

Flooding Issues Group (FIG) of BCCC, July 2022 onwards

7th 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 for the community and BCCC.

- 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 with Alexander Burnett MSP. Alexander has obtained answers to our questions to the Scottish Government; there is no indication that Ballater will be prioritised. Due to serious cost overruns on 2015 Flood Schemes, those schemes not yet been started (two thirds) have now been paused. These cost pressures are likely to seriously restrict new flood scheme approvals in 2022.
- Continue to collate a village position re option 3A and establish a list of the areas of concern.
- Arrange a survey/questionnaire of the community to establish a clear position with AbCo in relation to option 3A.

B. Support short / medium term actions to ensure that the impact on the village of higher frequency high water events remains low. These actions could 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 has commissioned this study including risk modelling and review of minor works to be completed in summer 2022. FIG has attended virtual meetings with ABCO FT and RPS 13/01 on 10/02, 10/03, 21/04 and 9/06. Arrange an information meeting and a public meeting once the study is issued.

- 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 discuss with the Resilience Group the transfer of pure resilience activities from FIG work streams.
- 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, to be undertaken 14th – 18th March.
- The SFF have pencilled in the weeks of 6th and 13th June 2022 for a tour of Scotland for the Flood Mobile to include Ballater.
- Investigate pros and cons of a sandbag deployment plan and lines of command. Following the recent meetings with the authorities (ABCO / Police/ Fire and rescue) propose to the Ballater Fire and Rescue watch commander an initial response to a SEPA flood warning or potentially dangerous high water event.

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 (AbCo, CNPA, SEPA, Dee Catchment Partnership, Fishery Board and Dee River Trust and the estates) and promote this Upstream Agenda to encourage urgent planning and action. Virtual and in person meetings have taken place with CNPA, SEPA, Dee River Trust and FIG have raised the matter with our MP and MSP and the chair of CNPA. FIG is continuing the process of co-ordinating with Braemar and Mid-Deeside Community Councils.
- FIG will continue to investigate the assumptions in the RPS report that confirmed upstream storage was technically feasible on a small scale, but which was rejected on a cost/benefit assessment.
- Workstream B study may also develop initiatives for Workstream D.