



Lewes District Council

POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD AND COASTAL EROSION RISK MANAGEMENT:

APPROVED BY LDC CABINET: 11 SEPTEMBER 2007

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document has been prepared by Lewes District Council to provide a public statement of the Council's approach to flood and coastal risk management in its area. The extent of Lewes District is shown on the attached map.
- 1.2 The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has policy responsibility for flood and coastal risk management in England. However, delivery is the responsibility of a number of operating authorities" (i.e. the Environment Agency (EA), local authorities and internal drainage boards). Responsibilities differ according to the type of operating authority and Lewes 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 risk management. 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 This Policy Statement fulfils that requirement. Copies are available from the LDC offices at Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB and Fort Road, Newhaven, BN9 9QE and from Seaford Tourist Information Centre, and on the Internet at www.lewes.gov.uk. The Council is also providing a copy to:
 - ❖ the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
 - ❖ the Department for Communities and Local Government
 - ❖ Environment Agency
 - ❖ Town & Parish Councils in Lewes District (on request)

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

- 2.1 Lewes District Council acknowledges and supports the Government's policy aim and objectives for flood and coastal erosion risk management (set out in italics 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 risk management measures.

Section 3 below sets out our plans for reducing, or managing, the risk of flooding and coastal erosion in Lewes District.

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, Lewes District Council has a supporting role – in partnership with the County Council and the emergency services – in the related work of emergency planning and emergency response. Following the devastating floods in Lewes District in October 2000, we reviewed our arrangements for dissemination of flood warnings and introduced a package of improvement measures. We will work with partners to:

- ensure that our Emergency Plans include appropriate arrangements for flood emergencies and that such plans are regularly reviewed. Flood Emergency Plans have been prepared for Lewes (updated 2005) and for Seaford and Newhaven (2004). Newhaven Port & Properties have emergency plans for Newhaven Harbour.
- maintain an awareness of the EA's Flood Warning 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 EA for our area.
- promote community self help through the Lewes Flood Warden Network (co-ordinated by Lewes Town Council).
- promote business continuity planning with local firms, so that they are better prepared for any flooding incidents, and can recover more quickly.

Objective (b)

To encourage the provision of adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound and sustainable flood and coastal defence measures

Responsibilities for flood and coastal defence are set out in Section 3 below. Where Lewes District Council is the operating authority, it will provide adequate and economically, technically and environmentally sound and sustainable flood risk management measures. To do so, we will:-

- adopt a strategic approach to provision of flood and coastal defences, particularly by assessing any potential wider effects of proposed defences. To this end, we have played a full role in the review of the South Downs Shoreline Management Plan and in Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs) and Catchment Flood Management Plans (CFMP's) 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 unsustainable 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 erosion risk management, in particular, by reference to DEFRA guidance, other Government publications and relevant technical manuals;
 - (b) Consulting with the EA on flood risk management options to ensure that best practice is adopted and shared;
 - (c) Using appropriately qualified experts to advise on identification and evaluation of options for flood and coastal defence; design of works or programmes of management;
 - (d) Taking account of latest research on climate change.
- Consider, and where appropriate actively pursue, alternative approaches to funding, such as public/private partnerships;
- where appropriate, seek contributions from developers, or other direct beneficiaries of works, in accordance with the DCLG Planning Policy Statement 25 on "Development and Flood Risk" and the PPS25 Practice Guide Companion.
- ensure that appropriate maintenance regimes are in place for flood and coastal defences, for which the District Council has responsibility.

- inform landowners of what responsibilities for maintenance rest with them (see paragraph 3.1 below).
- make publicly available the District Council's expenditure plans for flood and coastal defence maintenance and capital works in LDC Annual Budgets.
- 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:-
 - (a) 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 etc) Regulations 1994.
 - (b) co-operate with Natural England and the Environment Agency in completing and implementing Coastal Habitat Management Plans (CHaMPS) covering our area, drawing on Natural England/Environment Agency guidance for plan production.
 - (c) 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.
 - (d) ensure that, for those Water Level Management Plans where we are the lead operating authority, we work in partnership with Natural England 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 the area, Lewes District Council will take account of flooding and coastal erosion risks in all matters relating to planning including development plans and individual planning applications, in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 20 (Coastal Planning) and Planning Policy Statement 25 (Development and Flood Risk)

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is being carried out by specialist consultants as part of the evidence base for the Lewes District Local Development Framework. The SFRA will inform decisions about the future location of new development in our new Local Development Framework, and on individual planning applications.

