



Community Resilience Newsletter

Welcome

Welcome to the Spring and Summer Edition of the Resilient Communities Newsletter.

In this edition we will hear from Peter Bondar from Oxnam Resilient Community Group, sharing their experience and learning.

We have information from SEPA on new guidance and online flood maps for surface water and small water courses.

We will also have a look at the Government's Anti-terrorism Strategy "CONTEST", and

NHS Borders Resilience Planning Officer provides some advice on staying well in a changing climate.

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Peter Bondar of Oxnam Water Resilience Group on Communications in a rural setting

The Oxnam Water Resilience group as you may expect operates in and around the Oxnam Water Community Council area seven miles south of Jedburgh.

It's a typical Scottish Borders Community Council area; sparsely populated with some 350 people in 200 dwellings distributed over about 50 square miles.

There is one nucleated village, Oxnam and then a number of typically farming or former farming related dwellings spread across the area.

Like many similar areas there are several existing community groups, in our case the Oxnam Kirk, the Village Hall and the Community Council.

The resilience group operates in partnership with the other various community groups and our primary role is a communication gathering and dissemination role.

The primary method of interface is via a Facebook based community set of pages which was developed in response to the Covid 2020 outbreak, we have sourced several public

mobile radios (PMR) to facilitate field operations such as litter picking.

One of the major ongoing tasks for the resilience group is to understand the level of resilience and redundancy for the community and we've done detailed analysis on power supplies, telecommunications and water facilities.

Defacto we operate a two-tier operational system with a couple of resilience coordinators and then approximately 10 to 15 people who are able to contribute in a variety of forms depending upon the situation at hand.

Although the village hall is logically the epicentre for operations it is not blessed currently with the best ability to be used when telecommunications or power are denied.

For historical reasons one of the resilience coordinators has good access to backup power and alternative water supplies and a variety of communications media.



This is as a result of past work and also amateur radio qualifications approvals and equipment. So, this facility is the de facto communications and coordination hub.

Oxnam Valley Community is a fairly independent group of individuals, and we found the best method of engagement is to conduct a number of limited operations such as litter picking where we can use and exercise our communications facilities and then acting as a contingency buffer when specific situations such as power outages occur.





Peter Bondar of Oxnam Water Resilience Group cont...

In summary the Oxnam Water Resilience Group acts in co-operation with existing Oxnam community groups and operates in a supportive role, whilst when specific incidences occur, we adopt a more primary communication and advice role.

There are plans to further develop our communication strategy by using a mixture of WhatsApp in a tiered approach and also being amateur radio enthusiasts, we've been developing public mobile radio repeater stations so that we can

better infill communications in event of major outages in either to GSM based communications or land based networks.

New Surface Water Flood Maps Published – SEPA

As most of us are acutely aware, flooding is becoming an increasing hazard for the majority of our communities. The impact of these events can be catastrophic for families and the wider community due to loss of services and infrastructure such as transport.

Dealing with the aftermath can have a big impact financially and, on the health, and wellbeing of people. Loss of homes for long periods of time and on business viability due to loss of the ability to trade, and reduced income.

The Scottish Government National Adaptation Plan 2024 – 2029 sets out actions to build Scotland's resilience to climate change. It does this through support for communities, businesses, public services and nature to adapt to the changing climate in a way that is fair and inclusive. The Adaptation Plan sets out a long-term vision and defines Scotland's priorities for action over the next five years.

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 contains a legal duty across the public sector to help deliver the objectives, and the Adaptation Plan describes how government will support Scots to adapt and continue to live well in Scotland's changing climate.

SEPA have introduced new guidance, and surface water and small watercourse flood maps which will be invaluable to allow individuals, businesses and communities to understand the flood risk in their area. What the impacts could be and how best they can prepare to help protect lives, properties and communities.

These will build on local knowledge of where historical flooding has occurred and provide an understanding of where properties may be at risk from emerging issues, allowing flood preparation to be addressed e.g. availability of sandbags, consideration of floodgates, preplanning for evacuations and how to support vulnerable neighbours etc.

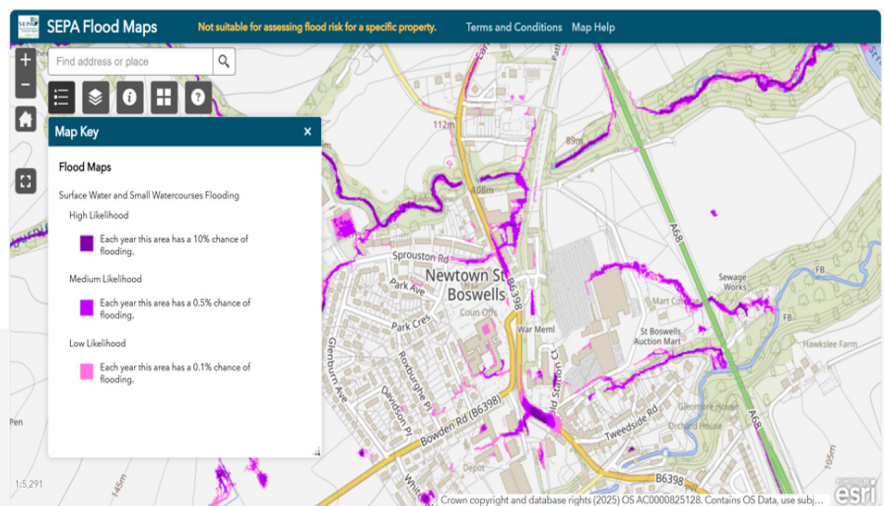
The new surface water and small watercourses flood maps can be accessed on SEPA's website via www.sepa.scot/flooding where users can also find out how they may be exposed to flooding from rivers and the sea.

The surface water and small watercourses maps can be accessed from the link below.

