

Mataikona

SEPTEMBER 2026



Foreword

This document has been prepared for the Future of Mataikona Road Working Group by Masterton District Council. It aims to outline Council's concerns and comprehension of the problem, and is intended to build a shared understanding of the current situation so we can move forward together.

Introduction

Mataikona is a special part of the Masterton District for so many people; the community that call it home, mana whenua who whakapapa there, generations of holidaymakers, sightseers, day trippers, recreation users, and kai gatherers. It's unique rock formations and rugged coastline make it a distinctive part of the country.

We know how important access to Mataikona is to enable these communities to continue to connect with their homes and whenua, and to enable the range of activities Mataikona is known for to continue.

The road has is being affected by the unique and ever-changing coastal environment, and by severe weather events that are becoming more frequent, presenting a growing challenge. Given that, Council has been focussed on exploring options to maintain access to Mataikona for our community.

- Over the last six years, millions of dollars have been spent on maintenance and on recovery works to the road following weather events.
- In 2023 we worked with the community and engineers to develop a business case¹ for government funding to improve the resilience of the road. This application identified the need for investment of over \$30 million, and this was not successful.
- Council has lobbied the government for further support, meeting with the Minister for Local Government and Climate Change at Parliament in 2025. The Minister acknowledged the challenge and agreed for senior officials to visit the coast, however central government's position does not extend to funding at this time.
- In December 2025 we took senior officials from the Ministry for Environment and Department of Internal Affairs on a tour of the area. They have asked to be kept informed of progress.
- In February 2026 we engaged Professor Bruce Glavovic to support Council to work with the community to explore options going forward.
- In April 2026 council officers and Bruce Glavovic met with the Mataikona Roding Resilience community group to discuss the plan going forward, and the progress made so far.

¹ <https://www.mstn.govt.nz/council/projects/mataikona-road>, *Mataikona Single Stage Business Case* June 2023

- We have now established a Working group and a Governance group to work together to explore long-term options.

It is critical that everyone involved – particularly the Mataikona community, mana whenua/iwi, and Council - understand the nature of the issue. Below is a summary of what we know so far. A full breakdown of the problem is outlined in the Single Stage Business Case² referred to above.

The Challenge

The Coastal Environment

The relentless nature of the coastal environment³ and the geology of the area makes Mataikona Road highly susceptible to slips, dropouts, and erosion, all of which are increasing its vulnerability. The increasing frequency and severity of weather events, sea level rise and vertical land movement⁴ projections compound these issues.

Mataikona Road and the surrounding area

The sea and storm events are undermining the structural integrity of the road, creating a number of points where there could be significant failure. If multiple failures were to occur, there may be properties that become isolated and cannot be accessed.

In some places, the road is vulnerable to erosion, dropouts,⁵ sand traps and slips from above. In other places, large trees on the coastal cliff below the road also present a risk, as their age and weight mean they are pulling on the cliffside, exacerbating the dropout risk.

Attempts to stabilise the road using ‘rip rap’ - large rocks placed along the coastline to protect it from erosion – are starting to fail in some places and are clearly not a permanent solution. Shifting the road inland has limitations in terms of costs and funding, space and longevity.

While the road has been a focus point, the challenge extends beyond the road. The surrounding area is also being impacted by flooding and land slip events, and inland access routes to Mataikona face additional challenges during significant weather events. Currently, marine access is challenging given the geology of the coastline.

Pack Spur Road as an alternative access option

In the event of a Mataikona Road fail, Pack Spur Road has been discussed as an alternative option for those located north of the failure site but this could still result in parts of the community being isolated. Regardless, Pack Spur Road has its own limits, including:

² <https://www.mstn.govt.nz/council/projects/mataikona-road>, *Mataikona Single Stage Business Case June 2023, part A, section three.*

³ Coastlines are harsh by nature – the force generated by waves, corrosiveness of salt, the constant movement of sand, and the harsh exposure to the elements are no match long term for a man made structure.

⁴ Effectively, the coastline is dropping as one tectonic plate overrides the other. NZ Sea Rise Project gives a detailed map and projected levels of sea level rise: <https://searise.nz/>

⁵ A dropout is an under-slip, where the supporting ground beneath the road drops away.

