



STRATHARD FLOOD GROUP EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIC BRIEFING

A detailed report to support Flood Group buy-in to an integrated resilience, upstream attenuation and natural flood management approach

Prepared for	Strathard Flood Group
Prepared by	Strathard Community Council
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“We are not changing direction — we are strengthening the Flood Group’s work by aligning it with what is now proven, supported and fundable.”

Executive summary

This report has been prepared to help the Flood Group assess a strategic shift in emphasis rather than a strategic retreat. Its purpose is to show, in detail, that the Flood Group's work over the past four to five years remains the essential foundation for the next phase of flood resilience work in Strathard. The recommended direction is to integrate upstream storage and attenuation thinking with a wider catchment-based resilience model, including natural flood management, drainage improvement, phased delivery and funding-led project development.

The evidence reviewed for this report shows that Scottish policy is now centred on long-term flood resilience, adaptation and catchment-scale action. That does not weaken the case for upstream storage; rather, it changes how that work should be framed. Projects that combine storage, floodplain reconnection, woodland creation, wetlands, run-off attenuation and community resilience are now more likely to align with national policy, attract external funding and be delivered in phases.

Key messages

- The Flood Group's evidence base is a strength and should be treated as the platform for the next phase.
- Scottish Government direction now favours resilience, adaptation and natural flood management working at catchment scale.
- Upstream storage remains important, but is stronger when presented as part of an integrated package.
- The new approach is more fundable, more deliverable in phases and more likely to build agency support.

1. Purpose of this report

This report expands the earlier strategic briefing note and is intended to provide the Flood Group with a fuller evidence base, clearer visual examples and a more detailed explanation of why an integrated approach is now the strongest route forward for Strathard.

- recognise the strength and value of the Flood Group's work over the last four to five years;
- show how that work links directly to the emerging national policy and funding environment;
- demonstrate, through Scottish case studies, that catchment-scale interventions are both practical and fundable;
- explain why upstream storage should be integrated into a broader flood resilience programme rather than treated as a stand-alone proposition; and
- set out a practical way forward that depends on — rather than replaces — Flood Group leadership and knowledge.

2. The existing Flood Group evidence base is already strong

The Flood Group has developed a substantial and credible body of local knowledge. That work has not been wasted and does not need to be restarted. On the contrary, it is precisely this depth of knowledge that gives Strathard an advantage over many rural communities.

- Local flood event history and lived experience of flooding impacts in Aberfoyle and the wider Strathard area.
- A practical understanding of how water moves through the Loch Ard, Duchray Water and downstream system.
- Engagement with Stirling Council, SEPA and consultants, including exposure to hydrological and drainage evidence.
- Detailed attention to upstream storage concepts and the need to reduce and delay peak flow arriving downstream.
- A recognition that flood resilience in Strathard cannot depend on one measure alone and must consider the wider catchment and its constraints.

In technical terms, much of the Flood Group's work has already been moving in the same direction as current flood resilience policy. It has focused on attenuation, lag time, upstream opportunity, flood pathway behaviour and the practical limits of downstream-only measures. That is not out of step with current thinking; it is consistent with it.

3. Why this is a turning point

The strategic context has changed. The Scottish Government's National Flood Resilience Strategy is explicitly framed around making Scotland more flood resilient over the coming decades, while wider Scottish Government land use and climate policy increasingly emphasise natural processes, adaptation and multiple-benefit interventions. In other words, the policy environment has moved towards resilience, not away from it (Scottish Government, 2024).

This matters because funding tends to follow policy direction. In the present climate, a proposal framed solely as a single major engineered prevention scheme is likely to encounter greater difficulty than one which clearly combines upstream attenuation, natural flood management, resilience and staged delivery.

- Policy now favours resilience and adaptation, not only hard defences.
- Catchment-scale proposals are easier to align with biodiversity, climate adaptation and nature restoration funding.
- Phased programmes can begin sooner and build further evidence over time.
- A stronger, broader framing makes it easier to bring partners, funders and regulators with the community.

