

Council announces preferred flood protection scheme for Selkirk

Scottish Borders Council's (SBC) Executive enthusiastically approved the proposed preferred design for the Selkirk Flood Protection Scheme (FPS) at its meeting in Newtown St Boswells today.

The Preferred Scheme was developed by Halcrow Group Ltd in partnership with SBC over the past 15 months. The Scheme is considered to be the most desirable combination of flood protection measures that can be delivered for Selkirk. The options were presented to the public at an exhibition in Victoria Hall in June 2010. Furthermore, over 60 individual meetings were held with major stakeholders as part of the project's consultation process.

Conor Price, Flood Protection Project Manager at SBC, said: "I am delighted that we have received formal approval for our preferred design today. The Project Team has invested an enormous amount of time and effort in advancing the project to this stage. We are confident the people of Selkirk will approve of our efforts, however, we recognise that from here the key to concluding a design is to continue to discuss the proposals with the residents of Selkirk. We are committed to designing robust, modern flood defences that protect the town and we are striving to deliver a scheme that the people of Selkirk are proud of, that they consider theirs."

With formal approval of the Preferred Scheme now in place the Project Team will begin the Outline Design Stage and undertake further consultation with the community. The design will then be submitted for formal Flood Protection Scheme status under the new Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 before the end of 2011.

The Outline Design Stage of the Project will see significant activity on the ground in Selkirk. A number of major surveys will be required; specifically a Ground Investigation Survey and a Topographic Survey along the line of the proposed measures. A survey of the main existing structures which interface with the scheme is also essential. In particular, it is necessary to assess the existing pedestrian bridges over the Ettrick. In parallel with the work in Selkirk the Project Team will continue to develop the St Mary's Loch Option through the St Mary's Loch Working Group.

A second Public Exhibition will be held in Selkirk so that all developments can be presented to the public. This is currently programmed for May 2011. This will be an important event as the public's comments (where possible) will be incorporated into the final design before submission for formal scheme status.

Councillor Jim Fullarton, Executive Member for Roads and Infrastructure and Chairman of the Flood Advisory Group said, "Today's decision is a major and important milestone in the delivery of a flood protection scheme for Selkirk. We are delighted with the progress to date and look forward to its completion in the next few years. I am only too aware of the power of the Ettrick Water and Long Philip Burn, and can recall the devastating flooding caused in 1977 when Selkirk Bridge was washed away, and the flooding at Bannerfield in 2003. This Scheme is essential in reducing the risk of these events occurring again. It will also protect the businesses of the Riverside Business Park."

Notes to Editors:

- Scottish Borders Council (SBC) is currently designing a full formal Flood Protection Scheme (FPS) for Selkirk.
- This scheme is being taken forward by design consultants Halcrow Group Limited on behalf of the Council. The project began in October 2009. Since then Halcrow has undertaken a full assessment of the flood risk to Selkirk, and identified the possible solutions that may be employed in protecting the town.
- The Project Team continues to assess the various options from a technical, environmental, economic and social perspective.
- The scheme is expected to be the first FPS to be taken through the formal approvals process under the Scottish Government's new Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009. The Act replaces the Flood Prevention Act 1961. The new Act is an exciting piece of legislation which recognises:
 - that flooding cannot be prevented;
 - that climate change may increase the flood risk in future years;
 - that a FPS should consider Sustainable Flood Protection and Natural Flood Protection measures where possible to be implemented alongside traditional flood defences;
 - that an improvement in the old legislation was required to provide engineers with a mechanism to improve the timescales for the design and approval of such schemes.
- SBC is delighted to announce that the first meeting of the St Mary's Loch Working Group (SMLWG) was held on Tuesday 14 September 2010.
- The SMLWG has been established by SBC to consider an option identified by the Selkirk FPS which requires a review of the water management systems currently being employed at St Mary's Loch, the

largest natural loch in the Borders. St. Mary's Loch feeds the Yarrow Water which ultimately flows into the Ettrick which then flows through Selkirk.

- The SMLWG is formed with representatives of all the interests in the Loch: SBC (and Halcrow as Design Consultants); Scottish Water; Scottish Environmental Protection Agency; Scottish Natural Heritage; The River Tweed Commissioners; The Ettrick & Yarrow Community Council; The Riparian Owners; and all other local interest groups.
- The beauty of the SML Option is that it not only reduces the flood risk to the town of Selkirk but it also reduces the peak flood levels all the way down the Yarrow Valley and along the Ettrick to the confluence with the River Tweed at Lindean. This is over 20 miles. It is a win-win situation in that it provides flood risk reduction to land and property without excessive capital cost investment.
- The Ettrick Water is one of the fastest rising/falling rivers in Scotland. It has a history of unleashing devastating flooding on the town. The last major flood was in 1977 when the 'Auld Stane Brig' was washed away (Selkirk's only bridge) thereby severing the town in two. Such floods also cause extensive damage to property and farms all along the Ettrick and Yarrow Valleys upstream of Selkirk.
- The Long Philip Burn has a more recent history of inflicting severe flooding to the Bannerfield and Philiphaugh areas of Selkirk – In 2003 and 2004, scores of properties were inundated by flash flooding.

For more information, contact the Corporate Communications Unit on 01835 826632 or communications@scotborders.gov.uk