

WOODWALTON DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD PROTECTION AND WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT

1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose

- 1.1 This policy statement has been prepared by the Woodwalton Drainage Commissioners to provide a public statement of the Board's approach to its management of flood risk and water levels in its area.

Background

- 1.2 Defra have 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 Woodwalton Drainage Commissioners.
- 1.3 The Government has published a policy aim and three objectives for flood and coastal defence. To ensure a more certain delivery of 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. Copies are available from the Board's offices at 28 Thornham Way, Eastrea, Whittlesey, Cambs, PE7 2AS. We are also providing a copy to Defra (the Department of the Environment, Transport 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 flood 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 COMMISSIONERS WILL DELIVER THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY AIM AND OBJECTIVES.

Woodwalton Drainage Commissioners supports the Government aim and objectives for 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 Commissioners 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 participate 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 defence measures.

- Within the drainage district potentially all 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 seek to monitor the performance of the Environment Agency with regard to coastal and tidal river defence assist.
- Work will be carried out in accordance with best practice and to deliver best value for money taking due regard of 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, where appropriate, 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 Governments 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 Directives and the Conservation (Natural Habitats & C) regulations 1994.
- Works will be carried out in accordance with the published Standard Maintenance Operations and we will seek to avoid wherever possible damage to environmental interest 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 MAFF 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 Shoreline Management Plans, Coastal Habitat Plans and Local Environmental Agency Plans.

Objective ©: To discourage inappropriate development in areas at risk from flooding and coastal erosion.

- The potential impact on flood risk through future development in the Drainage District is fully recognised by the Board and it will take an active role in the assessment of structure planning, local plans and individual applications to ensure flood risk is not increased. These matters will be taken in conjunction with the Middle Level Commissioners who act on behalf of the Board in planning matters. 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 recorded in accordance with DETR.MAFF Circular (successor to 30/92)

3 FLOODING RISKS IN THE BOARD'S DISTRICT

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

Catchment Area drainage to and including the District	500 ha
Total area of the District	500 ha
Area of Agricultural Land	498 ha
Other land including property, highways, etc	2 ha
Sites of Designated Environmental Interest	
Woodwalton Nature Reserve adjacent to District	
Great Fen Project – land in hand	85.5ha

3.1 Assets for which the Board has operating authority responsibility are shown on the attached map and comprise: -

Pumping Stations	1 No
Other Water Level Control Structures	0No
Watercourses	12.25 km
*Critical Watercourses	0 km

*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.

Passing through or adjacent to the District are the following assets maintained by the Middle Level Commissioners

New Dyke	1600m
Monks Lode	4000n

Natural England Embankment to Woodwalton Nature Reserve	1300m
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3.2 Regulation of Activities

The Commissioners 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.

This section sets out the Commissioner'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

3.3 Standard of Protection

Through the operation and maintenance of the pumping stations and the channel system the Commissioners seek to maintain a general standard capable of providing flood protection to agricultural land and developed areas of 1 in 20 and 1 in 100 years respectively. This likely return period cannot be taken literally and should be considered as a chance of some overspilling from the system taking place each year as being 5% and 1% respectively.

3.4 Management of Flood Risks

The Commissioners monitor the condition of its pumping station and watercourses, even those not designated as critical, 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 assist is commensurate with 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 Commissioners welcome from its agricultural ratepayers, special levy councils and members of the public any comments on the condition of its system, which could lead to any increased flood, risk.

3.6 Publicity

The Commissioners 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 made 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 habitat and dissuade abuse of them through dumping waste or obstructing flows in other ways. The Board will publish its proposed annual programme of capital and maintenance work through newsletters and membership.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES

The Woodwalton Drainage Commissioners has nature conservation duties under the Land Drainage Acts 1991 & 1994, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and as a competent authority under the Conservation (Natural Habitats C) Regulations 1994.

Much of the Commissioners watercourse maintenance work of vegetation control and de-silting 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 Commissioners maintain only a small proportion of the total watercourse length 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, the Commissioners will

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

5 REVIEW OF POLICY STATEMENT

Woodwalton Drainage Commissioners reviewed this Policy Statement in 2004 and are aware that the Great Fen Project will have a significant impact upon the Drainage District and will review this Policy on an annual basis.