4. Strathard context map

The map below grounds the discussion in place. It is not a hydraulic model, but it shows the Loch Ard–Kinlochard–Aberfoyle corridor and why any future flood resilience proposal must think in terms of connected water movement rather than a single point solution.

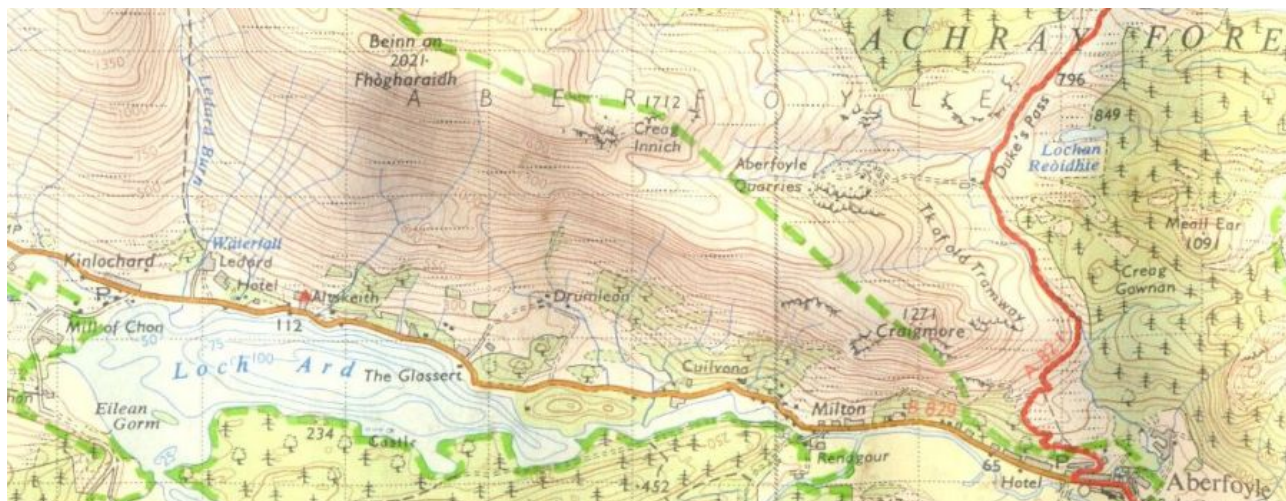


Figure 1. Loch Ard / Aberfoyle area context map. Source: C. Ingram, Loch Ard route map excerpt.

5. How the new approach builds on the Flood Group's work

The change being proposed is best understood as a reframing exercise. The Flood Group's work remains the starting point. What changes is the structure in which that work is placed: from a single-solution narrative to an integrated resilience narrative that is easier to evidence, easier to fund and easier to phase.

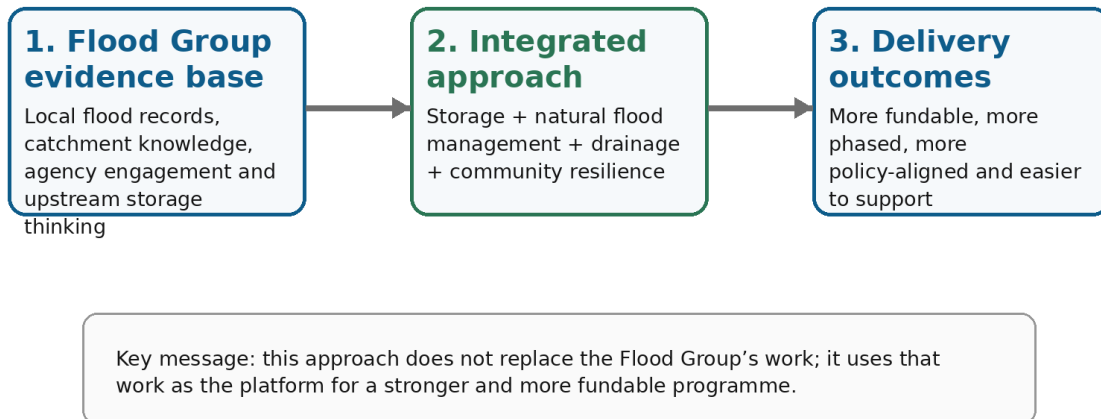


Figure 2. Conceptual pathway from existing Flood Group evidence to an integrated resilience programme.

