

Ballater & Crathie Community Council

Flooding Issues Group (FIG), Workstreams January 2024 onwards

12th Update

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

The damage and change in the river course due to the February 2021, November 2022 and October 2023 high water events underline the issues for the community and BCCC.

- FIG's priority is to assess the changes, get recommendations to improve flood defence and construct these defences as soon as possible, whilst improving resilience – workstreams D & E.
- 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 – workstream F.

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

FIG Members

Community Councillors: John Bannerman, Tom Flynn, Richard Frimston

Associate Members: Richard Bush, Neil Duncan, Lucile Verrot, Charles Wildash

Assistant Members: Phil Benzie, Martin Ellison, Mike Hadley, John W Morrison, John Owers-Bradley, Steve Pihoda.

The following are the current workstreams for FIG agreed by BCCC:

- Preservation of Life** (Timing: Current, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period: All)
- Promote Property Level Protection (PLP)** throughout the whole community and maintain close links with the Resilience Groups to enhance actions / processes related to SEPA flood warnings. (Timing: Current, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period: All)
- Oppose hard flood defences (**Option 3A**) as currently proposed by AbCo, on the basis of its economic impact and that there is active community opposition. (Timing: Current, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period: All)
- Support **short term actions** to ensure that the impact on the village of higher frequency high water events remains low. (Timing: Current, Flow rates <550 m³/sec, AEP:10%, Return Period: 1/10)
- Support **medium term actions** to ensure that the impact on the village of higher frequency high water events remains low. (Timing: Medium term, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period: to be agreed)
- Promote **upstream initiatives** for water management in the Dee catchment area. (Timing: Long term, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period : All)

Achievements to date and current and future related activities in relation to each work stream are as follows:

A. Preservation of Life **(Timing: Current, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period: All, Leader John Bannerman with John Owers-Bradley)**

Achievements:

- Following meetings with the authorities (ABCO / Police/ Fire and rescue) an initial response strategy setting out lines of command and emergency response was agreed with the Ballater Fire and Rescue watch commander after a SEPA flood warning or potentially dangerous high water event.
- The emergency response from the authorities and from Ballater Resilience Group on 7 October was very timely and effective.
- SSEN deployed mobile generating plant (Invercauld Rd) to maintain the village in the event of a power cuts for the first time.

Related activities:

- Developing links with SEPA and improving understanding of flood risks.

B. Promote Property Level Protection (PLP) throughout the whole community and maintain close links with the Resilience Groups to enhance actions / processes related to SEPA flood warnings. **(Timing: Current, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period: All, Leader John W Morrison with Mike Hadley, John Bannerman, Steve Prihoda)**

Achievements:

- FIG have organised demonstrations by the Scottish Flood Forum which led to two rounds of property surveys. It is heartening to see increasing numbers of properties with effective PLP that minimises damage during more frequent events.
- FIG have pressed AbCo to implement PLP on council properties at risk.

Related activities:

- Workstream D AbCo study (Dec 2022) has identified more properties at risk in high frequency events due to recent changes in the Dee
- FIG will continue to promote PLP for both residential and business properties at risk in the community area.

C. Oppose hard flood defences (Option 3A) as currently proposed by AbCo, on the basis of its economic impact and that there is active community opposition. **(Timing: Current, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period: All, Leader Richard Frimston with Neil Duncan, Martin Ellison)**

Achievements:

- FIG have organised a public meeting and consulted widely in order to ascertain community views.
- FIG have met with councillors and AbCo officers and AbCo Flood Team to detail possibility for variation to Option 3A and written to AbCo Director of Infrastructure as to BCCC decision.

Related activities:

- BCCC have subsequently met with our 3 ward councillors and also with officers as to withdrawing Option 3A.
- FIG have prepared a briefing note and executive summary for councillors on the various issues as to why 3A is not economically viable.

- Continue to press Marr Area Committee and other arms of AbCo to actively withdraw 3A.
- Press AbCo to fund a new solution (post Cbec design work) that may be a combination of E1 and/or F workstreams.

