

BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD PROTECTION AND WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT

1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose

- 1.1 This policy statement has been prepared by the Bedfordshire & River Ivel Internal Drainage Board to provide a public statement of the Board's approach to its management of flood risk and water levels within its Drainage District.

Background

- 1.2 The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has policy responsibility for flood and coastal defence in England. However, delivery is the responsibility of a number of flood and coastal defence "operating authorities" which includes the Bedfordshire & River Ivel Internal Drainage Board.
- 1.3 The Government has published a policy aim and three objectives for flood and coastal defence ❶ (clauses 1.5 & 1.6). To ensure a more certain delivery of the aims and objectives by the individual operating authorities the Government has published a series of High Level Targets ❷. The first target requires each operating authority to publish a policy statement setting out their plans for delivering the Government's policy aim and objectives in their area. This will include an assessment of the risk of flooding in their area and what plans they have to reduce the risk.
- 1.4 This policy document fulfils the requirement; copies are available from the Board's offices at Cambridge House, Cambridge Road, Bedford. We are also providing a copy to DEFRA, the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, the Environment Agency and local authorities.
- 1.5 The Government's policy aim is:
To reduce the risk to people and the developed and natural environment from flooding and coastal erosion by encouraging the provision of technically, environmentally and economically sound and sustainable defence measures.
- 1.6 The key objectives to achieve this aim are:
(a) *To encourage the provision of adequate and cost effective warning systems.*
(b) *To encourage the provision of adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound and sustainable flood and coastal defence measures.*
(c) *To discourage inappropriate development in areas at risk from flooding and coastal erosion.*

2 HOW THE BOARD WILL DELIVER THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY AIM AND OBJECTIVES.

- 2.1 The Bedfordshire & River Ivel IDB supports the Government aim and objectives for the management of flood risk and water levels. Our policy and approach will be consistent with them as follows:

Objective (a): To encourage the provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems.

- The Board will assist the Environment Agency wherever possible in its provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems. Co-operate with the Agency in responses to flood emergencies and participating as necessary in exercises to develop and test emergency response procedures, reviewing such arrangement every two years.

Objective (b): To encourage the provision of adequate economically technically and environmentally sound and sustainable flood defence measures.

- Within the drainage district potentially a large proportion of the area is at some risk to flooding and the Board will seek to retain this risk at acceptable levels through appropriate improvements and the implementation of a sound maintenance strategy. They will also seek to ensure that the Environment Agency's flood defences, which also afford protection to the district, are maintained at a satisfactory standard.
- Work will be carried out in accordance with best practice and to deliver best value for money taking due regard of local flood defence requirements, guidance available from DEFRA, the Environment Agency and other organisations.
- Regulate as necessary, using the available powers, the actions of others to ensure their works do not increase the flood risk.
- Ensure that riparian owners are aware of their responsibilities for maintenance.
- Play a positive role in fulfilling our statutory and other responsibilities for nature conservation, including achievement of the Government's environmental objectives and targets. We acknowledge our responsibilities under the Land Drainage Acts of 1991 and 1994, The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the European Birds and Habitats Directive and the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994.
- When carrying out our works we will seek to avoid wherever possible damage to environmental interests and aim to ensure no net loss to habitats covered by Biodiversity Action Plans and seek opportunities to enhance the aquatic environment.
- Ensure that for those Water Level Management Plans where we are the leading operating authority we work in partnership with English Nature to complete, implement where appropriate, and review Plans in accordance with DEFRA guidance on plan completion and the timetables set out in the High Level Targets.
- Co-operate with other bodies and make input to the development of Local Environment Agency Plans and Biodiversity Action Plans.

Objective (c): To discourage inappropriate development in areas at risk from flooding.

The potential impact on flood risk through future development in the Drainage District, or in the wider catchment draining to the District, is fully recognised by the Board and it will continue to take an active role in the assessment of structure planning, local plans and individual applications to ensure flood risk is not increased. The Board will endeavour to advise Planning Authorities in accordance with the Precautionary Principle set down in DTLR Document PPG25 – Development and Flood Risk. Where appropriate the Board will secure from Developers contributions to cover the cost of both immediate and longer term works necessary in ensuring that any potential increase in flood risk can be removed. Such contribution will be recovered either directly from developers or as recommended in PPG25.

3 FLOODING RISKS IN THE BOARD'S DISTRICT

- 3.1 As mentioned in Section 2 a large proportion of the drainage district is at some risk to flooding. The risk is controlled wherever it is practically and financially viable. However some variation in the standards of protection will apply. The following are the key details of the District:

Catchment Area draining to and including the District	77317ha
Total area of the Drainage District	17852ha
Area of Agricultural Land within the Drainage District	15004ha
Urban area within the Drainage District*	2848ha

* includes residential property, industrial property, major infrastructure, motorways and other highways.

