RAMSEY FIRST (HOLLOW) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD PROTECTION AND WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT

JULY 2014

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1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

1.1 This policy statement has been prepared by Ramsey First (Hollow) Internal Drainage Board to provide a public statement of the Board's approach to their management of flood risk and water levels in their District.

Background

1.2 The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has policy responsibility for flood risk management and coast protection in England. However, delivery is the responsibility of a number of flood and coastal defence "operating authorities" which includes the Ramsey First (Hollow) Internal Drainage Board. The Board's maintained infrastructure is shown in para 3.8 below and on the plan attached to this Statement.

1.3 The Government is taking forward a strategy for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England called "Making Space for Water".

1.4 The Board has reviewed its policy statement setting out its plans for delivering the Government's policy aim in its area. The review includes updating the assessment of the risk of flooding in the area, and its approach to reducing or managing that risk.

1.5 This policy statement fulfils that requirement.

1.6 Copies of this Statement are available from the Board's office at Middle Level Offices March Cambridgeshire PE15 0AH and on its website (www.middlelevel.gov.uk). Copies have also been sent to the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Middle Level Commissioners, the Environment Agency and to local authorities in the Board's District.

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

2.1 Ramsey First (Hollow) IDB acknowledge and support the Government's aim for flood risk management. The Board's policy and approach will be consistent with this aim, taking into account the resources of the Board. The Government's strategy aims:-

To manage the risks from flooding and coastal erosion by employing an integrated portfolio of approaches which reflect both national and local priorities so as:

- to reduce the threat to people and their property, and
- to deliver the greatest environmental, social and economic benefits, consistent with the Government's sustainable development principles

To secure efficient and reliable funding mechanisms that deliver the levels of investment required to achieve the vision of this strategy.

2.2 The Board will adopt a strategic approach to flood risk management. This approach should provide economic, environmental and social benefits to the District. It should also take account of natural processes, use resources wisely and avoid, as far as possible, committing future generations to inappropriate options for flood risk management.

2.3 The Board will assist the Environment Agency, the Lead Local Flood Authorities, and the Middle Level Commissioners wherever possible in their provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems, integrating with the Agency, the Lead Local Flood

Authorities and the Commissioners in response to flood emergencies and participating as necessary in exercises to develop and test emergency response procedures.

2.4 Development Control/development planning

The Board will seek to prevent inappropriate development and land use that could increase flood risk including where such development would lead to an increased discharge from the public sewage system or sewage treatment works to the Board's watercourse network. It will encourage well planned development by working to influence policy planning and decisions. It will do this by:

- Liaising with appropriate bodies to influence long-term development through appropriate Planning Strategies.
- Using the Board's role in the town and country planning process to seek to ensure that:
  - development does not take place which has an unacceptable risk of flooding leading to danger to life, damage to property and wasteful expenditure on remedial works
  - development does not create or exacerbate flooding elsewhere
  - development does not take place which prejudices possible works to reduce flood risk
  - development does not cause unacceptable detriment to the environment.
  - development does not lead to increased costs being incurred by the Board.
- Requiring applicants for consent from the Board, whether under the Land Drainage Act 1991, the Highways Act 1980, the Water Industry Act 1991, the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 or the Board's byelaws, or any other relevant legislation to provide appropriate flood risk assessments as part of their application.

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. 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 in

ensuring that any potential increase in flood risk is alleviated. The Board will, on the implementation of such powers, work with the designated SUDS Approval board to ensure that any potential increase in flood risk arising from development is reduced.

3. THE BOARD'S ASSESSMENT OF THE RISK OF FLOODING IN ITS DISTRICT AND WHAT IT WILL DO TO REDUCE OR MANAGE THAT RISK

3.1 Within the drainage District potentially all the area is at some risk of flooding and the Board will seek to retain this risk at acceptable levels through the undertaking of appropriate improvements and the implementation of a sound maintenance strategy. They will also seek to ensure that the Environment Agency and the Middle Level Commissioners maintain at a satisfactory standard any flood defences which also afford protection to the District. It is of course not possible for all risk of flooding to be eliminated. In particular, the Board are very concerned indeed about the very poor condition of the banks of the Bury Brook main river adjoining the District and that in consequence, there is a significant risk that flooding of the District from the Brook will result. The Board call upon the Agency to take appropriate steps to alleviate the flood risk. The Board will also make input to Local Flood Risk Strategies relevant to its catchment.

3.2 The Board will raise appropriate drainage rates and special levies to fund their flood risk management works, which will be based on knowledge of need.

