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MEDIA RELEASE

Major milestone reached – Wairoa flood mitigation secures formal support to proceed to construction

The Wairoa Flood Mitigation project has reached a significant milestone with National Infrastructure Funding and Financing (NIFF) confirming its formal support for the project to proceed, following a steering committee meeting held late last week.

The confirmation comes as land access negotiations near completion, with contractual agreements now in place for the majority of directly impacted properties.

Crown Manager, Lawrence Yule, says the approval, combined with largely completed land access negotiations, represents the breakthrough the community has been waiting for.

"This marks a pivotal moment for this project and for the people of Wairoa. The formal project approval from NIFF confirms we have met the rigorous requirements needed to move forward with construction," Mr Yule says.

"Securing land access has been one of the most challenging aspects of this project, and I want to acknowledge the incredible courage and community spirit shown by the whānau who have made the difficult decision to provide access to their land. Their sacrifice will directly help to protect Wairoa's future for generations to come.

"I also want to acknowledge the Crown's continued support and commitment, and to thank all project partners as we work together to deliver much-needed flood mitigation for the people of Wairoa."

Wairoa Mayor, Craig Little, said this progress is a direct result of the many sacrifices whānau in our community have made to enable this project to go ahead.

"On behalf of our Wairoa community, I sincerely thank everyone who has selflessly made their land available to help ensure our town's future security."

Mayor Little acknowledged the exceptional work of Crown Manager, Lawrence Yule, in achieving this milestone.

"Lawrence and his team have navigated complex negotiations, maintained momentum through challenging times, and kept this project moving forward when our community needed it most.

"For too long, our people have lived with uncertainty and rain anxiety. This decision is the formal confirmation we've been waiting for that construction is within reach. Again, I thank those whānau who have worked with us to make land available. Your contribution will protect hundreds of families and businesses and secure Wairoa's future.

"This is a huge milestone for Wairoa, and we remain appreciative to the current and former governments for the \$70 million contribution, which recognised flood mitigation for our town was long overdue."

Hawke's Bay Regional Council Chair, Sophie Siers, says the milestone demonstrates the strength of collaborative effort between central government, local government, and the people of Wairoa.

"This project exemplifies what can be achieved when we work together with a shared purpose. The progress made over recent months, particularly in securing land access, shows the commitment of everyone involved to delivering this much-needed flood mitigation for the Wairoa community," Chair Siers says.

"We recognise the personal impact this project has had on directly impacted whānau and landowners. Their willingness to work with us, despite the difficulty of the process, demonstrates the deep community commitment to protecting Wairoa's future."

NIFF's formal approval confirms the project has met key requirements around technical design, risk management, procurement planning, and readiness to proceed with construction.

With the preferred contractor Goodman already appointed and detailed design work advancing, the project team, being led by Hawke's Bay Regional Council, is now focused on finalising the remaining technical refinements and securing final approvals to enable construction to commence in the New Year.

Mr Yule says the project team remains committed to maintaining cultural responsiveness as work progresses.

"Cultural values and mātauranga Māori continue to guide our approach. We're grateful for the ongoing engagement from mana whenua, including representatives from Takitimu Marae, Ruataniwha Marae, and Tawhiti a Maru Marae, whose input will ensure we do whatever we can to protect cultural taonga."

Tātau Tātau o Te Wairoa Chair, Pieri Munro, acknowledged all the flood-affected whānau and Māori landowners who have carried the greatest burden through this process.

"The pathway forward has been taumaha for our people, involving significant sacrifice, including the further loss of whenua and, for some whānau, the loss of homes. As a Treaty settlement body, Tātau Tātau recognises that land loss is never taken lightly."

Mr Munro also acknowledged the Crown as funder, Crown Manager Lawrence Yule, Hawke's Bay Regional Council, Mayor Craig Little and Wairoa District Council for working through a complex process, including taking care to identify and respect wāhi tapu and cultural values.

"Kei runga i ngā piki me ngā heke – amidst the peaks and troughs the best outcome possible to give flood-affected homeowners a pathway forward has been achieved. Wairoa town and its people will feel more secure into the future with this level of flood mitigation being delivered."

Mr Munro said Tātau Tātau looks forward to continuing to work alongside the Council and partners on future groyne options to improve flood management at the Wairoa River bar openings.

Once constructed, Option 1C+ will enable 627 properties currently classified as Category 2C – those facing an intolerable risk to life – to move to Category 1, protected from a 1-in-100 year

flood event. This will provide the certainty needed for whānau, businesses, and the wider community to rebuild their lives with confidence.

"We're at a turning point," Mr Yule says. "The technical work is progressing, the funding is secured, consenting is underway, and land access is almost complete. The summer construction season is here, and we're working to ensure we can begin work as soon as all final approvals are in place.

"This has been a long journey, but we are now well positioned, with a clear line of sight and a shared commitment to delivering the flood protection Wairoa desperately needs."

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