faced with a situation where we have a reduced capacity for storage of water in our ditch systems and also a reduced capacity to discharge from those same ditches, leading to ponding and localised flooding in areas such as roads and gardens.

We should be looking to carry out the following improvements to aid with our resilience against the climate change phenomena:

- **Increase our storage capacity** - by restoring and maintaining additional watercourse within a wider 'network' around our adopted watercourses
- **Find new ways to reduce peak flows** – this could be through the use of 'hard engineering' such as reservoirs or through the use of natural flood management. It will also include the control of development and how impermeable surface is attenuated.
- **Better forecasting of likely events** – this would look at using not only weather forecasts but also the installation of monitoring equipment to understand the water tables, recharging rates of our aquifers, and the soil moisture deficits.
- **Fund and maintain resilience measures** – this may be the funding of local flood prevention measures such as gasketing, collapsible dams, or the purchasing of jetting and pumping equipment
- **Embrace the additional water** – this could look like creation of wet habitats and other storage facilities that could offer opportunities for the slowing or reducing of flood peak flows.

Conservation

Our practice and attitude towards the environment has not always been quite what would be expected of an Internal Drainage Board.

In recent years, the work of the ground teams and their supervisor have brought us on leaps and bounds in terms of consideration for how we might be impacting the nature and habitat we interact with.

It is vital however that we are not merely meeting minimum standards, but we are in fact setting an example, not only to the industry, but to the communities in which we operate.

In order to do this we need to accept our previous failings and learn from them by:

- **Adapting practice in line with science** – utilising and embracing the scientific findings and explanations on the impact of our maintenance practices, and adopting a hybrid approach that combines flood risk with conservation management.
- **Becoming more biosecure** – by actively monitoring our watercourses, documenting the location of potentially harmful species, and taking necessary action to ensure our staff are aware of how to handle the situation.
- **Working with the community** – this includes the dissemination of information via mediums relevant to the time and demonstrating publicly our change in approach.
- **Embracing new practices and technologies** – by discussing and working with partners in the field of flood management to determine how a joined approach can fund and implement engineering in both the district and the catchment that creates multiple benefits to nature and flood risk.
- **Restoring watercourse to allow diversity** – this can be done by reintroducing water to otherwise dry ditches, creating new features for nature to live in, and allowing watercourse that was previously inactive to see seasonal change to its condition.

District Management

The wider implications of the Environment Bill are still to be seen, but what is apparent is that the IDB are going to be required to take a more active role outside of the traditional district boundaries.

As one of the few self-funding bodies, the IDB is uniquely placed to contribute to the overall management of both the district and catchments that affect the main rivers. This funding, combined with strategic adoption and expansion of responsibility towards both watercourse and area will allow us to mange the wider area and attempt to remove the worst peak flows.

By working closely with the Lead Local Flood Authorities, such as county councils, we can bring together interested parties to form joined and intertwined plans that will aim t benefit a much greater area than previously possible.

District management will revolve around several key areas:

- **Contributing to and organising stakeholder meetings** – by bringing together interested parties and bodies we can begin aligning multiple objectives across different companies and authorities.
- **Utilising the Environment Bill** – to allow us to embrace the opportunity to take on additional critical areas and levy accordingly to ensure that the benefit felt outside the district by the Board's activities is fairly funded.
- **Expand our practices and responsibilities** – by taking on additional project types we can introduce new technologies and ideas that will aid the district and catchment as a whole. These may also be of benefit across IDB objectives to aid multiple achievements.
- **Seek improvement opportunities to our watercourse network** – through local knowledge and reports we can improve upon previously unadopted and unmaintained watercourses to increase capacity and conveyance.

