



Water Control Structures Policy

Approval date: 20/04/2026	Approved by: Board
Applies to: Board Members, officers and employees of the Board.	Linked Documents: Culverting Policy.
Frequency of review: 3 years	Next review date: April 2029

1. Purpose and Scope

This Policy sets out the Board’s approach to the maintenance, replacement, and funding of water-level control structures (WLCS) located within the Boards District.

It applies to all fixed hydraulic assets that influence drainage or flood management, including:

- Outfalls, penstocks, sluices, flap valves, weirs, tilting weirs, stopboards, culverts and headwalls, and trash screens.
- Associated pipework, chambers, and automation or telemetry equipment directly linked to those structures.

The Policy provides a framework for prioritising investment, sharing costs with beneficiaries, and securing external contributions to ensure sustainable and efficient operation of the Board’s drainage network.

The Policy also supports the Board’s duties relating to biodiversity and sustainable water management under the *Environment Act 2021* and *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (s40)*.

2. Statutory Context

The Board exercises permissive powers under the *Land Drainage Act 1991* to construct, maintain, improve, or remove works for land drainage and water-level management.

Ownership or control of a structure does not transfer statutory liability to the Board unless expressly adopted by resolution.

All works will comply with:

- The Board’s Byelaws made under Section 66 of the *Land Drainage Act 1991*.
- The Environmental Permitting (Regulations) 2016, where relevant.
- The Board’s Environmental and Health & Safety Policies.
- The Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009, where relevant.



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3. Principles of Management

These principles set out how the Board manages, maintains, and operates its water-level control structures to ensure they remain safe, effective, and sustainable. They provide a framework for asset prioritisation, health and safety, and the shared operation of structures within the district.

In emergency situations where a structure has failed, become blocked, or presents an immediate flood or safety risk, the Board may undertake temporary or permanent works without prior Board approval where delay would increase risk to people, property, or infrastructure. Such actions will be authorised by the Clerk & Engineer and reported to the next Board meeting.

3.1 Asset Management and Prioritisation

1. Maintain an accurate Asset Register identifying ownership, condition, and criticality. The Asset Register is the Board's central record of all adopted watercourses and engineered structures. It includes details of ownership, location, condition, and criticality, and is used to inform maintenance priorities, business cases, and future investment planning.

Note: The Board's Asset Register is an operational tool used to record, inspect and manage water-level management infrastructure. It differs from the Fixed Asset Register maintained for accounting purposes, which records the Board's financial assets for audit and reporting.

2. Prioritise works using risk-based criteria that consider public benefit, environmental impact, and cost effectiveness.
3. Plan replacements in line with asset condition, design life, and available funding.
4. Promote resilience and environmental gain when upgrading or decommissioning structures.
5. Engage landowners and partners early to explore opportunities for joint funding where private or shared benefit is evident.

3.2 Health, Safety and Structural Integrity

6. All inspection, maintenance, repair, and replacement activities associated with water-level control structures shall be planned and carried out in accordance with the Board's Health and Safety Policy, risk-assessment procedures, and relevant legislation, including the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. The safety of staff, contractors, and the public is a primary consideration in all asset-management decisions.
7. Many of the Board's adopted watercourses and associated structures are located on privately owned land. The Board retains responsibility for the safe operation, inspection, and maintenance of its adopted assets, while the landowner remains responsible for



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general site safety and access in accordance with the Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984. Where safety concerns are identified during inspection, the Board will take proportionate action and, where appropriate, notify the landowner in writing.

8. The Board will ensure that all new and existing water-level control structures are designed, operated, and maintained to minimise health and safety risks to staff, contractors, and the public. Design specifications and refurbishment works will incorporate appropriate access arrangements, signage, guarding, and other safety measures in line with current best practice and regulatory guidance. Defects or hazards identified through inspection will be recorded in the Asset Register and prioritised for remedial action.

