ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL	**OBAN, LORN & THE ISLES AREA COMMITTEE**
ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES	**9 SEPTEMBER 2026**

OBAN PVA FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Oban Potentially Vulnerable Area (PVA) continues to face significant flood risk challenges, exacerbated by increasing rainfall intensities and the town's specific topography. This report provides an update on the strategic, risk-based management approach for this PVA.

1.2 The primary focus of the Flood Risk Management (FRM) team is the protection of habitable floor levels and critical infrastructure, in line with national funding criteria. Key takeaways from this update include:

- **Infrastructure Optimization:** The Lochavullin Car Park pump system has been repaired and optimized. However, it must be recognized as a drainage aid for "nuisance" flooding; it is not a formal Flood Protection Scheme and will be reached by its mechanical capacity during extreme events.

- **Asset Responsibility:** While the FRM team manages strategic drainage, the operational resilience of specific Council assets (such as car parks and commercial units) remains the responsibility of the respective asset-owning services.

- **Data-Driven Mitigation:** A critical gap has been identified between localized flooding reports heard by Elected Members and the formal data held by the FRM team. Closing this gap is essential for identifying low-cost, short-term remedial works while long-term capital funding is awaited.

- **Funding Realities:** A full Oban Flood Protection Scheme (FPS) remains a multi-million pound capital requirement. The £1.8m recently secured by the

Council from the Scottish Government will be distributed in accordance with the Local Flood Risk Management Plans. These funds are prioritised for statutory actions and preparatory works for Cycles 2 & 3.

1.3 Until such time as large-scale capital funding is secured, the Council will continue to prioritize proactive watercourse inspections, statutory clearance and repair works, and enhanced community engagement to manage residual risk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee:

- Consider the contents of this report.
- Note the constraints around resources to investigate the securing of additional funding for Flood Risk Management in Oban PVA.

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OBAN PVA FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Oban has experienced numerous incidents of significant flooding, with the town being designated by SEPA as a "Potentially Vulnerable Area" ("PVA") in the Highland and Argyll Local Flood Risk Management Plan (2022 – 2028).

2.2 A number of short-medium and medium-long-term actions to mitigate flooding in Oban have been identified by Infrastructure Design's Flood Risk Management Team. These actions are being progressed where funding and resources allow.

2.3 There is currently no identified funding for the medium-long term actions to design and construct an Oban Flood Protection Scheme and to deliver the larger Surface Water Management Plan actions. In accordance with national funding frameworks, any future capital investment must be strictly prioritized based on a Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR) that favours the protection of high-value receptors. This includes the preservation of habitable floor levels and the maintenance of critical road and infrastructure networks, which serve as essential lifelines during extreme weather events.

It must be noted that these actions will be significant and are likely to run to tens of millions of pounds requiring attenuation/water storage and general climate change adaptation measures aimed at mitigating or minimising disruption from severe weather events. Without a confirmed 80% Capital Grant from the Scottish Government, the delivery of a formal Scheme remains a significant financial risk.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee:

- Consider the contents of this report.
- Note the constraints around resources to investigate the securing of additional funding for Flood Risk Management in Oban PVA.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 COMPLETED ACTIONS (Infrastructure Design's Flood Risk Management Team):

4.1.1 Repair of existing pumping system at Lochavullin car park:

- Existing control unit replaced and relocated on a plinth to reduce risk of future water damage,
- Existing pumps repaired,
- Confirmed that the existing pump outfall cannot be moved further downstream.
- The system has been optimized to manage surface water during low-to-medium intensity rainfall. However, it is important to clarify that this infrastructure is designed for drainage assistance rather than formal flood protection. During high-intensity events, the volume of surface water may exceed the mechanical capacity of the pumps, leading to temporary ponding in low-lying areas such as the car park.

4.1.2 Survey of Non-Native Invasive Species:

- Survey completed.
- Completed Survey passed to RIS Operations team who have secured funding to treat land within their area of responsibility.

