RAMSEY UPWOOD AND GREAT RAVELEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

POLICY STATEMENT ON WATER LEVEL AND FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

JANUARY 2019

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1. Introduction

Purpose

1.1 This policy statement has been prepared by the Ramsey Upwood and Great Raveley Internal Drainage Board (the Board) to provide a public statement of the Board's approach to its management of water levels and flood risk within the Ramsey Upwood and Great Raveley Internal Drainage District (the District). The Board is constituted by order of Parliament operating under the terms of the Land Drainage Act 1991 and is designated as a flood risk and coastal erosion 'Risk Management Authority' (RMA) under the Flood & Water Management Act 2010.

1.2 The Board serves the local community by managing water levels in ordinary watercourses and other water infrastructures within the District to mitigate against the risks from flooding and drought. In delivering its functions the Board will meet its environmental obligations and commitments and seek opportunities to enhance the environment. The Board recognises its responsibility for good governance, local accountability and financial security, achieving value for money from all its activities. As an independent public body the Board is committed to the pursuit of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

1.3 It should be noted that although this document refers to 'flood and coastal erosion risk management' (FCERM) the District is not affected by coastal erosion or tidal flooding.

Background

1.4 The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has policy responsibility for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England. The Environment Agency is responsible for taking a strategic overview of the management of all sources of flooding and coastal erosion. Lead Local Flood Authorities (unitary authorities or county councils) are responsible for developing, maintaining and applying a strategy for local flood risk management in their areas. Delivery is the responsibility of a number of flood risk and

coastal erosion "Risk Management Authorities" (RMA), which includes the Ramsey Upwood and Great Raveley Internal Drainage Board.

1.5 This Policy Statement sets out the Board's approach to meeting the national policy aims and objectives in this area, as stated in the *National flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England 2011* (the National Strategy); the statement will be revised to reflect future revisions of the National Strategy. It summaries what plans the Board has in place to manage water levels and reduce flood risk, whilst protecting and enhancing the environment, and ensuring good governance and local accountability. Copies of this Policy Statement are available from the Board's office at Middle Level Offices, March Cambridgeshire, PE15 0AH. Digital copies can be downloaded from the Board's website.

2. Governance and local accountability

2.1 The Board will ensure that its policies and procedures enable effective representation of and accountability to drainage rate payers and the occupiers of non-agricultural land within the District, including triennial elections in line with the requirements of the Land Drainage Act 1991, and timely engagement with charging authorities to fill vacancies in seats allocated to appointed members.

2.2 Board members must take decisions objectively in their best interests and uphold the ethical standards expected of public officeholders. Board members must adhere to the Board's Code of Conduct, including the seven principles of public life (Nolan Principles). The Board will make sure that there is suitable training in place for board members and staff, including on financial and environmental matters as appropriate.

2.3 Board members must declare financial and other interests relevant to their function with the Board. Board members will recuse themselves as appropriate where conflicts of interest may occur in relation to procurement, contract management and decision making.

3. Delivery the National Strategy's policy aim and objectives

Aim

3.1 The overall aim of the National Strategy is to ensure the risk of flooding and coastal erosion is properly managed by using the full range of options in a co-ordinated way. The Strategy states that communities, individuals, voluntary groups and private and public sector

organisations will work together to manage the risk to people and their property; facilitate decision-making and action at the appropriate level; and achieve environmental, social and economic benefits, consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

Objectives

3.2 The Strategy sets out five objectives in pursuance of the overall aim as follows:

- understand the risks of flooding and coastal erosion, working together to put in place long term sustainable plans to manage these risks and making sure that other plans take account of them;
- avoid inappropriate development in areas of flood and coastal erosion risk and being careful to manage land elsewhere to avoid increasing risks;
- build, maintain and improve flood and coastal erosion management infrastructure and systems to reduce the likelihood of harm to people and damage to the economy, environment and society as well as achieving wider environmental benefits;
- increase public awareness of the risk that remains and engaging with people at risk to encourage them to take action to manage the risks that they face and to make their property more resilient; and
- improving the detection, forecasting and issue of warnings of flooding, co-ordinating a rapid response to flood emergencies and promoting faster recovery from flooding.