3.3 Operation and Shared Responsibility

9. Operation of water-level control structures shall be clearly defined and agreed between the Board and any other responsible parties, such as landowners, estate managers, or partner organisations. Where structures form part of a wider Water Level Management Plan or collaborative scheme, operational arrangements, trigger levels, and responsibilities for monitoring and adjustment shall be documented and approved by the Clerk & Engineer. The Board will only authorise third-party operation where appropriate competence, risk assessment, and maintenance arrangements are in place.

4. Replacement and Funding Hierarchy

Scenario	Funding and delivery approach
Structure wholly serving Board operations (e.g. outfall or penstock on adopted drain with public benefit).	Fully funded and delivered by the Board, subject to available resources and prioritisation within the capital programme. Opportunities to improve biodiversity, eel and fish passage, or water-quality outcomes will be incorporated as required, and where practicable.
Structure with shared benefit (e.g. Board operational asset also improving private drainage, irrigation or habitat management).	Board seeks proportional contributions from beneficiaries, calculated through agreed cost-sharing or benefit ratio. Designs should, where feasible, deliver environmental and water-resources co-benefits such as wetland creation, water retention, or improved fish/eel passage.
Privately owned structure affecting an adopted drain.	Landowner funds all repair, replacement or removal. Works require prior consent under <i>Section 23 Land Drainage Act 1991</i> and must demonstrate that hydraulic performance, ecological continuity and eel-passage requirements are not compromised.
Strategic enhancement, resilience or water-resources project.	Board may pursue external partnership funding (e.g. FDGiA, Local Levy, EA/LLFA or environmental grants) where works provide multi-benefit outcomes, for



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	example, flood-risk reduction, drought resilience, or eel/fish-passage and habitat improvement.
Decommissioning or removal.	Considered where structure is redundant, environmentally detrimental, or obstructs flow or species movement. Decisions require Board approval and an assessment of potential biodiversity, eel-passage and water-balance improvements.

5. Partnership and External Funding

The Board will pursue partnership-funding opportunities where:

- The scheme delivers demonstrable shared benefit (flood-risk reduction, environmental gain, or infrastructure protection).
- A business case can evidence proportional public/private contribution.
- Administrative costs of pursuing funding are proportionate to scheme value.

The Clerk & Engineer will prepare and maintain business cases for prioritised assets, drawing on the Board's Asset Register, condition assessments, and supporting technical or environmental evidence as appropriate. Design and replacement works will comply with relevant Environment Agency or CIRIA guidance and recognised engineering standards appropriate to the scale and function of the structure.

6. Governance and Review

This Policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if legislation or the Board's Byelaws are amended. Implementation of this Policy is delegated to the Clerk & Engineer, with financial oversight by the Finance Committee.

Asset data, inspection records, and associated drawings will be stored securely and maintained in accordance with the Board's Data Protection and Information-Management policies.



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Glossary (for reference)

Term	Meaning
Asset Register	A digital record maintained by the Board that lists all adopted watercourses, pumping stations, and water-level control structures. It records location, condition, and operational importance, and provides the evidence base for maintenance and capital-replacement decisions.
Water-level control structure (WLCS)	Any engineered structure used to control water levels or flows in a watercourse (e.g. sluice, penstock, flap valve, or weir).
Outfall	A pipe or channel through which water is discharged from one system to another, often into a main drain or river.
Penstock	A sliding or hinged gate used to control water flow through a pipe or culvert.
Flap valve	A non-return valve fitted to an outfall to prevent water flowing back upstream during high tides or floods.
Weir / Tilting weir	A fixed or adjustable barrier that controls upstream water level.
Headwall	A concrete or masonry structure supporting a culvert or pipe outfall.
Telemetry	Remote monitoring of water levels or asset performance using sensors and communications systems.
FDGiA	Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid — government capital funding for flood-risk management projects.

Version Control

Version	Date Approved	Summary of Changes
1.0	20/04/2026	Initial policy approved