3 RISK OF FLOODING AND COASTAL EROSION IN LEWES DISTRICT AND WHAT WE WILL DO TO MANAGE AND REDUCE THAT RISK

Flood and coastal erosion risk management

- 3.1 Apart from certain statutory obligations to protect internationally important habitats under the EU Habitat Directive, all flood and coastal defence works are undertaken under permissive policies. This means that operating authorities, such as Lewes District Council, are not legally obliged to carry out flood and coastal defence works. It is also important to note that the District Council does not normally accept responsibility for maintenance of flood defences on private land; this is the responsibility of the landowner.
- 3.2 Lewes District Council is the relevant operating authority for:
- flood defences on ordinary watercourses which are not within the area of an internal drainage board; and
 - coast protection responsibility (ie, measures against erosion, not safeguarding against flooding from the sea) for 9.7km of the District's 14.5km frontage. The Environment Agency is the operating authority for Seaford Beach and Cuckmere Haven, and Newhaven Port and Properties is the operating authority for Newhaven Harbour.
- 3.3 A detailed schedule of the flood and coastal defences that are owned and managed by the District Council has been provided to the Environment Agency for inclusion in the National Flood and Coast Defence Database.
- 3.4 The Environment Agency is the relevant operating authority for flood defences on designated main rivers (the Ouse and its principal tributaries). The Environment Agency has reviewed the adequacy of existing flood defences along the River Ouse, in the light of the October 2000 floods and the Sussex Ouse Flood Management Strategy was agreed with DEFRA in 2004. Priority flood defence works at Malling Brooks, Lewes, were completed in 2004. Further improvements are planned for the Cliffe area of Lewes, funded by the Regional Flood Defence Committee. These should begin in 2008 and be completed by 2010.
- 3.5 The Environment Agency also acts as the Internal Drainage Board and has powers to maintain a complex system of watercourses, control structures, pumping stations and flood defences, mostly on the floodplain of the Ouse. The extent of the Agency IDB responsibilities is shown on the Planning Consultation Map, supplied by the Environment Agency to Lewes District Council.
- 3.6 Drainage from roads is normally the responsibility of the highway authority, East Sussex County Council, who have powers under the Highways Act to clear, drain and keep water off the highway, and to provide and replace culverts and gullies. The Highways Agency are responsible for drainage on trunk roads (A26, A27).

- 3.7 Foul drainage is the responsibility of Southern Water.

Assessment of Flood Risk

- 3.8 Significant areas of Lewes District are at risk from flooding by main rivers (the Ouse and its principal tributaries) and from inundation by the sea. The Lewes District suffered serious river flooding in October 2000. The areas at risk are shown on the Environment Agency's indicative flood plan maps and are being reviewed and refined in a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Lewes District. Flood defences on the main rivers, and at Seaford Beach, are the responsibility of the Environment Agency.
- 3.9 Based on historical flooding information, and the Environment Agency indicative flood plan maps, we have consulted with them on the risk of flooding from any ordinary watercourses, for which the District Council is the operating authority. The Agency have indicated that only one of these ordinary watercourses is "critical", in that it has the potential to put at risk from flooding large numbers of people and property. This is the Winterbourne Stream, immediately upstream of Bell Lane Lewes. As part of a national review of flood defence, responsibilities for "critical ordinary watercourses" have now transferred from local councils to the Environment Agency in a phased programme. Therefore, responsibility for the upper Winterbourne has now transferred to the EA.

Action to reduce or manage flood risks

- 3.10 The main means by which flood risks will be managed is through the Environment Agency's Flood Warning Plan (September 2000). This makes arrangements for warnings to be provided in coastal and river floodplain areas in Lewes District, including individual warnings through the Environment Agency's Floodline Warnings Direct system. Lewes District Council has plans for responding to flood warnings in its emergency planning procedures and co-ordinates its plans with East Sussex County Council and the emergency services. A Flood Defence Protocol was signed between the District Council and the Environment Agency in April 2003.
- 3.11 The Environment Agency has an annual programme for maintenance of the Winterbourne Stream, to be undertaken in early autumn each year. The District Council will work with the Environment Agency and Lewes Town Council (who manage the allotments upstream of Glebe Close) to promote local awareness of the potential flooding problems which can arise from blockages to, or dumping in, the Winterbourne Stream. An additional culvert grille has been installed at Bell Lane Recreation Ground in order to reduce flood risk.
- 3.12 Where the responsibility for maintenance rests with a landowner, the District Council will aim to secure co-operation in ensuring appropriate maintenance takes place, drawing on discretionary enforcement powers if necessary.
- 3.13 By following the Government guidance in Planning Policy Statement 25, the Council – acting as planning authority – will ensure that risks are further minimised. This includes measures for ensuring provision of sustainable drainage systems to serve

development by controlling surface water run-off and providing replacement flood storage, through the planning system.

- 3.14 In partnership with other agencies, the District Council is working on the Lewes Integrated Urban Drainage project, one of a series of national pilot projects funded by DEFRA. The project aims to reduce flood risk by better integration of urban drainage systems: rivers and other watercourses, highway drainage, foul drainage, and run-off hard surfaces. The project will be completed in 2008.
- 3.15 A Catchment Flood Management Plan (CFMP) has been approved for the Cuckmere and Sussex Havens area (incorporating a small part of the district in the lower Cuckmere Valley) and preparation of a CFMP for the Ouse Catchment is now underway.