3.3 The Board's powers to carry out flood risk management works are permissive (ie the Board is not obliged to carry out works) and their resources limited. The Board's policy is therefore to designate what the Board consider the most important watercourses in the District as "District Drains" and apply their resources primarily to the proper maintenance and, where necessary, improvement of such channels and associated structures. The

watercourses and structures so designated will change to meet changing needs over time as necessary but the watercourses and structures at present so designated are shown on the plan attached to this Statement. Other watercourses usually are the responsibility of other bodies or the adjoining owners and the Board will only take action in respect of these latter watercourses where resources are available and where it is in all the circumstances appropriate for the Board to become involved, bearing in mind the powers available to other persons or bodies. The Board has a supervisory duty, under section 1(2)(d) of the Land Drainage Act 1991 over all matters relating to the drainage of land in their District and will, under this duty where appropriate advise others regarding the undertaking of works when it is not appropriate for the Board to exercise its own powers.

3.4 In carrying out its functions the Board will consider its activities within the wider natural and developed environment seeking to ensure the avoidance of any adverse impact. The Board will equally co-operate with other drainage authorities and organisations in seeking to ensure that adverse impacts on the drainage District do not arise as a result of other activities.

3.5 The Board will carry out their maintenance and improvement works in an efficient and cost effective way to secure best value for money using best practice and accessing appropriate specialist advice when necessary.

3.6 The Board will so far as is practicable and appropriate undertake and encourage the provision of adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound and sustainable flood protection and water level management measures and so far as its powers permit seek to control development which could increase the risk of flooding.

3.7 As mentioned in this Section, the entire District is at some risk of flooding but that risk is substantially controlled. The following are the key details of the District:

Catchment Area draining to and including the District	2,845 ha
Total area of the District	1,625 ha
Area of Agricultural Land	1,582 ha
Other land including property, highways, etc	43 ha

(NB – Culverts under roads are generally the responsibility of the relevant Highway Authority ie the County Council or the Highways Agency)

3.8 Board Maintained Infrastructure

Pumping Stations	1 No
Other Water Level Control Structures	3 No
Watercourses	24 km

Adjacent to the District are the following assets maintained by the Middle Level Commissioners:-

Forty Foot River	(on the northern boundary)

Adjacent to the District are the following assets maintained by the Environment Agency:-

Bury Brook	(on the north western catchment boundary)

3.9 The Board will exercise as required its powers under the Land Drainage Act 1991, the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and any other relevant legislation and its Byelaws to seek to ensure that activities in and alongside its drainage system do not reduce flood protection standards and unnecessarily increase flood risk. The Board will where appropriate designate structures or features using section 30 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

3.10 Through the operation and maintenance of the pumping station and the channel system the Board seek to maintain a general standard capable of providing flood protection to their

District of 1 in 35-50 years in conjunction with the works of the Middle Level Commissioners in providing protection from the Middle Level system of 1 in 100 years. This likely return period can not be taken literally and should be considered as a chance of some overspilling from the District system taking place each year as being 2-3%.

Areas which are more vulnerable due to the particular local circumstances are areas adjacent to the north-western catchment boundary (see paragraph 3.1 above).

3.11 The Board monitor the condition of their pumping station and watercourses, particularly those watercourses, overspilling from which could affect property. Consistent with the established need, a routine maintenance programme is in place to ensure that the condition of the Board's 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 where it is appropriate to do so.

The Board welcome from their agricultural ratepayers, special levy councils, Lead Local Flood Authorities, and members of the public any comments on the condition of their system which could lead to any increased flood risk.

3.12 The Board 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. It 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 dissuade abuse of them through dumping waste or obstructing flows in other ways. Individuals have an important part to play in recognising and understanding their role in helping to protect themselves from flooding and its impacts. People need to recognise and appreciate

- the vital role of watercourses in controlling flood risk
- the need to avoid blockages whether by dumping rubbish or obstructing flows in other ways

The Board will publish their proposed annual programme of capital and maintenance work at their offices and in such other ways as from time to time may be deemed appropriate.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES

The Ramsey First (Hollow) IDB have nature conservation duties under the Land Drainage Act 1991, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2003, the Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and as a competent authority under the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994. The Board will fulfil these in a positive way.

Much of the Board's watercourse maintenance work constitutes vegetation control and de-silting and 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 also receive advice from their Conservation Officer and have a Biodiversity Action Plan and a Conservation Manual which indicate the way in which their functions can be carried out in a way appropriate to the environment and how the environment can be enhanced. The Board maintain only a small proportion of the total watercourse length in the District, the significant majority being the responsibility of the adjoining land owners or of other bodies.

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 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.

5. REVIEW OF POLICY STATEMENT

Ramsey First (Hollow) IDB will review this Policy Statement every 5 years or following any significant changes in Government policy for flood risk management.