

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL CASTELL-NEDD PORT
TALBOT



POLICY ON FLOOD AND COASTAL DEFENCE

October 2002

POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD AND COASTAL DEFENCE

Introduction

Purpose

- 1.1 This policy statement has been prepared by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to provide a public statement of the Council's approach to flood and coastal defence in its area.

Background

- 1.2 The Welsh Assembly Government has overall policy responsibility for flood and coastal defence in Wales. However, delivery is the responsibility of a number of flood and coastal defence "Operating Authorities" i.e. the Environment Agency through Local Flood Defence Committees and local authorities. There are no internal drainage boards currently operating within the Neath Port Talbot Council area. Responsibilities differ according to the type of operating authority and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's responsibilities are set out in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 below.
- 1.3 As a public body the Environment Agency is ultimately responsible to central government and to the Welsh Assembly Government. A more direct link with the public and customers is required for consultation and regular feedback on performance. A key role in this process is played by the statutory committees operating in each of the Agency's regions. In the Environment Agency Wales the Regional Flood Defence Committee has, through the setting up of a Welsh Local Flood Defence Scheme¹ (1996), delegated functions to six Local Flood Defence Committees. Neath Port Talbot Borough Council operates within two of these Local committees:

1. The South West Wales Local Flood Defence Committee
- and 2. The Glamorgan Flood Defence Committee.

The Committees are comprised of a mix of members appointed by the Regional Flood Defence Committee and the constituent councils who have a majority of one on the Committee thereby ensuring local democratic input into decisions.

- 1.4 The Government has published a policy aim and three objectives for flood and coastal defence². To ensure a more certain delivery of the aim and objectives by the individual operating authorities The National Assembly has published a series of high level targets³. 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 document fulfils the requirement to publish a policy statement setting out our plans for delivering the Government's policy aim and objectives in our area.
- 1.6 Copies of this Policy Statement are also available from the Council's offices at The Civic Centre, Port Talbot, The Civic Centre, Neath and the Civic Centre Penllergaer, and also on the Internet at 'www.neath-porttalbot.gov.uk'. We are also providing a copy to:
- The Welsh Assembly Government Environment Division;
 - The Welsh Assembly Government Planning Division;
 - Environment Agency Wales.

2. How the Council will deliver the Government's Policy aim and Objectives

- 2.1 Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council acknowledges and supports the Government's aim and objectives for flood and coastal 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 and coastal erosion 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, Neath Port Talbot County Borough 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, 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.*

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council will:

- provide an adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound approach to providing the flood and coastal defence service.

We will:

- 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 in Shoreline Management Plans, and Local Environment Agency Plans, for our area and the approach will be compatible with the strategy and policies contained in the Unitary Development Plan.
- 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 for money including:-
 - (a) keeping up-to-date with policy and technical developments in flood and coastal defence, in particular by reference to guidance issued by The Welsh Assembly Government, 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; 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 the Planning Guidance (Wales) Technical Advice Note 15: Development and Flood Risk ⁴ through the town and country planning process;
- ensure that appropriate maintenance regimes are in place for flood and coastal defences for which the Council takes responsibility;
- inform landowners of the responsibilities for maintenance which rest with them (see paragraph 3.1 below);
- make publicly available the Council's expenditure plans for flood and coastal 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;
- as a relevant authority we will contribute to the Swansea Bay Coastal Management Scheme ⁴;
- when carrying out flood defence works, seek opportunities for environmental landscape and seascape enhancement, and aim to avoid damage to environmental interest and to ensure no net loss to habitats covered by the UK and Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Action Plans. The provision of the Habitat Directive on the conservation of European protected species will be complied with. We will monitor all losses and gains of such habitats as a result of our carrying out flood defence works and will report on them annually to the Environment Agency;
- ensure there is no unavoidable damage to the historic environment, and co-operate with Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments whenever works may affect the historic environment, particularly scheduled ancient monuments for which their consent is required
- ensure that, for those Water Level Management Plans where we are the lead operating authority, we work in partnership with the Countryside Council for Wales to complete, implement and review plans in accordance with guidance on plan completion issued by the Welsh Assembly Government and the timetables set out in the High Level Targets.

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

As Local Planning Authority, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council takes account of flooding risks in all planning matters including the preparation of the Unitary Development Plan, supplementary guidance, development control and enforcement, in accordance with Planning Guidance (Wales) Planning Policy and TAN 15 – Development and Flood Risk..

3. Our Assessment of the Risk of Flooding and Coastal Erosion in our Area and what we will do to Reduce or Manage that Risk

Flood and coastal defence responsibilities

- 3.1 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 Neath Port Talbot County Borough 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 or coast protection measures on private land; this is the responsibility of the landowner.
- 3.2 Neath Port Talbot County Borough 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 (i.e. measures against coastal erosion) on all frontages in the ownership of the authority within the authority's area.
- 3.3 It is intended that the flood and coastal defences that are owned or managed by the Council will be scheduled in the form of an inventory as part of 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 (Unitary Authority or The Welsh Assembly Government Highways Division).

