

Local Flood Risk Management, Ballater.

1. Flood Risk Management in Scotland is governed by the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act, 2009. One of the key requirements of the Act is for local authorities to create Local Flood Risk Management Strategies to reduce the impact of flooding across their areas. These are to be supported by Local Flood Risk Management Plans which are to show how the Strategies will be delivered.
2. The Strategies and Plans are risk-based and plan-led, recognising that a long-term strategic (rather than reactive) approach is essential.
3. Most of Aberdeenshire is covered by the North East Local Plan District, which also includes Aberdeen City.
4. The Plan was published in 2016 and runs until 2022. Much of the early work on identifying potentially vulnerable areas, measuring risk and setting priorities was undertaken prior to Storm Frank. Ballater was then not considered a priority but after Storm Frank, it was included in the Plan following discussion at the Infrastructure Services Committee.
5. There are estimated to be some 230 residential and non-residential properties at risk of flooding within Ballater.
6. Aberdeenshire Council commissioned consultants RPS to undertake the Ballater Flood Study; they reported in February 2019. The preferred option identified in the feasibility study was Option 3A. The scheme is projected to cost £31m and, after due process, was submitted to the Scottish Government for funding.
7. Scottish Government has the responsibility for funding such schemes. However, the budget is limited and under huge pressure.
8. 3A includes 3.3km of direct defences – 1.32km of earth embankments, 800m of reinforced concrete walls with 1.5km of glass walls. A 1 km concrete wall is also proposed downstream of the Bridge
9. The current situation is that 3A is still with the Scottish Government/SEPA. No decisions have been taken on the numerous bids from across Scotland. As noted, the budget is under pressure; a number of the schemes already in development are over-budget and inflation within the construction sector is a major issue at present.
10. As things stand at the moment, 3A is the only option that, after robust analysis, will provide the level of protection required for an event on the scale of Storm Frank. In light of that it seemed to me absolutely right to put it forward to the Scottish Government. It is of course now recognised that significant flood events will happen more frequently as a result of climate change.
11. Other discussions and other thinking is taking place of course; FIG and BCCC have been active in this work, working with Aberdeenshire Council and the CNPA. There is work currently underway to look at the benefits and potential disbenefits of some smaller interventions in the river and on the banks, following discussions between FIG, BCCC, the Golf Club and Aberdeenshire Council and I understand that FIG will be organising another public meeting in Ballater later this year on these issues.

12. There is a growing focus on re-examining the options for up-stream storage; this is at an early stage but I have discussed the possibility of a meeting of all interested parties in early summer to look at the issues; in principle Aberdeenshire Council had agreed to host such an event.
13. It is absolutely recognised that many in the community do not support 3A and that the fullest possible dialogue, partnership and engagement will be required as/when/if matters move forward.
14. I am sorry not to be able to attend the meeting this evening. Unfortunately, I have tested positive for Covid and so must remain at home. I am however pleased that BCCC has arranged this event and pleased to have been able to support Richard, John and Tom in delivering it. It is really important that there is a positive discussion about what would happen should 3A get funding; what steps would be required, how the Ballater community would be engaged in any proposals and processes. At the end of the day, we all want the same thing – the protection of life and property (in that order) in Ballater. It will not be easy and perhaps it is a pity that Francis Farquharson of Monaltrie did not consider the possible consequences of building his spa town on a flood plain back in the 18th century....

PJA. 7 April 2022.