

EMBARGOED until Tuesday, 5 November at 6pm

MEDIA RELEASE

Wairoa community kōrero on flood mitigation options underway

The community of Wairoa is one step closer to having much needed and increasingly urgent flood mitigation in place, with public engagement on potential flood mitigation options now underway.

Following the devastating impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle in February 2023, \$70 million of Government funding was ring-fenced to provide community scale flood mitigation for Wairoa, making it the largest flood mitigation project in the Government's North Island Weather Events (NIWE) Flood Resilience Programme and the only project wholly funded by the Crown.

Since then, work has been ongoing to find solutions to help protect the community of Wairoa from future flood events, with the community now being asked for its feedback on two of the most technically viable flood mitigation solutions – Option 1C and 1D.

“In early October, the Tripartite partners – Wairoa District Council, Hawke's Bay Regional Council and Tātau Tātau o te Wairoa Trust – agreed to commence early engagement with mana whenua, including whānau and property owners potentially impacted by Options 1C and 1D,” says Crown Manager, Lawrence Yule, who was appointed by the Government in mid-August.

“This important milestone came off the back of a long and careful process which included the Wairoa Flood Mitigations Scheme Stakeholder Group – a Group established by the Tripartite partners – working with river engineers, technical experts and mana whenua to come up with technically viable flood mitigation solutions to help protect the community of Wairoa,” Yule says.

Throughout this process, there has been a shared commitment to minimising impacts on the people of Wairoa, whenua and cultural taonga, says Hawke's Bay Regional Council Chair, Hinewai Ormsby.

“The unfortunate reality is that every single option that has been considered to date has impacted some individual properties and parcels of both whenua Māori and general title land. We have had to carefully balance the fact that some land and people will be impacted, against the need to find a technically viable flood mitigation solution to help ensure the safety of the Wairoa community.

“Whilst it's important to acknowledge these potential impacts, and for us to do everything we can to ensure people are treated fairly and respectfully, we also can't lose sight of the benefits that flood mitigation will bring to the community of Wairoa.

“Both of the technically viable options being shared with the community will help to protect hundreds of hectares of whenua Māori and general title land and, in time, will enable Category 2C properties in North Clyde to move into Category 1.”

Crown Manager, Lawrence Yule, says early engagement with potentially impacted whānau and property owners has already started, and is being followed by broader community kōrero.

“The Tripartite Partners made the commitment to go out to the community of Wairoa to explain all of the options considered so far, including their benefits and limitations. This includes Options 1C and 1D – two of the most technically viable flood mitigation options which need further consideration and feedback from the community.

“We know the timeframes are tight, with the Government requiring a confirmed preferred flood mitigation option, and a business case based on that option, by 31 March next year, however it is important that this is an open and transparent process, and that the people of Wairoa have a genuine opportunity to share their thoughts and feedback on the options being considered.

Wairoa Mayor, Craig Little, says the project is one of the most significant the town has seen in decades.

“History shows that Wairoa has been impacted by flooding for as far back as records were kept, and yet we have never had any type of flood protection in place.

“Now, through the Government’s \$70m contribution, we have the opportunity to put solutions in place to help protect the community of Wairoa for generations to come. No decisions have been made yet and there is still a lot of work to be done, but we are making progress, and it is pleasing to see that this progress is now occurring at pace.

“We know there will never be a magic silver bullet to stop all flooding, but we absolutely have to do whatever we can to reduce the flood risk and help protect our community.”

For more information on the Wairoa Flood Mitigation Project, including the flood mitigation options being considered, visit: www.wairoafloodproject.co.nz.

ENDS

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Notes to the editor

Both Options 1C and 1D involve a floodway, which temporarily allows excess water to through it when river levels reach a certain height, for example, during very high flood events. In both options, that floodway is enclosed by small stop banks on both sides.

- Option 1C involves a 170m wide and 2m deep floodway, enclosed by small stopbanks averaging 1.2m high.
- Option 1D involves a 250m wide floodway averaging 0.9m deep, enclosed by small stopbanks averaging between 1.5m and 2m high.

Option 1C



Option 1D

