

BULLER DISTRICT COUNCIL & WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Prepared for: Buller District Council Meeting – 31 October 2018
West Coast Regional Council Meeting – 12 November 2018
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Subject: **Westport 2100**

Purpose

To provide a framework in order to map a pathway forward for the Westport community for the benefit of future generations.

Background

The West Coast Regional Council (WCRC) and Buller District Council (BDC) met on 3 October 2018 and workshopped a potential framework to address the natural hazard issues facing the Westport community. There has been a lot happening in this space over the past two years which has resulted in delays, and communication around this has not been as effective as it should have been.

This paper sets out the background as to what has been happening, and presents a framework for continuing this work for Westport, working in closely with the community.

What has been happening?

WCRC commenced work to review a range of potential Buller River protection measures with the Westport community in early 2017. At the end of this process there was no clear indication of a preferred option going forward. This slowed down this work to allow a working group to be established to work through the matters raised during the public debate. The working group has been partly convened with Terms of Reference established, however it has not yet met.

A comprehensive evacuation plan for Westport has been discussed for several years, with some planning undertaken in this space. However, the current river flood forecast modelling available, and the existing infrastructure in place, is insufficient to adequately allow the West Coast Civil Defence & Emergency Management (CDEM) Group confidence in issuing appropriate evacuation directions to the residents of Westport. Investment in the telemetry systems is underway to capture additional data. Further installations are planned to take place over the next 4 years. Once these are in place, it will take approximately five years to undertake the modelling required to have enough data to provide much more accurate warnings. In the meantime, eight of the proposed eleven additional flood and data recorders are providing information for collation and eventual modelling. Additionally, a paper will be going to the WCRC meeting in November to explore options around accelerating the installation and flood modelling programme.

Ex-tropical Cyclone Fehi in February 2018 emphasised the storm surge risk to Westport and surrounding areas when it severely impacted a number of residential properties. Future predictions make it clear that there will be an increase in the frequency and severity of weather events which is likely to include increased rainfall as well as ex-tropical cyclones and the associated storm surges. Recent advice from the Ministry for the Environment indicates that planning should take into account a continual forecasted rise in sea level over the next 100 years¹. The Ministry will continue to provide guidance as new research occurs and predictions around what the West Coast is likely to experience.

Flood modelling that was undertaken to inform the initial work WCRC were doing in regards to potential flood protection options is being redone to show what this will look like if the flooding occurred in conjunction with a Cyclone Fehi event and what it will look like with the slowly increasing rise in sea levels. This work is expected to be completed in December 2018.

¹ The Ministry for the Environment have provided a range of projections for sea level rise based on various scenarios. These range from 0.4m to 1.4m.

http://www.mfe.govt.nz/sites/default/files/media/MFE_Coastal_Fact%20Sheet%207.pdf

Much of the discussion to date around natural hazards has been focussed on the risk of flooding from the Buller and Orowaiti rivers. There has been little consideration in regards to all of the potential natural hazards posing a risk to the Westport community such as coastal erosion, tsunami, or geotechnical risk arising from earthquakes. An Alpine Fault earthquake, or other such localised event, has the potential to damage the current built environment and significantly exacerbate flooding through subsidence and liquefaction. This may be the time to consider other hazards and their potential effects as the above matters are addressed.

Next steps

The focus has changed from simply looking at potential flooding from the river to an all of hazards approach and finding the right way forward for the community. There is a need to take a planned approach to this work. This will set out what has to be done and who will do what. Both Councils believe that recommendations to decision-makers around how to holistically address hazard management should be led by the community. The community working group would be supported by civil defence along with both Councils. The Councils also support membership from the District Health Board and New Zealand Transport Agency to the working group to contribute to this planning work.

Both Councils agree that any action should provide for the following, in this order:

1. The protection of life
2. The protection of assets
3. Enhancing the resilience of the community.

There are short, medium and long term actions that will be identified and required when planning for the future and a wider working group, with a strong community focus, will be central to leading this. While a working group had been partly established by WCRC the membership and structure needs to be revisited to ensure that the representation will achieve the goals sought through this process.

A similar model to the Reefton Airshed Committee is proposed to be established for this work. An application process will take place from mid-November (following the respective Council meetings) to establish the working group. Members from the community will have an opportunity to put their name forward with Councillors from BDC and WCRC selecting the final members. A draft terms of reference for the working group have been attached to this report.

To be successful in this work the working group will need to:

- Be **informed** about the hazards affecting Westport and what this means for the town in the future
- Be **organised**, with a common goal, a planned approach and clear roles and responsibilities
- Take **dynamic action** to proactively reduce exposure and vulnerability to the social, cultural, environmental and economic consequences of these hazards.

Future work streams

Both Councils agree that there are some key work streams to be progressed. These include:

- completion of the Westport response plan;
- completion of the telemetry installation; and
- the protection and enhancement of evacuation routes.

The Westport 2100 Working Group will be central in seeing that this work is prioritised and progressed. The Working Group may potentially provide a staged series of recommendations back to the Councils for implementation as the work progresses in this space. The final suite of recommendations will be presented to the Councils by December 2019.

Recommendations

1. *That the Buller District Council and West Coast Regional Council receive this report;*
2. *That the Buller District Council and West Coast Regional Council adopt the draft Terms of Reference for the Westport 2100 Working Group;*

3. *That the Buller District Council and West Coast Regional Council advertise for applications to the Westport 2100 Working Group; and*
4. *That the Buller District Council and West Coast Regional Council each appoint two representatives to the Westport 2100 Working Group*

Mike Meehan
Chief Executive