3.3 The Board supports the national aim and objectives for the management of flood risk and water levels and the Board's policy and approach will be consistent with them.

4. Flood risk and water level management in the Board's District

4.1 The District has been determined to derive benefit, or avoid danger, as a result of drainage operations. As such the whole of the District is at some risk from flooding, but that risk is managed wherever it is practically, environmentally and financially viable[1].

[1] It should be noted that the Land Drainage Act 1991 provides the Board with statutory powers to carry out works of maintenance and improvement for land drainage and flood defence purposes, rather than imposing a duty on the Board to carry out such works.

4.2 The Board makes decisions regarding flood risk within the District taking into account the following:

- assets in place considering design standard and life;
- Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority flood risk strategies, plans and maps; and
- other information such as the history of flooding and land use impacts.

4.3 The following outlines the key details of the District:

- Total area of the drainage district: 1295 ha
- Catchment area draining to and including the District: 1900 ha
- Area of Agricultural Land: 1218 ha
- Area of other (non-agricultural) land: 77 ha

  [List above can include summary of other land: e.g. residential and commercial property, amenity land, major road and rail infrastructure, other highways, area of designated environmental sites etc]

4.4 Assets for which the Board have operational responsibility:

- Water Level Control Structures: 2 No
- Watercourses (maintained): 22 km
- Raised embankments: 1.3 km
- Reservoirs 0 ha
- Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) 0 No
- Pumping Stations: 3 No

4.5 Assets within or adjacent to the District that are maintained by the Environment Agency:

- Main Rivers: 0 km
- Raised embankments/flood walls 0 km
- Pumping Stations: 0 No

5. Building, maintaining and improving flood and coastal erosion risk management systems

5.1 Through the operation, maintenance and improvement of watercourses and other water control assets within the District, the Board seeks to achieve a general standard of water level management that enables the drainage and irrigation of agricultural land, reduces flood risk to developed areas, and sustains environmental features throughout the District.

5.2 The Board monitors and review the condition of its watercourses and other assets, particularly those designated as critical, over-spilling from which could affect people and property. Consistent with the resultant needs established, a routine maintenance programme is in place to ensure that the condition of the assets is commensurate with the standards required. The programme is reviewed periodically by the Board to ensure it is delivering the appropriate condition.

5.3 Where standards are not at the desired level, improvement works will be sought where they are considered to be practical and financially viable by the Board. Where improvement works meet the criteria set by Defra, financial support will be sought from the Government's Flood and Coastal Resilience Partnership Funding. Where appropriate works will be undertaken in partnership with other Risk Management Authorities and take opportunities to work with natural processes.

5.4 Work for and by the Board will be carried out in accordance with best practice and to deliver best value for money taking due regard of local flood risk management requirements and strategies, opportunities for partnership working, environmental obligations and guidance available from Defra, the Environment Agency and other organisations.

5.5 The Board's powers to carry out water level and flood risk management works are permissive (i.e. the Board are not obliged to carry out works) and their resources are limited. The Board's policy is therefore to designate what they consider to be the most important watercourses in the District as "District Drains" and prioritise their resources to the appropriate maintenance and, where necessary, improvement of such channels and associated structures. The watercourses and structures so designated will change over time as necessary but the current designated watercourses and structures are shown on the plan attached to this Statement.

5.6 Other watercourses usually are the responsibility of other bodies or the adjoining owners. 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.

5.7 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.

5.8 The Board will also seek to ensure, where possible, that assets managed by other risk Management Authorities, which also reduce flood risk to the District, are maintained at a satisfactory standard and may enter into a Public Sector Co-operation Agreement with another Risk Management Authority to achieve better value for money when carrying out work to reduce flood risk.

6. Regulation of activities – Avoiding inappropriate development and land management

6.1 The Board will take appropriate steps to help riparian owners understand their responsibilities for maintenance, byelaw compliance and environmental regulations.

