

Scotland Counts



The Conservation Volunteers and Scottish Government

Flooding Resilience Project

Supporting community flooding volunteers
Report 2021/22



Alva volunteers Graham, Gail, John and Trisha monitoring the high river level around the Henry Street bridge. ©ACRT



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TCV’s Scotland Counts project is run in partnership with the Scottish Government, NatureScot and Scottish Forestry.

This document reports on the Scotland Counts priority Flooding Resilience Project with the Scottish Government and in partnership with various local councils. This project encompasses and promotes capacity building and community resilience engagement on a range of climate impacts with a specific focus on flooding.

Below: On site with Menstrie Community Resilience Group, Scottish Flood Forum and Clacks Council looking at flood monitoring sites in Menstrie and learning how MCRG deal with flood events.

Inset: MCRG “flood pod” stationed next to likely flood locations full of equipment to help the team deal with a flood.



Project aims 2021/22

In 2021/22, the Flooding Resilience Project proposed to support and strengthen the involved communities in Clackmannanshire and Stirlingshire. Two further areas were identified as priority areas for the project – The Den of Alyth in Perth and Kinross, and Nethy Bridge in the Highlands.

As a result, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) is now supporting communities with active volunteers across Clackmannanshire, Aberfoyle/Strathard, Fintry and Alyth. We have also begun work to engage with the local community in Nethy Bridge, beginning with sessions in the local primary school.

Continued support of Clackmannanshire flood volunteer projects

TCV have continued to support Menstrie Community Resilience Group (MCRG) and Tillicoultry, Devonside and Coalsnaughton Flood Group (TIDECO) throughout 2020/22. We attend regular meetings to keep up to date with the groups and any flooding hotspots.

There are active volunteers in Menstrie who submit monthly records of several of the hotspots – 12 records submitted in total for 2021/22.

With feedback from community resilience teams we have made progress, and many TCV volunteers have now joined as community resilience volunteers with the support of TCV. These volunteers have greater support and enhanced training from both TCV and Clackmannanshire Council. They continue to monitor water courses as community resilience volunteers but these groups tend to liaise directly with the council. Through enhanced training provided by the council these volunteers are now able to carry out more work on water courses and attend flooding events or near misses to assist in these events.

TCV is seen as a key partner within these groups, who turn to us for expertise and help when needed. We also look to offer additional training to these flood group volunteers. TCV attends events hosted by flood groups and will offer opportunities for further training in other areas of Citizen Science. These events help to keep volunteers motivated and involved during periods where flood events are not likely.

New project development in Clackmannanshire 2021/2022

In partnership with Clackmannanshire Council, TCV has successfully engaged with the Alva Community Resilience Team. ACRT are now a fully functioning group, in partnership with Clacks Council, and they have carried out a successful test deployment of flood barriers at one of the main flood risk spots. The RiverTrack system is functioning well, alerting the team to a flooding near miss as reported in a local newspaper <https://www.alloaAdvertiser.com/news/19940769.hillfoots-flooding-teams-alert-weekend-storms/>.

TCV attends regular monthly meetings and supports the group through advice, joint working with volunteers and promotion to new volunteers looking to get involved.

Strathard/Aberfoyle

TCV have a continued presence in Aberfoyle and volunteers provide regular updates on local watercourses. TCV has reconnected with Gail Donald from SEPA, who is keen to develop some partnership working in this area, with a view to engage the community and increase volunteer numbers. Discussions have taken place with a view to join engagement with the local primary school.

Fintry

A small group of volunteers continue to contribute and Gail Donald is keen to look at further partnership working here with the local primary school.

In a recent meeting with Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust, we discussed the potential for some joint working with TCV volunteers taking part in some tree planting with LLFT within the catchment.

These plans will help to boost numbers and raise the profile of the project within this community.

One volunteer submits monthly records of several of the hotspots - 12 records submitted in total for 2021/22.



Fintry: Pupils sampling the Endrick's water life with Fergus McFarlane of the Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust.

Local primary school outdoor flooding resilience engagement

The Flooding Resilience Project engages primary school pupils to raise their awareness of flood risk and the theme of resilience. This is combined with Citizen Science activities to encourage the pupils' understanding of wider biodiversity and environmental issues. The school sessions meet the Curriculum for Excellence Resilience and Outdoor Learning Themes.

We have also made a connection with Scottish Water, who are starting a campaign in Clackmannanshire to raise awareness about sewer flooding caused by flushing inappropriate items down the toilet. We have incorporated some of this messaging in our flooding presentations which we give to local schools.

