



Drought Policy

Approval date: 20/04/2026	Approved by: Clerk
Applies to: Board Members, employees, contractors.	Linked Documents: Flood Policy Water Level Control Structures Policy Corporate Risk Register.
Frequency of review: 3 years	Next review date: April 2029

1. Introduction

A number of organisations have key responsibilities in managing drought. The North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board will work collaboratively with partners including Natural England, the Environment Agency, Defra, Water Resource Southeast, National Farmers Union, National Drought Group (NDG), and the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) to support effective drought management at both local and national levels.

Through partnership working, the Board will seek to influence policy affecting farming, land management, and water resources, ensuring drought risks are recognised and addressed in future planning.

During drought conditions, the Board will heighten water level monitoring and work closely with landowners, professional partners, and stakeholders to optimise water retention and distribution. Our aim is to manage the hydraulic catchment in an integrated way that supports agricultural, environmental, and operational needs year-round, while fulfilling our statutory obligations under the Land Drainage Act 1991.

This policy outlines how the Board will respond to and prepare for drought conditions. It:

- Defines what is meant by drought;
- Clarifies the Board’s role and responsibilities; and
- Sets out our approach to managing drought through a combination of short-term actions and long-term strategic goals.
- Supports the Board’s wider commitments set out in the Environmental Policy, Watercourse Maintenance Policy, and Water Level Management Plans.

2. Scope and Legal Context

This policy applies to all land and infrastructure managed or influenced by the Board. While the Board does not regulate abstraction or guarantee water availability, it will take reasonable steps to optimise water levels and support resilience in line with its statutory duty under the Land Drainage Act 1991.



Drought Policy

3. Drought

Drought is a natural phenomenon that occurs when prolonged periods of low rainfall lead to a shortage of water, affecting rivers, watercourses, and aquifers. The impacts of drought vary depending on timing, severity, and local catchment characteristics.

3.1 The Responsibilities of the Board and How Drought Will Be Managed

The Board will work in partnership with landowners, statutory agencies, and other stakeholders to help manage water resources during drought. However, it is important to note that the Board is not responsible for water quality, particularly during drought conditions when quality may be reduced. Water users must always satisfy themselves that water is suitable for abstraction, irrigation, or other uses before doing so.

3.2 Short-Term Goals

In close liaison with landowners, Natural England, and the Environment Agency, the Board will:

- Provide localised support by actively monitoring dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and temperature, and sharing relevant data with statutory authorities when environmental thresholds are exceeded or unmet.
- Prioritise water retention or redistribution where necessary to mitigate short-term environmental harm, particularly to designated sites and habitats of principal importance.
- Optimise the use of infrastructure and pump operation to maintain higher water levels and maximise available water during drought periods.

3.3 Long-Term Goals

The Board will collaborate with Natural England, the Environment Agency, other Risk Management Authorities, and wider partners to:

- Develop plans and protocols for future drought events.
- Invest in adaptive, resilient infrastructure across the IDB network.
- Assess and adjust routine maintenance regimes in light of drought impacts.
- Support the creation of resilient and adaptive catchment systems through partnership delivery.

4. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or following a significant drought event, to reflect any changes in legislation, catchment conditions, or lessons learned in collaboration with partners.



Drought Policy

Version Control

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