D. Support **short 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, Flow rates > 550 m³/sec, AEP: 10%, Return Period:1/10 Leader, Neil Duncan with John Bannerman, Tom Flynn)**

Achievements:

- FIG have obtained AbCo funding for the additional RPS study and liaised with BGC and BCE on the impact on the Golf Club and Caravan Park.
- FIG have worked with AbCo Flood Team and RPS throughout the RPS study process.
- FIG held a public meeting on 16 November 2023 to present the RPS additional study to the community and detail the short term and medium term actions proposed and start to discuss the level of viable protection that the community might be prepared to accept
- FIG with BRD FACT have now obtained necessary consents and financial and other assistance from Charitable Chiels, Ballater Commercial Enterprise Ltd, Marr Area Committee, Invercauld Estate and Balmoral Estate and installed HESCO box mitigations.

Related activities:

- FIG with BRD FACT will be finding additional funding and then proceeding with further protection for the HESCO box structure.

E.1 Support **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, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period: to be agreed, Leader Tom Flynn with John Bannerman, Richard Frimston, Lucile Verrot, Charles Wildash)**

Achievements:

- FIG have obtained approval in principle from BRD to contract with Cbec to produce outline possible options for a programme of upgradeable defences that will meet the viable protection (level of protection, budget & timescales) that the community is prepared to accept.

Related activities:

- Consult and engage with all stakeholders:
 - on all possible options for providing the viable protection that the community is prepared to accept.; and
 - on moving, improving and maintenance of existing and new river banks and bunds, particularly in conjunction with proposals for a sustainable riverside path.
- FIG and BRD are applying for external funding and when confirmed, BRD will then contract with Cbec who will deliver by late summer 2024. After consultation, FIG will then arrange a further public meeting in order to update the community.

E.2 Support **medium term** actions to ensure that the proposed Housing Development H1 at Eastfield mitigates the impact of lower frequency high water events on the Pannanich Road / Lochnagar Way area. **(Timing: Current, Flow rates > 1100 m³/sec, AEP:1%, Return Period: 1/100, Leader Richard Frimston)**

Related activities:

- Consult and engage with all stakeholders on all possible options including reprofiling the Deeside way.

F. Promote upstream initiatives for water management in the Dee catchment area. **(Timing: Long term, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period: all, Leader Richard Frimston with Tom Flynn, Lucile Verrot, Phil Benzie)**

Achievements:

- FIG have considered the various researched reports produced between 2019 and 2022 that show that climate change is driving both flooding and drought as immediate threats especially for North Eastern Scotland, bringing even drier summers and wetter winters.
- Virtual and in person meetings have taken place with AbCo, CNPA, SEPA, Dee River Trust, Invercauld Estate. FIG are now included in CNPA consultees re Dee Catchment Area water management and met on 17th November 2023.

Related activities:

- 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.
- FIG is continuing the process of co-ordinating with Braemar and Mid-Deeside Community Councils and other local Community Councils, and will collate a multi-community position for the Dee Catchment Area re flooding and drought and establish a list of the areas of concern and request support from the Scottish Government for a water management feasibility study to address the challenges of climate change.
- FIG is continuing to meet with all local land owners to encourage them to instal further water impoundment measures

G. Review current state of the Ballater Bridge and the effect on it of any of Workstreams C - F **(Timing: Medium term, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period: All, Leader Richard Bush)**

Related activities:

- Clarify AbCo asset management strategy for Royal Bridge: establish current design capacity and how it may be affected by extreme flood events and riverbed scour, how these hazards are being managed and establish potential implications of Royal Bridge integrity for other work streams C-F.

Future Workstreams

H. Management and maintenance of watercourses and other sources of flooding, such as run off and drain blockage during heavy rains. **(Timing: Medium term, Flow rates, AEP, Return Period: all)**

Related activities:

- Discuss and agree AbCo preventive maintenance routines for watercourse,
- Discuss and agree AbCo preventive maintenance routines to avoid blockage of drains which can lead to nuisance flooding during periods of intense rainfall.
- Ascertain and document non-river flooding risks