4.1.3 Watercourse Inspections and Waterbody Assessments:

- An inspection of Black Lynn Burn and its tributaries in accordance with Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 Section 18 was carried out in 2024.
- A more recent inspection was carried out in March 2026 of the Black Lynn Burn from the railway culvert to the shore.

4.1.4 S59 Clearance and Repair Works:

Carry out Clearance or Repair Works within Oban PVA in accordance with Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 Section 59 (where it considers that carrying out the works will contribute to the implementation of current measures described in any relevant local flood risk management plan)

The 2026 Watercourse Inspection identified and recorded:

a) Foreign Objects (mainly trollies) and trees within the watercourse – these have been recorded for clearance works.
b) Gully locations nearby the river and the condition of each one, any blocked gully has been notified to the operations team to clear.
c) Outfall locations within the river and the condition of each one. The inspection was able to identify initially whether the drainage network was

able to effectively convey water and establish required works such as removal of blockages and flap valve repairs.

4.1.5 **Community & Member Engagement:**

Oban PVA Flood Risk Management Session

- Arranged and hosted a session in Oban on 22nd January 2026. This event was attended by a Councillor and two members of public representing Oban Community Council.

4.1.6 **Hydraulic Modelling:**

Following hydraulic modelling carried out in-house and subsequent discussion at the Flood Risk Management Session carried out on 22nd January for Councillors and community council representatives, the Flood Risk Management Team have engaged with the Consultant who produced the 2019 Oban Flood Study to carry out the following work:

- Review relevant conclusions from the 2019 Oban Flood Study, focusing on sediment accumulation, vegetation, hydraulic controls, and sensitivity to channel clearance.
- Review existing 1D-2D hydraulic model outputs.
- Prepare a clear technical statement on the likely effects of sediment clearance and channel deepening within the Black Lynn Water downstream of the Soroba Burn confluence.
- Assess whether sediment clearance could reduce flooding during more frequent flood events (1 in 1 year).
- Provide a qualitative commentary on the cost-benefit of dredging where benefits are identified, accounting for access constraints and proximity to existing structures.
- Wider considerations relevant to sediment clearance, including river processes, downstream tidal influence, invasive species, biodiversity, visual amenity, and environmental authorizations where this provides context in regards to limitations of dredging as a flood risk management measure.
- Produce clear outputs suitable to inform the community regarding sediment clearance, ensuring that expectations regarding the "benefit" of dredging are managed against technical and environmental realities. This is critical to clarify the distinction between statutory maintenance and capital-intensive engineering solutions.

4.1.7 **Audit Scotland Report 2025: *Flooding in Communities: Moving Towards Flood Resilience***

- In August 2025, Audit Scotland published its national report, *Flooding in Communities: Moving Towards Flood Resilience*. The report signals a fundamental paradigm shift from traditional, reactive engineering measures ("flood protection") toward long-term, community-wide adaptability ("flood resilience"). While acknowledging areas of successful delivery across Scotland—such as Argyll and Bute Council's delivery of the Campbeltown Flood Protection Scheme—the report identifies severe

systemic barriers at a national level that directly impact the progression of future works.

- Audit Scotland concluded that the current national mechanism for funding major flood schemes is not fit for purpose.
- Nationally, estimated costs for Cycle 1 flood protection schemes escalated dramatically from ~£350m to over £1bn. This cost inflation across Scotland, combined with slower progress in early-phase projects elsewhere, has fully committed the central funding pot.
- Current delays to Flood Protection Schemes, including Oban, are the result of national, systemic funding bottlenecks rather than local inaction.
- The Audit Scotland report sets out specific operational, strategic, and statutory expectations for local authorities going forward:
    - Embed the principles of the National Flood Resilience Strategy (2024–2045), shifting focus from reactive infrastructure towards preventative adaptation, spatial planning, and natural flood management.
    - Actively target engagement and practical support towards vulnerable groups—including older residents, disabled people, and low-income households—who are disproportionately impacted by flooding and face barriers to securing property-level protection or insurance.
    - Move toward co-developing resilience measures directly with local communities, ensuring clear, accessible, and non-digital communication options remain available.
    - Address national deficits in technical skills, workforce capacity, and asset data sharing across local authorities and key statutory partners (SEPA, Scottish Water).