6. Flow transformation: before and after

The simplified diagram below illustrates the hydrological logic behind the recommended approach. On the left, water runs rapidly through the catchment and reaches the village with a high peak and limited lag time. On the right, upstream storage and natural flood management features spread and slow water movement, reducing peak flow and extending the response window downstream.

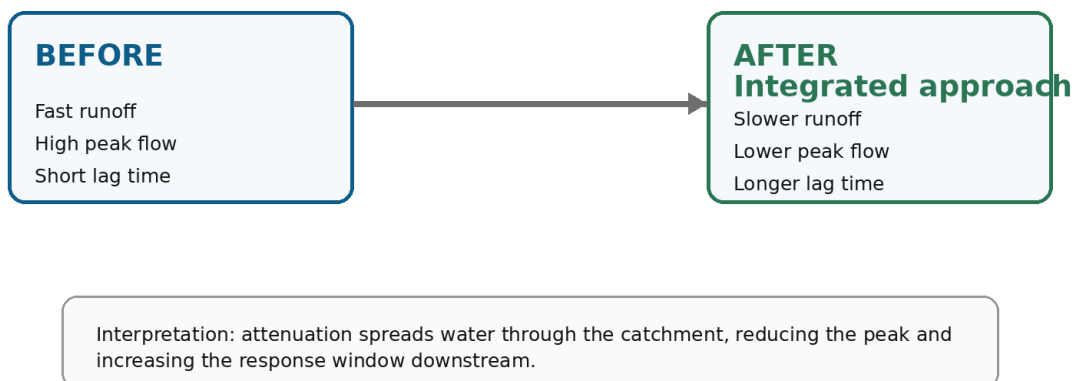


Figure 3. Before-and-after concept showing the effect of attenuation and integrated catchment measures.

7. Evidence from the Eddleston Water Project

The Eddleston Water Project is one of the strongest Scottish examples of why the recommended direction makes sense. It is a long-term, partnership-based project focused on testing the effectiveness of natural flood management techniques and habitat restoration at catchment scale. Tweed Forum describes it as a project funded

by the Scottish Government and led in partnership with SEPA, the University of Dundee and other public, academic and land management partners (Tweed Forum, n.d.).

The project is important because it demonstrates that the community does not need to choose between evidence and ambition. Eddleston shows that long-term monitoring, practical interventions and partnership delivery can sit together within one coherent programme.

cultural heritage of the River Tweed and its tributaries.



Re-meandering of Eddleston Water in the Tweed catchment © Colin MacLean

Figure 4. Re-meandering of Eddleston Water in the Tweed catchment. Source: NatureScot case study PDF, photo credit Colin MacLean.

Eddleston evidence point	Relevance to Strathard
Catchment scale	Eddleston was designed as a whole-catchment study, showing that flood management is strongest when upstream and downstream interactions are considered together.
Range of measures	The project includes re-meandering, tree planting, large wood structures, ponds and wetlands — illustrating that a package of measures is often more effective and more persuasive than a single intervention.
Measured results	NatureScot’s 2024 Eddleston summary highlights a 29% reduction in high flow frequency in Peebles and 50% upstream, together with 330,000 trees planted and major habitat gains (NatureScot, 2024a).

Intervention scale

NatureScot research in 2026 records 207 ha of woodland creation, 2.9 km of re-meandering, 116 flow restrictions and 28 run-off attenuation features (NatureScot, 2026).

