

My name is Julia Sutherland

I am here this evening as a householder of Upper Greens, Auchtermuchty having written to and met with Councillor Lothian, Andy Heer, Willie Rennie, Wendy Chamberlain as well as the Scottish Flood Forum about our grave concerns for the flood picture in the town.

The situation, as I understand it, is complex and multi/factorial - we all have a part to play, we are all connected by water - and I believe we are more than over-due a grown up conversation together about this connection we share.

There have been some discussions with local farmers in town also, and upper greens have approached Broombrae farm in order to seek a solution to flooding that occurred on the 8/10/2023 - and which is an ongoing situation. On a national level, Willie Rennie is putting together a piece of work to involve discussion and to find solutions for the future management of flood mitigation with farmers and the farming union, with communities and businesses. There is a theme concerning the environment at the Place Plan meeting on 30/12/2023.

What interests me and compels me to come out on this rainy night is what's happening at a council level to help the community right now as a matter of urgency. I am keen to seek timelines and a demonstration of accountability.

My experience:

7-8/10/2023 - There was severe and enduring flooding to the rear and front of several properties in Upper Greens, Auchtermuchty, where we live. 7 households and one fire station. Run off from field overwhelmed our already challenged drains and gullies which resulted in widespread flooding and significant damage to properties. People are out of their houses, work has ground to a halt, income lost, mental health taken its toll, we've seen an hospital admission for cardiac ill health, we've very sadly seen one family with several young children displaced, and an old age pensioner, vulnerable and alone left to face catastrophic flooding to her flat and now displaced for 6 months to emergency accommodation. Massive disruption and distress. Untold hidden stressors.

Further afield

Raw sewage flooding to Station Road business park - a massive public health concern
Flooding to Distillery Street, and a variety of other pinch points round the town, Westbank, Orchard Flat, High road and Low road.

I have been thinking about matters that have affected us and in particular what i consider to be council inaction with regard to our drains, gullies, our burn - in short, what is our response to flooding planning and mitigation?

It is indeed complex.

Auchtermuchty has had several surveys done of its sewers and to date we see no action. This is the current situation as I understand it having gone asking the questions from a variety of stakeholders. This is what I report:

1. Currently Auchtermuchty sewer backs up from the pump house at sterling distribution centre to upper greens and beyond

2. The business park was recently flooded with waste water - raw sewage - with effluent still running to burn via gully storm drains and was witnessed business park. The state of the drains and gullies are not just affecting householders, they are affecting businesses, our burn despite SEPA regulations does still take waste water.
3. Number 13 Upper greens gully drain repairs: it is evidenced in pictures of the work done at the time that considerably smaller pipes have been fed into to replace sections of these sewers and are so small, the flow is restricted severely. This drain has now most likely collapsed and is no longer taking water as seen by fire service carrying out vehicle maintenance. This is really concerning and needs to be rectified now.
4. Main sewer relief valve for the town has been closed off for several years on station road - this closed off the central sewage output as witness on Scottish water maps / we would like to know where that flow now goes
5. Muchty Calsay burn is struggling and we believe requires a survey to ascertain~
6. If pipe crossings are redundant and can be removed to stop restrictions (caught debris or trees, branches etc) we have pictures to show quite how congested the burn becomes
7. Ongoing - how will silt build up be managed and removed to restore the natural and effective base to the calsay burn / allowing water to flow at a safer level
8. Field run off from Broombrae farm and an accumulation of silt has built up over the years now causing issues for council drains, the fire station and local households. Householders are now faced with 3-4 ft of silt on the farmers side of shared boundary walls

a)What is the Council's response to the issue of council drains and gullies not being able to cope with flooding from fields in terms of a statutory nuisance to a neighbour?

b)What measures will the council take to assure us that we can rely on our drains and our gullies to cope with these ongoing flooding issues?

I would like answers to these questions.

Support requested

This is an issue of public safety and health and needs an open, honest discussion from all. Crucially, the field silt and water causes damage to the fire station, the council drains are not fit for the job and therefore I believe we face a risk to our health and safety. This is NOT an isolated incident - drains, gullies and the burn are not new issues. We need support from the council and the community council on this and representation from our council leaders who are elected to support the community.

Flood report

I would now like to request a copy of the Auchtermuchty Flood Report which is held by councillor Lothian and which despite requests, has not been shared to the public. Why is this not within the public domain. I request this as a matter of urgency. I have asked for this report from the council but was told that its content was too sensitive for public release. The councillor provided me and other people with a section of an email trail relating to "we know not what" but there is no scope for dialogue with interested parties if this report is withheld. Please could we have comment from the council on this. I am not satisfied to receive a response from councillor Lothian that

Auchtermuchty does not have a flooding problem. Why has there been a report commissioned if this is the case? I am concerned for the lack of transparency in this issue.

Emergency planning

Finally, I would now like to ask questions regarding emergency planning for the community

I would like council assurance that flood sacks and pods will be sited in designated areas for the town, not just at Westbank and that there are PIN codes made available now. I would like assurances that all contact numbers and lists are updated in regard to emergency mitigation measures generally for the community. To date, no one has been able to assure me that we have these measures in place. There is a lack of a coordinated response to this and I do not think it is good enough for the people of Auchtermuchty to have a variety of officials scratching their heads at such questions.

Conclusion

It's important we see a clear plan of action published by the council in response to these flooding issues in the community. It's vital we have grown up transparent conversation and I welcome a formal response from the council.