

GOOLE AND AIRMYN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Conservation Policy

Introduction

The Goole and Airmyn Internal Drainage Board has adopted this Conservation Policy to show how it intends to meet the duty placed upon Internal Drainage Boards under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1994 together with other relevant legislation.

The Board will undertake watercourse maintenance in a way that is compatible with nature conservation interests.

The Board recognises the need to positively demonstrate it's watercourse maintenance together with maintenance operations plus any capital works being undertaken are in a manner, whilst reducing flood risk and managing flows also safe guards nature conservation interests and wherever possible makes a positive contribution towards the enhancement of the natural environment.



The Drainage District

The Goole and Airmyn Internal Drainage Board has an operational area (Drainage District) covering a total of 1,842 Hectares (4552 Acres) of low-lying land. The District is contained within a peninsula surrounded by three tidal rivers namely the River Ouse, River Aire and the River Don (Dutch River). The site comprises of the majority of the urban area of the Town of Goole and the villages of Hook and Airmyn, the agricultural area is mainly arable farming. All of this area is below sea level at Mean High Water.

The District is protected from Tidal and Fluvial flooding by River defences and a network of Drains. These man made features demonstrate the significance that several hundred years of water control has made towards creating the present valued landscape from a natural marshland.



The Internal Drainage Board has a supervisory role in respect of all matters relating to the Drainage of Land and Property within its Boundaries.

The Land Drainage Act 1991 empowers the Internal Drainage Board to undertake works on any non-main River watercourse within the Drainage District. However, direct maintenance is generally limited to the Board's "Adopted Drains" which forms the Strategic Arterial Drainage System. The "Adopted Drains" amount to a total of 24 km (15 miles) in length and include 5 Pumping Stations with a total of 12 Pumps therein. There is a pumped outfall into each of the 3 Rivers. Consequently, water can be pumped into the River against the tidal flow.

The Board manages water levels in the Strategic Arterial Drainage System particularly during summer months to maintain sufficient water supplies for agricultural purposes and in winter for land drainage and flood defences.

The balance between these levels is very fine and may cause conflict at times. However, the present management practices have evolved over the years between the Board, farming communities and the urban areas including industry. This allows everyone to work with a greater awareness of the District's needs as a whole.

With the exception of "Main Rivers" these are water courses under the control of the Environment Agency and "Adopted Drains" (watercourses under the control of the Internal Drainage Board) the responsibility for maintenance of all the watercourses and field ditches is with the riparian owner.

Geographical

The Board's District is a low-lying area that was formerly marshland this was reclaimed by man.

In order to improve the quality of the soil our forebears introduced the practice of "warping" which was carried out for several centuries. This allowed the rich sediment from the River Ouse to settle onto the soil, thus developing very high grade farming land.

The "warp" rests on layers of peat, shale and a bed of clay which, was laid down during periods of high sea levels. This overlies a rock formation of Bunter Sandstone.



Statutory Obligations

The Land Drainage Act 1991 as amended by the Land Drainage Act 1994 places a duty on Internal Drainage Boards with respect to the Environment and Recreation. Simply the Land Drainage Act 1994 requires Internal Drainage Boards in conjunction with ongoing responsibilities to further conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. This includes flora, fauna and geographical or physiogeographical features of special interest and to have regard to the desirability of protecting and conserving buildings, sites together with objects of archaeological and historical interest. Internal Drainage Boards must also take into account the effect, of any proposals they wish to promote, could have on the beauty or amenity of any rural or urban area or any such flora, fauna, features, buildings, sites or objects in that area.

The Environment Impact Assessment (Land Drainage Improvement Works) Regulations 1999 requires Internal Drainage Boards to undertake an assessment of the impact on the environment of projects that are likely to have significant effects. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 also requires Internal Drainage Boards to consult with Natural England (English Nature) on proposed works or operations if these impact on the interest features of sites of special scientific interest.

Under the Habitats Regulations 1994, Internal Drainage Boards are required to consider the likely effect of the Board's plans or project on European designated sites. In this Board's District, it would be the Humber Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest. However, it is felt that it is unlikely that the nature scale or timing of operations undertaken by the Board would affect the site.



Sites of Environmental and Conservation interest

This Board has no sites within its' boundaries which are of this category However as previously mentioned the Humber Estuary site of special scientific interest is adjacent to the Board's northern flank

Protected Species

During a recent survey of the Board's Drains it was found that there are habitat compatible to both Great Crested Newts and Water Voles. The Board will endeavour to protect the species and habitats whenever possible by taking whatever action as required by statute. The Board's conservationist is aware and will guide the Board in the appropriate procedures as and when required.

Routine Maintenance Operations

Regular maintenance of the Board's "Adopted Drains" is essential for land drainage and flood defence. It also helps maintain the balance of Bio-diversity of the watercourse system maintaining the agricultural water supply. The programme of work is carried out in a systematic manner and always with nature conservation in mind.



Maintenance specifications provide the necessary guidance to ensure that appropriate standards is met. The plan ensures the operational needs of the District as a whole is served with the least impact to the natural habitats provided by the watercourses.

Rural water catchment areas provide the greatest opportunity for affecting environmental gain and the specifications adopted for these watercourses reflect the advantages to the Environment, the Board and conservation as a whole in reducing the flailmowing of channel banks.

The Board's annual maintenance of watercourses consists of Flailmow cuts of the channel banks and removal of aquatic weed by cutting and occasionally sludging.

Flailmowing commences during mid to late July or early August depending on the weather. De-weeding commences in mid to late August and continues through to mid October. The Board's practice of leaving a fringe of uncut vegetation at the water's edge, where this is both safe and practical, helps to provide stability to the banks and also ensures both food and shelter to small mammals e.g. water voles etc.



The Board, wherever possible, has begun to use the practice of cutting one bank in alternate years.

The normal increase of rainfall in the autumn months requires the Board's aims to complete all aquatic weed cuttings by mid October at the very latest. This helps to avoid the damage to banks, gateways and agricultural land generally caused by working in wet conditions.

The watercourses, which are maintained by the Board, in urban areas give protection from flooding to valuable properties by providing arterial drainage and storm water storage facilities.

As a result, the need to maintain these watercourses must reflect the strategic purpose without which the flood risk would be much greater. Again, this work will be carried out with a view to minimising the risk of environmental damage.

Inspections of watercourses prior to any work commencing will, whenever possible, be carried out to establish the presence or otherwise of nesting birds, small mammals and other species and to ensure whenever possible to avoid disturbances or at least it is minimised.

It is the practice of this Board to consult with conservation bodies, this includes both statutory obligation and voluntary action and includes any group that may have some input into the situation. Through this, it is hoped to achieve an environmental enhancement of the Board's watercourses.

Credit to Mr G Bate Clerk & Engineer and Mr Jon Trail of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust for supplying the Photos.