



North Norfolk District Council

Policy Statement

On

Flood and Coastal Defence

February 2001

North Norfolk District Council
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NORTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD AND COASTAL DEFENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

1.1 This policy statement has been prepared by North Norfolk District Council to provide a public statement of the Council's approach to flood and coastal defence 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" ie the Environment Agency, local authorities and internal drainage boards. Responsibilities differ according to the type of operating authority and North Norfolk DC's responsibilities are set out in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 below.

1.3 The Government has published a policy aim and three objectives for flood and coastal defence¹. 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 Targets². 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 their assessment of flooding and coastal erosion risk in their area, and the plans for reducing or managing that risk.

1.4 This policy statement fulfils that requirement. Copies are also available from the Council's offices at Holt Road, Cromer and on the Internet at [address]. We are also providing a copy to:

- the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food;
- the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions; and
- the Environment Agency.
- the Kings Lynn Consortium of Internal Drainage Boards³

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

2.1 North Norfolk DC acknowledges and supports the Government's aim and objectives for flood and coastal defence (as set out below). Our policy and approach will be consistent with them, as follows:

Government's policy aim: 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.

Section 3 below sets out our plans for reducing or managing the risk of flooding and coastal erosion risk in the Council's area.

Objective (a): *To encourage the provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems.*

Provision of flood warning systems for rivers is the responsibility of the Environment Agency and for the coast is the responsibility of the Norfolk Police. However, North Norfolk DC recognises its related and important role in emergency planning and response. We will therefore:

- ensure that our emergency response plans include appropriate arrangements for flooding emergencies and that such plans are reviewed, in consultation with the Norfolk Police, the Environment Agency and Norfolk County Council at least every two years;
- maintain an awareness of the Police and Environment Agency's flood warning dissemination plans for our area and contribute to their implementation as necessary; and
- play an agreed role in any flood warning emergency exercises organised by the Norfolk Police or Environment Agency covering our area.

Objective (b): *To encourage the provision of adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound and sustainable flood and coastal defence measures.*

North Norfolk DC will:

- provide an adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound approach to providing the flood and coastal defence service. We will:
 - ◇ adopt a strategic approach to provision of flood and coastal defences, particularly by assessing any potentially wider effects of proposed defences. To this end we will continue to play a full role in Shoreline Management Plans, and Local Environment Agency Plans, for our area;
 - ◇ aim to provide sustainable flood and coastal defences which provide social and/or economic benefits to people whilst taking account of natural processes and which avoid committing future generations to inappropriate defence options;
 - ◇ ensure work is carried out in accordance with best practice and to deliver best value for money including (a) keeping up-to-date with policy and technical developments in flood and coastal defence, in particular by reference to MAFF guidance, other Government publications and relevant technical manuals; (b) consulting the Environment Agency on flood defence options to ensure that best practice is adopted and shared; and (c) using appropriately qualified experts to advise on analysis and design of works or programmes of management;
 - ◇ consider alternative approaches to funding, such as Public Private Partnerships;

- ◇ where appropriate seek contributions from developers or other direct beneficiaries of works, in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 25*.
- ◇ ensure that appropriate maintenance regimes are in place for flood and coastal defences for which the Council takes responsibility;
- ◇ inform landowners of what responsibilities for maintenance rest with them (see paragraph 3.1 below);
- ◇ make available in public committee reports the Council's expenditure plans for flood and coastal defence maintenance and capital works.
- play a positive role in fulfilling our statutory and other responsibilities for furthering nature conservation, including achievement of the Government's environmental obligations and targets. In particular we will:
 - ◇ fulfil our responsibilities in relation to nationally and internationally important conservation areas, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and as a competent authority under the terms of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994;
 - ◇ co-operate with English Nature and the Environment Agency in completing and implementing Coastal Habitat Management Plans (CHaMPs) covering our area, drawing on English Nature/Environment Agency guidance for plan production;
 - ◇ when carrying out flood and coastal defence works, seek opportunities for environmental enhancement, and aim to avoid damage to environmental interest and to ensure no net loss to habitats covered by Biodiversity Action Plans. We will monitor all losses and gains of such habitats as a result of these operations and report on them annually to the Environment Agency.

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

As the local planning authority for our area, North Norfolk DC will take account of flooding and coastal erosion risks in all matters relating to development control, including development plans and individual planning applications, in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Notes 20 and 25*.

3. OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE RISK OF FLOODING AND COASTAL EROSION IN OUR AREA AND WHAT WE WILL DO TO REDUCE OR MANAGE THAT RISK

Flood and coastal defence responsibilities

3.1 Apart from certain obligations to protect internationally important habitats under the EU Habitats Directive, all flood and coastal defence works are undertaken under permissive powers. This means that operating authorities, such as North Norfolk District Council, are not obliged to carry out flood and coastal defence works. It is also important to note that the Council does not normally accept responsibility for maintenance of flood defences on private land; this is the responsibility of the landowner.

3.2 North Norfolk District Council is a relevant operating authority for:

- flood defences on ordinary watercourses which are not within the area of an internal drainage board; and

North Norfolk District Council is the sole relevant operating authority for:

- coast protection (i.e. measures against coastal erosion) on all frontages in the authority's area.

