Kembhill Park Flood Group (KPFG) was formed after the Kembhill Park area was flooded as a result of Storm Frank in January 2016. 32 homes were flooded, and others had flooding in their gardens and surrounding paths. Alehousewells school was also affected by water damage where carpets had to be replaced. Damage was extensive with the result many residents had to be evacuated with some not able to return home for many months whilst repairs were carried out. The cost of domestic insurance claims amounted to approximately £1 million.

KPFG was initially an informal group of residents who wanted to improve measures to prevent a similar situation in the future. After a short time, the group was formalized and is now a registered charity with the following objectives:

> The aims of the Group is to save lives, advance community development and improve environmental protection. This will be done by:
>
> - Increase awareness about flood risk in the Kembhill Park and surrounding area.
> - Propose actions to reduce the risk of damage to property which could be caused by a repeat of the flood of 8th January 2016.
> - Provide a voice for residents in Kembhill Park and surrounding area who are members of this group concerning all matters in relation to flood risk and prevention.
> - Mitigate the risk of environmental pollution caused by raw sewage from the local sewage plant in the event of a flood event.

Since its formation the group has been very active in raising issues with Aberdeenshire Council and national agencies to ensure that Kembhill Park and the surrounding area is fully recognized for local flood risk planning. Because of this work the Council has invested in a temporary flood barrier (Watergate) which can be deployed when conditions lead to increased flood risk.

Figure 1 Watergate Temporary Barrier in place.

We work closely with other local groups to ensure that any initiatives we take are closely coordinated. These principally include, Kemnay Community Council and Milton Meadows Community Resilience Group.

As a result of the work of KPFG we are now much more aware of the national approach to flood prevention and recovery.

Government policy in this context directs funding towards areas which have been identified as being at risk and most importantly, have been granted the designation of a Potentially Vulnerable Area (PVA). The local Council has some autonomy over how it spends money on flood prevention initiatives but is also influenced by national frameworks and local/national planning regulations.

Securing any significant funding for new works is tied into the Council's existing local flood risk management plans which are based to a large extent on the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) published national flood risk maps and its current list of PVAs.

Getting anything of a permanent nature done in the short term is frustrating and difficult as the Council is unable to carry out any works without first performing a comprehensive flood risk study and then prioritizing work for inclusion into its work plan.

Understanding the mechanism for achieving PVA status has been a core aspect of the work that we have done since 2016, with the goal of getting the Kemnay Area re-classified as a PVA. It would be fair to say that it has been a huge learning process for members of the committee. As a result, Kemnay has recently been awarded PVA status and we now look forward to next steps to improve flood defenses in our community.

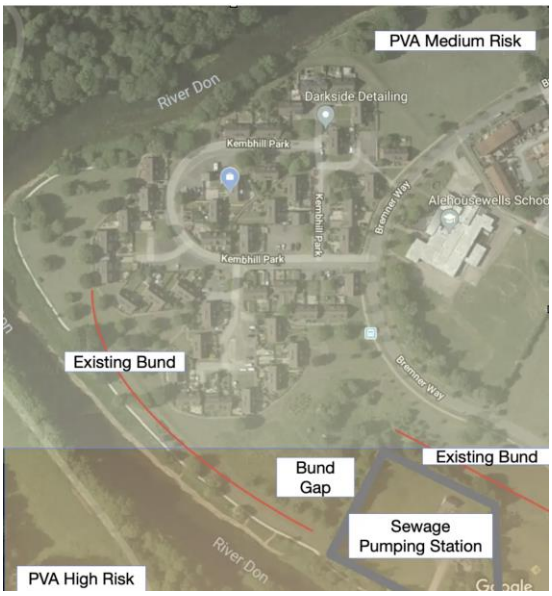

Figure 2 PVA status and the existing Bund with Gap

We expect that this will not produce any significant progress before the last quarter of 2020 which is more than 4 years after the original flood event. In the meantime, residents are aware of the effects of climate change and each time we have a period of persistent rain they are naturally anxious about the risk of another flood event occurring. At least we now know that the Watergate temporary barrier is an option which is more than we had in 2016.

We feel that has been instrumental in raising awareness, influencing key agencies and getting action for our local area.

A very important aspect of the KPFG committee's work has been to keep the local community informed

A very important aspect of the KPFG committee's work has been to keep the local community informed about its activities as things progress. We have done this by creating and maintaining a dedicated KPFG website and using mailing lists to publish minutes of our committee meetings and various papers relating to flooding issues. The KPFG Chairman has written and published regular newsletters about the groups work providing information to all residents and KPFG members in the Kembhill Park and surrounding area. These are published on the KPFG website for future reference and also distributed to everyone on our email lists and other interested parties such as local Councillors, MP and MSP. Paper copies are handed to a few residents who do not have internet access.

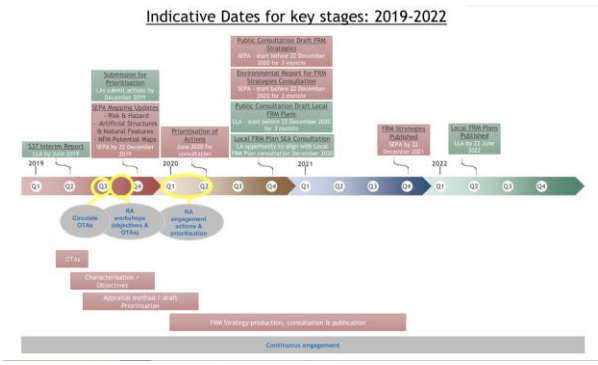

Figure 3: SEPA FRM timelines

The KPFG committee is of the view that a relatively small investment on the Council's part , compared to the cost to repair the damage to houses caused in 2016, could develop the existing flood defenses in Kembhill Park built in 1978 to the extent that it would prevent a repeat of the flooding on that occasion. Clearly, we would like to have a flood defense that can protect against an even higher flood level, just in case!

The diagram above is from a recent SEPA presentation about the key stages to deliver the next cycle of flood risk management plans from 2022 – 2028.We are very much aware that the pot of money to fund such works is not bottomless and the Council has to prioritize which areas in Aberdeenshire to tackle next. We aim to continue our efforts to raise the profile of our area and ensure the highest priority for our community.

All the work that has been done by the KPFG committee has been done by a small group of volunteers who have given their time willingly. Without these efforts we believe that the case for improving flood resilience in our area would not be receiving the attention and priority that it has. The Council's investment in purchasing the Watergate Temporary flood barrier is testament to this. However, we are also aware that residents who have been flooded feel that, whilst the provision of the temporary barrier is a welcome development, they do not feel that the temporary solution provided will lead to long term peace of mind. KPFG is encouraging the Council to accelerate the provision of a permanent solution to the flooding risk in our area.

Jim Buchan – Secretary of the Kembhill Park Flood Group.

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