ATTACHMENTS

Extraordinary Council Meeting
Under Separate Cover

Wednesday, 19 March 2025

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4.2 Submission to GWRC re the Waipoua Flood Risk Management Concepts Engagement

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GWRC CONSULTATION: WAIPOUA RIVER FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

Introduction

Masterton District Council (MDC) appreciates the opportunity to make a submission on the Waipoua River Flood Risk Management Concepts engagement. We are pleased to see Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) developing adaptation projects to help future proof the Masterton community.

We thank GWRC for the submission deadline extension to enable us to finalise this submission.

Our Community

Our community of over 29,000 residents are spread across an area of 2,300km^2. As a provincial town, Masterton offers a wealth of opportunities for its residents and is a great place to live, raise a family, and retire.

We have a reasonably vulnerable population: 22 per cent of our residents are pensioners (compared to 16 per cent nationally), and 24 per cent are under 20 years old, leaving just over half of the population at 'working age'. We also have large variances in deprivation: Masterton is considered more deprived than the New Zealand average and is therefore likely to be more vulnerable to economic shock.

We have experienced significant growth over the last decade. Between 2014 and 2023, our population increased by 20.5 per cent. Projections show the population will continue to trend upwards. It is estimated the Masterton population will grow by an average 1.5 per cent per annum until 2054.

Our Environment

We are incredibly proud of the beautiful taonga that is our environment. Having a healthy, functioning environment is vital for everyone. As part of our work programme, we are committed to strategic work on coastal management and climate adaptation, which has synergies with the flood risk management work GWRC is progressing.

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Overall comments

We acknowledge benefits from the four concepts GWRC have presented and would like to see a combination of attributes in the final outcome. We recognise the need to protect the town, community assets, and private property. We also recognise the importance for our community to be able to identify and connect with the river. We encourage an outcome that will result in a fair balance between these benefits for our community.

We understand the solutions presented are conceptual rather than formulated options, and require more comprehensive detailing, analysis, costing, and engineering work. More information is needed to fully assess these concepts, in particular concept four.

Our key priorities for consideration in identifying a final solution are outlined below.

Risk to life

Our primary priority is to minimise the risk to life on private and public property. Concept three includes risk of flooding Mawley Holiday Park, BMX and athletics tracks, and the Colin Pugh Sports Bowl in a large flood event.

We seek further information to better understand the associated risk to life that this concept presents, and what that would mean for the future of these community assets. Understanding how flooding is likely to act, and if there will be plenty of warning in a flood event will help determine the future use of the assets.

Mawley Holiday Park provides an affordable accommodation option near the town centre, Queen Elizabeth Park, and Trust House Recreation Centre for visitors. It is an ideal spot for families. The Colin Pugh Sports Bowl is used by all ages for football, athletics and cycling. If any of the 'at risk' assets need to be abandoned due to intolerable risk to life, this should be clearly communicated with the community, and options to no longer utilise the facility/facilities should be explored as part of GWRC's project cost.

Masterton District Council Community Assets

All four concepts will impact MDC's community assets to some extent. We seek clarification on what this impact looks like. While we understand there is a need to protect the town and private property, the solution should not be at the expense of community assets. The Masterton community have already funded the purchase and maintenance of MDC assets and committed to future investment via the Long-Term Plan.

We encourage GWRC to provide ongoing protection for our assets (to at least the current level) to ensure we can continue to deliver the existing level of service for our community.

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Where MDC assets are impacted through the implementation of this project, GWRC should ensure sufficient funding is allocated to remedy the situation. This cost should not fall on MDC. Some examples of remediation that could be required include:

- Relocating MDC assets. This could include sewer mains impacted by new flood areas or built over by new bunds and stop banks; relocation of Mawley Holiday Park; relocation of reserve areas and limestone trails.
- Replacement of impacted stormwater outlets, pipes and gate valves.
- Methods to minimise the risk to infrastructure and the built environment (including fences) from flood debris and damage resulting from an increased flood risk.

We are pleased to note roading assets are not impacted, and that roading bridges are protected in all concepts. However, in the event of a flood, we would like to better understand the impact debris and slash would have on the Queen Elizabeth Park Swing Bridge, the Whitipoua Swing Bridge, the Colombo Road Bridge, and the State Highway two Opaki Road Bridge.

McJorrow Park is a critical asset for the pride and wellbeing of the community. We are pleased to see the proposed bund will help protect it. However, the proposed bund will impact the future development of sports fields, that in turn could have impacts for our community.

It looks like all concepts will impact on the accessibility of the Villa Street carpark and recreation trails. Any changes to accessibility of community assets should be clearly communicated with both MDC and the community.

Environment

We are pleased to see nature based solutions included in concept four. However, we are concerned about how the environment - particularly the ecology and biodiversity of the river and surrounding areas - will be affected across all concepts.

Our concerns include:

- How will lowering the berm (concept three) impact on Henley Lake wetlands?
- How has the environment been considered with regards to widening the riverbed (concept two)? For example:
    - Consideration for increased levels to toxic algae.
    - Ongoing negative sediment affects for the Waipoua and Ruamahanga Rivers, down to Wairarapa Moana.
    - Increased number of pest plants and animals when the riverbed is dry.
    - Loss of existing vegetation.
    - The emissions cost of removing tonnes of aggregate from the riverbed, transporting, and dumping it.
    - The impact on fish passages.

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An ecological assessment to determine the impact of the final solution will be critical. More information is needed to determine the health outcomes for the river in terms of sediment, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, nutrients and bacteria.

Cost benefit analysis

The cost of impact on MDC assets needs to be addressed. A cost benefit analysis of all concepts should be clearly communicated with both MDC and the community. It is difficult to comprehend the benefits, opportunities and drawbacks of each concept without one.

Insurance impacts

We would like GWRC to provide an assessment of the change in insurability of properties in Masterton that are currently potentially flood affected.

This should be based on firm evidence from insurers regarding their assessment of current flood risk, the cost of insurance cover for that flood risk, and the extent to which that cost will reduce (for residential & commercial properties) after the installation of the measures proposed.

We are also concerned about insurance implications for Council assets that will be exposed to greater risk of damage from flooding within the proposed widened flood path. These assets will likely not be insurable in future and our community will need to be prepared to fund the costs of their reinstatement or acknowledge the loss of them if they are inundated by flood waters and not replaced.

There are other property owners in other parts of the widened flood path (including the New Zealand Motor Caravan Association and Masterton Red Star Rugby Club) whose insurance position will be similarly adversely affected. Specific consultation and communication with these property owners is needed. While there will be significant reduced flood risk for private property owners in Masterton, the extent of that benefit through lower insurance premiums and greater peace of mind, has not been quantified in the information provided to date.

Moving forward

Moving forward, as concepts are progressed, we look forward to:

- Clarification on how private and MDC assets will be impacted, and appropriate engagement with those involved. This could include MDC, private property owners, Wairarapa Deerstalkers, Henley Trust, sports clubs, and the wider community to consider loss or degradation of assets.
- An ecological assessment to determine the impact on the health of the river and its surrounds.

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- A cost benefit analysis to understand the benefits, opportunities and drawbacks of each concept.
- An assessment of the change in insurability of properties that are currently potentially flood affected.
- MDC officers working with the GWRC team on a multi-criteria analysis.

Lastly, we thank GWRC for the important work on this project and look forward to seeing the project through to completion.

[Signature required – Gary Caffell on behalf of Masterton District Council]

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