

MEDIA RELEASE

24 July 2023

Next steps outlined for progressing Westport flood protection

Work continues behind the scenes following Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, announcement in May of a \$22.9m package to support initiatives to improve Westport’s flood resilience.

The Westport Flood Resilience Steering Group met on Friday in its role to maintain oversight and synchronisation of the various packages of work that will be delivered by the respective Councils.

Central to the wider flood resilience project are the flood banks around Westport. A technical review of the structural flood protection elements of the proposal was undertaken following the submission of the Business Case. The Regional Council, and now the Steering Group, have approved the appointment of Graeme Campbell and Peter Blackwood to consider the Business Case engineering design and the technical review to progress to an agreed final design solution.

West Coast Regional Council Chair, Peter Haddock, said that the proposal in the Business Case was never going to be the final design.

“These types of projects have several design phases to go through and this next step will answer the questions that are probably on everyone’s mind.”

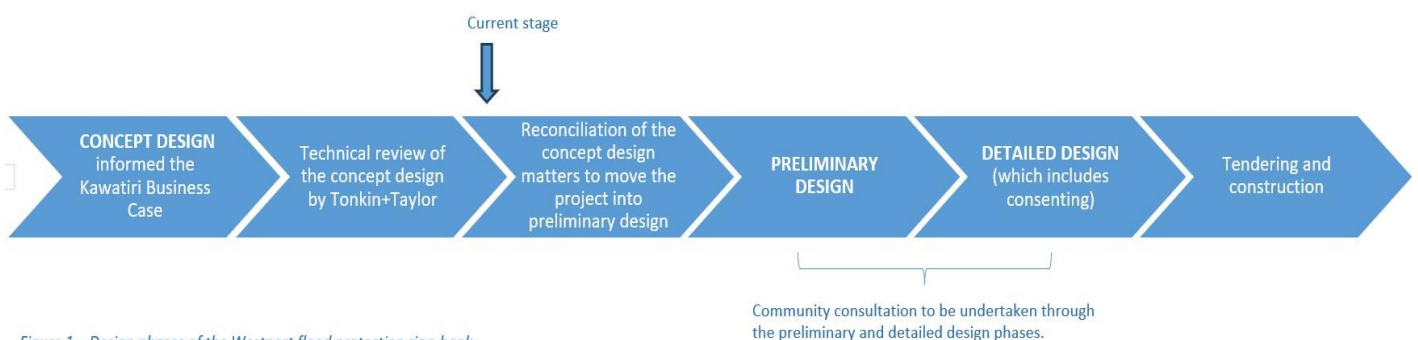


Figure 1 – Design phases of the Westport flood protection ring-bank

Chair Haddock noted that this is a critical component of the overall project.

“Ministers Robertson and McAnulty must be assured of the soundness of the concept design ensuring that any technical issues are addressed and managed in the redesign of the structural flood protection components.

“Both Graeme and Peter have considerable river engineering experience and will be able to assist Council in moving the project onto the preliminary design phase.”

The Steering Group meeting also endorsed four workstreams to be carried out by the West Coast Regional Council. The workstreams, deemed “quick wins”, will provide significant benefits to the community by reducing floodwater inundation. They are:

- Floating Lagoon
- Averys
- Abattoir Drain at Railway Bridge
- McKenna Road

The Floating Lagoon project comprises geotechnical and survey work at this stage, whereas the other three projects will be progressed through to construction. All four quick win projects will be funded by the Regional Council and do not rely on the release of funds from government.

“This is a great first step for the community,” said Buller District Mayor Jamie Cleine. “These are some straightforward engineering solutions to reduce the risks in specific areas around Westport before work on the bigger flood protection project is finished.

Regardless of what is built, these projects will be complementary to the final flood banks.”

ENDS -

Media contact

Peter Haddock | Chair | West Coast Regional Council | 027 247 9148

Jamie Cleine | Mayor | Buller District Council | 027 423 2629

Further information

The Westport Flood Resilience Steering Group has been appointed by Ministers to progress the implementation of the funding agreed in the budget. The Steering Group is independently chaired and comprises key leaders from Buller District Council, the West Coast Regional Council, Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae, The Department of Internal Affairs and the National Emergency Management Agency.

While exact details are still being planned, the funded packages of work that the Steering Group will oversee and co-ordinate over the next two years include:

- \$15.9m for a ringbank to reduce the risk of flooding, this is in addition to the Westport Rating District’s contribution. Further work needs to be undertaken to determine the detailed location and design of the ringbank.
- \$1.5m for the reforestation of the Organs Island area.
- \$1.0m to restore the Regional Council’s emergency funds for immediate works on Buller riverbank.
- \$1.0m to replenish the Regional Council’s contingency fund (which has been exhausted).
- \$0.5m for a development plan for Alma Road and to support the development of low-risk areas.
- \$0.25m for a Feasibility study into strategic land purchase at Alma or other low risk sites.
- \$2.0m for an Adaptation Relief Fund to assist owners in high-risk areas for initiatives such as raising buildings, or to procure moveable flood barriers for example.
- \$0.5m to improve local civil defence capability.
- \$0.25m for a sea level monitor/tide gauge to improve early warning.

The various packages of work will be delivered by the respective Councils through the PARA framework:

- To **Protect** areas in the short term where this is practical and affordable. Protect does not mean eliminating the risk of flooding; it means reducing the risk of flooding while longer term measures can be put in place.
- To **Avoid** development and intensification in high-risk areas, and as quickly as possible.
- To **Relocate** at risk communities in the medium and long term into low-risk areas.
- To **Accommodate** flooding in some areas through measures such as raising floors and temporary moveable flood barriers.