Economic case

NatureScot reports the value to the economy of the project's natural flood management could be as high as £17.7 million — a useful reminder that resilience can be defended in economic terms, not just environmental terms (NatureScot, 2024a).

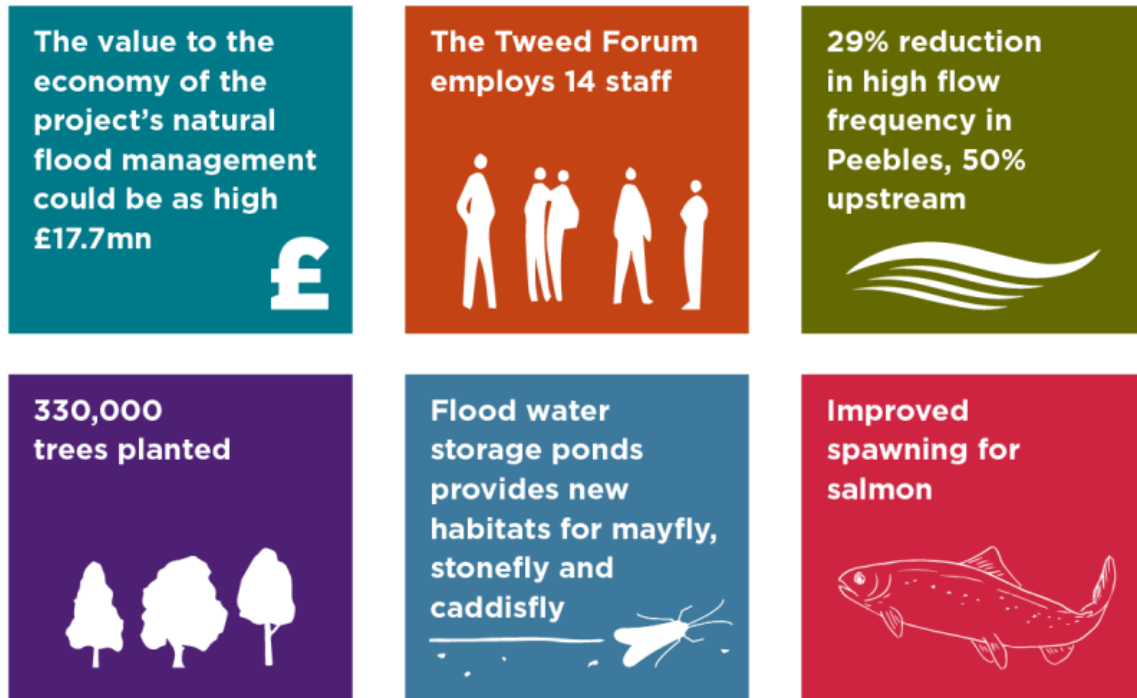


Figure 5. NatureScot Eddleston highlights graphic showing economic value, high flow reduction and tree planting.

For Strathard, the lesson is not that Eddleston can simply be copied. The lesson is that a catchment programme built around slowing the flow, restoring storage and working through partnership can produce measurable hydrological, ecological and economic benefits. That is exactly the kind of language and evidence base funders increasingly expect to see.

8. Evidence from the River Peffery / Ben Wyvis catchment

The Peffery work is equally relevant because it shows how river restoration, woodland creation, floodplain habitat and headwater restoration can be combined under one catchment narrative. NatureScot's 2024 case study describes the River Peffery work as re-meandering a section of river, planting new woodlands next to the river and creating new floodplain habitat, while linked peatland and forest-to-bog restoration in the headwaters helps reduce peak storm discharges and flood risk to Dingwall and other communities (NatureScot, 2024b).



Figure 6. Aerial image of the River Peffery after re-meandering. Source: NatureScot, 2024 (credit CR Contracting Ltd.).