Sites of Environmental Interest within the Drainage District:

Wetland SSSI

Flitwick Moor	50.0ha
Fancott Meadows	12.9ha

County Wildlife Sites 64 No

- 3.2 The Bedfordshire & River Ivel IDB has provided the Environment Agency with information on the major flood defence assets for which the Board are responsible. The information is available from the Environment Agency at Central Area, Bromholme Lane, Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambs.

- 3.3 Assets for which the Board has operating authority responsibility:

Water Level Control Structures	12No
*Watercourses	636km
** Critical Watercourses	None
Raised Embankments	1.18km (total length on one side of a watercourse)
*** Strategic Ordinary Watercourses	21.22km

* It should be noted that the Land Drainage Act 1991 provides the Board with statutory powers to carry out works of maintenance and improvement for land drainage and flood defence purposes, rather than imposing a duty on the Board to carry out such works.

** Critical watercourses are those from which over-spilling will put at risk of flooding a significant number of people and properties. Against clear criteria the above length has been agreed with the Environment Agency. It is the government's intention that over time these watercourses shall be enmained and become the responsibility of the Environment Agency.

*** These are ordinary watercourses within the Drainage District that when over-spilling occurs a risk of flooding will occur to a number of properties, but overall the criteria is below that considered appropriate for enmaining by the Environment Agency. These watercourses usually require high standards of maintenance in order to keep flood risk to a minimum.

Passing through or adjacent to the Drainage District are the following assets maintained by the Environment Agency:

Main Rivers	64.27km
River Raised Embankments	27.92km
(total length of embankment on one side of Main River)	

3.4 Flood Risk From These Watercourses

This section sets out the Board's assessment of flood risk taking into account the following:

- Assets in place considering design standard and life
- Environment Agency flood risk maps
- Other information such as the history of flooding and land use impacts

3.5 The areas within the drainage district which are more vulnerable to flooding due to the particular local circumstances are:

- 1) Bedford Town – parts of Cardington Road and Goldington Road
- 2) Parts of Wilstead
- 3) Parts of Great Barford (Flood Relief Scheme in progress 2006)
- 4) Parts of Girtford
- 5) Thorncote Green
- 6) Parts of Biggleswade
- 7) Parts of Beeston Green
- 8) Parts of Shefford

(This list is not exhaustive)

The Board is satisfied that there are minimal risks to human life arising from any failure in its assets or overspilling from its watercourses.

3.6 Through the operation and maintenance of flood balancing areas and the channel system the Board seeks to achieve a general standard capable of providing flood protection to agricultural land and developed areas of 1 in 5 and 1 in 100 years respectively. This likely return period cannot be taken literally and should be considered as a chance of some over-spilling from the system taking place each year as being 20% and 1% respectively. It should also be noted that the long-term effects of global warming will increase the flood risk to known vulnerable areas and may increase the risk to areas presently considered to have acceptable protection.

3.7 Reduction and Management of These Flood Risks

The Board monitors the condition of its watercourses, particularly those designated as strategic, over-spilling from which could affect property. Consistent with the established need, a routine maintenance programme is in place to ensure that the condition of the assets is commensurate with the standards of protection which are sought. Where standards are not at the policy level, improvement works, where they can be demonstrated to meet with DEFRA criteria, will be considered and undertaken as appropriate. The Board will also consider carrying out works to reduce flood risk where it is not presently possible to meet DEFRA criteria but works are considered to be practical and financially viable by the Board.

The Board welcomes any comments regarding the condition of its system which could result in the avoidance of any increased flood risk.

3.8 The Board will seek to promote the need for works in its District and create an understanding among people who live and work in it as to what the flood risk is and the efforts being undertaken to control it. They will also seek to achieve, directly and

through local councils, a culture within which the watercourses are seen as vital to controlling flood risk, whilst providing an interesting aquatic habit and amenity. Every effort will be made to dissuade abuse of watercourses, be it due to dumping of waste or obstructing flows by any other means.

4 REVIEW OF THIS POLICY STATEMENT

The Bedfordshire & River Ivel IDB will review this Policy Statement within a period not extending beyond 5 years.

References

- ❶ Strategy for Flood and Coastal Defence in England and Wales MAFF and Welsh Office, September 1993
- ❷ High Level Targets for Flood and Coastal Defence Operating Authorities and Elaboration of the Environment Agency's Flood Defence Supervisory Duty MAFF, November 1999.

JKBE/JB

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