- Seasonal weather can make it impassable at times, and suitable only for four-wheel drive and/or high wheel clearance vehicles
- There is a section of (approximately) 200m of exposed clay that is problematic in weather events: the gradient is very steep, the top layer of material can be washed out making it slippery and boggy, and the drainage around it is challenging
- part of the route travels over private land
- requires crossing two fords⁶
- dropout risk due to the severity of the steep below-road cliff, and heavy aging trees planted on the below-road cliff
- prone to flooding/scour from nearby creeks
- failure risk of the hills above
- forestry slash debris on cliffsides above the road
- the grade of the road at the top section can be difficult to maintain with some machinery, and presents challenges for heavy vehicles
- drainage issues.

Sea Level rise projections

By the end of the century, the Mataikona coastline is projected to have up to 1.24m of sea level rise, caused by melting ice, warming oceans and sinking coastlines.⁷ This means that not only will there be significantly different tide lines, but increased sea levels can increase the consequences of coastal storms. Sea level rise amplifies weather events by providing a higher base level for storm surges and waves effects, inundation and erosion leading to more frequent, extensive, damage.

To be clear, a significant road failure could occur at any time as a result of a severe storm, erosion, slip or dropout. While we have referred to the end of the century for sea level rise, imminent action is required.

Put simply, parts of the road in its current state are likely unsustainable given the level of sea level rise projected.

Civil Defence Emergency risk

Nationwide, we are experiencing more frequent and more severe weather events, which presents an elevated risk profile for civil defence response. There is significant risk that parts of the Mataikona community will be cut off and depending on the scale of the event, communities may be left to fend for themselves for at least 7-10 days.

Secondly, during or after an event, the ability for emergency services and relevant specialists (for example, Geotech Engineers) to access the area for the safety of the community is a serious concern.

⁶ A ford is a shallow body of water that crosses a road. The level of water varies with weather conditions.

⁷ Source: <https://searise.nz>. Data from sites 2373 – 2379, between Whakataki and Mataikona Rivers. SSP2-4.5 including vertical land movement (medium confidence), p50. Measured at year 2100.

What has happened so far

Single Stage Business Case

The Single Stage Business Case⁸ to improve road resilience was completed in 2023. It was required to allow Council to apply for government funding and included a range of options. After analysis of the options, the three ranked the highest each had an estimated cost of between \$30-\$270 million.⁹ To give context, Council's annual rates revenue was set at \$32 million. In other words, even if Council spent all the rates we collected in a year from across the whole district, we couldn't afford 'the fix' identified in the business case.

A hybrid option that combined the most cost-effective solutions from the business case was costed at \$37.2 million.¹⁰ Funding provision for the hybrid option was included in Council's 2024-34 Long Term Plan, spread over ten years and subject to NZTA funding. However, this was ultimately not supported by NZTA, as their peer review noted the hybrid solution had a lifespan of around only 10 years.

Government position

In 2025, Council approached the government for help outlining the challenge.

The government signalled they are moving towards a 'user pays' approach, while subsequently acknowledging that national adaptation policy and legislation remain under development and approaches may change. However, at the current time, funding that was sought from NZTA for the longer term Mataikona Rd programme was not secured, and no further funding for that programme is presently committed.

Long term, the government have announced their intention to '*move towards an end state where the Crown no longer distorts risk signals and blunts incentives to manage risk by providing financial assistance where homeowners suffer significant losses after major events (especially in the form of residential property buyouts).*'¹¹

Road maintenance and repair

Council have continued to maintain and repair the road. This includes re-sheeting, repairing and reshaping scoured shoulders, clearing event debris and slips, fatigue cracking, repairing road dropouts, sealing potholes, dealing with depressions and deformations, edge breaks, culvert clearing and repairing and replacements, grading, sand removal, installing retaining

⁸ <https://www.mstn.govt.nz/council/projects/mataikona-road>

⁹ Single Stage Business Case, page 5.

¹⁰ With Local Government Cost Index (LGCI) increases (the equivalent of inflation for Councils), these costs will have increased substantially.

