

# ISLE OF AXHOLME 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 Isle of Axholme Internal Drainage Board 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 The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) 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 include the Isle of Axholme Internal Drainage Board. The Board maintained infrastructure is shown in paragraph 3.2 below.
- 1:3 The Government has published a policy aim and three objectives for flood and coastal defence (1). 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 (2). The first target requires each operating authority to publish a policy statement setting out its plans for delivering the Government's policy aim and objectives in its area. This will include an assessment of the risk of flooding in its area, and what plans it has to reduce that risk.
- 1:4 This policy fulfils this requirement. A copy of this policy has been forwarded to DEFRA, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Environment Agency (Midland Region) and the District Councils in which the Board's district is located. Copies are available from the Board's office, The Gables Business Court, Belton Road, Epworth, Doncaster, North Lincolnshire, DN9 1JL, telephone 01427 872715.

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

- 2:1 The Isle of Axholme Internal Drainage Board supports the Government's aim and objectives for flood and coastal defence. The Board's policy will be consistent with them.

#### **POLICY AIM**

**To reduce the risk to people and the developed and natural environment from flooding by encouraging the provision of technically, environmentally and economically sound and sustainable defence measures.**

Section 3 below sets out the Board's plans for reducing or managing the flood risk in the Board's district.

### **Objective (a)**

#### **To encourage the provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems.**

The Board will assist the Environment Agency (Midland Region) wherever possible in its provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems, integrating with the Agency in response to flood emergencies and 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 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 improvement works in an efficient and cost effective way and where appropriate use best practice and techniques wherever possible.

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 seek to control that development which could increase the risk of flooding.

Within the drainage district a significant part of the area is at some risk of flooding and the Board will seek to retain this risk at acceptable levels through appropriate improvements and a sound maintenance strategy. The Board will also seek to ensure that the Environment Agency maintains at a satisfactory standard any flood defences which 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 drainage to the district, is fully recognised by the Board and it will take an active role in the assessment of structure plans, local plans and individual planning applications to ensure flood risk is not increased. Where appropriate the Board will secure from developers, and other direct beneficiaries, contributions to cover the cost of both immediate and longer term works necessary to ensure that any potential increase in flood risk is removed.

### 3. FLOODING RISKS IN THE BOARD'S AREA

3:1 As mentioned in Section 2, a significant part of the Board's district is at some risk of flooding. However, that risk is substantially controlled although varying standards of protection apply. The following are the key details of the district:-

Catchment area draining to and within the district	16,514 ha
Total area of the district	16,514 ha
Area of agricultural land	15,153 ha
Other land including property, highways, etc.	1,361 ha
Sites of designated environmental interest	
Local nature reserves	<i>under review by Wildlife Trust</i>
SSSI	7
SPA	0
SAC	0
RAMSAR	1

#### 3:2 Board Maintained Infrastructure

Pumping Stations	18
Other water level control structures	3
Watercourses	300,852 metres
Strategic Ordinary Watercourses	96,531 metres

Passing through, within or adjacent to the district are the following assets maintained by the Environment Agency:-

Main rivers	60,839 metres
River flood defences	31,945 metres
Sea and tidal defences	33,404 metres

#### 3:3 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 the drainage system do not reduce flood protection standards and unnecessarily increase flood risk.

#### 3:4 Standard of Protection

Through the operation and maintenance of the pumping stations and the drainage system the Board seeks to maintain a general standard capable of providing flood protection to agricultural land and developed areas of 1 in 10 and 1 in 50 years respectively. This likely return period can not be taken literally and should be considered as a chance of some overflowing from the system taking place each year as being 10% and 2% respectively.

#### 3:5 Management of Flood Risks

The Board monitors the condition of its pumping stations and watercourses, particularly those designated as Strategic Ordinary Watercourses, overflowing 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 will be considered and undertaken as resources allow.

### 3:6 Publicity

The Board will seek to promote the need for works in its district and create a rational understanding among people who live and work in it as to what the flood risk is and the efforts made to control it. The Board will also seek to achieve directly and through local councils a culture within which the drainage systems are seen as vital to controlling flood risk, whilst providing an interesting aquatic habitat and to dissuade abuse of them through the dumping of waste or the obstructing of flows in other ways.

The Board will publish and place on deposit at its offices, notices of its proposed annual programme of capital and maintenance works as follows:-

- |                  |   |  |
|------------------|---|--|
| January/February | - | Capital works.   |
|                  | - | Programme of works for the following spring, summer and autumn vegetation control.             |
| July/August      | - | Programme of works for the following winter and spring watercourse reforming and silt removal. |

## 4. **ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES**

4:1 The Isle of Axholme Internal Drainage Board has nature conservation duties under the Land Drainage Acts 1991 and 1994, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and as a competent authority under the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulation 1994. The Board will fulfil these in a positive way.

Much of the Board's 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 also maintains the diverse aquatic habitat in the district. The Board maintains a significant proportion of the total watercourse length in the district, the remainder being the responsibility of the Environment Agency and riparian landowners.

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

- avoid any unnecessary or long term damage to the natural habitat
- take appropriate opportunities to enhance habitats
- monitor the effect of any changes made

The Board will play its full role in sustaining the water level plans prepared for SSSI and, in conjunction with English Nature and other interested parties, review the plans in accordance with DEFRA guidance.

## **5. REVIEW OF POLICY STATEMENT**

5:1 The Isle of Axholme Internal Drainage Board will review this policy statement within a period not extending beyond five years.

### References:-

- (1) Strategy for Flood and Coastal Defence in England and Wales M.A.F.F. and Welsh Office, September 1993.
- (2) High Level Targets for Flood and Coastal Defence Operating Authorities and Elaboration of the Environment Agency's Flood Defence Supervisory Duty M.A.F.F., November 1999.