

**Open Meeting**

<b>To</b>	Waikato District Council
<b>From</b>	Clive Morgan General Manager Community Growth
<b>Date</b>	13 December 2021
<b>Prepared by</b>	Jim Ebenhoh Planning and Policy Manager
<b>Chief Executive Approved</b>	Y
<b>Reference #</b>	GOV1301 / ECM #
<b>Report Title</b>	Port Waikato Adaptive Management Planning: Update

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report briefly summarises the past 7 months' progress on the Port Waikato Adaptive Management Planning project, which has been working towards a long-term Resilience Strategy in response to natural hazard risks. It recommends that Council continues to provide advice to the community around short- and medium-term actions that can be taken to slow coastal erosion, and that Council completes the actions relating to public assets such as the carpark that it has committed to undertaking. It recommends that Council confirms it will not fund any further sand transfer trials or other physical works aimed at protecting public or private property at Sunset Beach in Port Waikato. It also recommends that work towards the long-term adaptive management plan (Resilience Strategy) be temporarily paused while Council works with the wider Port Waikato community on developing its Local Area Blueprint.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

**THAT the report from the General Manager Community Growth be received;**

**AND THAT Council endorses the ongoing provision of advice to the Port Waikato community on short- and medium-term actions to slow coastal erosion at Sunset Beach, as well as completion of agreed actions relating to public assets such as the carpark;**

**AND THAT Council confirms it will not directly fund any further sand transfer trials or other physical works aimed at protecting public or private property at Sunset Beach in Port Waikato;**

**AND FURTHER THAT Council agrees for work towards the long-term adaptive management plan to be temporarily paused until the Port Waikato Local Area Blueprint is completed.**

### **3. BACKGROUND**

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A report to Council in December 2019 provided detailed background on coastal erosion issues at Port Waikato. In brief, Port Waikato has historically experienced cyclical coastal erosion; that is, there have been times of erosion followed by times of accretion. Council obtained consultant advice in 2014/15 that led to a subsequent decision to relocate the community hall when erosion reached the recommended 'trigger point' of 7.5 metres from the building.

The community continues to experience severe coastal erosion which has worsened rapidly in the past few years, particularly affecting public property and private properties at the southern end of Oceanview Road. A public information session hosted by Council in October 2019 at the Surf Lifesaving Club revealed the community's concern about a perceived lack of action by Council in relation to erosion hazards. Following that meeting, Council staff developed a coordinated approach to communication and activities relating to Port Waikato including carpark maintenance, drainage, public toilets, signage, and guidance on possible consent pathways relating to demolition, rebuild and relocation.

In addition to these immediate responses, Council also recognised the need to embark on a longer-term adaptive management planning process, in partnership with the community and other stakeholders, to develop a resilience strategy for Port Waikato in the face of various natural hazards. At its 7 December 2019 meeting Council resolved that *"\$50,000 be approved from the Disaster Recovery Fund for independent facilitation and technical advice for an adaptive management planning process with the Port Waikato community, local iwi, other agencies and stakeholders in order to build resilience to natural hazards, noting that additional funding is likely to be required in future years and will also be sought from external sources."* Dedicated funding for Adaptive Management Planning has been included in the 2021-2031 Long Term Plan (\$70,000 for the first three years, with inflation adjustments). to continue this project and eventually undertake similar projects with other communities.

The adaptive management planning process is summarised in the Co-Design Report approved by Council at its May 2021 meeting. The benefits of this approach include that it makes decisions now based on the best information currently available, while preserving flexibility for future decision-making to take place based on new and/or improved information. Various 'trigger points' can be programmed so that actions can be planned for when a specified event occurs (e.g. erosion to within a certain distance of a building), without needing to know today exactly when that might occur.

Adaptive management planning in the context of coastal erosion and flooding is NOT the same thing as 'managed retreat'; it provides for the full spectrum of options including defence, accommodation (e.g. raised floor levels), retreat, and avoidance (e.g. not allowing subdivision or other intensification of land use in hazard areas).