3.3 The flood and coastal defences that are owned or managed by the Council are detailed in our return for the database, which is maintained by the Environment Agency.

3.4 The Environment Agency is the relevant operating authority for flood defences on watercourses that are designated as Main Rivers. Other watercourses are designated as Ordinary Watercourses. Culverts under roads are generally the responsibility of the relevant Highways Authority (Norfolk County Council or Highways Agency).

Assessment of flood risk

3.5 There are many km of Ordinary Watercourses within North Norfolk. North Norfolk DC is one of several relevant operating authorities: the Environment Agency, internal drainage boards, Norfolk County Council. Many rivers and streams are designated as Main River and thus the responsibility of the Environment Agency. The internal drainage boards are co-ordinated through the King Lynn Consortium of Drainage Boards.

3.6 The Council is in discussion with the Environment Agency in respect of any "critical ordinary watercourses" within the Council's area (ie watercourses which are not classified as "main river", but which the Council has agreed with the Environment Agency to be critical because they have the potential to put at risk from flooding large numbers of people and property).

3.7 The main areas at risk of flooding are shown on the Environment Agency's indicative flood plain maps and Section 105 maps. The indicative maps cover the whole administrative area of North Norfolk DC and show areas at risk from fluvial flooding. The Section 105 maps show only those areas at risk from marine flooding. The Council emphasises the need for the Environment Agency's flood warnings to be heeded, where these are provided (see below).

Action to reduce or manage flood risks

3.8 The main means by which flood risks will be managed is through the Environment Agency's flood warning dissemination plan⁴ of September 2000 and the Norfolk Police plan (Seawitch)⁵ of December 2000. These makes arrangements for warnings to be provided in The Broads and coastal areas within this Council's area, including (for river flooding) individual warnings to high risk properties. North Norfolk DC has included plans for responding to both major and minor flooding in its emergency planning procedures and has

arrangements for cascading warnings received from the Environment Agency and the Police to the relevant Council services.

3.9 The Council will ensure that regular maintenance is carried out on the flood defences and channels which we own, so that they operate at optimum efficiency. Where there is a proven need the Council will ensure that regular maintenance is carried out on other flood defences. Where the responsibility for maintenance rests with a landowner, we will aim to secure co-operation in ensuring appropriate maintenance takes place, drawing on enforcement powers if necessary.

3.10 The Council has no work programme for flood alleviation works.

3.11 By following Government guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note 25* (PPG 25) on development in flood risk areas, the Council, acting as a local planning authority, will ensure that risks are further minimised. This includes measures for ensuring sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) to control surface water run off. Guidance on SUDS is given in PPG 25.

Assessment of coastal erosion risks

3.12 The Council has a total coastal frontage of 68 km. Management of 34 km is the responsibility of the Environment Agency to provide defence against flooding. Of the 34 km of shoreline in the Council's area and for which it is the operational authority under the Coast Protection Act, 22 km is defended against erosion. The remainder (12 km) is undefended. As identified in the 1996 Shoreline Management Plans^{6,7} 15 km of the coast has a policy of Hold the Line. The remaining frontage has policies of Managed Retreat (13 km) or Do Nothing (6 km).

3.13 Land at risk of erosion was identified in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 20 and is shown in the 1998 Local Plan.⁸ The area at risk is updated by the Council's Coastal Management Unit in response to events.

Action to reduce or manage coastal erosion risks

3.15 So far as it is possible, the Council aims to reduce erosion by discouraging cliff top development which will increase water penetration in to the cliff. It encourages the use of positive drainage systems and discourages the use of soakaways for the disposal of surface water and septic tank discharges.

4. PARTNERSHIPS AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 The Council has set out its policy and approach to flood and coastal defence. We recognise that working in partnership with central Government and other operating authorities is essential. Our local population also has an important part to play, in recognising the vital importance of watercourses in controlling flood risk and the need to avoid blockages, whether by dumping rubbish or obstructing flows in other ways. We ask

members of the public to let us know of any problems which might increase the risk of flooding or coastal erosion.

4.2 North Norfolk DC intend to review this policy statement in three years' time, when it will be revised and reissued as necessary. Meanwhile, the Council welcomes any comments on the approach and policies set out in this statement.

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

3 Kings Lynn Consortium of Internal Drainage Boards, Kettlewell House, Austin Field Industrial Estate, Kings Lynn. PE30 1PH

4 Environment Agency Local Flood Plan (Norfolk Police Area) EA September 2000

5 Seawitch Norfolk Police December 2000

6 North Norfolk Shoreline Management Plan Sub cell 3a (Sheringham to Snettisham) EA, NNDC KL & WNBC & EN July 1996

7 Sheringham to Lowestoft Shoreline Management Plan (Sub Cell 3b) NNDC, GYBC, WDC & EA May 1996

8 North Norfolk Local Plan NNDC April 1998

* At the time of preparation of this Policy, DETR had yet to issue PPG 25 which will replace Circular 30/92 on Development and Flood Risk.