ALVA PRIMARY SCHOOL AND RIVER TRACK

TCV visited Alva Primary School in March 2022 and gave a classroom presentation to the 37 Primary 7 pupils, focused on flooding and flooding resilience as well as introducing the logo competition. Outdoor practical sessions will follow up in the early summer.

Pupils were excited to take part in a competition to create a new logo for ACRT and will complete their entries prior to the next session. Stuart Cullen, Clacks Council Flooding Officer and Brian Denny, a member of the ACRT group, will attend the school and present a prize to the winning logo design.

In addition to this, Clacks Council has a spare RiverTrack unit which will be installed within the school. Teachers commented on how this would be an invaluable learning resource within the school.

“This was great for the kids, it’s good to help them understand more about what’s happening locally.”

Teacher from Abernethy Primary School

COALSNAUGHTON PRIMARY SCHOOL – FLOODING RESILIENCE

Three sessions were delivered in September 2021 where we introduced the concept of the TCV Flooding Resilience Project and the Logo Competition. TCV’s engagement with Coalsnaughton Primary School has taken part in indoor and outdoor sessions, in partnership with the Scottish Government, Clacks Council and Scottish Flood Forum.

The pupils at Coalsnaughton Primary took part in a competition to design the new logo for Tillicoultry, Devonside and Coalsnaughton Flood Group (TIDECO).



Classroom introduction to flooding resilience at Coalsnaughton Primary School.

Sessions included:

SESSION 1 - Wednesday, 8th Sept - a presentation/discussion on Flooding Awareness and Resilience and introducing the TIDECO logo competition - 18 pupils.

SESSION 2 - Wednesday, 15th Sept - half a day Citizen Science activity along the River Devon (signs of flooding, wildlife) - 18 pupils.

SESSION 3 - Wednesday, 29th Sept - pupils presented TIDECO Logo Competition and Prize-giving - 18 pupils and Stuart Cullen, Clacks Council Principal Roads and Flooding Officer and Gail Walker, Danny Raeburn and Reed Oz, members of TIDECO.

Alongside our outdoor engagement, the class were involved in a healthy class competition designing a logo for TIDECO. In partnership with Clacks Council and Scottish Flood Forum we shortlisted the logos. Each group of pupils presented for 5 minutes - why their logo should win, what it means to them and the community, and why they decided to draw their logo. All the designs from the class were of a high standard and so the final selection was difficult to make. The TIDECO logo competition was sponsored by Clacks Council, who kindly provided gift vouchers for the winning group.



The TIDECO logo winners Cerys and Mia of Coalsnaughton Primary with their prize of gift tokens for their class.



Outdoors with pupils from Coalsnaughton Primary School monitoring the local wildlife along the River Devon and looking out for signs of flooding.

ABERNETHY PRIMARY SCHOOL - FLOODING RESILIENCE

Abernethy Primary School in Nethy Bridge is the most recent school to get involved with TCV's Flooding Resilience Project. Nethy Bridge and the surrounding areas are prone to flooding, and this is the first step in engaging this community with the project. Two sessions have taken place with the Primary 5-7 pupils, with a total of 24 pupils taking part.

Session 1 took place on March 1st and was an online presentation introducing the pupils to the project and flooding.

Session 2 took place on March 14th and was an in person session. Pupils carried out a "water course inspection" of a small burn which runs through their school grounds, followed by some Citizen Science activities of kick sampling and pond dipping.



Pupils from Abernethy Primary School taking part in water course monitoring and a pond dip.

New project developments – Alyth and Nethy Bridge

ALYTH RIVER KEEPERS AND CATERAN ECOMUSEUM

A new monitoring project has been successfully developed in the Den of Alyth in partnership with Alyth River Keepers and Alyth Community Support Group who take the lead with response actions to flooding. Alyth has previously been affected by flooding and has a RiverTrack monitor fitted in the town. Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) are in full support of the project.

The monitoring of the Alyth Burn proposed by the group will supplement the quarterly inspections already undertaken by the Council. The Council also supplied maps of the Den which TCV have used to produce our recording sheets for river monitoring. We also have Scottish Flood Forum’s support and they have provided expert advice and guidance.

