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## Open Meeting

<b>To</b>	Waikato District Council
<b>From</b>	Clive Morgan General Manager Community Growth
<b>Date</b>	9 December 2019
<b>Prepared by</b>	Jim Ebenhoh Planning and Policy Manager
<b>Chief Executive Approved</b>	Y
<b>Reference #</b>	GOV1301 / 2403084
<b>Report Title</b>	Port Waikato Adaptive Management Planning

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report presents background information on the coastal erosion issue at Port Waikato, summarises current and proposed Council responses, and requests approval of \$50,000 from the Disaster Recovery Fund to facilitate and inform an adaptive management planning process with the Port Waikato community, local iwi, other agencies and stakeholders in order to build resilience to natural hazards.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

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

**AND 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.**

### 3. BACKGROUND

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Port Waikato is a community at the far north-western corner of the Waikato District, at the mouth of the Waikato River, with a resident population of around 1,000 and a summertime population of up to 1,500. It has historically experienced cyclical coastal erosion; that is, there have been times of erosion followed by times of accretion. It is currently experiencing 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.

## **Previous studies and decision-making**

In 2014/15 the Council commissioned the consulting firm GHD to advise on options in relation to Council-owned public property that was imminently threatened by erosion; namely, the community hall and associated carpark. The GHD reports identified the challenges involved in defending against erosion, including an estimated cost of approximately \$1 million for a 90m seawall as well as possible difficulties in gaining consent from the Waikato Regional Council arising from the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement's direction to avoid hard protective structures where possible.

After consideration of this information, the Council adopted a policy of managed retreat with respect to public assets in Port Waikato; in particular, it decided that it would demolish or relocate the community hall when coastal erosion reached a distance of 7.5 metres from the building. The Council did not consider any recommendations or commission any work in relation to private properties.

## **Recent erosion, demolition of community hall, and October public meeting**

In September of this year, as a result of a significant weather event, coastal erosion reached the trigger point of 7.5 metres from the community hall, and the building was demolished as per the previous Council resolution. A new community hub to replace the community hall and extend the existing Surf Life Saving Clubhouse is currently under construction. The concrete pad that was under the previous community hall is due to be removed shortly, and the carpark has been narrowed and traffic converted to a one-way system. Fences and signage have been erected advising the public of the dangerous cliff edge.

Around the same time as the demolition of the community hall, the erosion worsened with respect to several properties just north of the hall: 7 and 9 Ocean View Road. The Council's Building Quality Manager contacted the owners of the two properties and advised that the dwellings should not be occupied, however did not issue a formal Dangerous Building notice under the Building Act 2004.

In response to the worsening erosion, the Council held a public information session at the Port Waikato Surf Lifesaving Club on 5 October. Over 150 members of the public attended and heard from various Council staff regarding current work underway and potential future options. Coastal expert Jim Dahm also gave a comprehensive presentation regarding coastal processes at Port Waikato and elsewhere, and discussed various options including seawalls, groynes, beach renourishment, and managed retreat. While the meeting as a whole was characterised by expressions of frustration from some members of the public regarding a lack of action by Council to protect the community against erosion, Mr Dahm's presentation was generally well-received.

## **Coordinated Council response**

Following the 5 October meeting, Council staff have developed a coordinated approach to communication and activities relating to Port Waikato. Decision-making regarding the carpark, public toilets, communications and signage has been informed by group discussion across multiple departments. Fortnightly updates to over 120 members of the Port Waikato community, via an e-mail newsletter and Council's website, have increased in frequency to

weekly. Immediately affected property owners at the southern end of Ocean View Road have been contacted by Council building and resource consents staff, who are offering guidance on possible pathways including demolition, rebuild and relocation.

