

Case Study: Improving Relationships with a Flood Risk Community

Introduction:

This case study gives an example of a local community group taking action to become more resilient to flooding and its journey towards building stronger links with their local authority and the wider community. The area is identified as having an extremely high flood disadvantage. The key learning points are around good communication and building strong links with the local authority or resilience partnerships.

What Happened?

Aberfeldy is situated next to the River Tay and the Moness Burn flows down through **the Birks O Feldy** and the town. The River Tay has a long and significant history of flooding. A song by Robert Burns written in 1787 reflects the power of the water.

“The braes ascend like lofty wa’s,

The foamy stream deep-roaring fa’s,”

The Tayside Crescent area of the town faces flood threats from the River Tay and the Moness Burn. On January 7th 2016 the Moness Burn overtopped its banks and threatened houses with flooding. The force of the water that evening washed away a wooden bridge on the Moness Burn and redefined the watercourse. In previous years the town has experienced significant flooding with properties flooded and access to Aberfeldy blocked by flooding.



Aberfeldy is within one of SEPA’s “potentially vulnerable areas” (PVA) and has 240 residential and 140 non-residential properties at risk of flooding with expected annual damages estimated at £1.2 million. The town has experienced flooding on numerous occasions with both residential properties and business affected.

Who are Tayside Waders Association?

The Tayside Waders are a residents association with their own constitution and bank account and were set up by local residents in July 2012 with support of a local Councillor to address flooding concerns. They manage a local flood resilience store provided by Perth and Kinross Council where they store pumps, sandbags, trolley and synthetic flood defence equipment.

Good Practice Point:

There are many pre-existing social assets in communities that can get involved in flooding engagement activities. These include a wide range of community organisations so mapping and knowing the community is an important first step.

What Actions Were Taken?

The Tayside Waders Association volunteers deployed their own pumping equipment and sandbags to protect people and properties from flooding. The group warned local residents to take action, supported vulnerable neighbours during the flooding and communicated with emergency services. The group reported that as a result of their actions they managed to keep the water in the burn, avert serious flooding and increased their confidence in their community resilience.

During the event, the Tayside Waders Association encountered difficulties with deploying and removing sandbags and with communicating with key agencies and emergency services during the flood risk incident. After the flooding, across Perth and Kinross the Local Resilience Partnership arranged a series of community debrief sessions to identify problems, solutions and actions to improve resilience and agency response to future extreme weather events. These were successful methods to engage communities, log issues and nurture the culture of community resilience. These events resulted in identifying the need for the Tayside Waders to develop a community flood plan, and link it to the Aberfeldy emergency plan in order to improve communication and partnership working and to ensure the group are linked-in and supported.

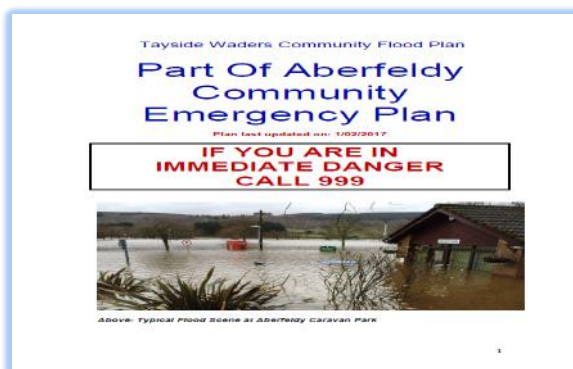


Figure 1: Increased flood resilience for Aberfeldy

Good Practice Point:

Carrying out debrief sessions with community members and involving them in the process as part of the team can help to cultivate future community resilience and help identify solutions to issues that have arisen.

What Ongoing Support is the Group Receiving?

The Scottish Flood Forum (SFF) advised the Tayside Waders that other synthetic forms of flood defence equipment are far more effective and easier to deploy and dispose of after a flood risk incident than sandbags. The local council and the SFF supported the group to access funding to buy 200 synthetic sandbags.



The SFF are supporting the group in developing and testing their community flood plan and helping them create stronger links with other groups and the Local Resilience Partnership.

Key Outcomes: What Actually Changed?

1. Aberfeldy Community Flood Plan produced with support of the SFF
2. Better planning for future flood risks
3. Increased knowledge, skills and awareness in how to respond and become more resilient to future flood risks
4. Increased flood resilience
5. 200 synthetic sandbags acquired by the Tayside Waders
6. Improved links between the community group and the local resilience partnership.

Next Steps:

The Tayside Waders are planning to launch their community flood plan in Aberfeldy and use this event to promote new involvement with the group and generate wider understanding of flood risks in the community.

The Tayside Waders now aim to work in partnership with the Aberfeldy Resilience Coordinator.

The Tayside Waders will plan a desktop exercise event to test their community flood plan with local residents, emergency services and relevant responder organisations.

Good Practice Point:

Carrying out desk top tests of emergency plans with communities can help to foster a sense of team work, partnership working and build relationships with flood risk communities.

This will promote a better understanding of flood risks and encourage people to consider the steps they can take to reduce the risks from flooding and other severe weather related events.



The Tayside Waders will continue to investigate other funding opportunities for resilience equipment. The Tayside Waders will continue to encourage wider community involvement to promote a better understanding of flooding risks and other weather related emergencies.

Contact:

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