Flood Maps | SEPA - Flood Maps | SEPA

The publication of the surface water maps supports the implementation of the **Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024-2029** and was a focus under Climate Resilience in SEPA's **Annual operating plan for 24-25**.

Example of the surface water flood map





Resilient Communities and Community Resilience

We are all very familiar with why we have resilient community groups.

Members of the community organise and mobilise in times of need to support their neighbours and the wider community by preparing for and responding to severe weather events, pandemics etc. The network in the Scottish Borders currently numbers 57 active groups, ranging in membership from 3-4 to 20+ residents of all ages.

What does Community Resilience look like?

It's all the things wrapped around us, some obvious, others not so that provide services, support, reassurance and comfort when needed.

The Health Centre, places of worship, community groups, dental surgeries, local shop, garage, schools and nurseries, sports and other clubs/associations, neighbours, Community councillors, Local Councillors, retained fire service, community police officers, ambulance service. The list isn't exhaustive.

The community "looking out" for and supporting each other.

With this in mind we would like to raise awareness of the **Governments CONTEST Strategy**.



The strategy is the counter terrorism strategy for the UK, and is often known as the "4 P's"

Pursue: investigate and disrupt terrorist attacks.

Prevent: stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism

Protect: improve our protective security to stop a terrorist attack.

Prepare: work to minimise the impact of an attack and to recover as quickly as possible.

The Police and security services lead the Pursue aspect of the strategy. The remaining "P's" sit with other organisations such as Scottish Borders Council and the wider community.

Prevent is the "P" that communities can support by "looking out for" and supporting each other.

The aim of the Prevent Strategy is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Prevent tackles all forms of extremism – including both Islamist extremism and far right threats.

Prevent has 3 key objectives:

- tackle the ideological causes of terrorism
- intervene early to support people susceptible to radicalisation
- enable people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.

We all have a role in protecting vulnerable children, young people and adults from being drawn into terrorism. Extremism and radicalisation in our communities are very real threats, and being

aware is the first step. You can help to reduce the threat from terrorism, radicalisation and extremism.

- Be vigilant - go to the Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) website to find out what to look out for.
- Know what to report.
- Report it.

Most if not all of our communities have access to village halls. These halls are often the responsibility of a committee of the Community Council. Managing and maintaining these halls can be expensive and many will be let out to community groups etc. to cover costs.

Committees should be aware of who is seeking to rent the hall and for what purpose? Groups that support terrorism etc. may not often be obvious.

A growing movement around the world are Active Sports clubs. Mainly male only, providing training for mixed martial arts, boxing etc. These groups are often affiliated to extreme right-wing organisations and are a recruiting platform for these ideologies.

They have no discernible leadership but are interconnected and organised.

Generally, these groups don't meet in mainstream venues. It's often private gyms, halls and other spaces.

Ensuring that your hall booking process is robust will help to keep your community safe. A small example of community resilience working to protect everyone.



Staying Well and Resilient in a Changing Climate

Advice from NHS Borders on looking after yourself, your community, and our health services this summer

As we approach the warmer months, NHS Borders is encouraging residents across the region to think about how rising temperatures and changing weather patterns — increasingly driven by climate change — can affect our health and wellbeing.

We're already seeing longer, hotter summers across the UK, and forecasts suggest that heatwaves will become more frequent and intense in the years ahead. While a bit of sunshine can lift spirits, extreme heat poses real risks — particularly for older adults, young children, those with long-term health conditions, and people living alone.

Why This Matters!

Rising temperatures can lead to increased cases of dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke — all of which place additional strain on already stretched health and social care services. People with respiratory, cardiovascular, or mental health conditions can be particularly vulnerable, and prolonged heat can also disrupt sleep and worsen feelings of anxiety or stress.

And it's not just physical health — climate-related distress, often called climate anxiety, is becoming more common. Feeling overwhelmed by news of extreme weather, environmental change, or future uncertainty is a normal response — but it's something we can address together by building supportive, informed communities.

What You Can Do?

By taking simple steps to keep yourself and others safe, you're not only looking after your own wellbeing

— you're also helping to reduce unnecessary demand on NHS services and ensuring our teams can focus on those most in need.

Top Tips for Staying Safe and Well!

- Stay cool indoors: Keep curtains closed during the hottest part of the day. If possible, use a fan and avoid using ovens or hobs during heatwaves.
- Drink plenty of fluids: Water is best. Try to avoid excessive alcohol or caffeine.
- Avoid peak heat: Limit outdoor activity between 11am and 3pm. If you need to go out, wear loose, light clothing and a hat.
- Check in on others: Especially neighbours who are older, live alone, or have existing health conditions.
- Know when to seek help: NHS 24, NHS Inform, and your local pharmacy can provide advice — please avoid A&E unless it's an emergency. Scottish health information you can trust | NHS inform

Looking After Mental Health!

If you're feeling anxious or overwhelmed by climate change, you're not alone. Talking about your concerns, focusing on local action, and staying connected can make a big difference. Small steps — like helping a neighbour, reducing waste, or supporting community groups — all contribute to a more resilient, hopeful future.

For mental health resources, visit: Mental health support | NHS inform Building Community Resilience Community awareness and early action help protect essential health and care services during periods of pressure. As part of a Resilient Community group or local support network, your role in sharing information and supporting vulnerable residents is vital — and very much appreciated.

By working together, we can stay well, support one another, and ease the pressure on our frontline services. That's what resilience looks like — at the personal, community, and system level.

We hope you have found the content of this newsletter informative. The Emergency Planning Team eps@scotborders.gov.uk would welcome any feedback on this issue and invite suggestions from you on anything you would like to see included in future editions. These biannual editions will precede "Autumn & Winter" and "Spring & Summer".

Best regards
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