

# **RIVER STOUR (KENT) 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 River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board to provide a public statement of the Board's approach to its management of flood risk and water levels in its Internal Drainage District (IDD).

#### 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 River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board. The Board maintained infrastructure is shown in paragraph 3.3 below.

1.3 The Government has published a policy aim and three objectives for flood and coastal defence\*. To ensure a more certain delivery of the aim and objectives by the individual operating authorities the Government has published a series of high-level targets\*\*. 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 that risk.

1.4 This policy statement fulfils that requirement. We are providing a copy to the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, the Environment Agency and Local Authorities in the district. Copies are also available from the Board's office at 34 Gordon Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 3PW.

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

2.1 The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board supports the Government's aim and objectives for flood and coastal defence. Our policy and approach will be consistent with them as follows:

## **Policy Aim**

*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.*

### **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. Integrating with the Agency in responses to flood emergencies and by participating as necessary in exercises to develop and test emergency response procedures.

### **Objective (b): To encourage the provision of adequate economically, technically and environmentally sound and sustainable flood and coastal defences.**

- In meeting its obligations the Board will consider its activities within the wider natural and developed environment seeking to ensure the avoidance of any adverse impact. It will equally co-operate with other drainage authorities and organisations to ensure adverse impacts on the drainage district do not arise as a result of other activities.

- The Board will carry out its maintenance and improvements work in an efficient and cost-effective way using appropriate “best practice” and will access appropriately qualified advice when necessary.

- To achieve this, the Board will encourage the provision of adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound and sustainable flood protection and water level management measures and will seek to ensure that development does not increase the risk of flooding.

- Within the drainage district potentially all of the area is at some risk of flooding and the Board will seek to keep this risk at acceptable levels through appropriate improvements and the implementation of a sound maintenance strategy. The Board will also seek to ensure that the Environment Agency maintains at a satisfactory standard any flood defences which would also afford protection to the district.

### **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 the Board will take an active role in the assessment of strategic planning, local plans and individual applications to ensure flood risk is not increased. Where appropriate the Board will seek to ensure that contributions are secured from developers and other beneficiaries to cover the cost of both immediate and longer term works necessary to ensure that any potential increase in flood risk can be removed.

### **3. FLOODING RISK IN THE BOARD'S DISTRICT**

3.1 As mentioned in Section 2, the entire drainage district is at some risk from flooding. Although that risk is substantially controlled, some variation in the standards of protection will apply. The following are the key details of the District:

Total Catchment Area draining into and including the District	39,000 Ha
Total Area of Drainage District	11,919 Ha
Area of Agricultural Land	9,479 Ha
Other Land including Property, Highways, etc	2,440 Ha

#### 3.2 Sites of Designated Environmental Interest:

Wetland SSSIs(3):

Preston Marshes SSSI	43 Ha
Stodmarsh NNR SSSI	604 Ha
Sandwich Bay & Hacklinge Marshes SSSI	<u>1,757 Ha</u>
Total Area	2,404 Ha

#### 3.3 Board Maintained Infrastructure

Pumping Stations	Nil
Water Level Control Structures	131
Total Number of IDB Maintained Watercourses	143
Total Length of IDB Maintained Watercourses	173 Km

#### 3.4 Environment Agency Maintained Assets

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

Main Rivers	255 Km
River Raised Embankments	38 Km
Coastal Flood Defences	18 Km
Flood Storage Reservoirs	2

### 3.5 Regulation of Activities

The Board will exercise as required its powers under the Land Drainage Act 1991 and its Byelaws to ensure that activities in and alongside its drainage system do not reduce flood protection standards and unnecessarily increase flood risk.

### 3.6 Standard of Protection

Through the operation of water control structures and the drainage system the Board seeks to maintain suitable channel standards to provide appropriate levels of flood protection to agricultural land and developed areas.

### 3.7 Management of Flood Risks

The Board closely monitors the condition of its watercourses and in particular those that may be liable to overspill and affect property. Consistent with the established need an ongoing maintenance programme is in place to ensure that the condition of the assets is commensurate with the desired standards of protection. Improvement works will be considered and undertaken as appropriate.

The Board welcomes from its agricultural ratepayers, special levy councils and members of the public any comments on the condition of its system which could help in avoiding increased flood risk.

### 3.8 Publicity

The Board will seek to promote understanding among people who live and work in its District as to what the flood risk is and efforts made to control it. The Board 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 maintaining and enhancing the aquatic habitat, and they will discourage abuse of them through dumping waste or obstructing flows in other ways. The Board publishes an annual programme of Capital and Maintenance Works.

#### 4. Environmental Measures

The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board has nature conservation duties under the Land Drainage Act 1991, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and as a competent authority under the Conservation (Natural Habitats C) Regulation 1994. The Board will fulfil these in a positive way.

Much of the Board's watercourse maintenance work of vegetation control and desilting is a vital and routine requirement. Whilst inevitably some short-term impact will arise, this management is essential also to maintain the diverse aquatic habitat in the district. The Board maintains only a small proportion of the total watercourses in the District, the significant majority being the responsibility of the riparian landowners.

When carrying out works, be it maintenance or improvement, and consistent with the need to maintain satisfactory flood protection standards, we will aim to;

- Avoid any unnecessary or long-term damage to all the natural habitats.
- Ensure no net loss of habitats covered by Biodiversity Action Plans, monitoring any gains and losses and reporting annually to the Environment Agency.
- Take appropriate opportunities to enhance habitats.

The Board will play its full role in sustaining the Water Level Management Plans prepared for the SSSI sites within its District and, with the Environment Agency and Natural England and other interested parties, review the plans in accordance with DEFRA guidance.

#### 5. Review of this Policy Statement

River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board will review this Policy Statement within a period not extending beyond 5 years\*\*\*.

References:

\*Strategy for Flood and Coastal Defence in England and Wales MAFF and Welsh Office, September 1993.

\*\*High Level Targets for Flood and Coastal Defence Operating Authorities and Elaboration of Environment Agency's Flood Defence Supervisory Duty MAFF, November 1999.

**\*\*\*An updated Policy template is under development by ADA and Defra, and further guidance is expected shortly. The Board was advised by ADA to reaffirm its existing Policy Statement until the new updated document is made available. Therefore, this Policy Statement was Reaffirmed at the Board Meeting on 25 May 2017 with a view to review when further guidance is received.**