Following the December 2019 Council resolution above, an independent facilitator (Traverse Environmental Ltd) was procured with the agreement of community members, and a Port Waikato Resilience Group (PWRG) was set up including representatives from the Port Waikato Residents and Ratepayers Association, Waikato District Council, Waikato Regional Council, and Department of Conservation. After a delay arising from the initial 2020 COVID-19 lockdown, the PWRG began meeting regularly, approving terms of reference and an intended work programme which was summarised in the Co-Design report attached to the May 2021 Council report.

Achievements of the group to date in the past 18 months include:

- Commissioning a report on Port Waikato coastal hazards and potential options commissioned from Raglan-based eCoast, and a report on groundwater issues and potential impact on erosion from Nature Based Solutions, both peer reviewed by Dr Terry Hume
- Developing a Sunset Beach Interim Erosion Response Plan (IERP) including potential low-cost, no-consent or easily-consentable short-term options, as well as medium-term options with higher costs or consent requirements
- Agreeing to future work on a longer-term adaptive management plan (Resilience Strategy)
- Endorsing the May 2021 Co-Design Report for the project, outlining intended deliverables of the various workstreams referred to above
- Hosting representatives from the Department of Internal Affairs who summarised central government's work on natural hazard adaptation
- Addressing issues relating to carpark design, maintenance and function to minimise stormwater runoff
- Arranging for future installation of fixed-camera monitoring of beach erosion conditions from various locations
- Installation of signage advising people to keep off the eroding sand cliff
- Installation by community of netting to help retain sand on the cliff
- Trialling the transfer of 100 cubic metres (m<sup>3</sup>) of sand from the beach to the base of the cliff face adjoining the Sunset Beach carpark, to see what benefit is provided for what duration
- Obtaining quotes for larger amounts of sand transfer (e.g. 1000m<sup>3</sup>)
- Discussing consent / permit requirements for all options

## **4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

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### **4.1 DISCUSSION**

#### **Short / Medium Term options including sand transfer**

Based on interest from PWRG community members in expanding the previous 100m<sup>3</sup> sand transfer trial to a higher volume, Council staff obtained a quote for 1000m<sup>3</sup> of sand transfer, which was approximately \$35,000 (plus consenting requirements).

Neither our Council's staff nor Waikato Regional Council (WRC) staff believe we have a mandate to spend \$35,000 of districtwide (or regionwide) ratepayer funds on the 1000m<sup>3</sup> sand transfer, with no assurance that it would last very long. In addition, these works would go against the Council policy of managed retreat with respect to the public assets at Sunset Beach (i.e. the carpark and community hub) – a policy recently also applied at Ngarunui Beach in Raglan.

**Commented [AC1]:** We can add the issue of frequent these would need to be to effectively mitigate the erosion hazard. Think Orewa beach, at roughly \$100K more than once a year.

The PWRG, at its meeting on 25 November, noted the cost and expressed some understanding of the reasons why the Council would not fund this work, although the views vary across the group's members.

The PWRG has also expressed a desire for Council to continue smaller 100m<sup>3</sup> sand transfer trials, both in front of the carpark and further along the beach in front of private property. The view of WDC and WRC staff is that repeated 100m<sup>3</sup> trials are unlikely to be effective unless they are very frequent, in which case cumulative cost would quickly escalate. As with the potential 1000m<sup>3</sup> trial referred to above, Council staff also do believe we have a mandate to fund any sand trials in front of private property.

**Commented [AC2]:** Do not?

Some PWRG members have previously said that Council should declare a state of emergency and release significant sums for the various projects the community wants to undertake. Our understanding is that the current situation does not trigger a state of emergency, although it is understandably concerning for the owners of erosion-prone property.

In summary, so far sand transfer appears to be the only viable option to buy the community some time to work on a longer-term resilience strategy, but based on experiences with the 100m<sup>3</sup> trial and the currently aggressive erosion cycle at Sunset Beach, it is unlikely to have lasting benefit for reasonable cost.

Staff recommend continuing to help the community in other ways, e.g. via advice on external funding sources, advice on consenting requirements, and finishing the work underway on carpark improvements, etc.

