
Policy Statement on Flood Defence



*A Description of Leeds City Council's approach
to the protection of property
and the environment in the District*

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL, POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD DEFENCE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Purpose

- 1.1 This policy statement has been prepared by Leeds City Council to provide a public statement of the Council's approach to management of flood risk in its area.

Background

- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 The Government has published a policy aim and three objectives for flood and coastal defence¹. 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 targets². 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 an assessment of the risk of flooding and coastal erosion in their area, and what plans they have to reduce that risk.
- 1.4 This policy statement fulfils the Council's obligations as an operating authority for non main river watercourses within its area. The Council is also a member of the Yorkshire Regional Flood Defence Committee which oversees policy and programmes for flood defence on "main rivers" in the region undertaken by the Environment Agency. Nothing in this policy statement shall commit the Council to funding or actions in relation to the business of that Committee. Copies are available from the Council's offices at the Department of Highways and Transportation, Leonardo Building, 2 Rossington Street, LS2 8HB and on the Internet at the Council's website (<http://www.leeds.gov.uk>). We are also providing a copy to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and the Environment Agency.

The Government's policy aim and objectives

- 1.5 The Government's policy aim is:

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.

- 1.6 The key objectives to achieve this aim are:

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

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

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

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

2.1 Leeds City Council acknowledges and supports the Government's aims and objectives for flood and coastal defence. 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.

2.2 Section 3 below sets out our assessment of the flooding risk in the Council's area and our plans for reducing or managing that risk.

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

2.3 Provision of flood warning systems is the responsibility of the Environment Agency. However, Leeds City Council 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 and amended as necessary, 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.

2.4 Leeds City Council 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 river catchments which affect 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 MAFF 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.
- 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 etc.) Regulations 1994 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;
 - when carrying out flood defence works, seek opportunities for environmental enhancement, and aim to avoid damage to environmental interest including protected species and local and national Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species. 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 guidance on plan completion and the timetables set out in MAFF High Level Targets.
 - consult the Wildlife and Countryside Section of the Council's Department of Leisure Services for advice prior to carrying out any flood defence works.

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

2.5 As the local planning authority for our area, Leeds City Council 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 Notes 20 and 25.

3.0 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 Leeds City 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 Leeds City 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 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.
- 3.4 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 (Leeds City Council or Highways Agency).

Assessment of flood risk

- 3.5 There are approximately 500 km of ordinary watercourses for which Leeds City Council is the relevant operating authority. These are all of the watercourses in the Council's area except the River Aire, between Apperley Bridge and Castleford, Oulton Beck between Middleton and Oulton, the River Wharfe between Otley and Boston Spa, Collingham Beck between Scarcroft and Wetherby, and Cock Beck between Seacroft and Aberford, and Kirkstall Goit, which are designated as *main river* and thus the responsibility of the Environment Agency. There are two internal drainage boards operating in the Council's area: Marston Moor IDB and North Wharfe IDB, both of which have responsibility for small rural areas at the north-eastern fringe of the Authority.
- 3.6 We have agreed with the Environment Agency that within the Council's area there are 61 km 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 listed below:

Watercourse	From	To
Adel Beck	Alwoodley Park	Parkside Road
Bagley Beck , Rodley	Farsley Beck Bottom	Canal Rd, Rodley
Drain, Sandford	Broadlea	River Aire
Farnley Beck	Roker Lane	Gelderd Road
Farnley Wood Beck	Moor Head	Elland Road
Grimes Dike	Birchfields Avenue	York Road (A64)
Meanwood Beck/Sheepscar Beck/Lady	Parkside Road	York Street
Millshaw Beck/Hol Beck	White Rose Centre	Water Lane
Nun Royd Beck	Tennyson Street	Leeds Road
Scotland Beck/Oil Mill Beck/ Cow Beck	Moseley Wood	Abbey Road
Red Beck , Rodley	Ring Road	Rodley Lane
The Beck/Kippax Beck/Sheffield Beck/Lin Dyke	Barrowby Road	Ledston Ings
Throstle Carr Beck	Middleton	Leadwell Lane
Tong Beck	Tong Lane End	Roker Lane
Tyersal Beck	Daleside Road	Black Carr
Un named. Meanwood	Potternewton Crescent	Meanwood Road
Wyke Beck	Easterley Road	Halton Moor Road

- 3.7 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 as shown below:

Watercourse	
Bagley Beck , Rodley	Farsley (Farsley Beck Bottom), Stanningley (Town Street)
Farnley Beck	Lower Wortley, Holbeck
Farnley Wood Beck	Churwell (Old Close), Millshaw (Snittles Farm)
Grimes Dike	Whinmoor
Meanwood Beck/ Sheepscar Beck/ Lady Beck	Meanwood (Monkbridge), Buslingthorpe, Sheepscar
Millshaw Beck/Hol Beck	Millshaw, Wortley South
Red Beck , Rodley	Rodley West (Petrie Crescent)
The Beck/Kippax Beck/Sheffield Beck/Lin	Kippax (Brigshaw Lane)