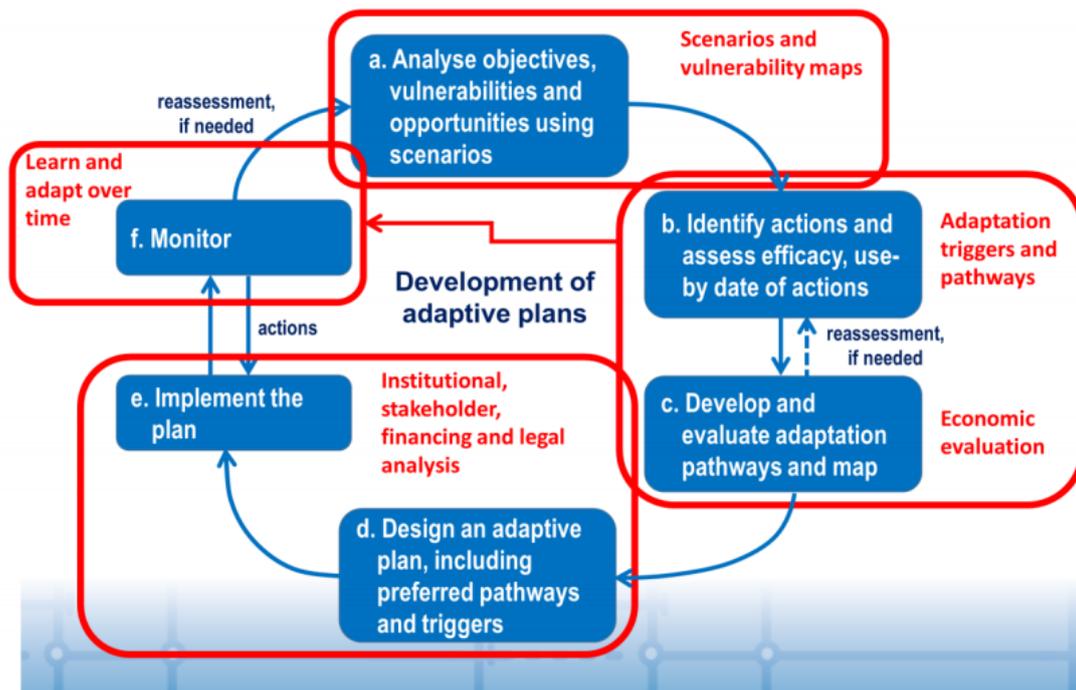
On 19 October an information session was held in relation to the draft natural hazards chapter of the Proposed District Plan; it was well-attended and provided some useful feedback, including unintended barriers to relocation of hazard-prone homes. In response to this feedback, it is intended that, prior to formal notification for submissions next year, provision will be made within the Proposed District Plan for existing buildings to be relocated (or a new building constructed) in a safer location within the same site. It is worth noting that Port Waikato is subject to more hazards than coastal erosion, including potential coastal inundation and river flooding.

In recent weeks, erosion advanced approximately one metre towards the southwest corner of the dwelling at 7 Ocean View Road. The Council commissioned a geotechnical engineer to advise on the risk of further slope failure affecting the dwelling, and contacted the owner, who has given written confirmation that he would have the dwelling demolished the week beginning 2 December. The Council has since issued a formal Dangerous Building notice for 7 Ocean View Road, prohibiting occupancy and requiring demolition by 16 December.

### **Adaptive management planning**

Concurrent with these shorter-term activities, Council staff have been exploring the potential of an adaptive management planning approach for the long-term resilience of the Port Waikato community in terms of natural hazards. This approach, also referred to as ‘dynamic adaptive management planning’ or ‘dynamic adaptive policy pathways’, is recommended by the Ministry for the Environment in its most recent guidance document (“Coastal Hazards and Climate Change: Guidance for Local Government,” Ministry for the Environment, December 2017). The diagram below is taken from that document.

Figure 64: Dynamic adaptive policy pathways approach



Source: Adapted from Haasnoot et al (2013)

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).

The adaptive management planning approach to coastal erosion and flooding has been pioneered in New Zealand in recent years in the Hawkes Bay region, where the Hawkes Bay Regional Council, Napier City Council and Hastings District Council have been working together on a unified Coastal Hazards Strategy, and on the western side of the Firth of Thames, where Hauraki District Council is developing a Community Plan for the Kaiawa / Miranda area with a focus on coastal flooding. Similar approaches have been undertaken through the Rangitaiki River Forum in response to the Edgcombe flooding of March 2017, and by the Thames-Coromandel District Council and Waikato Regional Council in relation to coastal inundation and erosion risk to Thames township. Undoubtedly other coastal communities in New Zealand, such as South Dunedin, are also considering their hazard portfolio using the adaptive management planning framework promoted by central government.

The Council needs to decide very soon on its approach to engaging with the Port Waikato community on natural hazards including coastal erosion. Port Waikato residents are currently discussing how best to engage with Council on coastal erosion issues, having mooted the option of a subcommittee of the Residents and Ratepayers Association, as well as the option

of an independent committee with representation from the Residents and Ratepayers Association, local iwi, etc. Related to this, a petition has been circulating that would ask the Council to ‘sandbag our beach or execute a practical plan to prevent further erosion at Port Waikato’. At any point, the Port Waikato community may request an urgent meeting between the community committee / subcommittee and Council staff, and/or may present the petition referred to above. The adaptive management planning framework is recommended as the best approach to consider all the options and work with the community towards a resilient future.