18 hotspots have been identified within the burn to be monitored. Following site visits and finalisation of recording sheets, 5 new

volunteers have been recruited in Alyth and are now regularly monitoring the 18 flooding hotspots. We have had successful updates from volunteers which were relayed via TCV to PKC following storms in February. Several downed trees and branches were blocking or partially blocking the water course and volunteers produced a detailed map of this which was forwarded to the Council. Feedback from both the volunteer group and the Council was very positive about this, with the Council pleased about the detailed report provided and volunteers happy to see quick action taken by the Council to remove blockages.

6 completed recording sheets have been submitted by volunteers since they began recording in January of 2022, and this number would be higher if the Den had not been closed for several weeks in February and early March due to storm damaged trees.

The local scout group had expressed an interest in becoming involved in monitoring and clearing the river. TCV will provide training to get them set up as volunteers.



Storm damage map produced by Den of Alyth Volunteers for Perth and Kinross Council.



Cateran Ecomuseum

The Cateran Ecomuseum has also shown an interest in the project in Alyth. On September 18th 2021, TCV delivered a co-designed “BioBlitz your River” event with the museum at the local River Ericht. 34 members of the public attended this event and took part in the BioBlitz.

The Cateran Ecomuseum is also working with Sheffield University to map Citizen Science projects across the whole of the Tay Bioregion and would like to include the flooding resilience project in this work.

Above: River Ericht “BioBlitz your River” event in partnership with Cateran Ecomuseum. Some participants looking for invertebrates in the kick samples from the river.

NETHY BRIDGE

TCV, Scottish Flood Forum and Alan Fraser, Team Leader at Highland Council, met to discuss outline plans to build better resilience to flooding in Nethy Bridge. Alan was very positive and supports TCV’s flooding resilience engagement project to be delivered with a local school (details of this engagement above). Having the local authority on board as well as successful school engagement is a great positive step for this project. Some initial connections have been made with Nethy Bridge Community Council, and TCV will look to continue to strengthen these relationships in the coming year.

Potential areas for project development

DOLLAR

Following on from successes in the other Hillfoots towns, TCV are in early discussions with Paul Laidlaw, SFF Senior Community Resilience Manager, about connecting with the newly reformed flood group in Dollar. TCV could support this group in the same way as we support existing groups such as MCRG and TIDECO, and there is also scope for engagement with local primary schools in the area. This work would be guided by SFF who have already made contact with this group.

MUSSELBURGH

A local community group in Musselburgh which is affected by both coastal and river flooding reached out to see if TCV could provide support. Initial contact with this group was positive, and they already have active volunteers and an interest in natural flood management strategies. The Scottish Flood Forum are looking into the area, and there is a potential to work within a local primary school with which the group has connections.

PARTNERSHIP WORK WITH SCOTTISH FLOOD FORUM

The partnership between TCV and SFF has grown from strength to strength. We are looking to work more closely and align our goals in 2022/23. SFF sees the value TCV can bring through involving and engaging local communities as well as our work in schools and how this benefits the wider work they carry out. We will work with SFF to identify further communities we can look to work with in the future.

Summary

In 2021/22, the Scotland Counts Flooding Resilience Project was able to strengthen existing project relationships and develop new ones. Our work in partnership with Clacks Council in the Hillfoots continues to benefit the local community, and the newly formed ACRT, in addition to the MCRG and TIDECO groups, work closely with TCV and seek guidance where they need it. Throughout 2022/23 we will continue to support these existing groups as well as looking to expand to new communities within this area. Work with communities in Fintry and Aberfoyle/Stathard had also continued, and with the support of SEPA we will work to boost volunteer numbers here again in 2022/23. School engagement across Scotland has been hugely successful with a total of 79 pupils worked with across 3 schools and 2 council areas. Priorities for school engagement moving into 2022/23 will be looking to link up with Gail Donald from SEPA to reconnect with schools in Fintry and Aberfoyle. We have also had a request to link back up with Menstrie Primary School.

The development of a new monitoring project in the Den of Alyth has been a huge success with 5 new, highly involved volunteers. Early partnership with Perth and Kinross Council has been a productive one, and they are very supportive of the work carried out by the volunteers here. Engaging the local scout group will be a focus in 2022/23, with a view to also upskill these volunteers to carry out some maintenance tasks.

The Nethy Bridge project is still in its early stages. Flooding Resilience sessions in Abernethy Primary School were positively received by both staff and the pupils. TCV will continue communication with Nethy Bridge Community Council with a view to establishing a monitoring project in the future.

The Conservation Volunteers thank all the partner organisations and community participants for their support of the Flooding Resilience Project during 2021/22, and we look forward to the Project's continued development during 2022/23.