



THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

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Feedback on Franz future

Feedback on the future of Franz Josef continues to trickle in with 80 submissions now received.

“It has been great that we have had this level of feedback from the community, particularly with Franz Josef experiencing what may be its busiest tourist season ever,” said Mike Meehan, Chief Executive of the West Coast Regional Council. “We have had really good engagement with the community right from the start of this process.”

The study, detailing three packages of options for the future of Franz Josef, was released for feedback in November 2017. The three packages identified consider how to *avoid nature’s most significant challenges*, *defend against nature’s challenges* or how to *live with nature’s challenges*.

Mr Meehan said that this is the most comprehensive assessment undertaken of the challenges for the township and will inform decision making at a local and national level.

“The feedback received will assist with determining which of the packages, or options within the packages, to take forward and develop into a business case to take to Government to discuss further,” said Mr Meehan. “This work is a huge step forward for Franz Josef.”

Council will start work on collating the feedback received and analysing the information. The Franz Josef Governance Group, consisting of representatives from local and central government, iwi, business, NZ Transport Agency, Department of Conservation and the community, will review this information in the coming months. Key outcomes will be tested with the community to ensure that the package of options to take forward to the business case are those most widely accepted.

“While there is no one solution that will address all of the issues facing Franz Josef, combinations of these options will help to protect the community and the value at stake here,” said Mr Meehan. “I’m looking forward to working with the community and stakeholders to shape the potential options towards a positive future for the township.”

Franz Josef is unique in New Zealand. Situated on the Alpine Fault and next to the Waiho River, the area is subject to significant risk. However, it is these natural features that have made Franz Josef a nationally significant tourist destination. Over 500,000 visitors stay in Franz Josef each year, requiring significant investment (e.g. hotels, restaurants, and visitor activities). This investment needs protection if Franz Josef is to continue its unique role. However, the town has few permanent residents which significantly affects its ability to locally fund natural disaster risk mitigation options.

This work is part of the wider Tai Poutini West Coast Economic Development Action Plan released in July 2017. Future-proofing Franz Josef recognises that current infrastructure improvements, such as raising the bridge over the Waiho River and stopbank repairs, are only temporary measures. The regional council commissioned Tonkin + Taylor and EY to undertake a Natural Hazards Options Assessment and Cost Benefit Analysis to provide an appropriate evidence base to assist decision-making on the ‘best way’ forward for the town.

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