

# HADDENHAM LEVEL DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS

## POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD PROTECTION AND WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose**

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

#### **Background**

- 1.2 The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food 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 Haddenham Level Drainage Commissioners. The Commissioners 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<sup>1</sup>. 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<sup>2</sup>. 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 Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and the Environment Agency and local authorities in the district. Copies are also available from the Commissioners' office at Highland House, 80 Aldreth Road, Haddenham, Ely, Cambs, CB6 3PN.

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

- 2.1 The Haddenham Level Drainage Commissioners support the Government's aim and objectives for flood and coastal defence. Our policy and approach will be consistent with them.

#### **Policy Aim**

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

Section 3 below sets out our plans for reducing or managing the flood risk in the Commissioners' District.

#### **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. 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 and coastal defences.*

- ❖ In meeting its obligations the Commissioners will consider their 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 Commissioners will carry out their maintenance and improvement works in an efficient and cost effective way and where appropriate use best practice and accessing appropriately qualified advice when necessary.
- ❖ To achieve this the Commissioners 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 potentially all the area is at some risk to flooding and the Commissioners 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 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 draining to the district, is fully recognised by the Commissioners and they will take an active role in the assessment of structure planning, local plans and individual applications to ensure flood risk is not increased. Where appropriate the Commissioners will secure from Developers, and other direct beneficiaries, contributions to cover the cost of both immediate and longer term works necessary in ensuring that any potential increase in flood risk is removed.

## 3 FLOODING RISKS IN THE COMMISSIONERS' AREA

3.1 As mentioned in Section 2, the entire area is at some risk to flooding but that risk is substantially controlled but varying standards of protection apply. The following are the key details of the District:

Catchment Area draining to and including the District	4360.ha
Total area of the District	3035 ha
Area of Agricultural land	3015 ha
Other land including property, highways, etc	20 ha

3.2 Commissioners Maintained Infrastructure

Pumping Stations	2 No.
Other Water level Control Structures	6 No.
Watercourses	30 km
Critical Watercourses	0 km
Raised Embankments	0 km

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

Main Rivers	19 km
River Flood defences	13 km
Sea and Tidal Defences	6 km

3.3 **Regulation of Activities**

The Commissioners will exercise as required their 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.

3.4 **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.

### 3.5 **Management of Flood Risk**

The Commissioners monitor the condition of their pumping stations and watercourses, particularly those 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 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 MAFF criteria, will be considered and undertaken as appropriate.

The Commissioners welcome from their agricultural ratepayers, special levy councils and members of the public any comments on the condition of its system that could lead to any increased flood risk.

### 3.6 **Publicity**

The Commissioners will seek to promote the need for works in their 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. 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 Commissioners will publish their proposed annual programme of capital and maintenance work to all ratepayers.

## 4 **ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES**

The Haddenham Level Drainage Commissioners have 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 Commissioners will fulfil these in a positive way.

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, we will aim to

- ❖ avoid any unnecessary or long term damage to all the natural habitats
- ❖ take appropriate opportunities to enhance habitats.

## 5 **REVIEW OF POLICY STATEMENT**

The Haddenham Level Drainage Commissioners 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** MAFF 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** MAFF, November 1999.