SYNOPSIS   Flood embankments, or levees, are a vital part of flood risk management. In the light of serious levee failures during major storms such as Hurricane Katrina in the US (2005), Tempête Xynthia in France (2010), torrential rain in Pakistan (2010) and torrential rain and snowmelt in the US (2011), organisations from six different countries (France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the UK and the USA) decided to come together to provide a guidance document on the design, construction and management of levees – the International Levee Handbook (ILH, 2013). The paper will describe the vision for the handbook, give an overview of its contents and provide a short summary of one of the key technical issues which emerged in relation to the UK and Ireland context.

As smaller reservoirs (down to 10,000m³) come under regulation in at least some parts of the UK the distinction between flood embankments and dams will become less significant. A nascent community of practice in the UK and Ireland, which has developed around the ILH, supported the development of new national guidance on the design of flood embankments to Eurocode 7 (expected 2014). This will be of interest to dam engineers. The further development of this community is currently being discussed, with the possibility of it being developed in association with the BDS, to ensure that relevant knowledge is shared with the dam community.