

11 December 2023

Mr David Lawman
Chairperson
Stonehaven and District Community Council

by e-mail only

Tim Stephen

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Dear David

I am writing following the November minute of the Stonehaven and District Community Council on November 11, 2023 – in regard to the comments in regard to Storm Babet and its impact on Stonehaven, and the request for an Aberdeenshire Council comment to a number of points raised.

I have noted and passed on the thanks expressed to council staff by SDCC (6a) which is much appreciated. As the meeting highlighted – Storm Babet was a serious weather event which has had a major impact on a range of infrastructures, houses and people in Kincardine and Mearns. I am pleased that Stonehaven was relatively unscathed during the storm, and that the flood defences performed as expected. That said, I appreciate the points that have been made in regard to the ongoing worry of residents and business owners, especially those not directly covered by recent investment into flood schemes. I am also aware (and grateful) for the actions of individuals who cleared drains during the night to avoid flooding – and would reassure you that this is an issue we are looking at.

In terms of specific issues, I can make the following comment and/or update.

Arbuthnott Drain

We are aware of concerns in regard to the Arbuthnott Drain (installed in 2015 to alleviate flooding issues from rainfall and associated runoff) and its outflow valve. This is something we are looking at with a view to improving its efficiency in the future. For the medium term we are now taking a risk-based approach to its maintenance – which can be interpreted as ensuring it is inspected for silt buildup and valve clearing prior to expected adverse weather events.

Boardwalk

Council officers are shortly to complete a temporary footpath which will ensure that the Fireballs and Nippy Dip can go ahead as planned. We are also awaiting quotations for repairs to the wider boardwalk and we anticipate being able to decide the best way forward in terms of permanent repair once we have those quotations back.

We are also about to re-fence off the closed part of the boardwalk to stop occasional users from accessing the closed area for their own safety.

Beach area

Officers are in the process of obtaining quotations for shingle management along the beachfront, essentially moving shingle back from the wall to the beach itself where we expect this will provide protection for future weather events.

We are aware of outstanding beachstep repairs required, and that a number of handrails are twisted. In some cases, temporary repairs have been made prior to anticipated more permanent repairs. In other cases, steps have been fenced off prior to permanent repairs in the future.

Harbour

The harbour is currently benefitting from ongoing repair of railings with costs being prepared for other damages. Our inspections have not highlighted any issues with underwater structures.

Flood wardens

The risk and resilience team are currently reviewing the existing Flood plan and use of wardens. It is probable that the existing system will be formally stood down as it was based around the potential for the Carron to flood – as opposed to dealing with issues such as Babet.

Emergency Response contacts

The police are the designate lead for major emergencies. Whilst the council does have an individual designated as an on-duty emergency response co-ordinator (DERC), it does not have staff routinely on 24-hour cover. However, in an emergency (such as Babet) Aberdeenshire Council will publish appropriate contact information on its website on a bespoke basis – recognising that every emergency situation is unique.

Ability of Community Council to feedback suggestions

I have noted the wish that Aberdeenshire Council should listen to suggestions for improvements and further flood developments and would reassure you that we are happy to work with you in this regard. However, it is unlikely that there will be significant capital funds available for major flood projects in Stonehaven in the near future.

I hope this is helpful and wish you and all of Stonehaven Community Council a peaceful Christmas.

Yours sincerely



Tim Stephen
Kincardine & Mearns Area Manager