Dyke	
Throstle Carr Beck	Rothwell West
Tyersal Beck	Duckett's Crossing (Dale Side Grove)
Wyke Beck	Halton Moor, Killingbeck, Fearnville

3.8 In addition, Council inspections show there to be significant deficiencies in the river walls at Sheepscar Beck creating an increased flood risk to the locality. There are some key grids, usually at culvert entrances, which, if not cleared regularly, will significantly reduce the flow so as to increase the risk of flooding. The Council is satisfied that in most cases 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). In rare cases the local topography is such that the occurrence of a blockage at the entrance to a culvert could cause significant impounding to occur behind an unsuitable earth embankment. This could pose a discernible risk to human life.

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. This makes arrangements for warnings to be provided in the following locations within this Council's area, including individual warnings to high-risk properties

River Aire. In the Leeds area the Environment Agency may issue warnings for the River Aire as follows:

<i>Warning Name</i>	<i>Ref No</i>	<i>RF9 Location and possible impact</i>
Flood Warning		
Horsforth	RW021	From Calverley Bridge to Newlay: Rodley treatment works and over 20 properties at Newlay weir
Kirkstall	RW022	From Kirkstall Forge to The Goit: 45 businesses, including Morrisons and Alders, and the railway line
Scientific Games	RW044	Business site on Kirkstall Road
Knoctrop	RW025	Thwaites Mill and the Waste Water Treatment Works
Redland Aggregates	RW045	Sand and gravel firm: low probability
Allerton Ings, Agricultural	RW040	Farmland downstream of the Aire and Calder confluence
Allerton Ings, Barnsdale Rd	RW041	Road only: A656 to Castleford; floods regularly
Allerton Ings, Properties	RW042	5 isolated properties on Barnsdale Rd: high probability of flooding
Newton Ings	RW043	From New Fryston to Castleford Ings: Farmland and Newton Lane flood regularly
Severe Flood Warning		
Burley	RS023	260 industrial, commercial and residential properties, mostly south of Kirkstall Road, including Redcote Lane and east to the Inner Ring Road
Central Leeds	RS024	From Wellington Street to Knoctrop: 450 central area properties at risk, particularly south of the river
Mickletown	RS027	900 properties at risk: affected by Aire and Calder combined
Allerton Bywater	RW026	55 properties in the centre and NW of the village: low probability

River Wharfe. In the Leeds area, the Environment Agency may issue the following flood warnings for the River Wharfe:

Flood Watch		
Nidderdale and Wharfedale	DF906	Wharfe catchment

Flood Warning		
Billams Hill, Otley	DW555	257 properties adjacent to Otley Bridge and Ackroyds Mill; high probability
Pool in Wharfedale	RW565	77 properties between Pool and Arthington: high probability
The Avenue, Collingham	DW582	8 properties: high probability
Collingham	DW575	237 properties in the Millbeck area along Collingham Beck: high probability
Wetherby	DW580	3 properties on north side of river at tennis club and car park
Severe Flood Warning		
Otley	DS560	375 properties at risk; high probability

- 3.10 Leeds City Council has included plans for responding to both major and minor flooding incidents in its emergency planning procedures and has arrangements for cascading warnings received from the Environment Agency to relevant Council services. The Council has a policy during flooding incidents (see LCC 'Emergencies Handbook', Feb.2001) of issuing sandbags, on request, in the following order:
- Vulnerable individuals or establishments;
 - Residential properties; and
 - Business or other non-residential properties
- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 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. 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.
- 3.13 The Council has a programme of desirable capital flood alleviation works, mainly on sections of watercourse where the Council is not the riparian owner or asset manager. These works will be progressed subject to funding from developer contributions under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Where capital maintenance work is necessary on Council owned assets, this will be taken into consideration during the Council's annual budgetary planning cycle.
- 3.14 We are also engaged in regular inspections of central area channel walls with a view to ensuring that owners take action to repair these wherever necessary. In our maintenance programme we will give priority to clearing the excess silt in canalized watercourse lengths owned by the Council (Sheepscair Beck and Hol Beck) and clearing trash from those grids and screens for which the Council has a formal maintenance responsibility. The Council has a routine maintenance regime in place to ensure defences operate at their design standard.
- 3.15 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.

The Coastline

- 3.16 Leeds City Council is an inland authority and does not, therefore, have any coastal defences

4.0 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 Leeds City Council 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.

Notes

- * Publication anticipated in Spring 2001.

References

- 1 Strategy for Flood Defence in England and Wales MAFF and Welsh Office, September 1993
- 2 High Level Targets for Flood Defence Operating Authorities and Elaboration of the Environment Agency's Flood Defence Supervisory Duty MAFF, November 1999