Bringing It All Together

Climate Change

Increase storage capacity

Reduce peak flows

Improve forecasts

Fund local resilliance

Embrace additional water

Conservation

Adapting practice

Embrace new practice

Become more biosecure

Work with communities

Restore and improve existing watercourse

Using new practice and ideas

Working with local bodies and communities

Improving existing networks

District Management

Organising stakeholders

Working within the Environment Bill

Expanding practices and responsibilities

Improving our existing watercourse

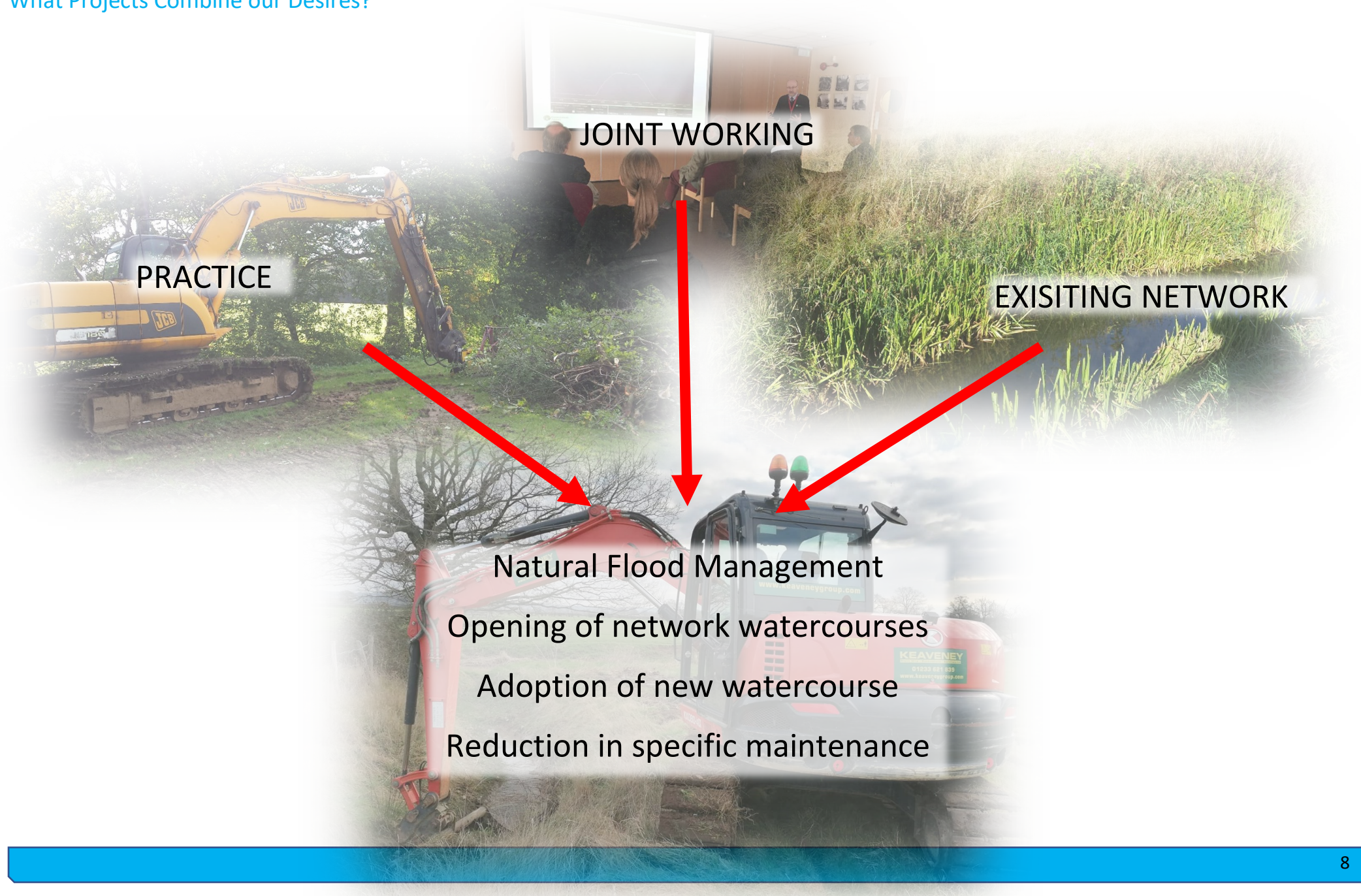
Under the existing circumstances there are 3 elements we should aim to work within:

Practice

Joint Working

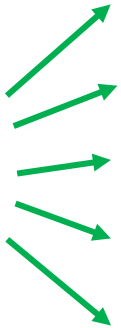
Existing Network Improvement

What Projects Combine our Desires?



To take a collective approach and present beneficial projects we need to determine several points:

1. Who are our partners and what are their desired outcomes?



Local Borough and District Councils – as yet unknown what their desires are.

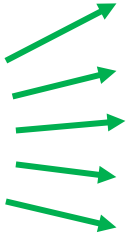
County Councils – As LLFA a reduction in peak flows and increased responsibility taken by partners, but no definitive answers.

SERT – Rewilding and regeneration of rivers. Implementation of natural flood management schemes.

Stakeholders – Farmers and landowners want improved drainage but also improved means to comply with ideas such as ELMS.

EA – Favour NFM over hard engineering. Positive towards projects that benefit assets.

2. How it's going to be funded?



Local Borough and District Councils – Do they have the additional funding?

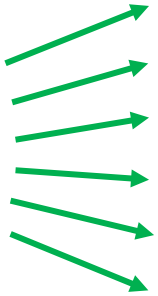
County Councils – What grants are available?

SERT – Already requested IDB funding

IDB – self-funding via levy. Offers good opportunity for longevity

EA – scheme money from EA via the grant in aid funding? NFM specific funding?

3. Who is going to implement the projects?



Local Borough and District Councils – Unlikely to have the provision

County Councils – May offer finance towards contractor?

SERT – May have contractors / partners

IDB – Can alter work force tasking at specific times of year.

EA – may prefer to have contractor carry out work

Stakeholders – May be able to carry out community days / volunteers?

Phase 2 – Summer / Autumn 2022

Partner Interaction

- Meet with Councils and determine expectations of IDB and desires for flood risk management
- Determine funding streams for projects including council provision, acceptance of IDB levy increase, EA grants
- Meet with South East Rivers Trust to set out shortlist of NFM projects that ties IDB, KCC, and SERT desires
- Receive costings and proposals from SERT to submit to the Board for approval

Watercourse and Network

- Carry out initial watercourse adoption (March 2022) (UM14 – Pile Lane, Staplehurst)
- Carry out cleansing of adopted watercourse
- Carry out assessment for the 2023 Winter/Spring network project (Currently expected to be WC26 - Rhoden Stream Network, Paddock Wood)
- Set out 2024 Winter/Spring project (WC 27 – Tudeley Brook / Whetsted Wood network)
- Amend working plan to allow for project time and reduction in maintenance of non-vital channels in 2023
- Continue with existing maintenance plan for 2022
- Carol Donaldson to conduct Year 1 ecological surveys

Phase 3 – Spring 2023

Partner Interaction

- Commit to NFM projects where benefit is displayed
- Continue to seek revenue streams for ongoing outside projects
- Create working group to assess progress and ensure spade in the ground progress

Watercourse and Network

- Commence new project using either contractor or inhouse ground teams
- Begin implementation of new works plan, including suggestions from Carol and use of contractors where required
- Begin market testing for wide spread use of contractors in general maintenance