

Water Level and Flood Risk Management Policy

1 Introduction and background

Internal Drainage Boards are the land drainage authority within their Drainage Districts. IDB functions include the supervision of land drainage, funded by land owners, and flood defence works on ordinary watercourses or other flood sources as requested by local authorities or the Environment Agency. In doing this, they closely manage water levels, both in watercourses and underground (groundwater), by improving and maintaining ordinary watercourses, drainage channels and pumping stations to reduce the risk of flooding. IDBs have an important role to play in flood risk management and in habitat creation and management.

The purpose of this policy is to provide information on the approach of the Swale & Ure Drainage Board (the Board), to the management of risk of flooding from surface water, ground water and ordinary watercourses within its District.

The Swale & Ure Drainage Board is constituted by Statutory Instrument in accordance with the Land Drainage Act 1991(as amended) (LDA). An Internal Drainage Board shall exercise a general supervision over all matters relating to the drainage of land within the Drainage District.

Under the LDA the Board may choose to undertake land drainage works of maintenance, improvement or construction. Additionally, the Board may choose to undertake Flood Risk Management works within its District if it considers the work desirable having regard to the local flood risk management strategy and the purpose of the work is to either manage a flood risk from an ordinary watercourse or it is work detailed in LDA s14(A)(9)(a)-(h).

The Board is required under the *National flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England 2011* to assist other Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management Partners in delivering that Strategy

When undertaking function, the Board has a duty to consider furthering the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the conservation of flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest.

The Board chooses to manage water levels and other infrastructure within the District to mitigate the risks of flooding from surface water, ground water and ordinary watercourses within its District whilst providing a level of protection to the environment including management of water levels associated with drought conditions.

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

The Board's District has been determined as an area of special drainage need and to derive benefit from drainage operations. The District is at some risk from flooding from pluvial, fluvial and ground water, but that risk is managed wherever it is practically, environmentally and financially viable.

The Board makes decisions regarding flood risk within the District accounting for the following:

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

The following outlines the key details of the District:

- Catchment area draining to and including the Drainage District: 297,400 ha
- Total area of the Drainage District: 20,513 ha
- Area of rated agricultural land: 19,211 ha
- Area of other land including property, roads and railways: 1302 ha

Assets for which the Board chooses to undertake operational responsibility:

- Pump station: 1
- Water level control structures: 38
- Watercourses the Board chooses to maintain based upon priority and need: 340 km
- Culverted or piped watercourses: 27.5km

3 Building, maintaining and improving flood and coastal erosion risk management systems

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

All Ordinary Watercourses are the responsibility of riparian owners. Under Section 23 and Section 66 of the Land Drainage Act, no person is permitted to undertake works in a watercourse within the District without the consent of Swale & Ure Drainage Board

The Board monitors and reviews the condition of assets within its District, particularly those regarded by the Board as priority where over-topping from which could affect people and property.

Areas within the district more vulnerable to flooding associated with particular local circumstances:

- Land and roads in the vicinity of Bedale Beck at Crakehall
- Agricultural land adjacent to Main Cut at Snape and Carthorpe Mires
- Agricultural land on the floodplain of the River Swale from Catterick to Myton on Swale
- Domestic and commercial property, roads and public open space adjacent to Willow Beck, North Beck, Brompton Beck, Turker Beck and Sun Beck in Northallerton, Brompton and Romanby
- Residential property proximal to College Stell, Romanby

- Domestic and commercial property, roads and public open space adjacent to Cod Beck at Thirsk
- Roads and residences adjacent to Old Beck at Dalton
- Roads, houses and public open space at Kirby Wiske and Newby Wiske at risk from the River Wiske
- Domestic and commercial property, roads and public open space at Boroughbridge adjacent to Rivers Ure and Tutt
- Agricultural land at Roecliffe and Lower Dunsforth
- Domestic residences at Old Sike Stell, Topcliffe Mill

The Board's power to carry out water level and flood risk management works are permissive, and resources are limited. Resources are prioritized to the appropriate maintenance and, where necessary, improvement of watercourses and associated structures.

Consistent with the needs established, a routine maintenance programme is in place to ensure that the condition of a priority asset remains constant. The programme is reviewed periodically by the Board to ensure it is delivering the appropriate condition. Where asset condition has deteriorated, improvement works will be sought where considered to be practical and financially viable. Where improvement works meet the criteria set by Defra, financial support will be sought from Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid (FDGiA) fund for flood and coastal erosion risk management projects. Where possible, works will be undertaken with support of other risk Management Authorities or in partnership with other District Stakeholders. Opportunities to work with natural processes will be considered.

Maintenance work for and by the Board will be undertaken in accordance with environmental best practice.

The Board has a supervisory duty, under section 1(2)(a) of the Land Drainage Act 1991 over all matters relating to the drainage of land in its District and will, where appropriate, advise others regarding the undertaking of works.

The Board will seek to ensure, where possible, that assets managed by other Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) which reduce flood risk to the District are maintained. Where those other RMAs do not have sufficient resource to provide maintenance, the Board may consider entering into a Public-Sector Co-operation Agreement with that RMA to undertake that work on its behalf.

4 Implementing Risk Management measures

The Board will through use of its legislative powers and byelaws, regulate as necessary the activity of others to ensure actions within, alongside, and otherwise impacting the strategic drainage system, do not increase flood risk by preventing the efficient working of drainage systems.

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

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 be proactive in its assessment of local plans and of planning applications for development within its District, endeavouring to ensure that flood risk is not increased.

The Board will, where appropriate, seek to designate structures or features affecting flood risk under section 30 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

5 Environmental measures

The Board chooses to undertake watercourse maintenance work. That work comprises vegetative control of submerged, emergent, and floating aquatic plants and the flailing of bankside vegetation for health & safety operational reasons but also to ensure shrub progression does not take control. Inevitably some short-term impacts may arise, however aquatic growth re-establishes over the next growing season.

When carrying out maintenance work the Board works in accordance with environmental best practice guidelines.

When undertaking improvement work the Board must comply with Environmental Impact Assessment (Land Drainage Improvement Works) Regulations 2017.

The Board will take all steps to avoid any unnecessary or long-term damage to natural habitats and species

The Board will take opportunities to achieve multiple environmental outcomes and work with natural processes wherever possible.

The Board District contains several sites of special scientific interest:

- Upper Dunsworth Carrs
- Swale Lakes
- Farnham Mires
- Hay-a-Park
- Aubert Ings
- Bishop Monkton Ings
- Newsome Bridge Quarry

Where the Board considers any works or acts associated with function are likely to affect any of the flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features by reason of which the land is of special interest, or significantly to prejudice anything associated with the reason the site has been designated, it will consult with Natural England.

6 Approval and Review of this Policy Statement

This Policy was approved and adopted by the Board on 6th June 2019, revised September 2023, approved by the Board at its meeting November 2023.

The Board will review and update this document as and when required but in any event in 2028.