



# THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

**27 September 2017**

## **Franz future options now on the table**

The draft findings of a study detailing options for the future of Franz Josef were discussed at a community meeting in the township last night.

The options identified consider how to *avoid nature's most significant challenges, defend against nature's challenges* or how to *live with nature's challenges*.

Mike Meehan, Chief Executive of the West Coast Regional Council, 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.

"We need to make a collective decision with all of the stakeholders involved, and particularly the Franz community, as to what is the appetite for living with or defending against this natural disaster risk. Once this is established, I am very keen to ensure we continue to engage with central and local government, the community and iwi to find the right way forward for the future."

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.

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.

"We now have a once in a lifetime opportunity to make decisions that would normally be made after an event has occurred", said Mr Meehan. "And 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."

"This work is a huge step forward for Franz Josef. The community is engaged and has the ability to shape the potential options which point towards a positive future for business."

This work is part of the wider Tai Poutini West Coast Economic Development Action Plan released earlier this year. 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.

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.

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