Assessment of coastal erosion risks

- 3.16 As identified in the Shoreline Management Plan, Lewes District Council has direct responsibility for 9.7km of coastal frontage. All of this is chalk cliffs, overlain in places by more recent deposits. Within this 9.7km of frontage, some 2.8km (in Peacehaven and Telscombe) is defended against erosion by coastal defences comprising concrete walls and groynes.
- 3.17 The risk of erosion along defended frontages is low, provided existing coast defences are well maintained. However, even in defended frontages, cliff faces are subject to weathering and instability. The extremely wet weather of autumn 2000/winter 2001 led to a number of cliff falls. The District Council carried out a programme of remedial cliffs stabilisation works in spring 2001, in the interests of public safety.
- 3.18 The risk of erosion along undefended frontages is higher with erosion rates of up to 0.4metres per year (See 2006 SMP Review for details). Most undefended frontages in Lewes District comprise undeveloped open cliff tops, as at Seaford Head and between Peacehaven and Newhaven.

Action to reduce or manage coastal erosion risks

- 3.19 The District Council is a partner in the Regional Monitoring Programme for the coast between Selsey Bill and Beachy Head, and the Channel Coast Observatory, a consortium of partners around the coast from Dorset to the Thames Estuary. The Council is assisting remote sensing of wave conditions in Seaford Bay as part of the Regional Monitoring Programme, by installation of a monitoring station at Newhaven Fort.
- 3.20 The District Council monitors the condition of those coast defences for which it is responsible every six months.
- 3.21 The Environment Agency monitors the condition of Seaford Beach and carries out an annual programme of beach recycling and reprofiling and, if necessary, recharge to maintain its integrity. The Environment Agency also carries out any necessary emergency works following storm events.

- 3.22 Our management programme takes into account the most recent predictions of climate change as set out in the 2006 Shoreline Management Plan Review and the approved Coast Defence Strategy for Saltdean to Newhaven/West Breakwater. Preparation of a Coast Defence Strategy for the River Ouse (A27 to Newhaven) to Seaford Head is well advanced, with a preferred option package the subject of consultation late in 2006, and now awaiting approval by the Environment Agency.

4 PARTNERSHIPS AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY STATEMENT

- 4.1 The District Council has set out its policy and approach to flood and coast erosion risk management. We recognise the need to work in partnership with the Government, other operating authorities and the local community.
- 4.2 Our local population has an important part to play in reducing the carbon emissions that are driving climate change and increasing flood risk. Local people also need to recognise 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 the public to let us know of any problems which might increase the risk of flooding or coastal erosion.
- 4.3 Lewes District Council intend to review this policy in three years' time, when it will be revised and reissued as necessary. Meanwhile, the District Council welcomes any comments on the approach and policies set out in this document.

References

- **Strategy for Flood and Coastal Defence in England and Wales**, MAFF and Welsh Office, September 1993.
- **High Level Targets for Flood and Coast Defence Operating Authorities and Elaboration of the Environment Agency's Flood Defence Supervisory Duty**, MAFF, November 1999.
- **High Level Targets for Coast Defence: Template for use in preparing Policy Statements**, MAFF June 2000.
- **South Downs Shoreline Management Plan**, June 1997 and review June 2006.
- DoE Circular 30/92, **Development and Flood Risk**
- PPG20, **Coastal Planning**
- PPS25, **Development and Flood Risk**, December 2006.
- **Development and Flood Risk: A Practice Comparison Guide to PPS25**, DCLG "Living Draft", February 2007
- **Sussex Ouse Flood Management Plan**, EA, 2004
- **River Ouse to Seaford Head Coast Defence Strategy: Preferred Options**, EA 2006
- **Lewes Integrated Urban Drainage Study**, Black & Veatch, November 2006
- **Making Space for Water: taking forward a new Government Strategy for flood and coastal erosion risk management for England**, DEFRA, 2005
- **Working Together**, South Downs Coastal Group, 2005
- **Adopted Lewes District Local Plan** Lewes District Council, March 2003
- Report to LDC Interim Cabinet **"Improving dissemination of flood warnings in Lewes"** 14 February 2001

- **Lewes Flood Emergency Plan**, ESCC/LDC
- **Seahaven Flood Energy Plan**, ESCC/LDC
- **Saltdean to Newhaven (West Breakwater) Coast Defence Strategy** - approved October 2003
- **Our role in managing major incidents**, LDC Statement on Emergency Planning, October 2003.
- LDC/Environment Agency, **Flood Defence Protocol**, April 2003
- **Lewes Flood Warden Network** 2003 Handbook, March 2003

Web Sites

- www.lewes.gov.uk/community/10121.asp
- www.lewes.gov.uk/community/929.asp
- www.sdcq.org.uk
- www.channelcoast.org.uk
- www.defra.gov.uk/environment/flooding/

