Rivers Authorities and Land Drainage Bill 2017-19

May 2019

KEY MESSAGES

- We support the Rivers Authorities and Land Drainage Bill. It will establish new bodies known as 'rivers authorities', which will boost efforts to manage flood risk.

- A rivers authority would be a locally accountable body with the power to issue an additional precept to existing councils to collect Council Tax. The purpose of this revenue would be to fund additional local flood risk management work.[1]

- It is important that the Bill makes the rivers authorities democratically accountable through councils. Local democratic agreement from the councils involved, and local ratepayers, will be essential in them being successful.

- It is also vital that once operational, rivers authorities engage residents in their work and are accountable to them for their decision-making.

- Councils outside of rivers authority areas should also be able to raise a precept for local flood risk management. As with the establishment of rivers authorities, this must be contingent on local democratic agreement.

- Lead Local Flood Authorities have a statutory role in local flood risk management. They should therefore be responsible for deciding how any additional local funds are spent in line with their local flood risk management strategies. Any new burdens arising from this work would need to be fully funded.

- Rivers authorities will also be subject to the council tax referendum regime set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992. We would like clarification that the council tax precept referendum limits imposed on a new rivers authority will not affect existing limits in place within councils.

Further information

For more information on the national funding arrangements for local flood risk management, please refer to the LGA's website.[2]

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[1] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0169/18169en.pdf
[2] https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/severe-weather/flooding/paying-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk/funding-arrangements

Briefing