The Council's Flood Risk Management team remains fully prepared to progress future schemes. However, the timeline for advancing major capital Flood Protection works in Oban remains dependent on the Scottish Government and COSLA establishing a restructured, sustainable national funding model and clarifying future funding cycles.

4.1.8 **Funding:**

- The Council’s Flood Risk Management Team has secured a Flood Resilience allocation of £1.8m from the Scottish Government’s £42m allocation for FY 2026/27,
- It must be explicitly noted that these funds are not "discretionary" for general drainage issues. All funding received from the Scottish Government is subject to distribution in accordance with the statutory actions identified within the nationally prioritised Local Flood Risk Management Plans as well as to prepare for the 2028 Flood Risk Management Plans.
- This ensures that resources are allocated to the highest-priority risks already

agreed upon at a national and regional level. Any deviation from these plans would require a formal review of the statutory LFRMPs and could jeopardise future capital grant eligibility.

4.2 IMMEDIATE ACTIONS TAKEN DURING & AFTER A FLOOD EVENT:

4.2.1 **RIS Operations team actions taken during a flood event are likely to include:**

- assisting emergency services and others where possible to do so.
- manage the safe operation of the public road network by providing the necessary signage, posting service disruption notices via the website and working closely with partners,
- manage the pumping system for Lochavullin car park, ensuring this is operational during low and medium intensity flood events, until such time as it is overwhelmed during medium to high intensity flood events. A number of relevant asset-owning Council services may be involved in these instances to implement localized resilience measures for their specific assets, such as the car park and commercial units, as the pumps cannot provide total immunity during extreme events,
- responding and assisting where possible.

4.2.2 **Infrastructure Design's Flood Risk Management Team actions taken after a flood event:**

- Collation of Flood Data: Elected Members, Oban Flooding Forum, Oban Community Council and other community representatives are often the first point of contact for residents during flood events. To ensure the Council can effectively investigate and identify potential short-term remedial works, it is essential that all reports of internal or significant flooding are formally directed to the FRM team and to SEPA's Flood Reporting (reportaflood.sepa.org.uk).

4.3 SHORT-MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS (Infrastructure Design's Flood Risk Management Team):

4.3.1 **Watercourse Inspections & Waterbody Assessments:**

Carry out Watercourse Inspections & Waterbody Assessments of Black Lynn Burn and its tributaries in accordance with Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 Section 18:

- Following the Watercourse Inspection carried out in March 2026, a Waterbody Assessment will be progressed which will identify flood risk from defects within the watercourse and further inform/refine the frequency of inspections required. The assessment will also identify riparian owner of defects and notify them of their duties to reduce flood risk.

- Watercourse Inspections are typically carried out on a 6 yearly frequency – Oban has a frequency of every 18 months currently recommended; however the FRM team will carry out inspections on a 12 monthly basis to deliver increased resilience. The next scheduled Watercourse Inspection of Black Lynn Burn and its tributaries is March 2027.

4.3.2 **S59 Clearance and Repair Works:**

Carry out Clearance or Repair Works within Oban PVA in accordance with Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 Section 59 (where it considers that carrying out the works will contribute to the implementation of current measures described in any relevant local flood risk management plan).

- Repair Works identified during the 2026 Inspection of Black Lynn Burn from the railway bridge to the shore including flap valve repairs and unblocking/repairing defective pipes is expected to be progressed within available funding resources,
- Clearance works of trollies, trees and any other foreign objects causing a flooding risk identified during the 2026 Inspection of Black Lynn Burn from the railway bridge to the shore.
- Clearance works to clear any obstructions before winter 2026/27 are scheduled to be commissioned shortly.
- Repair works to replace the most crucial flap valves before winter 2026/27 are scheduled to be commissioned shortly.