### **Collaboration and communication with regional and central government**

At the 5 October meeting at Port Waikato, some members of the community asked what involvement regional government and central government could have regarding the coastal erosion issues. A regional council staff member was scheduled to attend that meeting but could not attend due to unforeseen circumstances; however, regional council staff from both the natural hazards (“Regional Resilience Team”) and policy implementation teams have committed to participating in future discussions and meetings with the community, as they are doing in the Kaiawa / Miranda area.

In addition, Council staff have discussed central government involvement with both Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) and Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management (MCDEM) staff. These staff have provided information and contacts in relation to cross-departmental work on coastal hazard management and climate change issues. They have also suggested strategies to raise awareness and involvement of local MPs and the relevant Ministers. Arrangements are currently being made to make these connections at the political level, so that when central government is in a position to advise further or assist in any other way on coastal hazard issues, Port Waikato is top-of-mind alongside communities such as Matata, Edgecumbe and South Dunedin.

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

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### **4.1 DISCUSSION**

As discussed above, the adaptive management planning framework is promoted as best practice by central government. It has the potential to deal with multiple potential hazards in an inclusive way that deals with uncertainty by incorporating the best available knowledge as it becomes available, and not unnecessarily locking in irreversible or inefficient decisions.

To ensure that the negative image of Council held by some members of the Port Waikato is not a barrier to collaboration, an independent facilitator and project manager is sought, as is the case with the Kaiawa / Miranda work by Hauraki District Council. By engaging a facilitator that can also be a project manager, with experience in coastal erosion and flooding issues, the Council’s resourcing limitations will also be addressed, as Council staff do not have sufficient capacity to fully manage such an intensive, complex process of community engagement and discussion over a sustained period of time.

It is estimated that the project will run over two to three years before a definitive plan is developed and agreed, due to the need to obtain and in some cases refine the technical information on various options, and the multiple stages of discussion and decisionmaking built into the process. The cost over three years is estimated to be approximately \$250,000; however, the Waikato Regional Council will be approached for a contribution to this project as they have made in other similar cases. An initial investment of \$50,000 by Waikato District Council will enable the project to get underway and could fund between 6 months and one year's worth of the project, depending on how quickly and intensively it unfolds.

Aside from the District Plan Review budget which is already oversubscribed, and the Master Planning budget of \$100,000 per year which has already been brought forward to support the District Blueprint and Local Area Blueprints, there is no obvious funding source for this proactive, intensive community planning work. The Disaster Recovery Fund is recommended as the funding source because the Port Waikato community is already dealing with some severe effects of coastal erosion, and because an investment in proactive planning could avert future disasters and corresponding drawdowns from this Fund.

It is worth noting that Port Waikato is one of only a few communities (along with Gordonton) that does not have a Local Area Blueprint but is planned to have one developed in the near future. The initiation of a Port Waikato Blueprint project was originally planned to take place this year, but was delayed due to the need to focus on the coastal erosion issues initially. It is likely, however, that the development of an adaptive management plan for Port Waikato could provide the basis for a future Local Area Blueprint for the community. That is, once the community has had the in-depth discussion and planning around where and how it will orientate itself in relation to natural hazards, it will have gone some ways towards the future-focused exercise involved in Local Area Blueprints.

## **4.2 OPTIONS**

Option One is simply to do nothing with respect to private property issues in relation to coastal erosion at Port Waikato. The Council would focus on decision-making and management in relation to public assets such as the carpark, roading, public toilets and the community hall. Its only activities in relation to private property would be its 'business as usual' approach to building consent and resource consent functions. The advantage to this option is its simplicity and low cost. The disadvantage is that the Port Waikato community would likely consider itself to have been abandoned by its Council, and negative publicity would ensue.

Option Two is the status quo: essentially an enhanced version of Option One, it is intensively focused on short-term issues and actions, including the extra effort being made to facilitate a smooth consenting pathway for immediately affected property owners, and making decisions around public assets currently affected by erosion. It would not involve any engagement with the community about longer-term options with respect to private property, but would likely face immediate demands from segments of the community for short-term interventions such as sandbagging, seawalls, groynes, etc. This option is

preferable to Option One in that it sends the message to the Port Waikato community that it is important. It has the major downside, however, of being focused on short-term rather than medium-term or long-term planning. This means that the Council (and the community) are likely to remain in a reactive, back-foot mode rather than proactively considering what might happen and what responses could be in 5, 15, 20, 30 years or more. It would not be consistent with central government guidance, and by being reactive it is likely to be responsive to the loudest members of the community rather than proactively undertaking a planning process that is inclusive by design.