### **Local Area Blueprint, and Long-term adaptive management planning**

In response to community requests, Council is about to start a Local Area Blueprint process for Port Waikato and Gordonton, to complement the Local Area Blueprints already adopted for 15 other communities. This process began in early December with communications and an online survey, and will hopefully progress to in-person workshops in early 2022 depending on Covid-19 alert levels. The goal is to complete the Port Waikato Blueprint by the end of June 2022.

The current community members of PWRG, which are collectively endorsed by the Port Waikato Residents and Ratepayers Association as its 'Erosion Control Subcommittee', largely consists of Oceanview Road property owners. They have understandably been very focused on short-term actions, so the longer-term adaptive planning discussions have not yet progressed significantly.

It is proposed to pause the long-term planning project while the Local Area Blueprint is undertaken. This would focus the Council's efforts on one long-term planning exercise at a time in Port Waikato. It could also provide an opportunity to obtain a wider range of views and possibly yield additional interested community members willing to engage on the longer-term planning project and potentially representing a more geographically diverse range of the community.

This proposal was endorsed by the PWRG at its 25 November meeting.

## 4.2 OPTIONS

### Sand Transfer and other physical protection works:

**Option One:** Confirm that Council will not directly fund any further sand transfer trials or other physical works aimed at protecting public or private property at Sunset Beach in Port Waikato, but will continue to provide advice to the community on short- and medium-term actions to slow coastal erosion at Sunset Beach, in addition to completing agreed actions relating to public assets such as the carpark. **This is the recommended option.** It is financially prudent with respect to districtwide ratepayer contributions, while still providing non-financial support to the community to assist with their erosion control efforts.

**Option Two:** Explore a targeted rate for protection works, based on the various levels of benefits accruing to beachfront property owners and the wider community. This option has not yet been modeled but would likely need to be quite targeted, unless some level of benefit were allocated to properties beyond the immediate oceanfront. The advantages of a targeted rate include greater equity for ratepayers outside Port Waikato than using districtwide funding, and a coordinated approach rather than ad hoc property-by-property protection efforts. The disadvantages include the need for extensive community consultation, significant administrative burden, the likelihood that any targeted rate would be mandatory for at least some property owners who would rather not invest in protection, and the possibility that protective works are not likely to be effective beyond the short-term without a reversal of the current erosion cycle. **This option is not recommended for those reasons.** It could be more efficient and fairer for interested owners to undertake any necessary protection work themselves rather than mandating it for all owners in an area via a targeted rate, as long as consenting / permitting issues are addressed to mitigate potential 'end effects' and other negative environmental outcomes.

**Option Three:** Provide funding for protective works from districtwide rates or other districtwide funding sources. **This option is not recommended** as the benefits are not seen as accruing districtwide.

### Local Area Blueprint and Long-term Adaptive Management Planning

**Option One:** Agree for work towards the long-term adaptive management plan (Resilience Strategy) to be temporarily paused until the Port Waikato Local Area Blueprint is

**Commented [AC3]:** Would this affect the work DOC is doing in the northern part of PW? Or is this outside Sunset Beach?

completed. **This is the recommended option.** It would allow Council to focus its efforts on the Blueprint process over the next several months, provide opportunity for the wider community to contextualise the coastal erosion issue within the overall community vision for Port Waikato, and could reveal a diversity of views that might supplement those of the existing community working group. This option is also supported by the PWRG.

**Option Two:** Proceed with both the Local Area Blueprint and the long-term adaptive management plan (Resilience Strategy) in parallel. While this might appear to have the potential advantage making faster progress on the Resilience Strategy, it has the likely risks and disadvantages of stretching the capacity of key Council staff and community representatives involved in both processes, potential community confusion about the differences between the projects, challenges in folding learnings from one process into another simultaneously, and the opportunity cost of not allowing for the possible identification through the Blueprint process of additional community members who would be interested in working on the Resilience Strategy from the start. **This option is not recommended** for those reasons.