4.3.3 **Community & Member Engagement:**

Oban PVA Flood Risk Management Session

- Whilst at the first meeting in January 2026 it was proposed to hold three meetings per year, regular quarterly reporting directly to the OLI Area Committee has now been implemented. The frequency of the in-person sessions shall now therefore be two per year. The next in-person event shall be open to the community and shall be arranged once the relevant technical updates from the Flood Study Review are available – to ensure the models and potential options can be discussed with Elected Members, members of public and interested parties. We would welcome any input from Elected Members to determine any dates / time periods which would NOT be suitable to hold the next meeting.

Oban Flooding Forum

- Attend and contribute to a Community or Elected Member led “Oban Flooding Forum” if one is, at any stage now or in future, formed. It is our current understanding that no such group yet exists.

Flood Incident Reporting

- It has been noted that various reports of flooding have been discussed locally but have not yet been formally submitted to the FRM team for technical investigation. By capturing this data accurately, the team can identify localized defects—such as blocked outfalls or defective flap

valves—which can often be rectified using existing maintenance budgets to provide immediate benefit while long-term capital funding is pursued.

4.3.4 **Hydraulic Modelling:**
As defined in Section 4.1.6

Report Review has now been received back and is being considered by the FRM Team. We are currently in discussions with the specialist consultant on the effects and consequences downstream of Market Street Bridge in particular – with regards existing bridges and culverts on the south bay outfall.

As established by the 2019 Flood Study modelling, the Report Review confirmed that sediment removal and/or widening of the channel has a negligible effect on flood risk. The Report Review considered flood events as before, and additionally included the 1:1 flood event within the scope of its review.

4.3.5 **Review of 2019 Flood Study:**
Following discussion with the specialist Consultant who carried out the 2019 Oban Flood Study and its recent Review, a scope is being assembled to carry out the following work:

- Review of the 2019 flood study which will include the full scheme with the additional PVA areas for Cycle 3,
- Consideration of the new SEPA climate change legislation/guidance.
- Current Climate Change forecasts.

An assessment on how the current flood protection scheme options can be reduced into smaller schemes. The assessment should demonstrate if and how these smaller schemes would have a positive impact to flood risk management.

4.3.6 **Drainage Survey:**
Carry out a survey of drainage network. The survey area would be to inform the network of surface water pipes outfalling into Black Lynn Burn / Soroba Burn to the railway culvert and would involve a CCTV survey of the surface water system. Tender documents are in the process of being assembled in order to inform a quotation for these works as to which timescales will also be confirmed.

It may be possible to include this within scope of the above noted Review of the 2019 Flood Study.

We continue to review elements of the Oban PVA's surface water drainage network including that around Lochavullin Car Park.

4.3.7 **Attempt to Mitigate Funding Constraints:**

- The FRM Team will continue to provide updates to EDI Committee and the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee on how Flood Risk Management Actions within the Oban PVA are progressing,
- While the FRM team maintains the strategic drainage assets (such as the Lochavullin pumps), the operational resilience of specific Council-

owned assets—including car parks and commercial units—remains the responsibility of the respective asset-owning services. Infrastructure Design will continue to provide technical guidance to these departments.

- The FRM Team will continue to make representations to Scottish Government seeking to make funding available – including a proposal to progress a scheme separately in smaller elements/stages. This "phased delivery" approach is being explored to reduce the immediate capital burden, though it is noted that Scottish Government confirmation is required to ensure this does not jeopardize the 80% funding threshold or the required Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR) established in the HM Treasury Green Book.
- The FRM Team has no resource currently available with which to explore additional funding avenues. If the Flood Risk Management team are to explore additional funding sources, additional staffing resources would be required within the team to allow this. Should additional staffing resources become available, actions would include:
    - Investigate and progress any additional funding sources / routes available to allow larger, capital funded Actions to be progressed and to accelerate the delivery timescales for the Design & Construction of an Oban Flood Protection Scheme:
    - Explore all opportunities for securing any available funding to accelerate flood protection works at Oban.