Option Three is to embark on the adaptive management planning process with the community, using existing Council staff resources only. This option has the advantage over Options One and Two of taking the long-term view and following central government guidance for adaptive management planning. Its disadvantage is that the level of resourcing provided would be insufficient for the demands of the project, given commitments of existing Council staff. It is likely that the project would move slowly, there would be poor or incomplete communication internally and externally, and frustration would emerge from the community, again creating negative publicity. In addition, there would be missed opportunities to learn from elsewhere in New Zealand through the involvement of a facilitator / project manager who has intensive experience in adaptive management planning in coastal communities.

Option Four is the recommended option: to undertake an adaptive management planning process with the Port Waikato community, local iwi, key stakeholders and other agencies in order to build community resilience to natural hazards, using \$50,000 from the Council's Disaster Recovery Fund as an initial investment to obtain independent facilitation and project management. This option would potentially leverage co-funding from regional government and elsewhere, and would ensure that the project has the level of resourcing and expertise that cannot be provided in-house without costly tradeoffs. A potential disadvantage to this option is that the rest of the District may question why they are paying (through their rates) for an issue currently limited to Port Waikato. A potential response to that concern is that natural disasters are increasingly common, and that while Port Waikato might be the unfortunate 'first cab off the rank', other communities in the Waikato District could benefit from adaptive management planning exercises or disaster recovery in the future. Another response is that this exercise would not be primarily about 'bailing out' individual property owners, but ensuring the resilience and viability of a longstanding beachfront community that is an important part of the Waikato identity, offering recreational and amenity benefits to the District as a whole.

## **5. CONSIDERATION**

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### **5.1 FINANCIAL**

The Disaster Recovery Fund, which was created many years ago, is funded through General Rates of \$122,000 per year (2018/19 funding). It has been used in the past in response to severe weather events; the last expenditure was \$727,000 for road repairs and \$131,000 for

water reticulation system repairs, both in 2016/17. The purpose of the Fund includes supporting activities that improve community readiness for and ability to respond to natural disasters. This proposal would fall into that category.

The current balance of the Fund is a surplus of \$535,000. The requested contribution of \$50,000 is not a large amount in relation to the annual rates contribution to the Fund of \$122,000.

## **5.2 LEGAL**

There are no significant legal issues in relation to the decision requested today. The Council has no legal obligation to undertake any activities in relation to private property other than its business-as-usual consenting activities. It would be embarking on the adaptive management planning pathway as a 'best practice' approach, on a voluntary rather than mandatory basis. At the same time, there are no legal risks in relation to undertaking adaptive management planning. Any legal issues would arise in relation to particular options that might be chosen in the future, such as building defensive structures or relocating dwellings.

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

The approach recommended in this report 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 proposed adaptive management planning process is inclusive by design, and will involve partnership with local iwi (Ngaati Karewa, Ngaati Tahinga), the Waikato Regional Council, and central government.

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

The Significance and Engagement Policy is not triggered by the decision requested by this report, as \$50,000 is a modest sum funded at the Districtwide level, and the decision does not immediately impact much of the District at this stage besides the Port Waikato community, for which participation is voluntary.

That said, the adaptive management planning process will involve 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 <input type="checkbox"/>	Consult <input type="checkbox"/>	Involve <input type="checkbox"/>	Collaborate <input type="checkbox"/>	Empower <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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).	The adaptive management planning process will be co-designed with the Port Waikato community and is likely to involve multiple collaborative workshops with nominated community representatives, iwi and other agencies, as well as opportunities for wider input including more formal consultation at appropriate times.				

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 (provide evidence / description of engagement and response)
	X		Households
X			Business
X			Other (please specify)

There is no Community Board specifically for Port Waikato, but the wider Onewhero-Tuakau Community Board will be invited to be involved in the process. In addition, the Port Waikato Residents and Ratepayers Association is likely to have representatives involved. Discussions have been held with local iwi regarding the draft natural hazards chapter of the Proposed District Plan, and strong iwi involvement is expected to occur through this wider process. A number of households attended the public information session on 5 October and the Proposed District Plan drop-in session on 19 October, and it is expected that residents will have significant involvement in the adaptive management planning process. Other stakeholders likely to be involved include regional and central government.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Port Waikato is facing severe coastal erosion which is likely to worsen. In addition, the community is prone to other natural hazards in the future such as river flooding. Initial investment in an adaptive management planning process is recommended by this report. Such a process is promoted as best practice by central government and has been used elsewhere in New Zealand recently in response to coastal erosion and flooding. It has the potential to deal with multiple potential hazards in an inclusive way that deals with uncertainty by incorporating the best available knowledge as it becomes available, and not unnecessarily locking in irreversible or inefficient decisions. This process could become a model for responding to other natural hazard issues in the District, and it could be an empowering exercise for the Port Waikato community – an important component of its own Local Area Blueprint, and a recipe for resilience in the face of multiple risks and a high level of uncertainty.