

## Policy Statement

<http://www.lewes.gov.uk/floodpol.htm>

### Floods and Coastal Defence: Approved by LDC Interim Cabinet March 2001

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This Policy Statement has been prepared by Lewes District Council to provide a public statement of the Council's approach to flood and coastal defence in its area. The extent of Lewes District is shown on the attached map.

1.2 The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) 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 (EA), local authorities and internal drainage boards. Responsibilities differ according to the type of operating authority. Lewes District Council's responsibilities are set out in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 below.

1.3 The Government, through MAFF, has published a policy aim and three objectives for flood and coastal defence. 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. 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 available from the LDC offices at Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1DW and Fort Road, Newhaven, BN9 9QE and from Seaford Tourist Information Centre, 25 Clinton Place, Seaford, BN25 1NP, and on the Internet at [www.lewes.gov.uk](http://www.lewes.gov.uk). The Council is also providing a copy to:

- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food;
- Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions;
- 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 defence (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 defence 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 have reviewed arrangements for dissemination of flood warnings with the EA and our other partners. A package of improvement measures will be introduced later in 2001. We will:

- ensure that our Emergency Plans include appropriate arrangements for flood emergencies and that such plans are regularly reviewed. This will include preparation of Flood Emergency Plans for Lewes and Seaford with our partners (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 the implementation as necessary, and
- play an agreed role in any flood warning emergency exercises organised by the EA for our area.

#### **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 (mostly on coastal defence), it 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 will continue to play a full role in the Shoreline Management Plan and Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs) 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 by:
  - (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 various technical manuals;
  - (b) Consultation with the EA on flood defence 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;
- 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 District Council takes responsibility.

- inform landowners of what responsibilities for maintenance rest with them.
- make publicly available the District Council's expenditure plans for flood and coastal defence maintenance and capital works (LDC Annual Budgets).
- play a positive role in fulfilling our responsibilities for promoting nature conservation, working in partnership with English Nature, the Environment Agency and other partners. This will include work on Water Level Management Plans (WLMPs) and Coastal Habitat Management Plans (CHaMPs) in the District.

### **Objective (c)**

#### ***To discourage inappropriate development in areas at risk from flooding and coastal erosion.***

Lewes District Council is the Local Planning Authority for the area. The District Local Plan includes policies to take account of issues arising from flooding and coastal erosion (Policies ST15, 16, 17 and 18 in Proposed Modifications, November 2000). These policies take account of the Government Guidance in PPG20 (Coastal Planning) and PPG25 (Development and Flood Risk). The Local Plan policies and the PPG advice form the basis for the exercise of development control in determining individual planning applications.

- We will be reviewing our Local Plan policies in the light of the revised draft PPG25, published in February 2001.
- We will continue to consult with the Environment Agency on applications which raise flood risk or coastal erosion issues.

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

#### **Flood and coastal defence responsibilities**

3.1 Apart from certain obligations to potential 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 are responsible for Seaford Bay and Newhaven Port and Properties for Newhaven Harbour.

A schedule of the flood and coastal defences that are owned and managed by the District Council has been provided to the Environment Agency.

3.3 The Environment Agency is the relevant operating authority for flood defences on designated main rivers (the Ouse and its principal tributaries). The Environment Agency is currently reviewing the adequacy of existing flood defences, particularly along the River Ouse, in the light of the October 2000 floods and a package of flood alleviation measures is expected to be prepared as a matter of urgency.

3.4 The Environment Agency also acts as the Internal Drainage Board and has powers to maintain the 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.

3.5 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 Authority are responsible for drainage on trunk roads (A26, A27).

#### **Assessment of Flood Risk**

3.6 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. Flood defences on the main rivers, and at Seaford Beach, are the responsibility of the Environment Agency.

3.7 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.

#### **Action to reduce or manage flood risks**

3.8 The principal 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 automatic voice messaging (AVM) telephone 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.

3.9 The District Council will introduce an annual programme for maintenance of the Winterbourne Stream, between Bell Lane and Glebe Close Lewes (a distance of 450 metres), to be undertaken in September each year. This work will be co-ordinated with downstream maintenance work on "main river" sections of the Winterbourne, to be carried out by the Environment Agency.

3.10 The District Council will work with Lewes Town Council (who manage the allotments upstream of Glebe Close) and others to promote local awareness of the problems which can arise from blockages to, or dumping in, the Winterbourne Stream.

3.11 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 enforcement powers if necessary.

3.12 By following the Government guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note 25, the Council - acting as planning authority - will ensure that further risks are 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.

#### **Assessment of coastal erosion risks**

3.13 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 is defended against erosion by concrete walls and groynes.

3.14 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 extreme weather of Autumn 2000/Winter 2001 led to a number of cliff falls. The District Council has engaged consultants to carry out a risk assessment and a programme of remedial works, in the interests of public safety, is being investigated.

3.15 The risk of erosion along undefended frontages is higher with erosion rates of up to 0.4metres per year (See 1997 SMP 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**

3.16 The District Council is a partner in the Regional Monitoring Programme for the coast between Selsey Bill and Beachy Head, for which grant-aid is currently being sought. It is also a partner in the ROCC (Risk of Cliff Collapse) Project, a partnership between agencies in East Sussex and Seine Maritime (France) to study factors affecting instability in chalk cliffs, led on the UK side by Brighton University School of the Environment. The ROCC Project is expected to produce a detailed monitoring programme for the coastline between Brighton and Eastbourne. The Project is financially supported by INTERREG

3.17 The District Council monitors the condition of those coast defences for which it is responsible every six months.

3.18 The Environment Agency monitors the condition of Seaford Bay and carries out an annual programme of reprofiling and, if necessary, recharge to maintain its integrity. The Environment Agency also carries out any necessary emergency works following storm events.

3.19 Our management programme takes into account the most recent predictions of climate change as set out in the 1997 Shoreline Management Plan and the emerging Coast Defence Strategy for Saltdean to Newhaven /West Breakwater (to be published for consultation, April 2001). The latter may include proposals for new coastal defence works.

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

4.1 The District Council recognises the need to work in partnership with the Government and other operating authorities, particularly the Environment Agency.

4.2 Other stakeholders have 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 the public to let us know of any problems which might increase the risk of flooding or coastal erosion.

4.3 The Policy Statement will be reviewed 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.

4.4 It is intended that the Policy Statement will be a working document so that amendments will be made if further flood risks should be identified before the planned review in March 2004.

### **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

- DoE Circular 30/92, **Development and Flood Risk**

- PPG20, **Coastal Planning**

- PPG25, **Development and Flood Risk**, revised draft, DETR, February 2001.

- **Lewes District Local Plan, Proposed Modifications**, November 2000, Lewes District Council

- Report to LDC Interim Cabinet "**Improving dissemination of flood warnings in Lewes**" 14 February 2001