



POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD AND COASTAL DEFENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

1.1 This policy statement has been prepared by Dover District Council to provide a public statement of the Council's approach to flood and coastal defence in its area.

Background

1.2 The Department of 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" ie the Environment Agency, local authorities and internal drainage boards. Responsibilities differ according to the type of operating authority and Dover District Council'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 White Cliffs Business Park, Dover, Kent CT16 3PJ and on the Internet at www.dover.gov.uk. We are also providing a copy to:

- The Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA);
- the Environment Agency.

- the River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board

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

2.1 Dover 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 is the responsibility of the Environment Agency. However, Dover DC recognises its related and important role in emergency planning and response. We will therefore:

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

Dover 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 both within the South East Coastal Group and in the development of Shoreline Management Plans, and Local Environment Agency Plans covering the District;
 - in June 2007 agreement was reached by the East Kent Chief Executives to progress forming a sub group to the South East Coastal Group consisting of five local authorities; Dover, Shepway, Thanet, Canterbury and Swale. This group is formally known as the East Kent Engineering Partnership (EKEP), and the group meet on a quarterly basis to discuss future coastal schemes and utilise any shared working where possible. Through the agreed memorandum of understanding the EKEP are also permitted to provide shared engineering services within the partnership.

- 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 whenever possible that all works are carried out in accordance with best practice and 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 DEFRA 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 where appropriate, such as Public Private Partnerships;
- where appropriate seek contributions from developers or other direct beneficiaries of works, in accordance with Circular 30/92 or other related documents.
- ensure that appropriate maintenance regimes are in place for flood and coastal defences for which the Council takes responsibility;
- seek to ensure that private landowners are made aware of their responsibilities for maintenance when works are identified affecting private land (see paragraph 3.1 below);
- make publicly available the Council's expenditure plans for flood and coastal defence maintenance and capital works within the existing budget reporting mechanisms.
- 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;
- notification of all future coastal projects to the Council's Senior Ecology Officer. Advise full extent of proposed works and location with appropriate necessary mitigation measures to be put in place to further protect the ecology and any SSSI sites.

- 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 at the end of each financial year to the Environment Agency; and
- ensure that, for those Water Level Management Plans where we are the lead operating authority, we work in partnership with English Nature to complete, implement and review Plans in accordance with DEFRA guidance on plan completion and the timetables set out in DEFRA High Level Targets.

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

As the local planning authority for our area, Dover 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 Circular 30/92 and other related documents.

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 Dover 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 Dover District Council as an operating authority has a number of legal powers in relation to:

- flood defences on ordinary watercourses which are not within the area of an internal drainage board; and
- coast protection (ie 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 designated main rivers. Culverts under roads are generally the responsibility of the relevant Highways Authority (Kent County Council or Highways Agency).

Assessment of flood risk

3.5 The two key watercourses within the district are the River Stour which flows from the District boundary at Stourmouth to the sea at Sandwich Bay, and the River Dour which

rises in the Alkham Valley and flows through the urban centre of Dover to the sea at Wellington Dock.

3.6 The River Stour is designated as a main river and is thus the responsibility of the Environment Agency. The River Stour catchment is also covered by the River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board on which the Council is represented. The River Dour is currently treated as an ordinary watercourse on which the Council has a number of legal powers although the Environment Agency has commenced the process of enmainment. In practice there have been few recent concerns over the risk to flooding from the River Dour and the Council has not needed to exercise these powers.

3.7 As the geology of the area consists primarily of chalk downland, which readily absorbs rainfall, fluvial flood risks are perceived as relatively low. There are however a number of 'hot spots' which have been identified based on historical flooding information, coupled with the Environment Agency's flood plain maps. The Council has not carried out a detailed assessment of the risk to flooding although areas of particular concern include:

- River Dour : Russell Gardens
 Buckland Bridge
- River Stour Catchment : South Stream
 North Stream
 Ash Levels
 Goshall Stream

The Council is satisfied that there are minimal risks to human life created by these flood risks from ordinary watercourses, but emphasises the need for the Environment Agency's flood warnings to be heeded, when these are provided (see below).

