

Ballater Flood Group

Updated Activity Report
4th June 2016

Background

The Ballater Flood Group (BFG) was formed following the December 2015 flood.

During the last 3 months the focus of activity has been towards establishing the risk of further flooding taking account of the changes which are apparent to the river channel - and identifying what actions can be taken to alleviate or protect Ballater Community.

A public meeting was held at the V&A Halls on Friday 13th May which was attended by approx. 80 residents. Both SEPA and AbCo Flood Team were invited to attend but declined. Cllr Katrina Farquat was in attendance.

Review of the meeting.

BFG were represented by Gordon Riddler Ian Cameron and Tony Cox with guest speakers Douglas Johnston and Kenny Scott.

BFG described that it's activities were limited to first phase alleviation and protection from any future 'normal' seasonal flood event.

The meeting opened with a review of the facts of the flood event and described the social and economic scale of effect. Almost 50% of housing stock has been damaged which is statistically far greater than any other community in the UK. The total cost of the event will exceed £100 million. The social impact has been devastating.

Douglas Johnston - an Edinburgh based hydrologist - provided a presentation of his survey work calculations and conclusions. He explained the terms used by experts and described the interpretation of the 1:500 risk terminology. He described that the river channel has been damaged and reduced to the extent that a high autumnal spate of the order of the August 2014 event will result in significant and extensive flooding. Other issues including the choking effect of the Royal Bridge and the construction of 'hard' levees were discussed - but these are generally out with the scope of this phase of work.

His report has been submitted to the Authorities for their consideration and we are planning a meeting to establish their response to take place on 14th June. The outcome will be posted thereafter.

The role of Local Government was discussed in terms of their responsibility to Ballater community to offer protection from future flood risk. This subject has been raised by Alan Nicoll of Laurie and Co within a letter sent to AbCo Chief Executive which requests that they (AbCo) explain their duty of care to the Flood Group. The response to this question will be notified when it is received.

AbCo have confirmed that the golf club embankment will be restored to the extent that it's planning consent permits. SEPA have confirmed that this work has been modelled and shows flood protection benefit. Beyond this there are no works planned to provide flood protection in the short term.

If the report as submitted confirms that the risk of future flooding is as we believe it to be - then what can we do about it?

The meeting discussed the possibility of restoring channel capacity which firstly involves reaching agreement with the Authorities that this is beneficial and can be achieved without environmental damage.

This will feature at the June 14th meeting.

As a back up measure BFG have identified a potential secondary solution which uses a military based solution of steel cages which are erected parallel to the Ballater side river bank forming a protective levee running between the upstream breach point to a location to the east of the Royal Bridge. This proposal represents a tried and tested system that has been extensively used both in the US and the U.K. Kenny Scott of HESCO provided an informative presentation of the system which obviously has a potential for providing a useful and cost effective solution for Ballater flood protection.

BFG explained that to continue with its activities it required the support of the community via a mandate. Following a short period of consideration the audience voted unanimously in support of the proposal to continue.

To continue the Group requires additional skill sets to complement its capabilities. These include finance and business administration.

If there are individuals who would wish to become involved with this programme - we will be very pleased to hear from you.

BFG wishes to acknowledge the support and assistance kindly offered by Iain Latte and Jim Sunley.

Tony Cox

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