

Report To:	Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee	Date: 12 January 2010
Report By:	Corporate Director Regeneration & Resources	Report No: SL/JC/LA/473/10
Contact Officer:	Sharon Lang	Contact No: 01475 712112
Subject:	Flooding - Request by Councillor Blair	

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request the Committee to consider the attached letter APPENDIX from Councillor Blair regarding flooding within Inverclyde.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Council is asked to consider the request from Councillor Blair.

Sharon Lang
Legal & Administration

Councillor Alan Blair
Ward 3 – Inverclyde North
Municipal Buildings
Greenock PA15 1LX

Inverclyde
council



Miss E Paterson
Head of Legal & Administration

Direct Line: 01475 712020
Fax: 01475 712976
Email: alan.blair@inverclyde.gov.uk
Our Ref: AB/sc
Your Ref:
Date: 23 November 2009

Dear Miss Paterson

Flooding

The incidence of flooding within Inverclyde is becoming progressively more serious, and also more predictable.

I attach copy of a letter sent by me to Mr. Graham on 10 November, which sets out my concerns about the position. Perhaps that letter might be read along with the present one.

The consultant's report with regard to flooding was made available in March this year, and arising from this a Working Party has been established. What, however, has not happened is that any funding commitment has been made by the Council which might at least demonstrate that the matter is being taken seriously.

In the view of my colleagues and myself, the Council was seriously mistaken in not accepting our proposal to include £1.5m for anti-flooding measures at the Council's last budget meeting. I shall be glad, therefore, if you will arrange for the appropriate Committee or Committees to consider the Council's position with regard to flooding as soon as possible, this to include an assessment of what financial contribution is likely to be required of the Council if it is to be seen to be dealing with the problem on a serious basis.

Quite apart from other considerations, it does seem not unlikely that the Council could become liable in civil damages arising from claims by parties suffering loss through predictable flooding against which the Council has taken no effective steps.

Yours sincerely

Alan Blair
Councillor

Enc.



Councillor Alan Blair
Ward 3 – Inverclyde North
Municipal Buildings
Greenock
PA15 1LX

Mr Neil Graham
Corporate Director Environment & Community Protection

Direct Line: 01475 712020
Fax: 01475 712976
Email: alan.blair@inverclyde.gov.uk
Our Ref: AB/slc
Your Ref:
Date 10 November 2009

Dear Mr Graham

Flooding

As you will recall the Liberal Democrat group was unsuccessful at last years' budget meeting to have included in that budget a sum of £1.5m to start dealing with flooding problems within Inverclyde.

In March of this year the Council received a very full and detailed report from consultants with regard to the problem of flooding within Inverclyde. To a larger extent this bore out what I understand to have been findings of another report some 20 years ago, albeit that the level of detail provided is probably significantly greater. In any event, it clearly demonstrates that a considerable investment is required to deal with the flooding problem which exists.

While we hold the view that the Council should take the initiative in dealing with the problem, nonetheless it is plain that to deal with it comprehensively will require a substantial amount of Government funding. In this connection it would be very helpful if you could clarify what prospects there are for fund becoming available, and what steps the Council is taking to press Inverclyde's case for such funding.

My understanding is that prior to the SNP Government taking over, the process was for a local authority to make application for grant aid, in the context of a fully developed plan showing in what way such grant would be used. Were such an application successful, then the grant would be "ring-fenced" for the purpose described. My recollection is that such Government funding would represent 80% of the total cost, with the remainder requiring to be financed by the Council, although that recollection may not be entirely accurate. Perhaps you could clarify this.

In any event while the removal of "ring-fencing" by the SNP Government was in many ways very welcome, nonetheless it may be that Flood Prevention has to some extent been a loser because of this. It follows that there would be a strong case for the principal of ring-fencing to be revived where some large physical problem is involved, such as flooding. I would welcome your views on this.

The issue is an Inverclyde wide one, but I do have a specific ward interest with regard to the West station area. The causes of repeated flooding there are not in serious dispute, and could certainly be tackled by the Council on its own. The flow from the Hole Burn requires to be controlled at times of heavy rainfall, the pond at Lady Alice has to be kept cleared so that its holding capacity is not reduced, there has to be more efficient clearing of leaves and gullies, and a quicker reaction time when a problem arises.

The potential problems at the West station are well known and if the Council fails to take remedial action, then it may well expose itself to substantial claims for damages, in particular from shopkeepers.

I do of course very much welcome the steps that have been taken to form a flood management group and your own involvement in this, along with key organisations such as FEPA, Scottish Natural Heritage, AMEY and Strathclyde Police. At lowest, this level of co-operation should make reaction to flooding much more effective than it has been in recent years. It will not, however, solve the fundamental problems which exist, without substantial investment from both the Government and Inverclyde Council. Last year the Council rejected our proposal that a combination of capital and revenue funding be approved to the level of £1.5m in aggregate, this to allow a serious start to be made to the work which needs to be carried out. Perhaps you could let me know what level of funding the Corporate Management Team expects to recommend the Council to accept over the next few years in order to deal with the whole question of flooding within Inverclyde.

Yours sincerely

Alan Blair
Councillor

Cc: John Mundell, Ciano Rebecchi