

Agenda Item	8
Report No	RC/027/19

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Ross and Cromarty Committee

Date: 14 August 2019

Report Title: Dingwall Flooding Incident

Report By: Corporate Communications and Resilience Manager
Interim Chief Officer (Resources for Community Services)
Head of Infrastructure

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the weather conditions which led to a major flooding incident in Dingwall on Wednesday 10 July, as well as the response by the Highland Council and partner agencies.
- 1.2 Immediate impacts are highlighted as are the recovery actions put in place by the multi-agency Highland Local Resilience Partnership.
- 1.3 Future reports to Committee will provide more detail in terms of actions required to mitigate against similar, future events.
- 1.4 A further flood event occurred on 5 August 2019 and a Multi Agency drop in session was held and was very well attended.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. Note the exceptional weather conditions which resulted in this flood event;
 - ii. Commend the quick response and efforts by the Highland Council and partner agency staff who worked throughout the night to minimise and contain threat to life and property;
 - iii. Note the work done following a previous flooding incident and the response to the recent incident noting that further technical information will be made available to a future Committee by the Flood Risk Management Team; and
 - iv. Following a Multi Agency Drop in Session for the public, the Highland Council committed to respond to the questions raised and provide further information opportunities, including site visits. Updates will be brought to future Committee.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – The identification of any required additional or redistributed resources will form the subject of future report to Committee.
- 3.2 **Legal** – The Council has duties under the Civil Contingencies Act, along with other Category One Responders, to plan for and respond to emergencies. The Council have duties under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 to assess bodies of water with regard to flood risk and have powers under this Act to promote Flood Protection Schemes.

Duties and responsibilities in regard to flooding are set out in the Highland Council's web site at: <https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1226/emergencies/81/flooding/2>

- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** – the effects of flooding on people and property are significant, with potential impacts across the entire community.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – it is recognised that flooding events may become more frequent and the flood study for Dingwall and Blairninich by the Flood Management Team in response to existing flood risk, makes an allowance for climate change implications.
- 3.5 **Risk** – until a Flood Protection Scheme can be implemented, there is a risk that this type of event will occur with greater frequency. It should be recognised that a flood scheme alleviates flooding and reduces the risk, but the risk cannot be eliminated. Severe weather and flooding are risks on the national community risk register and the Highland Council's Corporate Risk Register includes participation in multi-agency planning and exercising for emergencies based on the national community risk register.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** – none.

4. Background

- 4.1 On Wednesday 10 July, Dingwall experienced an exceptional period of weather, after which the Met Office confirmed that a month's-worth of rain had fallen within an hour on a very localised area. The volume of water resulted in the drainage system being unable to cope. In addition, a high tide restricted the flow of the water to dispersal to the sea.
- 4.2 Significant debris volumes washed down from the upstream catchment culminating in a build up on the Knockbain Burn (Boggan Burn) screen by Blackwells Street. The speed with which the waters rose, due to debris blockage on the Boggan Burn, is evidenced by three flood alarms on the Boggan Burn triggered within a 15 minute period. The blockage resulted in excess flow overtopping the banks of the Burn and down into Dingwall.
- 4.3 A routine inspection of the Boggan Burn culvert and screen had been carried out on Monday 8 July and this was found to be clear of all debris with low water flow. The inspection is supported by CCTV footage from the morning of Wednesday 10 July 2019. However, a later image shows the culvert blocked by debris washed downstream. Significant debris build up was removed from the screen and water levels in the Burn subsequently dropped.
- 4.4 Areas affected included Munro Place, Burn Place, Simpson Place, Achany Road,

Blackwells Street, Bridaig Avenue, Pefferside Park and a number of individual properties in the wider area.