**Option Three:** Abandon the long-term adaptive management plan (Resilience Strategy) process altogether. **This option is not recommended**, as commitments have been made by both WDC and WRC to the community that we will assist them in working towards a sustainable future in the face of natural hazards – an approach that is strongly encouraged by national and regional policy and supporting guidance. The only potential advantage to this option might be cost savings by not spending any more of the adaptive management planning budget in the 2021-2031 Long Term Plan. This would likely set a precedent meaning that other coastal communities such as Raglan would not receive Council assistance in their long-term resilience planning either.

## **5. CONSIDERATION**

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### **5.1 FINANCIAL**

There are no direct financial implications of this report, other than to slow the pace of expenditure for facilitation of this project while the Local Area Blueprint is undertaken. The Council resolved to fund the initial phase of this work through \$50,000 from the Disaster Recovery Fund, and has now included additional funding to complete this project in the 2021-2031 Long Term Plan (\$70,000 for the first three years of the LTP, with inflation adjustments).

### **5.2 LEGAL**

There are no significant legal issues in relation to the decision requested today, although one community member of the PWRG has indicated they are seeking legal advice in relation to the erosion issues.

### 5.3 STRATEGY, PLANS, POLICY AND PARTNERSHIP ALIGNMENT

The approach taken through this project is aligned with the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, the Waikato Regional Policy Statement, and the proposed Waikato District Plan, all of which encourage a holistic, integrated approach to natural hazards and suggest looking at more options than just hard protection structures.

The approach is also consistent with the Council’s vision of Liveable, Thriving and Connected Communities, by proposing a collaborative process to promote the future viability of the Port Waikato community. It is also aligned with the following Community Outcomes:

- Supporting our communities: Kia tautoko ki a taatou Haapori
- Sustaining our environment: Kia toituu to taatou Taiao
- Working together with you: Kia mahi tahi taatou
- Providing value for money: Ka whai painga mo te puutea

The adaptive management planning process is inclusive by design, and involves partnership with the Waikato Regional Council, central government, community representatives, and local iwi (Ngaati Karewa, Ngaati Tahinga) - subject to their availability.

The decision not to defend the public assets at Sunset Beach against erosion is consistent with Council’s previous policy decision to take a ‘managed retreat’ approach for the carpark and adjacent community facilities. This approach has also been taken at Ngarunui Beach in Raglan. It does not imply a similar ‘managed retreat’ approach for private property; this will need to be discussed as part of the long-term adaptive planning process.

### 5.4 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY AND OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

The Significance and Engagement Policy is not triggered by the decisions requested by this report, which largely confirm status quo Council policy. It should be noted, however, that some community members of the PWRG may have had higher expectations for Council funding of protective works than what would occur if this report’s recommendations were approved.

The adaptive management planning process itself involves a high level of engagement over the life of the project, hopefully moving beyond collaboration to empowerment; that is, building community capacity and resilience.

Highest levels of engagement	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Tick the appropriate box/boxes and specify what it involves by providing a brief explanation of the tools which will be used to engage (refer to the project engagement plan if applicable).</i>	The decisions requested today have been informed by feedback from the PWRG, which has been summarised in this report; however, the decisions requested may not fully align with all the aspirations of all PWRG members.				

State below which external stakeholders have been or will be engaged with:

Planned	In Progress	Complete	
	X		Internal
	X		Community Boards/Community Committees
	X		Waikato-Tainui/Local iwi (Waikato-Tainui has not yet been directly engaged but local iwi have been invited onto the PWRG)
	X		Households – through community reps
	X		Business – through community reps
	X		Other (central government, e.g. DIA and DoC)

There is no Community Board specifically for Port Waikato, but the wider Onewhero-Tuakau Community Board has representatives on the PWRG, as does the Port Waikato Residents and Ratepayers Association.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This project has reached a critical decision point. Providing clarity on what Council will and will not do in terms of the nature and scale of further expenditure for coastal erosion works is essential.

It is considered worthwhile to continue to facilitate a long-term adaptive planning response, and provide advice on any short- or medium-term actions the community wants to fund itself.

Pausing the long-term adaptive planning workstream during the Local Area Blueprint process would help the Council to focus its efforts over the next several months, would allow the wider community to contextualise the coastal erosion issue within the overall community vision for Port Waikato, and could reveal a diversity of views that might supplement those of the existing community working group.