

Flood Information Group (FIG) of BCCC, December 2021 onwards

4th Update

FIG's purpose is to identify and assess issues regarding flooding, obtain the broadest possible consensus in the local community as to the level of protection from flooding that is realistic, obtainable and desirable, and to promote, communicate and co-ordinate actions for its well-being and safety.

The following are the current direction of travel for FIG:

The damage and change in the river course due to the February (2021) high water event was a serious wake-up call.

- FIG's priority is to assess the new situation, get recommendations to improve flood defence and construct these defences as soon as possible, whilst improving resilience – workstreams B & C.
- FIG will however, also remain focused on longer term solutions, which aim to provide greater protection against a major Storm Frank but have much longer timescales to deliver – workstreams A & D.

To deliver the work streams, FIG will source technical expertise whenever necessary from whatever sources are available.

A. Support hard flood defences as currently the only Aberdeenshire Council (AbCo) proposed way of protecting Ballater village from a storm Frank type event. However, the definitive design of these defences must take into consideration the concerns of the various village stakeholders.

(Timing: Long Term)

- To avoid any confusion and misunderstandings, particularly in relation to this work stream, BCCC notes and reaffirms the statement BFRG made, with BCCC support, to the Marr Area Committee on 5 November 2019 and the written support BCCC gave in 2019 to the concept of the alternate proposal of BFG.

Related activities:

- Lobby for funding. FIG has met with Andrew Bowie MP and is arranging to meet with Alexander Burnett MSP.
- Continue to collate a village position re option 3A and consult with major stakeholders. (Ongoing process). Organise a meeting in March 2022 for the community to build a consensus.
- Propose to AbCo alternatives for consideration (such as that previously proposed by Tony Cox).

B. Support short / medium term actions to ensure that the impact on the village of higher frequency high water events remains low. These actions should also mitigate the impact of lower frequency high water events.

(Timing: Current)

Related activities:

- Scope for a study to examine effects of recent damage and change in the river course was prepared.
- AbCo MAR area committee agreed on 23 November to commission this study including risk modelling and review of minor works. FIG continues to press AbCo so as to make urgent progress on each of these two issues.
- Source funding for and take action on any associated recommendations.
- Engage with all stakeholders on maintenance of existing river banks and bunds.

- Discuss and agree ABCO preventive maintenance routines to avoid blockage of drains which can lead to nuisance flooding during periods of intense rainfall

C. Promote Property Level Protection (PLP) and maintain close links with the Resilience Group to enhance actions / processes related to SEPA flood warnings. **(Timing: Current)**

Related activities:

- A meeting to discuss Resilience issues with AbCo took place on 14 September 2021. Various actions were agreed and documented. FIG will press for further action.
- Communication campaign. A demonstration by the Scottish Flood Forum took place in V&A Halls on 10 December 2021; 32 property surveys requested to SFF.
- Organise demonstration day with manufacturers.
- Investigate pros and cons of a sandbag deployment plan and lines of command. A meeting is planned for 22 November 2021 to make progress with the relevant parties.
- Identify vulnerable villagers who may need support and consider how to protect exposed properties which may be uninhabited at the time.

D. Support upstream initiatives for water management in the Dee catchment area . **(Timing: Current & long term)**

Related activities:

- It is apparent from well researched reports in 2019 and 2020 that climate change is driving both flooding and drought as immediate threats especially for North Eastern Scotland, bringing even drier summers and wetter winters; workstream D must raise awareness of these issues.
- Identify Key Stakeholders (CNPA, SEPA and the estates) and promote this Upstream Agenda to encourage urgent planning and action. A meeting with CNPA is to take place in January 2022.
- FIG will continue to investigate the assumptions in the RPS report that confirmed upstream storage technically feasible but which was rejected on a cost/benefit assessment.
- Workstream B study may also develop initiatives for Workstream D.