

**North East Scotland Flood Liaison and Advice Group
Held – Committee Room 2, Woodhill House
2pm, Thursday 2nd September 2004**

Meeting Note

Present

Andrew Carruthers (Aberdeenshire Council)
Alison Hogge (Aberdeenshire Council)
Hilary MacBean (Aberdeenshire Council)
David Crichton (Insurance Industry Representative)
Malcolm Taberner (Aberdeenshire Council)
Anne Buchan (Aberdeenshire Council)
Ken Mercer (Aberdeen City Council)
David Cameron (SEPA)
Judith Cox (Aberdeenshire Council)

1) Apologies

Piers Blaxter (Aberdeenshire Council)
Jim Lister (Scottish Water)
Nicola Abrams (SEPA)
Neil Stewart (Cairngorms National Park Authority)
Daniel Lewis (Aberdeen City)

2) Minute of Previous Meeting

Amend item 5 on the WPR to say “Babtie” and not “Baptie”. Amend item 2 to include “soakaway”.

3) Matters Arising

- Bog bursts
Malcolm Taberner will provide further information at the next meeting. He reported that it is impossible to predict where or when a landslip will occur, although the recent landslip in Perthshire happened in the same location as a previous landslip in 1964. It was also reported that the bog burst in Shetland occurred on gently sloping land, and stretched for 5 miles. Therefore a landslip need not be on a steep slope, and is usually triggered by long periods of dry weather, followed by heavy rain. The British Geological Society (with Macaulay Institute) will be carrying out surveys on a number of hillsides to identify potential areas at risk from landslips.

Mitigation measures were briefly discussed. It was reported that in Shetland most of the herringbone ditches, which carry excess water away from peat land areas, had either been built over or neglected. Therefore water was not able to seep through the peat, and this contributed to the landslip.

- Surface water soakaways
A meeting to discuss the 5-metre soakaway rule between the Building Control teams in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council has not yet taken place although Hilary McBean will try and organise this. It was highlighted that continuity between both Councils interpretation on the soakaway rule is needed quickly.

ACTION: Hilary MacBean

- PAN69: Planning and Building standards advice on flooding
The PAN includes a section on FLAG membership, and it was agreed that a member from the Building Control team in Aberdeen City (as the Development Control representative is from Aberdeenshire Council) and a representative from Emergency Planning should be invited to attend NESFLAG meetings. It was agreed that the contents of PAN69 will be discussed at the next meeting in more detail.

ACTION: Andrew Carruthers

- Progress on Blackdog
Information was requested on the progress of the Blackdog project. Andrew Carruthers reported that the Residential development had been built, and this has assisted in the development of the Index21 – a tool to assess housing layouts. The tool uses 5 principles (climate, energy efficiency, resource efficiency, social consideration and biodiversity) to assess how environmentally friendly a housing layout is. Two seminars have been run so far, and a third seminar with developers was due to be held in September. The project has received unanimous support from planners and architects. A second project is to develop a method of assessing individual houses. In a related process, a Design Forum started on 1 September 2004, and Susan Stirling, from Scottish Executive will be a member of the Forum.

A specific question was asked on the ideal roof pitch for snow. Andrew said that the roof pitch will depend on the type of snow as well as the type of tile used. A shallow roof pitch is ideal to collect dry snow and use it as insulation (as in Switzerland), whereas a steeper pitch is more appropriate where wet snow falls, as it will slide off the roof easier. However, the angle of roof pitch is also affected by materials used, and in turn has an impact on the usability of the space within the roof (one of the considerations that dictated Georgian house designs), and on the weight of the roof (and consequently on the engineering requirements for the walls and foundations). Effectively, there is not a simple answer to the question.

Closer to home, it was reported that if developers in the UK could reduce the pitch of the roof (most commonly at 45degrees), they could reduce their costs. In Canada, a number of dwellings use solar plates, and the money saved by reducing the pitch of the roof goes towards installing the solar plates. Andrew added that work done by Index 21 may result in a

change of vernacular style, if the dwellings were designed to reflect modern domestic patterns of living, renewable energy technologies (as they become more available) and local climate conditions.

4) Update of remit

It was agreed that the remit should be amended after PAN 69 has been discussed at the next meeting.