6.2 The Board will regulate as necessary, using available legislative powers and byelaws, the activity of others to ensure their actions within, alongside, and otherwise impacting its drainage system do not increase flood risk, prevent the efficient working of drainage systems, or adversely impact the environment.

6.3 The potential impact on flood risk from future development both within the District and the wider catchment draining into the District, is fully recognised by the Board. The Board will take an active role in the assessment of local plans, major development and, individual (planning) applications, to prevent inappropriate development and land use to ensure that flood risk is not increased. This will include, where appropriate, providing pre-application advice and checking of flood risk assessments.

6.4 Where appropriate the Board will seek contributions from developers to cover the cost of both immediate and longer term works necessary to mitigate against any resultant increase

in flood risk. Such contributions will be recorded in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and associated technical guidance.

6.5 The Board will where appropriate designate structures or features affecting flood risk using section 30 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

7 Communication and transparency

7.1 The Board will publicise the local risks from flooding, the reasons for managing water levels within the District and articulate the efforts being undertaken by the Board to manage water levels and flood risk as well as the steps the local community and land managers can take to assist in its management.

7.2 The Board will be open and transparent in its actions and decisions. The Board will comply with the requirements set out in the relevant Local Government transparency code.

7.3 The Board will provide an overview of the objectives and costs of its water level management operations by publishing on its website:-

- A record of the watercourses it periodically maintains;
- A statement of the types of general maintenance activities it routinely undertakes and why;
- Its Annual Report to Defra (IDB1 Form); and
- Approved Board minutes and papers.

7.4 The Board will seek views and respond to enquiries from the local general public in this regard and work with local partners to build a culture within which watercourses are seen as vital to managing flood risk, and enhancing habitat and amenity. Every effort will be made to dissuade abuse of watercourses.

7.5 The Board invites any comments regarding the condition of its system, which could assist with the management of water levels.

8. Working together

8.1 The Board will co-operate and share information with other relevant authorities in the exercise of their flood and coastal erosion flood risk management functions. The Board will contribute to strategies, plans and consultations relevant to its catchment and functions.

8.2 The Board will assist the Environment Agency wherever possible in its provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems, and assist Risk Management Authorities where necessary during flood emergencies. The Board will participate as necessary in exercises to develop and test emergency response procedures.

8.3 The Board has provided the Environment Agency and other local Risk Management Authorities with information on the major flood defence assets for which the Board is responsible. The information is available from the Environment Agency.

8.4 The Board will seek to work with all relevant local organisations, in carrying out its flood and coastal erosion risk management functions and environmental obligations.

9. Environmental Measures

9.1 The Board has 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 Flood and Water Management Act 2010, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, and as a competent authority under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. The Board will fulfil these in a positive way.

9.2 Much of the Board's watercourse maintenance work constitutes vegetation control and de-silting and is often a vital and routine requirement. Whilst inevitably some short or long term impacts may arise, this management is often essential to maintain the distinct assemblage of aquatic habitat and species present in the District. Such work will be carried out in a way that manages the potential risks to the environment. The Board has access to environmental expertise from their Conservation Officer and have a Biodiversity Action

Plan, developed according to ADA and Natural England guidelines, which indicates 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.

9.3 When carrying out work, 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 agricultural interests and to natural habitats and species;
- Carry out the monitoring of any gains and losses of biodiversity and report annually to the Environment Agency; and
- Take appropriate opportunities to achieve multiple environmental outcomes and work with natural processes, wherever possible, including the enhancement of habitats and water bodies within the District.

9.4 The District encompasses no sites of national and international biological or geological interest including:

9.5 The Board has no Water Level Management Plans.

9.6 The Board will play its full role in sustaining the Water Level Management Plans prepared for SSSIs to maintain, or bring sites into, favourable condition, in conjunction with Natural England and other interested parties and review the plans in accordance with guidance.

10. Approval and Review of this Policy Statement

10.1 This protocol was adopted by the Ramsey Upwood and Great Raveley Board.

10.2 The Ramsey Upwood and Great Raveley IDB will review and update this Policy Statement as and when changes to policies are made and notwithstanding within a period not extending beyond five years.