5. Response

- 5.1 By around 5pm it was clear that serious situation was emerging and Community Services staff mobilised immediately to clear gullies, screens and to fill / deploy sandbags. Resources (staff, sandbags and equipment) were brought in from Alness and Dingwall and by midnight all the gullies had been cleaned and tons of silt and debris had been removed from Burn Place. The Council's Corporate Communications team provided information via social media to ensure up to date information was being provided to the community. Local Members, the Chief Executive and Ward Manager were involved in co-ordinating the response from the Council and partner services and in liaising on site with residents and Community Services staff.
- 5.2 The focus on the following day was on clearing up and washing out debris etc. Staff remained on stand-by across the Highlands for further events, with more sandbags being filled to ensure enough would be available if required.
- 5.3 The Highland Council Recovery Group met and planned recovery work, staffing and communication including -
- Checking on properties
 - Checking and clearing screens in the affected area and in other areas at risk of flooding in the area
 - Providing community resilience messaging through Emergency Liaison Groups
 - Issuing updated information and responding to media enquiries
 - Ensuring additional operatives were put on stand-by and stocks of sand bags increased, where necessary, to ensure effective response to any further incidents, given the ongoing poor forecast.
- 5.4 A multi-agency Local Resilience Partnership Group meeting was held on the afternoon of 11 July which considered Met Office forecasting and flood alert information from SEPA. Meeting arrangements, contact details, British Red Cross support, and a social media hashtag were all agreed in the event of any further impacts over the following a twenty-four hour period.

6. Further Weather Event

- 6.1 On 5 August 2019 an Emergency Liaison Meeting was called following weather forecast of heavy rainfall. This enabled the resilience response to be prepared. Some flooding did occur and Council teams and partners were mobilised. This event affected fewer households than the earlier event and it was discussed at the community event the next evening as described below.

7. Previous flood incidents and defence proposals

- 7.1 Since the last severe flooding in Dingwall in 2006, the Highland Council has invested considerably in flood defence measures including the installation of CCTV monitoring and trigger alarms for flooding. A flood study for Dingwall is currently being undertaken as it has been identified as a Potentially Vulnerable Area by SEPA. This study will consider impacts from coastal flooding, flood risk from the River Peffery and flood risk from the Boggan Burn. The Local Flood Risk Management Plan identified the progression of a flood study in Dingwall as a priority and monies were made available in the capital programme to undertake this study. The aim of the study is to fully

understand and model the flood risk, at various return periods and also consider climate change. The study will go on to consider mitigation measures, culminating in a recommendation of the optimal solution – alongside the financial costs and the benefits derived.

- 7.2 Flood alleviation in Scotland is a plan-led and a prioritised process grant with funding allocated from Scottish Government. The next call for prospective schemes will be in December of this year, and proposals for Dingwall will be part of the Council's submission. SEPA will then work with Scottish Government to identify the prioritisation of these schemes based on criteria yet to be established, the Highland Council had officer representation on the prioritisation group. SEPA have 'specified' the nature and scope of all flood studies, so the flood study at Dingwall will be benchmarked against all the other studies submitted by Local Authorities, so that direct comparison can be made of the costs and the benefits. There are clearly more areas in Scotland prone to flooding than current funding levels permit to be resolved – but it is right that funding is targeted at those locations that would derive the most benefit, and the Council supports this process.
- 7.3 The Council works closely with partners for prevention and preparedness in the event of flooding, which is an identified risk on the national risk register. The Council's Flood Risk Management Team, based in Dingwall, engage with the Scottish Flood Forum and promote their advice. This information also sets out roles of the various agencies involved in flooding. <https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1226/emergencies/81/flooding>.

8. Community engagement

- 8.1 A multi-agency drop in session attended by around 60 people took place on Tuesday 6 August 2019 in Council Offices, Dingwall between 5.00 pm and 7.00 pm. Representatives from the Scottish Flood Forum, SEPA, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, NHS Highland and the Highland Council's Development and Infrastructure, Flood Management Team, Community Services, Roads and Housing Teams were in attendance to speak to those affected and to provide advice and answer questions.
- 8.2 The Council committed to answer all the questions raised and hold a further session so that this issue can be further considered. This is being planned by mid September and will further feedback to the Committee.
- 8.3 Council staff will continue to liaise with Dingwall Community Council including attending their meeting on 12 August 2019. Any support from the Community Council to engage with local residents will be helpful.
- 8.4 The Council's web site will be updated with new information and advice following the next Community Engagement Session in September.

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Date: 9 August 2019

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