Assessment of flood risk

- 3.5 There is a vast network of ordinary watercourses within the county borough for which Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is the relevant operating authority. These are all of the watercourses in the Council's area except the main rivers. Main rivers are the responsibility of the Environment Agency. There is no Internal Drainage Board operating in the Council's area.
- 3.6 We have agreed with the Environment Agency that within the Council's area there are **25 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 and/or disrupt main transport systems). A Schedule of "*critical ordinary watercourses*" is held by the Land Drainage Section, and will be periodically reviewed.
- 3.7 The Council will carry out an assessment of the risk of flooding from the ordinary watercourses in our area based on historical flooding information, coupled with the Environment Agency's indicative flood plain maps. This ongoing assessment will identify the main areas at risk of flooding together with any deficiencies in structures such as river walls, culverts etc.

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.

Action to Reduce or Manage Flood Risks

- 3.8 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 various locations within this Council's area, including individual warnings to high risk properties.

Flood warning messages given by the Environment Agency relate to main rivers in the Neath Port Talbot Area as follows:-

River Afan	Flood Warning Area WW109 Port Talbot
River Neath	Flood Warning Area WW110 Resolven
River Neath	Flood Warning Area WW112 Neath and Aberdulais
River Tawe	Flood Warning Area WW118 Ystalyfera
River Tawe	Flood Warning Area WW119 Pontardawe

Neath Port Talbot County Borough 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.

- 3.9 The Council have in place a regular maintenance programme of inspection and cleansing of debris screens/grids that have been constructed at the inlet of some culverts that are in the Council's ownership. Inspection and removal of debris is regularly undertaken to ensure that the build up of debris is kept to a minimum. Desilting of culverts takes place on an ad hoc basis and is subject to resources and finance being available. The Council intends to inspect all critical ordinary watercourses and flood defences on all ordinary watercourses on a risk based frequency derived from initial inspections carried out by the Environment Agency.
- 3.10 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 of flood defences and channels of ordinary watercourses rests with a landowner, we will aim to secure co-operation in ensuring appropriate maintenance takes place, drawing on enforcement powers if necessary and appropriate.
- 3.11 The Council's major capital works programme is determined at the beginning of each financial year, when capital budgets are confirmed.

- 3.12 By following Government guidance in Planning Guidance (Wales) Planning Policy and TAN 15 – Development and Flood Risk on development in flood risk areas (and TAN 14 – Coastal Planning⁶), the Council, acting as Local Planning Authority, ensures that further risks are minimised. This includes measures for ensuring sustainable urban drainage systems to control surface water run off where appropriate.

Assessment of Coastal Erosion Risks

- 3.13 Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is a member of the Swansea Bay Coastal Engineering Group, together with neighbouring authorities and other bodies. The Coastal group have produced the Swansea Bay Shoreline Management Plan (*March / 2001*). There are approximately **22.8 km** of shoreline in the Council's area, parts of which are defended against erosion by sea defences. The remaining frontage consists of industrial areas, docks etc. and dunes.
- 3.14 An assessment of coastal erosion risks have been identified in the *March/2001* Swansea Bay Shoreline Management Plan.⁵

Action to reduce or manage coastal erosion risks.

- 3.15 The plan also identifies future strategies and actions with respect to dealing with erosion, and details future inspection and study programmes.
- 3.16 In addition to the strategies identified under the Shoreline Management Plan, the Council in accordance with its powers under the Coastal Protection Act 1949 operates a programme of routine beach management for the protected frontage. This consists of annual re-profiling and occasional beach recharge as necessary within the limits of a budget.

4. Partnerships and Review of this Policy Statement

- 4.1 The Council has set out its policy and approach to flood and coastal defence. We recognise the need to work in partnership with The Welsh Assembly 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 or coastal erosion.

- 4.2 Neath Port Talbot County Borough 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.

References

- 1 *Welsh Local Flood Defence Scheme 1996*
- 2 *Strategy for Flood and Coastal Defence in England and Wales* MAFF and Welsh Office, September 1993
- 3 *High Level Targets for Flood and Coastal Defence in Wales and Elaboration of the Environment Agency's Flood Defence Supervisory Duty* The Office of The National Assembly for Wales
- 4 *Planning Guidance (Wales) Technical Advice Note (Wales)15 – Development and Flood Risk 1998* – Published by Wales Assembly Government.
- 5 *Swansea Shoreline Management Plan* – Swansea Bay Coastal Engineering Group –March 2001.
6. *Planning Guidance (Wales) Technical Advice Note (Wales)14 – Coastal Planning 1998* – Published by Wales Assembly Government.