

**POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD AND COASTAL EROSION
RISK MANAGEMENT**



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy statement has been prepared by Thanet District Council to provide a public statement of the Council's approach to flood and coastal erosion risk management within the district.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has overall national responsibility for policy on flood and coastal erosion risk management. However delivery is the responsibility of a number of flood and coastal erosion risk management authorities which includes Thanet District Council.

2.2 The Environment Agency is responsible for taking a strategic overview of the management of all sources of flooding and coastal erosion. As part of its strategic overview role, the Environment Agency has published a [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England](#). The strategy provides a lot more information designed to ensure that the roles of all those involved in managing risk are clearly defined and understood.

2.3 District and Borough Councils in coastal areas (such as Thanet) act as coastal erosion risk management authorities with responsibility for implementing approved policy and managing erosion risk assets. These local Councils are also key partners in planning local flood risk management and can carry out flood risk management works on minor watercourses, working with Lead Local Flood Authorities and others to ensure that risks are effectively managed.

2.4 In April 2010 the [Flood and Water Management Act](#) was enacted. This new act provides for better, more comprehensive management of flood risk for people, homes and businesses. The Act places a duty on all flood risk management authorities to co-operate with each other. The Act also creates the new roll of 'Lead local flood Authority'. Kent County Council (KCC) is the Lead Local Flood Authority for this area and oversees local flooding caused by surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. KCC have published a [Local flood risk management strategy](#) in accordance with the requirements of the Act. Importantly the Act also requires flood and coastal erosion risk management authorities to aim to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development when exercising their flood and coastal erosion risk management functions.

2.5 To ensure a more certain delivery of the aim and objectives by the individual operating authorities the Government published a series of high level targets in 2000 (revised 2005). 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. This policy statement fulfils that requirement.

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

3.1 The Government has published a policy aim and three objectives for flood and coastal defence:

3.2 Government Policy on Flood and Erosion Risk Management: 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.

3.3 Objective (a): To encourage the provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems.

3.3.1 Provision of flood warning systems is the responsibility of the Environment Agency. However, Thanet District Council recognises its related and important role in emergency planning and response. We will therefore:

- i) 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 and the Lead Local Flood Authority,
- ii) maintain an awareness of the Environment Agency's flood warning dissemination plan for our area and contribute to its implementation as necessary; and
- iii) play an agreed role in any flood warning emergency exercises organised by the Environment Agency or Lead Local Flood Authority covering our area.

3.4 Objective (b): To encourage the provision of adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound and sustainable flood and coastal defence measures.

3.4.1 Thanet District Council will:

- i) provide an adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound approach to providing a flood and coastal erosion risk management service;
- ii) 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 East Kent Engineering Partnership and in the development of Shoreline Management Plans, and Local Environment Agency Plans covering the District;
- iii) 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;
- iv) 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 Environment Agency/DEFRA guidance, other Government publications and relevant technical manuals; (b) consulting the Environment Agency on flood defence options to ensure that best practice is shared; and (c) using appropriately qualified experts to advise on analysis and design of works or programmes of management;
 - v) consider alternative approaches to funding where appropriate, such as Public Private Partnerships or [Community Infrastructure Levys](#);
 - vi) where appropriate seek contributions from developers or other direct beneficiaries of works, in accordance with EA Guidance on [Flood and Coastal Erosion Resilience Partnership Funding](#) of coastal schemes and [National Planning Policy Framework](#) or other related documents.
 - vii) ensure that appropriate maintenance regimes are in place for flood and coastal defences for which the Council takes responsibility;
 - Viii) seek to ensure that private landowners are made aware of their responsibilities for maintenance when works are identified affecting private land;
 - ix) make publicly available the Council's expenditure plans for flood and coastal defence maintenance and capital works within the existing budget reporting mechanisms.
 - x) 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:
 - xi) 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](#);
 - xii) co-operate with Natural England and the Environment Agency in completing and implementing Coastal Habitat Management Plans (although none are currently designated within the District), drawing on Natural England/Environment Agency guidance for plan production;
 - xiii) Start early liaison with Natural England, Environment Agency and all relevant local stakeholders on all future coastal projects. Consult and advise on full extent of any proposed works and location with appropriate necessary mitigation measures to be put in place to protect the ecology and designated sites.
 - xiv) when carrying out flood and coastal defence works, seek opportunities for environmental enhancement, and mitigate damage to environmental interest and to ensure no net loss to habitats which may be covered by Biodiversity Action Plans. We will monitor all losses and gains of such habitats as a result of flood and erosion risk management operations.

3.4.2 In June 2007 an agreement was made by the East Kent Chief Executives to progress the forming of a local engineering partnership consisting of five local authorities; Dover, Shepway, Thanet, Canterbury and Swale, plus the Environment Agency. This group is formally known as the [East Kent Engineering Partnership](#) (EKEP). The group meets on a quarterly basis to co-ordinate current and future coastal schemes and maximize opportunity for shared working. Through the agreed memorandum of understanding the EKEP's aim is to provide a quality, good value engineering service for the benefit of local flood and erosion risk management. The joint working and communication between the member organisations is well aligned with the requirement of the Flood and Water Management Act to co-operate with other risk management authorities.

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

3.5.1 As the local planning authority for the District, Thanet DC will take account of flooding and coastal erosion risks in all matters relating to development control, including development plans and individual planning applications.

3.5.2 A [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#) (SFRA) for Thanet was prepared and published in 2009. The SFRA is intended to provide a better understanding of flood risks, national planning guidance on Flood Risk zones, and the implications of how flood zones interact with potential development sites.

