

# RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD DEFENCE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose

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

#### Background

- 1.2 The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (D.E.F.R.A., formally the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, M.A.F.F.) 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, local authorities and internal drainage boards. Responsibilities differ according to the type of operating authority and Runnymede BC'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 The Civic Offices, Station Road, Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 2AH and on the Internet at <http://www.runnymede.gov.uk/>. We are also providing a copy to:
- the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;
  - the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions; and
  - the Environment Agency.

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

2.1 Runnymede BC acknowledges and supports the Government's aim and objectives for flood 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, Runnymede BC 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.*

Runnymede BC 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 defence, in particular by reference to D.E.F.R.A. 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 by an annual report to Committee, which will be posted on the internet.
- 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 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; 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 D.E.F.R.A. guidance on plan completion and the timetables set out in M.A.F.F. 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, Runnymede BC will take account of flooding risks in all matters relating to development control, including development plans and individual planning applications, in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 25.

The Environment Agency is a Statutory Consultee in respect of the Local Plan, and has to identify areas at risk of flooding to which appropriate policies should apply.

The Local Plan Policies themselves are agreed in liaison with the Environment Agency.

### **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 Runnymede Borough 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 Runnymede Borough Council is the relevant operating authority for flood defences on ordinary watercourses within the Borough of Runnymede.
- 3.3 There are no coastal defences within the Borough of Runnymede, and thus there is no relevant coastal defence operating authority.
- 3.4 The flood defences that are owned or managed by the Council are detailed in our return for the database which is maintained by the Environment Agency.
- 3.5 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**

- 3.6.1 There are 150 km of ordinary watercourses for which Runnymede BC is the relevant operating authority. These are all of the watercourses in the Council's area with the following exceptions:
  - the River Thames, between Runnymede Borough Council's boundary with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Runnymede Borough Council's boundary with Elmbridge Borough Council;
  - the Abbey River between the River Thames at Penton Hook Weir and the River Thames at Chertsey Lock;
  - the River Wey between Runnymede Borough Council's boundary with Woking Borough Council and the River Thames;
  - the River Bourne (Addlestone), between Runnymede Borough Council's boundary with Woking Borough Council and the River Wey at Weybridge;
  - the River Bourne (Chertsey), between the railway line at Lyne and the River Thames at Weybridge;
  - the Moat, between Thorpe Lea, Egham and the River Bourne north west of Chertsey;

- the Meadlake Ditch between Pooley Green and the Moat at St Anns Lake, Thorpe;
- the Hurst Ditch between Stroude Road and the Hurst Ditch at Thorpe Green;

all of which are designated as main rivers and thus the responsibility of the Environment Agency. There is no internal drainage board operating in the Council's area.

3.7 We have agreed with the Environment Agency that within the Council's area there are 21 km of "critical ordinary watercourses" (ie 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:-

- Ottershaw: Murray Road to Fletcher Close
- Chertsey/Addlestone: Green Lane, Chertsey to Station Road, Addlestone
- Chertsey: St Peters Hospital to the River Bourne in Chertsey
- Chertsey: Watery Lane to the River Bourne in Chertsey
- Chertsey: Hanworth Lane Industrial Estate to the River Bourne in Chertsey
- Englefield Green/Egham: Royal Holloway College to the Moat
- Englefield Green/Egham: Spencer Gardens to Runnymede
- Englefield Green: Englefield Green to Wick Lane

3.8 Based on historical flooding information, coupled with the Environment Agency's indicative flood plain maps, the Council has carried out an assessment of the risk of flooding from the ordinary watercourses in our area. The main areas at risk of flooding are the towns of Egham, Chertsey and Addlestone and the villages of Englefield Green and Ottershaw. In addition, Council inspections show there are no significant deficiencies in any of the river walls within the Borough. The watercourses identified as "critical ordinary watercourses" are all subject to a build up of silt to a greater or lesser extent which, if not cleared regularly, will significantly reduce the flow so as to increase the risk of flooding. We have in place a program of routine maintenance and de-siltation for these "critical ordinary watercourses. The Council is satisfied that there are minimal risks to human life created by these flood risks from ordinary watercourses, but emphasises the need for the Environment Agency's flood warnings to be heeded, where these are provided (see below).

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

3.9 The main means by which flood risks will be managed is through the Environment Agency's flood warning dissemination plan of July 2000. This makes arrangements for warnings to be provided in Addlestone, Chertsey, Egham and Thorpe within this Council's area, including individual warnings to high risk properties. Runnymede BC 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.

- 3.10 The Council has a programme in place to inspect the state of:
- flood defences (whether or not owned by the Council) on all ordinary watercourses; and
  - all critical ordinary watercourses and related culverts.
- 3.11 The Council will ensure that regular maintenance is carried out on the flood defences and channels which we own, or for which we accept responsibility, so that they operate at optimum efficiency. Subject to the availability of the necessary resources and where it is considered appropriate we will make use of our permissive powers to assist with maintenance on other ordinary watercourses. 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.
- 3.12 The Council has given approval to carry out flood studies for Englefield Green, and Guildford Road catchment (Chertsey and Ottershaw). The Council's approved major work plan with respect to flood alleviation is:
- Englefield Green Flood Study
  - Ripley Springs Catchment (Egham) Flood Study
  - Guildford Road Catchment(Chertsey and Ottershaw) Flood Study
  - Chertsey Bourne Environmental Enhancement Study (Jointly with the E.A.)
  - General Flood Investigations
  - Guildford Road Flood Alleviation Works
  - Murray Road Flood Alleviation Works

The flood alleviation works should be carried out in the financial year 2001/2002 and additional works will be carried out in the light of the findings of the studies.

- 3.13 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 includes measures for 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 Runnymede BC intend 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.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Strategy for Flood and Coastal Defence in England and Wales M.A.F.F. 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 M.A.F.F., November 1999

Other references from the policy statement, for example to the relevant Shoreline Management Plan.

\* the DETR had yet to complete consultation on PPG 25 which will replace Circular 30/92 on Development and Flood Risk.