



Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE01557](#)

Main Petitioner: David R Slater

Subject: No Scottish Government funding for Whitesands flood scheme

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to rule out additional grant funding for Dumfries and Galloway Council for their proposed flood prevention scheme on the Whitesands river frontage in Dumfries that will obscure our important river views forever and take away important safe car parking.

Background

Dumfries and Galloway Council is proposing a “new vision” to protect the Whitesands area in Dumfries from flooding, and [states](#):

A heritage-led vision has been developed. This has been achieved by working with our design team, local residents, business owners and other interested parties. The plans include new flood defences within an attractive landscape design. This offers the potential for the Whitesands to become a revitalised civic space in the heart of the town. The project has been through an extensive community engagement programme.

A Draft Whitesands Masterplan is available [here](#).

Scottish Government Action

The Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 creates a general duty for Scottish Ministers, SEPA and responsible authorities to exercise their functions with a view to reducing overall flood risk. Responsible authorities include local authorities, Scottish Water and other public bodies designated by Scottish Ministers. The SPICe Briefing [Flooding Frequently Asked Questions](#) sets out key aspects of flooding responsibilities, as does SEPA’s webpage on [Flood Risk Management Planning](#).

For individual projects, it is up to the local authority to apply for, and agree to a funding package with the Scottish Government, depending on eligibility – as set out in joint Scottish Government and COSLA [guidance](#), agreed in December 2011. A [letter](#) published alongside the guidance states:

As part of the 2008 Local Government settlement a number of former specific grants were rolled up and became part of the General Capital Grant paid to Councils. The flood prevention and coast protection capital grant was one such grant which was rolled up in this way.

Local authorities have identified that this has had implications for councils wishing to undertake large flood projects. As part of the Spending Review 2011, which covers the period 2012-2015, it has been agreed with COSLA that the distribution methodology for the flooding component of the General Capital Grant will change. The new distribution methodology is to allocate the flooding component only to large flooding projects.

As set out below (PQ S4W-20986) the Whitesands Project was not successful in securing funding from the Scottish Government, and this decision is the subject of an ongoing appeal.

Scottish Parliament Action

The following PQs are relevant:

Question S4W-20986: Sarah Boyack, Lothian, Scottish Labour, Date Lodged: 02/05/2014 To ask the Scottish Government which of the flood improvement schemes proposed in each local authority area in 2013-14 it (a) approved and (b) rejected, broken down by the (i) cost of and (ii) timescale for setting up the scheme.

Answered by Paul Wheelhouse (19/05/2014): A joint COSLA/Scottish Government panel was established to evaluate the seven flood protection scheme applications received. The two successful applications are set out in the following table.

Council	Scheme	Cost £	Construction Timescale
Scottish Borders	Selkirk	31,767,058	Oct 2014 – Dec 2016
Angus	Brechin	16,383,000	Nov 2014 - Mar 2016

The five unsuccessful applications are set out in the following table.

Council	Scheme	Cost £	Construction Timescale
Dumfries and Galloway	Whitesands	12,201,665	Jul 2015 - Dec 2016

Dundee	Dundee Central Waterfront Broughty Ferry	1,620,999	Aug 2014 - Dec 2016
		1,649,377	Jun 2014 – Mar 2015
Edinburgh City	Water of Leith	35,400,400	Nov 2014 - Dec 2016
Inverclyde	Inverclyde	3,156,684	May 2014 - Mar 2016
Perth and Kinross	Almondbank	14,745,877	Oct 2014 - Apr 2016

Two of the unsuccessful schemes are the subject of an ongoing appeal

Question S4W-19083: Elaine Murray, Dumfriesshire, Scottish Labour, Date Lodged: 06/01/2014 To ask the Scottish Government which areas of Dumfries and Galloway receive a full flood warning service from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and whether it plans to fund an increase in the provision of this service.

Answered by Paul Wheelhouse (17/01/2014): The Scottish Government has continuously funded improvements to Flood Warning in Scotland including providing the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) with £8.6 million to enhance their flood warning service by implementing Floodline's Direct Warning Service, and establishing the Scottish Flood Forecasting Service (a partnership between SEPA and the Met Office to provide early warning to local authorities, emergency services and other partners in Scotland through a daily flood guidance statement) at an annual cost of around £560,000. We have also committed to continue to fund the implementation of SEPA's Flood Warning Strategy and have provided £189,000 for improvements to flood warning in 2013-14.

SEPA's current service in Dumfries and Galloway includes flood alerts, which cover the whole region and are issued when SEPA forecasts that 'flooding is possible' anywhere in the region. It is an early alert to help people prepare for dealing with the possibility of flooding, generally issued up to 24 hours in advance. However it is not a targeted flood warning at community level.

SEPA offers more specific targeted flood warnings at about 250 locations in Scotland where there are a network of rain gauges and flow gauges sufficient to forecast flooding conditions with more accuracy. In Dumfries and Galloway, SEPA currently provides such a flood warning service for the River Nith in Dumfries, Whitesands.

In 2014, SEPA will extend the River Nith flood forecasting model upstream of Dumfries. The initial plans were for one additional flood warning location immediately upstream of Dumfries, however, following the flood event of 30 December 2013, SEPA is currently considering the feasibility of extending the model further upstream to include Kirkconnel.

As published in the 2012-2016 Flood Warning Strategy, SEPA is also planning to develop a new coastal flood warning scheme for the Solway Firth in 2015. The communities which will benefit from this new warning scheme will be defined in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council and will take full account of the recent flood impacts.

We are also in early discussions with SEPA about extending the warning service in other areas recently affected by flooding in Dumfries and Galloway; such developments require detailed feasibility and cost assessments which will be undertaken in 2014-15.

In addition, the Scottish Flood Forecasting Service can also provide partners with specific advice on areas not covered by formal flood warning schemes, such as estimates of rainfall totals for specific areas and communities which may be impacted. Dumfries and Galloway receives the full benefit of this service.

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16 February 2015

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Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP www.scottish.parliament.uk