4.0 OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE RISK OF FLOODING AND COASTAL EROSION IN OUR AREA AND WHAT WE WILL DO TO REDUCE OR MANAGE THAT RISK

4.1 Flood and coastal defence responsibilities

4.2 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 Thanet 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.

4.3 Thanet District Council is the relevant operating authority (risk management authority) for coast protection (measures against coastal erosion) and sea defence (measures against coastal flooding) on the 25.5 km frontage in the Authority's area between Plum Pudding Island on its Northern coastline and Cliffsend at Pegwell Bay on its South coast.

4.4 The River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board is the relevant operating authority for ordinary watercourses within its area of operation which includes Thanet.

- 4.5 The flood and coastal defences that are owned or managed by the Council are detailed in the Council's database which is also provided to the Environment Agency.
- 4.6 The Environment Agency is the relevant operating authority for:
- flood defences on designated main rivers; and
 - sea defences (measures against coastal flooding) on the frontages within the Authority's area outside the limits detailed in 4.3 above (3km length of coastline between Knock Point on the North Thanet Boundary and Plum Pudding Island).
- 4.7 Culverts under roads are generally the responsibility of the relevant Highways Authority (Kent County Council or the Highways Agency).
- 4.8 Assessment of flood risk**
- 4.9 Flood risk on ordinary watercourses in Thanet is managed by the River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board.
- 4.10 The River Stour and the Wantsum Channel are designated as main rivers and are the responsibility of the Environment Agency.
- 4.11 Maps showing indicative flood risk for both inland and coastal areas have been published by the Environment Agency. These maps are on the Environment Agency's website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk More local information on coastal flood risk is contained in the Isle of Grain to South Foreland Shoreline Management Plan. The Shoreline Management Plan is available for viewing and downloading on the website of the South East Coastal Group www.se-coastalgroup.org.uk
- 4.12 Action to reduce or manage flood risks**
- 4.13 The Environment Agency administers a flood warning service called 'Floodline' that provides advanced notice of when flooding from rivers and the sea is likely to occur. This service provides the main means by which risk management authorities including Thanet District Council are alerted to potential flooding events. Warnings are provided for the following locations within this Council's area of concern:
- Coast from Seasalter to Margate – Reference number 064WAC303
- The Coast from Pegwell Bay to Deal including The Tidal Stour – Reference number 064WAC304
- 4.14 Thanet District Council 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.

- 4.15 In addition, to flood warnings being issued to individual high risk properties, the Environment Agency have arranged for flood warnings for Kent to be broadcast by:-
- Meridian ITV
 - BBC South East TV
 - BBC Radio Kent
- 4.16 The current status of the UK in terms of flood warnings can be found via the Environment Agency's [Live Flood Warning Map](#).
- 4.17 The Council emphasises the need for the Environment Agency's flood warnings to be heeded, where these are provided.
- 4.18 By following Government guidance on development in flood risk areas in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and the locally produced [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#), 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.

4.19 Assessment of coastal erosion risks

- 4.20 The [Isle of Grain to South Foreland Shoreline Management Plan](#) (SMP) is a high level policy document concerned with present and future coastal management. The current SMP was written in 2008 and replaces the original 1996 document. The SMP states that the current policy for most of the Thanet Coastline is to **hold the line**. This means continuing to maintain defences and subsequently assets where there is an economic justification. It is envisaged that this will be achieved through maintaining / upgrading existing sea walls. It is important to note that the defences arrest erosion at the cliff toe but not at the cliff top, although the rate of erosion above the wave impact zone is far reduced. It is acknowledged by the SMP that the presence of these defences affects the environment and landscape quality of the cliffs. Therefore, if through detailed studies an opportunity for not maintaining current defences is identified then a policy of no active intervention may be implemented.
- 4.21 Some areas of the Thanet coastline have no formal sea defences and are actively eroding. Where there currently are no defences in place, a policy of **no active intervention** is implemented, which will allow natural processes to take place i.e. erosion of the chalk cliffs and the fronting rock platform. This also maintains and improves the geological, environmental and landscape interests of Thanet's designated intertidal habitats.
- 4.22 The Environment Agency provides guidance information on the future predicted rate of erosion for the coastline in England and Wales. [Coastal Erosion Maps](#) are available on the Environment Agency's website. They provides details of the likely rate of erosion based upon current and future shoreline management policy.
- 4.23 The risk of significant erosion along the defended frontages is low. Most of the Council's 'hard defences' consist of mass concrete gravity sea walls founded on the chalk foreshore. The seaward face of these walls are

protected from undermining by scour with insitu concrete toes cut into the chalk platform.

4.24 Action to reduce or manage coastal erosion risks

4.25 The Council has an active programme of capital coast protection and flood defence works and has recently undertaken flood defence improvement schemes at Margate and Pegwell Bay. This work was supported with national grant aid administered by the Environment Agency. The design standard of these schemes take account of future predicted changes in sea level and storm intensity due to climate change.

4.26 Sea walls in Thanet are subject to regular inspection and are routinely maintained through revenue funded maintenance and repair works. However future improvement or major refurbishment of these walls will be subject to funding availability and SMP policy as broadly described in 4.19 above.

5.0 PARTNERSHIPS AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY STATEMENT

5.1 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 Lead Local Flood Authorities and other operating authorities. Our local population also 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 members of the public to let us know of any problems which might increase the risk of flooding or coastal erosion.

5.2 Thanet District Council intends to review this policy statement in three years' time, 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.

5.3 It is intended that this Policy Statement will be a working document and that continued monitoring and amendments will be made as flood risk areas are more accurately identified during the period before review in three years time.

Prepared by Thanet District Council - September 2013