5) FLAGGIS Project, stage 2

It was reported that stage 1, which is on the Council's Intranet, had been tested and is working well. The breakdown of costs for stage 2 (extending the project to new members on the Extranet/Internet) was presented to the group, based on proportionate representation (how big an area each member covered, and how much information they would actually use). The two options for hosting the website was also discussed, and it was agreed to use Aberdeenshire Council's server, than an independent server to host the site.

A demonstration of FLAGGIS to the Environment Team and Development Control was requested. The Police, Grampian Fire and Rescue Service, and Cairngorms National Park Authority have already been invited to a demonstration.

ACTION: Alison Hogge and Andrew Carruthers

It was highlighted that there may be a copyright issue in relation to the Flood Risk Assessments produced with planning applications. Therefore, it was suggested that a legal opinion is sought.

ACTION: Piers Blaxter

6) Coastal Issues

Malcolm Taberner gave an informative presentation on the effects of coastal erosion in Aberdeenshire, and the problems faced by the Council when river mouths build up with shingle and flood nearby properties. Malcolm reported that shingle is washed up during storms and blocks the mouth of the river, creating a small loch, and, in some instances, the river cannot break through the shingle. Malcolm stated that this is a natural process, but because settlements are built next to the river mouths, the area of the land that would turn into a marshy loch is built on, and the Council have to take action to ensure that shingle is not allowed to build up.

The solution used by the Council has been to remove the shingle from the beach once a year, and to build rock armour (large rocks or concrete blocks with a sloping front along the high tide mark). The rock armour helps to disperse the energy of the waves, so sand and shingle settle on the sea floor before reaching land.

Malcolm reported that more could be done in terms of the planning system – consideration given to SPP7 (Planning and Flooding), and the Coastal Plan, which

is currently being prepared. The Coastal Plan would help planning policy to understand coastal issues and sites at risk from flooding, as well as identify suitable greenfield sites, and prepare for a planned natural retreat of the coastline. Malcolm also added that in 1997 the Infrastructure Services Committee agreed the Close Protection Policy Statement, which states that a developer would be liable for works if they were informed of the potential flood problems prior to the development starting.

Ken Mercer, from Aberdeen City Council also gave a presentation on the effects of coastal erosion on the sea wall and beachfront. Referring to the Coastal Defence Erosion Study (1999), he reported that several points of the sea wall had been eroded, several panels from the timber groynes (wooden fences along the beach front) were missing, and the level of sand on the beach had dropped. Ken reported that rock armour could not be used on the beach, as it would pose a safety risk with local users and tourists. Therefore, the sea wall will be repaired, and rock armour could be sited 200m offshore, in order to prevent sand from washing away.

7) Feedback from seminar

It was requested that the attendees list be circulated to all members of the group.

Andrew Carruthers gave a brief summary of the seminar, and what he hopes NESFLAG will be doing in the next year. Focusing on the idea of setting up a National Flood Forum, Andrew said that he will write to both COSLA and the Scottish Executive, to get support and consider funding. Andrew suggested that a National Flood Forum could act as an umbrella group with local action more appropriate for local Flood Watch Groups. A Flood Fair in Aberdeen or Aberdeenshire was also suggested. During the discussion, it was reported that people affected by flooding, especially when culverts overflow and flood part of a street, can feel embarrassed by such events.

It was also reported that there is an issue of whether Scottish Water are liable for any remedial works to prevent neighbourhoods from flooding if a culvert overflows in times of heavy rain. It was highlighted that in the meantime the Council has to carry out the work, such as creating a retention pond, and pay for it themselves. In the absence of a representative from Scottish Water, it was agreed that this issue should be raised at the next meeting.

ACTION: Andrew Carruthers and Jim Lister

8) SUDS working group update

Andrew Carruthers will report to the group at the next meeting.

9) Development Plan update

Aberdeenshire Local Plan Inquiry has now started, and should be finished by mid February.

10) Major development proposals

None were raised.

11) AOCB

None.

12) Topics for the next meeting

- PAN 69 (its contents and possible NESFLAG remit changes)
- Scottish Water (the extent of their liability during periods of flood, and their responsibility to contribute in full or part to flood alleviation works).

The date for the next meeting will be 16th February 2005 at 2pm, at Woodhill House. Room TBA.