

Cyclone Gabrielle Recovery Update April 2023

Cyclone Gabrielle landed in Aotearoa on 13 February 2023, impacting the northern part of our district most severely.

It caused widespread road closures due to slips and fallen trees. The cyclone also damaged homes, property and farmland.

Port Waikato and farmland in north of the Waikato district is the focus of our recovery efforts to support flood and slip-affected residents.

Geotech and building safety assessments resulted in seven homes being given red stickers and 13 yellow in Port Waikato.

Recovery Office set-up

Council has established a Recovery Office to support these impacted communities.

Council's recovery response to the cyclone involves understanding the impacts of this event on the built and natural environment, and to assist in reducing future exposure to hazards and their associated risks.

Roads

The Waikato District Alliance has completed and opened all roads to traffic. However, we are still awaiting design, costings, and timings for more permanent / resilient solutions to roading damage in some areas.

Vehicle and pedestrian access to Sunset Beach has been restored.

We are working alongside Waka Kotahi to secure additional funds to support repairs to reduce impacts on our ratepayers.

Over the next 4-6 months roading crews are working their way around the Waikato district to clear slips, blocked culverts and fallen trees by the sides of roads in this order of priority.

Work is underway to carry out a detailed assessment of the condition of our main roads

This may lead to additional maintenance requirements on some roads. This would therefore require funding from Waka Kotahi.

Stormwater

Council's partner WaterCare has cleared debris from the drains within the Port Waikato township that became obstructed.

To improve the functionality of drains in high rainfall events, the drainage network in Port Waikato will be reshaped to improve water flow.

Further drain clearing is planned to begin late March. Impacted landowners will be contacted by WaterCare.

The weir at Port Waikato reservoir tank will also be reinforced to stand up to further weather events.

We will explore longer-term options around covering some open drains and/or reticulating more of the catchments.

This will be investigated in the context of affordability and long-term sustainability of any options.

Damaged homes

Affected homes in Port Waikato have been assessed to identify if they are safe to live in.

Council has linked in with EQC to understand the claim process to help support affected homeowners and provide advice to owners on insurance and the process for carrying out remedial building work i.e., who to contact, engineers, suitably qualified contractors, designers etc.

After a specific request from Waikato District Council, EQC has passed on messages to the insurance sector to raise the profile of damaged homes in the Waikato district.

The first round of the Mayoral Relief fund award \$55,000 across 22 individuals that were impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle. Applications are still open to support those with unexpected costs that are yet to occur.

The [mayoral fund is available](#) to assist with clean-up/impacts not covered by insurance and EQC.

Council is commissioning a study of the entire hillside behind Port Waikato's Maunsell Road to understand the geology and possible future impacts.

This study is not however adequate for the assessment of individual properties to remove stickers or make properties safe for re-entry.

Business and community support

To ensure we can support our local business and communities to bounce back from the cyclone, we need to understand the impacts to help overcome the social disruptions of this event.

These disruptions relate to businesses, cultural, emotional and physical well-being of individuals and communities.

Community meetings have helped to identify further properties affected by slips and high-level flooding.

Working in partnership with the Ministry for Social Development, we have identified residents suffering from ongoing disruptions and damage to their homes. Council will be offering specific and tailored support to residents who fall within this category.

We continue to be in regular contact with affected property owners to ensure they have what they require from council.

We have contacted over 340 residents and business in the district to understand the impact of the cyclone and what support is required.

Analysis of the data revealed some small economic and social impacts; however, the main concern was around the council infrastructure that was damaged.

[Read more about business recovery support.](#)

What else is being done in the Recovery Office

We are:

- Linking individuals and business with the appropriate support funds, government agencies and support groups when required.
- Continuing to check in on those individuals that have been most impacted by the cyclone.
- Continuing to link in with agencies like MSD, MBIE, MPI and Rural Support Trust. Together we will identify issues that arise and ensure we collectively work together to support individuals, communities and businesses.
- Identify and develop key community response plans that will ensure communities are even better prepared for emergencies in the future.