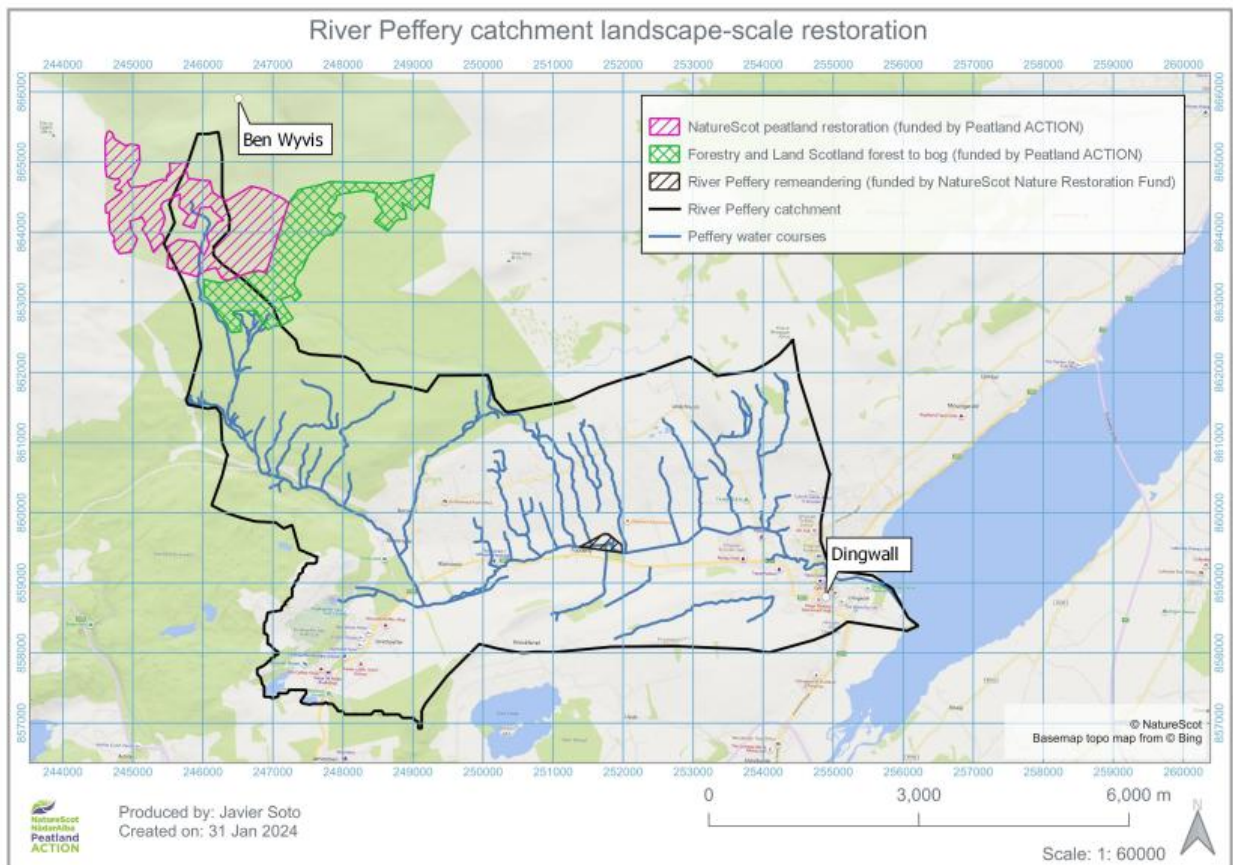


Figure 7. River Peffery catchment landscape-scale restoration map. Source: NatureScot, 2024.

The Pebble Trust’s project summary adds another important point for Strathard: the first phase of the Peffery project used a LiDAR survey of the floodplain to explore feasibility, which then helped unlock the implementation stage and more substantial funding. This is highly relevant because it shows how an evidence-building first step can be used to unlock the larger delivery phase (The Pebble Trust, 2021).

