

TO: SWALE RURAL FORUM
DATE: 1 JULY 2009
SUBJECT: LEYSDOWN FLOOD BOARDS - UPDATE
BY: Head of Environmental Services
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides an update on the operation of the flood boards forming part of the sea defences in Leysdown follow a request from Leysdown Parish Council that one set of flood boards is operated locally.

Implications:

Human Resources Implications : None

Finance Implications: None

Legal Implications: None

Crime & Disorder Implications (Section 17) : None

Equalities & Diversity Implications: None

Sustainability Implications: None

Risk and Health and Safety Implications: Potential risk to life and property should flooding occur due to there being a gap in the sea defences if flood boards are not in place during storm and tidal surge conditions.

Corporate Plan Implications: Promoting a Safer and Stronger Community

Decision Required: **That Members note the report and that further discussions are taking place with the Environment Agency and that the outcome of the discussions will be reported to Leysdown Parish Council.**

Background

1. The flood boards and the sea defences in Leysdown are the responsibility of the Environment Agency to provide and maintain. The Borough Council have agreed with the Environment Agency that the Council will be responsible for the opening and closing of the gates. The floodgates and flood boards form an essential element in the sea defences to prevent flooding under exceptionally high tides and storm conditions and the Council Policy for operating the gates/boards requires that all the gates and boards are closed from 1st October to Easter. The only exception within this policy being 2 swing gates in Queenborough and one swing gate in Sheerness where access is provided to boat slipways. These swing gates can be easily and quickly closed and the reason for limiting the openings to three points is to ensure that they can be closed immediately on the receipt of a flood warning.

2. Last year we experienced problems with floodgates being opened by unauthorised persons and left in the open position. It was therefore decided that the padlocks would be changed to ensure that the integrity and safety of the sea defences could be maintained. We were not aware of any local arrangements for the operation of the flood boards in Leysdown until this was raised by the Parish Council.

Actions to Date

3. In March this year the Parish Council advised that one set of flood boards had been operated locally with the boards being taken out on days of good weather during the period when the gates/boards would normally be closed and requested that this arrangement be allowed to continue. I replied to the Parish Clerk at that time that I could not recommend a change to the current policy as I was concerned that this arrangement could lead the integrity of the sea defences being compromised with a potential risk to the local community from flooding.

4. I also explained that it may be possible to provide steps or ramps to some sections of the defences so that access is permanently available but this would need to be explored with the Environment Agency. As no comments were received back from the Parish Council it was assumed that they were happy with the current arrangements.

5. However, with the issue now being raised at the Rural Forum we have been in contact with the Environment Agency. The Agency have confirmed that they share the concern regarding the operation of the flood boards by a third party but are happy to explore the possibility of other options to allow access to the beach during the winter season.

6. Arrangements have been made with the Environment Agency to explore the options in more detail and the results of these investigations will be reported to the Parish Council.

Recommendation

7. That Members note the report and that further discussions are taking place with the Environment Agency and that the outcome of the discussions will be reported to Leysdown Parish Council.

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Date 30th June 2009