3.8 As regards coastal or tidal flooding there are large areas of the District, as identified within the Environment Agency's indicative flood plain maps, which are at risk from flooding should the coastal defences be breached. The Council has not undertaken a more detailed assessment of the risk of tidal flooding but is aware that localised flooding in conjunction with tidal surges occurs regularly at Sandwich Quay and elsewhere along the River Stour. In addition, the Granville Road, Kingsdown Road area of Walmer together with sections of Wellington Parade are frequently affected by percolation through the shingle bank at times of high tide. The Environment Agency have indeed installed a monitoring gauge within the cellar of one of the Wellington Parade properties which provides an early warning should levels start to rise.

Action to reduce or manage flood risks

3.9 The main means by which flood risks will be managed is through the Environment Agency's flood warning dissemination plan of August 2000. This makes arrangements for warnings to be provided in the areas listed below within this Council's area, including individual warnings to high risk properties.

- Tidal: 5 Sandwich Bay to Swalecliffe
 6 Sandwich Bay
 7 Folkestone to Sandwich Bay
 8 Dungeness to Folkestone
- Fluvial : G6 Great Stour Catchment

Dover 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 to relevant Council services.

3.10 The Council undertakes regular inspections at times of severe weather to inspect the state of:

- flood defences (whether or not owned by the Council) on all ordinary watercourses; and
- all critical ordinary watercourses and related culverts.

3.11 The Council will ensure that regular maintenance is carried out on the flood defences and channels which it owns, or for which it accepts responsibility, so that they operate at optimum efficiency. Where the responsibility for maintenance rests with a landowner, we will if necessary seek to secure co-operation in ensuring appropriate maintenance takes place, drawing on enforcement powers if necessary.

3.12 The Council has no specific plans for flood alleviation works in the capital programme. We are however co-operating with the Environment Agency and Folkestone Dover Water Company with regards to sluice/weir reconstruction works proposed at Bushey Ruff on the River Dour. The various sluice gates along the River Dour are checked regularly and maintenance arrangements included within the Street Cleansing Contract to ensure that they are kept clear of debris.

3.13 By following Government guidance in Circular 30/92 and other related documents 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 to control surface water run off.

Assessment of coastal erosion risks

3.14 The District is covered by two Shoreline Management Plans: Beachy Head to South Foreland (1994) and Isle of Grain to Dover Harbour (1996) (Further information can be found on the following website: www.se-coastalgroupp.org.uk/). Of the 33.2 km of shoreline in the Council's area, 25.9 km is defended against erosion. The remaining frontage consists of natural cliff.

3.15 The coast defences within the District are managed by a variety of parties although the Council retains certain legal powers as the operating authority for the area. The defended sections are managed as follows:

- Folkestone Warren to Abbots Cliff - National Rail
- Shakespeare Beach - National Rail
- Dover Harbour - Dover Harbour Board
- St. Margaret's Bay - Dover District Council
- Kingsdown Rifle Range - Ministry of Defence
- Kingsdown to Sandown Castle, Deal - Dover District Council
- Sandown Castle, Deal to Sandwich Bay - Environment Agency

3.16 Risks of erosion vary along the defended and undefended frontage. The problems of the Folkestone Warren are well documented and National Rail maintains an ongoing programme of works to dewater the various slip-planes. Within Dover Harbour, the defences are well maintained and the likelihood of erosion is considered to be low given

the protection afforded by the harbour walls. The undefended chalk cliffs to the west and east of the harbour have been subject to a number of geological studies which suggest an annual erosion rate of 200 mm.

3.17 The defended frontage at St. Margarets Bay is considered to be stable, as are the defences within the Deal urban area. The main concerns along the frontage

relate to the former Kingsdown Rifle Range; where the defences are no longer maintained and are failing, and the shingle foreshore within Kingsdown and Walmer which is a volatile medium subject to significant movement under storm conditions. Similar problems exist on the frontage north of Sandown Castle although some measures have been taken by the Environment Agency, which will hopefully reduce the risk.

Action to reduce or manage coastal erosion risks

3.18 The Council has undertaken a Coastal Strategy Study of the Deal to Kingsdown Management Unit and undertakes work in accordance with the recommendations of the Strategy Plan. In addition, the Council's Beach Response Management Plan seeks to ensure close monitoring and management of the shingle foreshore including the monitoring of coastal processes from a gauge sited on Deal Pier. This work is being supported by the regional strategic monitoring project. The management regime takes into account the most recent predictions of the impact of climate change as set out in the two SMP's.

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 the need to work in partnership with central Government and other operating authorities. 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 Dover DC intends to review this policy statement every three years, 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 DEFRA 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 DEFRA, November 1999.