- The project aims to reconnect the river to its original floodplain to improve biodiversity and reduce flood risk.
- The feasibility phase was explicitly supported because it helped establish a credible basis for later delivery and further funding.
- The implementation phase includes removing embankments and allowing the river to spill onto the floodplain, creating around 7 hectares of new wetlands.
- NatureScot links the river project with wider peatland and headwater restoration, underlining the value of a full-catchment framing.

9. What the case studies mean for Strathard

Taken together, the Eddleston and Peffery evidence supports a clear conclusion. The strongest route for Strathard is not to abandon upstream storage, but to embed it within a broader and more persuasive package.

- Upstream storage remains important because it is fundamentally about attenuation and holding water back.
- Natural flood management adds complementary mechanisms such as wetlands, woodland planting, floodplain reconnection and run-off slowing.
- A catchment approach creates a clearer funding narrative because it delivers flood, biodiversity, climate and landscape benefits together.
- A phased programme allows earlier progress instead of waiting indefinitely for a single large intervention.
- A broader framing makes it easier to keep the Flood Group’s technical evidence at the centre while still speaking the language funders and agencies now use.

10. Funding case and delivery logic

The strongest financial argument for the new approach is not simply that it sounds more modern. It is that it is structurally easier to fund. Scottish flood resilience, nature restoration and climate adaptation funding increasingly favour projects that create multiple benefits and can demonstrate partnership working, staged delivery and wider resilience outcomes.

Funding logic	Single-scheme framing	Integrated framing
Policy fit	Narrower fit	Stronger fit with resilience, adaptation and nature restoration
Phasing	Often all-or-nothing	Can begin with studies, early works and pilot interventions
Benefits case	Mainly flood-specific	Flood + biodiversity + water + climate + community resilience
Partnership value	Harder to widen	Encourages SCC, SCT, Flood Group, agencies and funders

Evidence growth

Static once designed

Can be strengthened over time through monitoring and staged delivery

For Strathard, this suggests a practical model: use the Flood Group's existing evidence to shape an enhanced feasibility stage; frame that stage as an integrated catchment and resilience study; use the outputs to build a stronger external funding case; and then move into phased delivery as opportunities arise.

11. The Flood Group's role in the new approach

A major concern in any strategic shift is that existing expertise will be sidelined. That should not happen here. The Flood Group remains central because the credibility of the next phase depends on continuity with the work already undertaken.

Role	Contribution
Flood Group	Technical and local knowledge; challenge function; continuity with existing evidence; practical insight into flood pathways and priority interventions.
SCC	Representative leadership; strategic coordination; community mandate; communication with elected representatives and agencies.
SCT	Development and funding expertise; funding applications; project packaging; support for delivery partnerships.
Agencies / partners	Technical input, modelling, data and regulatory alignment as the programme moves forward.

This division of roles is important. It ensures that the Flood Group is not being asked to step back. It is instead being asked to help shape a stronger overall proposition.

12. Recommended next steps

- Convene a dedicated Flood Group session to review this report and test the integrated approach against local knowledge and previous work.
- Agree the key elements that must be carried forward from the current upstream storage work into any revised feasibility scope.
- Prepare a short joint briefing for SCC and SCT setting out the case for an integrated flood resilience study.
- Identify likely funding routes for a phased evidence-and-feasibility stage.
- Engage Stirling Council and relevant partners with a clearer, policy-aligned proposition that still reflects Strathard's local priorities.

The immediate objective should not be to discard previous work and start again. It should be to secure agreement on a stronger wrapper within which that work can progress.

13. Conclusion

The Flood Group has already done much of the hard work. The question now is how that work is best taken forward. The evidence reviewed in this report points in one clear direction: upstream storage should remain part of the conversation, but it will be stronger — politically, technically and financially — when presented as one element within a wider catchment resilience programme.

That is the opportunity now facing Strathard. It is not a choice between ambition and realism. It is a chance to preserve ambition by presenting it in the form most likely to secure support, funding and delivery.

References

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