¹¹ Source: Proactive release of Establishing a National Adaptation Framework Cabinet Paper <https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/Establishing-a-National-Adaptation-Framework-Proactive-Release.pdf> It should be noted that this position is still being worked out at the government consider climate adaptation legislation and policy. Successive governments have expressed different views and funding models, so it is unclear as to what will be legislated. Until this happens, local government, mana whenua and communities need to tackle the challenge without coherent policy direction from the government.

walls, dealing with land slips and floods, aggregate loss, installing gabion baskets, dealing with fallen trees on the road and renewing chip seal.

The last of the Crown post-Cyclone Gabrielle Resilience Funding that has been helping to fund these works will have been spent by June 2027.

Storm events in June and early July 2026 have caused further damage, estimated at \$1.46m. The cost of funding this will be shared with NZTA Waka Kotahi.

Costs involved¹²

The costs of repairing and maintaining roads in the Masterton district is shared between Council and the government. Council funds its share through rates that are collected from property owners across the district. Rates funds are allocated to various budgets, such as the roading budget. The funds within the roading budget are then allocated across the roading network, noting the Council roading network consists of over 814km of both sealed and unsealed roads that we need to maintain. Funding for Mataikona Road comes from the overall pool of rates collected for roading.

Over the six years from **2020/21 to 2025/26**:

- Council has collected \$1.67 million in rates from 157¹³ Mataikona properties. Of this, \$834,774 was roading rates.
- Council has invested \$1.8 million in Mataikona Road, and the government has invested \$4.2 million.
- The total spend on Mataikona Road over this six year period was \$6.04 million.

In addition, a separate additional tranche of Crown Resilience Funding was secured to be spent over two years. \$3 million of Crown Resilience Funding is scheduled to be spent between July 2025 – June 2027, split between Council and the government.

This means by June 2027, **\$9.04 million** would have been invested into Mataikona Road since July 2020.

The table below provides a breakdown:

When	What:	MDC funding share	Central Gov. share	Total spend
2020/21 – 2025/26	Emergency response, recovery and general maintenance (spent)	\$1,805,000	\$4,237,400	\$6,042,400
2025/26 – 2026/27	Additional Resilience expenditure (spent and scheduled)	\$660,000	\$2,340,000	\$3,000,000
Total spend 2020/21 – 2026/27:		\$2,465,000	\$6,577,400	\$9,042,400

¹² These figures do not include the estimated \$1.46m of works that is required after the June/July 2026 weather events. At time of writing they had not yet been through the approval process.

¹³ 157 properties on Mataikona Road, Sandy Bay Drive, and 49 properties at the coastal end of Pack Spur Road.

To give further context:

- The average roading maintenance cost for the Masterton unsealed network (per km): approximately \$14,000 pa.
- The average Mataikona Road maintenance cost over the last 6 years (per km): more than \$60,000 pa.

Recent levels of Council investment in Mataikona Road maintenance and repair are significantly higher when compared to other roads in the district, and relative to rates contributions. Ongoing maintenance requirements across the whole district, potential local government amalgamation and proposed rates capping considerations may impact future funding decisions. It is possible that future Councils may not be able to sustain this level of investment on Mataikona Road without some additional contribution from Mataikona ratepayers to recognise the significant investment required to maintain the level of service.

Where to from here

Given the nature of the problem, there is no clear affordable, long term sustainable solution for resilient road access to Mataikona in its current form. Further central government funding options have been explored and to date have not been successful. We need to work together to come up with a plan for Mataikona access moving forward.

We have established the Working Group, with representatives from the Mataikona community, mana whenua/iwi, Masterton District Council and the Greater Wellington Regional Council to develop an agreed approach for resilient access to Mataikona. Each Working Group member has been tasked to bring the perspectives and interests of the community, mana whenua, organisation or agency that they are there to represent. As the group progresses, there will be community meetings to present progress made, ask for feedback, and to help shape the thinking and plan preparation.

We have also established a Governance Group to provide strategic direction and secure organisational buy-in and support for the agreed plan. The governance group has senior representatives from Council and Iwi.

We are estimating that the project will take up to two years. Together, we will develop an agreed pathway for the future to Mataikona and this valued coastline.



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