4.3.8 **Structures Team:**

Queen Park Place Bridge

- The Council's Structures Team (within Infrastructure Design alongside the FRM team – and containing some of the same engineers) have commissioned a specialist contractor to repair longitudinal cracking on Queen Park Place Bridge (at the downstream end of Black Lynn Burn). This work is being funded from the Council's revenue structures maintenance budget.

- Queen Park Place Bridge, along with all 903 bridges on Argyll and Bute Council's adopted road network, is inspected every 24 months.

4.3.9 **Engagement with Other Responsible Authorities:**

Scottish Water

- FRM Team shall engage with Scottish Water to discuss technical matters around Oban PVA's combined sewer network.

4.4 SHORT-MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS (Argyll and Bute Council's RIS Operations Team):

4.4.1 **Treatment of Non-Native Invasive Species:**

Treatment of non-native invasive species around Black Lynn Burn is programmed to be carried out between June and September 2026. This is not related to Flood Risk Management and is under a separate funding stream.

4.5 MEDIUM-LONG TERM ACTIONS (Infrastructure Design's Flood Risk Management Team):

4.5.1 Design & construction of Oban Flood Protection Scheme, including large projects within the Oban Surface Water Management Plan can only progress once funding is secured & allocated to project.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 This report provides the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee with an update on Flood Risk Management within the Oban PVA. The Council's strategy remains focused on a risk-based approach that prioritizes the protection of habitable floor levels and critical infrastructure. By managing existing assets effectively and seeking targeted funding for capital works, the Service aims to mitigate the most significant economic and safety risks posed by flooding, while acknowledging that total protection of all land types is not technically or financially viable.

5.2 While the FRM team has optimized the Lochavullin pumping system, it remains a drainage aid rather than a comprehensive flood defense. The long-term risk to Oban remains.

5.3 The effectiveness of the Council's short-term response is heavily dependent on the quality of data received. Formally capturing the flooding incidents currently reported to Elected Members will allow the FRM team to prioritize high-impact, low-cost remedial works. This proactive maintenance approach, combined with the optimized pumping infrastructure, remains the Council's primary tool for managing risk until a large-scale capital scheme can be funded.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy - In line with the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009, with Local Flood Risk Management Plans 2016-2022 and 2022-28 as endorsed by Council, and with the Council's Flood Risk Management Policy.

6.2 Financial - Any future funding applications will be assessed against the ability of a scheme to protect habitable properties and critical infrastructure. The £42M national allocation for 26/27 is ring-fenced for the delivery of actions within Argyll's statutory Flood Risk Management Plans. As highlighted in recent Audit Scotland findings, the lack of a long-term funding settlement for Cycle 2 flood protection schemes creates significant budget uncertainty. No

funding is currently identified for a long-term Oban solution; this report proposes that lobbying continues with a focus on these statutory constraints.

6.3 Legal – The Council has four key responsibilities under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009:

Prepare maps of bodies of water etc
Assess bodies of water.
Prepare local flood risk management plans and carry out the Actions identified in the LFRMP.
Carry out clearance and repair works.

6.4 HR – None known.

6.5 Customer Service – None known.

6.6 Risk- There is a reputational risk if the distinction between protected habitable property and non-protected amenity land is not clearly communicated. The Council minimizes this risk by ensuring that all technical reviews and community engagements emphasize the prioritization of internal floor levels and critical infrastructure. There is a risk of missed opportunities for flood mitigation if incident data is not shared centrally. If the FRM team is unaware of specific flooding locations, they cannot allocate resources for investigation or repair. Improving the flow of information from the community and Elected Members to the technical team is a key mitigation measure for this risk.

6.7 Climate Change - In line with findings in Campbeltown, the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events are outpacing historical drainage capacities. All future modeling for Oban will incorporate the latest SEPA climate change allowances to ensure any proposed scheme is resilient to future conditions and provides long-term value for money.

6.8 Fairer Scotland Duty – None known.

6.9 Equalities - protected characteristics - An EqSEIA will be required as and when long term solutions can be progressed.

6.10 Consumer Duty – None known.

6.11 Island Communities – None known.

6.12 Children's Rights and Wellbeing – None known.

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