

Ballater & Crathie Community Council

Flooding Issues Group (FIG), Workstreams BCCC meeting 10/11/2025 (16th update)

FIG Members

Community Councillors: John Bannerman (FIG convener), Richard Frimston

Associate Members: Tom Flynn, Lucile Verrot, Phil Benzie, Martin Ellison, John W Morrison

INTRODUCTION/History recap

On 31/12/2015 Ballater village like other communities in the NE of Scotland was badly flooded by Storm Frank, a storm rated by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) as approximately a 1/200-year event. As a result of this flooding, Aberdeenshire council (ABCo) contracted a specialist company, RPS, to produce a feasibility study on the options to avoid a reoccurrence. This study concluded with a recommended option, 3A, which despite community objections, following Marr Area Committee approval, was submitted to Scottish Government (SG) for funding support in January 2020.

As of today (Nov 2025), although ABCo remain committed to 3A, no funding from SG has been forthcoming.

In 2020 as it became apparent that nothing was going to happen on the ground in the foreseeable future the Ballater and Crathie Community Council (BCCC) formed a subcommittee, the Flooding issues Group (FIG) to look at what could be done on the ground to progressively enhance the resilience of Ballater village to flooding.

Following the submission of 3A to SG, the BCCC position was to support 3A subject to the legitimate concerns of the community being addressed during the engineering phases. However, following a public meeting in April 2022 during which ABCo presented the process if funding from SG was forthcoming, the BCCC changed their position to oppose 3A since it became clear that it was highly unlikely that the legitimate concerns of the village could be addressed.

Interestingly, SEPA data shows that in the 5 years following Storm Frank, Ballater did not experience any river flows above approximately 400 m³/sec and subsequently no flooding. In the following 3 years, on 4 occasions, flows of more than 500 m³/sec have occurred with varying levels of flooding.

During one of these events (February 2021) the river permanently moved its course from Glen Muick towards the village. To determine the implications of this change ABCo contracted RPS to produce the Ballater additional Flood Study (BAFS). This study concluded that for high frequency low level flooding (1/30 year event), flooding would be worse in the village, but that for the low frequency high level flooding (1/200 year event) nothing had changed. To mitigate this increased risk the BAFS looked at several options with option 7 being the recommendation, the installation of a 440-meter 1.5-meter-high bund.

Since ABCo's position remains 3A they were not willing to fund option 7, but were willing to assist the community. A complete option 7 was beyond the means of the community, however after successful fund raising and support from several sources a partial option 7 was installed, the Hesco Box (HB) bund. This bund proved its worth in Jan 2024 when the village was dry at river flows which had previously caused flooding.

Progressively as FIG has reflected on this subject, we believe that with our changing climate not only is there an increasing risk of flooding but also increasing likelihood of extended periods of drought. To address these dual challenges of climate change we believe a catchment level approach is required.

To structure our work, we have developed and regularly update a series of workstreams as explained below;

A. Preservation of Life

The procedure “Local response to a SEPA Aberdeenshire flood Alert and specific Ballater flood warning” has been updated following discussions with the stakeholders and is currently with Scottish fire and rescue for final comments.

Actions.

Follow up with Scottish fire and rescue and agree on which local entity “owns” the procedure.
After each SEPA flood warning review the procedure with a view to continuous improvement.

John Bannerman

B. Promote Property Flood Resilience and Build back better

To maximise the resilience of a property to flooding there are 3 components, prevent water ingress, limit damage if water does enter and build back better following flooding.

The Scottish Flood Forum (SFF) have visited Ballater on several occasions and visited approximately 50 properties to give advice. Recently the SFF mobilised their flood mobile to Ballater. Observations on the ground seem to confirm that homeowners are progressively taking responsibility for improving their resilience to flooding.

Actions.

Remain engaged with the SFF to capitalise on any support they can give to Ballater to encourage property owners to do what they can to protect their property and reduce , eventual damage and recovery time.
Consider trying to quantify the uptake of PLP within the village

John Morrison

C. Oppose option 3A

Despite community opposition ABCO continue to promote 3A to Scottish government for funding.
However, it seems unlikely that funding will be available within the foreseeable future if ever. Without central funding ABCO will not progress 3A.

Actions.

Monitor the Scottish government approach to the funding of cycle 2 projects more specifically 3A for Ballater.
Continue to discuss with relevant officers at ABCo.

Richard Frimston

D. HESCO BOX BUND

Moving forward the HB bund will require maintenance and there may be opportunities for enhancements.

Actions.

Monitor the condition of the Hesco Box bund and Evaluate options for enhancements

John Bannerman

E. CBEC STUDY

The phase 2 of the study, development of a mathematical model, has been completed. The options to be modelled during phase 3 have been identified and additional survey work completed. Funding for phase 3 has been secured (Community Trust/CNPA partnership).

Actions.

Monitor phase 3 and participate to review meetings with CBEC as required.

Tom Flynn

F. DEE RESILIENCE STRATEGY

Under the coordination of the Cairngorm National Park Authority a Dee Resilience strategy workgroup has been established. A project manager has been recruited and will attend the next workshop.

Actions.

Representing Braemar and Mid-Deeside CC's as well as BCCC, participate to the next workshop 8/12.

Encourage ABCO to participate fully.

J Bannerman

G. FUND RAISING

As the CBEC study progresses funds will be required. Additionally, any future works associated with workstream D will require funding.

Actions.

Maintain an exhaustive list of all potential funders to be contacted when scope and costs of works becomes clear.

In the event of successful fund raising ensure funders requirements are followed.

Martin Ellison/ Phil Benzie