

\*\*\*\*\*

## MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

### POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD DEFENCE

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

##### Purpose

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

##### Background

1.2 The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (formerly 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" i.e. the Environment Agency, local authorities and internal drainage boards. Responsibilities differ according to the type of operating authority and Mid Suffolk 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 defence <sup>1</sup>. 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 targets <sup>2</sup>. 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 131, High Street, Needham Market, Suffolk, IP6 8DL and on the Internet at [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk). We are also providing a copy to:

- The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;
- The Environment Agency.
- The River Gipping Internal Drainage Board;
- The Waveney Valley Internal Drainage Board: and
- The River Deben (Upper) Internal Drainage Board.

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

2.1 Mid Suffolk District Council 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 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, Mid Suffolk 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 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.***

Mid Suffolk DC will:

- provide an adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound approach to providing the flood defence service. We will:
  - adopt a strategic approach to provision of flood defences, particularly by assessing any potentially wider effects of proposed defences. To this end we will continue to play a full role in Local Environment Agency Plans, for our area;
  - aim to provide sustainable flood 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 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, 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 defences for which the Council takes responsibility;
  - Inform landowners of what responsibilities for maintenance rest with them (see paragraph 3.1 below);
  - make publicly available the Council's expenditure plans for flood defence maintenance and capital works should such works arise.
- 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;
    - when carrying out flood defence works, seek opportunities for environmental enhancement, and avoid damage to environmental enhancement, and 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; 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 MAFF or DEFRA guidance on plan completion and the timetables set out in MAFF 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, Mid Suffolk DC will take account of flooding risks in all matters relating to development control, development plans, including individual planning applications, in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Notes 20 and 25\*.

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

#### Flood defence responsibilities

3.1 Apart from certain obligations to protect internationally important habitats under the EU Habitats Directive, all flood defence works are undertaken under permissive powers. This means that operating authorities, such as Mid Suffolk District Council, are not obliged to carry out flood 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 Mid Suffolk District Council is the relevant operating authority for flood defences on ordinary watercourses, which are not within the area of an internal drainage board.

3.3 Currently, no flood defences are owned or managed by the Council.

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 (County Council or Highways Agency).

#### **Assessment of flood risk**

3.5 There are very approximately 43km of ordinary watercourses for which Mid Suffolk DC is the relevant operating authority. There are also a number of watercourses designated as main river, totalling 94.5km, which are the responsibility of the Environment Agency. There are three internal drainage boards (IDB's) operating in the Council's area, the River Deben (Upper) IDB, the River Gipping IDB and the Waveney Valley IDB.

3.6 We have agreed with the Environment Agency that within the Council's area there is only 0.4km of "critical ordinary watercourses" (i.e. 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). The watercourses concerned are as follows:

<b>Watercourse Name</b>	<b>Start OS Ref</b>	<b>Finish OS Ref</b>
Needham Market	TM 0851755449	TM 0845855444
Needham Market	TM 0901554438	TM 0916654502
Stowmarket	TM 0471957754	TM 0462057632

3.7 Based on historical flooding information, coupled with the Environment Agency's indicative flood plain maps, the Council will carry out an assessment of the risk of flooding from the ordinary watercourses in its area during 2002, and review this policy in the light of that assessment.

## **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 system. This makes arrangements for warnings to be provided within this Council's area, including individual warnings to high-risk properties.

Mid Suffolk DC has plans for responding to both major or minor flooding in its emergency planning procedures and has arrangements for cascading warnings received from the Environment Agency to relevant Council services.

3.9 The Council is developing an annual programme to inspect the state of all critical ordinary watercourses and related culverts.

3.10 The Council will ensure that regular maintenance is carried out on the watercourses and channels which we own, or for which we accept responsibility, so that they operate at optimum efficiency. 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.

3.11 By following Government guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note 25\* on development in flood risk areas, the Council, acting as a local planning authority, will ensure that risks are further minimised. This may include measures such as ensuring sustainable urban drainage systems to control surface water run off.

## **4. PARTNERSHIPS AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY STATEMENT**

4.1 The Council has set out its policy and approach to flood 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.

4.2 Following an internal review in June 2004, Mid Suffolk DC intend to further review this policy statement in mid 2005. At this stage, the Environment Agency was considering the enmainment of the three critical ordinary watercourses within Mid Suffolk. Following the outcome of this consideration, the policy will be revised and reissued as necessary. Meanwhile, the Council welcomes any comments on the approach and policies set out in this statement.

## **References**

<sup>1</sup> Strategy for Flood and Coastal Defence in England and Wales MAFF and Welsh Office, September 1993.

<sup>2</sup> High Level Targets for Flood and Coastal Defence Operating Authorities and Elaboration of the Environment Agency's Flood Defence Supervisory Duty MAFF, November 1999.

June 2004.