

3.1 WHANGAMATĀ FLOOD MODELLING COMMUNICATION PLAN



TO:	Thames-Coromandel District Council
FROM:	Brett Houston, Water Services Manager
REPORT DATE:	18/07/2024
MEETING DATE:	06/08/2024
RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:	Receive (information only)

1 PURPOSE | TE TAKE MŌ TE PŪRONGO

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the details and implementation of the Communication Plan for the release of the stormwater flood levels of properties in Whangamatā.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA

This report informs Council of the details and implementation of the Communication Plan for the release of the stormwater flood levels of properties in Whangamatā.

This Communication Plan has been developed by staff to cover the following areas:

1. Development and deployment of Flood Model on the TCDC Hazards Page
2. Development and issue of Letters to Ratepayers detailing flooding on their property
3. Development of a Project Information Pack for Ratepayers including FAQs – issue at TCDC Offices or Drop-In sessions
4. Web page, radio, media press release at start of Communication Plan implementation
5. Run multiple Drop-in Sessions for Ratepayers to answer related questions
6. Development and issue of information for Customer Services to be able to answer general questions
7. Development of general flooding statements that are able to be entered onto LIM property reports
8. Briefings for TCDC Staff, Community Board Members and Councillors

This report follows Workshops held with Council in Oct-23 and May-24 to review

- Details of the Flood Model
- How other Councils had released this information
- Discussion with Council Insurers re the implication of the flood model information

Council has never undertaken this type of exercise before and therefore some tailoring to our approach may be needed along the way. It is very important that Council takes note of this.

Background

Whangamatā has experienced significant stormwater flooding from weather events over the last 20 years, including during the severe storms in January and February 2023.

In 2022 Council began the multi-year Whangamatā Stormwater Improvements project with the aim of expanding the capacity of infrastructure so that it can handle increased amounts of stormwater generated by weather events.

A crucial element of the project has been to model flooding in Whangamatā in order to guide decision making on new developments, to gauge where infrastructure investments are needed to mitigate flooding risk for existing properties and to inform property owners of the potential risk.

The detailed hydrological and hydraulic model of the Whangamatā Catchment was undertaken with two primary objectives:

1. To evaluate the current performance of the existing stormwater infrastructure within the catchment, including assessing the frequency and extent of inundation.
2. To provide a tool for modeling and comparing the potential effects of different stormwater improvement options.

An integral aspect of the model has been the development of Floodplain Mapping, dividing the township into 16 grid sections to overlay flood inundation data. This mapping highlights the susceptibility of many properties to flooding under different recurrence intervals.

These flood maps will be soon available on our Council's website as part of the Smart Maps suite of digital maps. This will be included under 'Hazards' for any property in Whangamatā. Waikato Regional Council already has information displayed on their website re the hazards from Coastal inundation and River Flooding but does not include hazards associated with Stormwater flooding.

The maps model probable flooding for 1-in-10 and 1-in-100 year flood events given the current stormwater infrastructure. The maps don't foretell the future, they offer a probable guide to areas that will likely be flooded to some extent. There is a standard disclaimer on this webpage advising viewers.

Longer-term residents and property owners will likely already be familiar with areas where flooding can occur. The infrastructure budgeted and approved in the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan (LTP) is meant to mitigate this flooding risk, and so over time the flood modelling maps will be updated to reflect the changed risk level.

Staff have identified that the communication plan implemented by Tauranga City council was a success and this method has been used as the basis for the TCDC Communication Plan. This model included Letters to Residents, Media communications, Drop-in sessions, follow questions and responses, Property File changes, support for residents without webpage access and a detailed Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

Our Council's Land Information Memoranda (property file) for Whangamatā properties will be updated with the new modelling information. If Residents have questions about how the flood modelling information could affect their property's valuation and / or insurance, then they will need to contact a property valuation and / or insurance expert. Council is unable to advise Residents on insurance and / or valuations.

Under the Stormwater Improvement Project \$9.171 million has been approved in the Long Term Plan 2024-34 for stormwater improvement work over the next six years. The hydrological modelling the stormwater modelling maps contain is essential to set the priorities for this work. The project team's approach has been to divide Whangamatā into 11 catchments to develop options for each of these areas based on the existing stormwater pipe network. Work has already begun at Williamson Park to reduce stormwater flooding risk. The 1st Stage of this work has just been completed.

A community engagement team was formed in April 2023 following a meeting between Whangamatā Community Board, Whangamatā Ratepayers Association and TCDC Staff to gain community input into the Whangamatā Stormwater Improvement project. This engagement team includes representatives of the Whangamatā Ratepayers Association, two Community members who are civil contractors, a member of the Whangamatā Community Board, a Councillor and our Council's Water Services Manager.

Council contacted several other Councils to review how they developed and deployed a Flooding Mapping Communication Plan. It was found that the communication plan implemented by Tauranga City Council (TCC) was a good model for our Council to successfully deploy flooding information to our communities. The Whangamatā Flood Model Communications Plan has been based around this TCC model. The Communications Plan is detailed below.

The Communication Plan will utilise various channels to communicate with the Community:

- Paid channels: Budget dependent – newspaper, radio, digital.
- Media engagement with journalists – encourage positive coverage.
- Social media: Council's profiles.
- Owned channels:
 1. News releases on website
 2. Email newsletters at key stages.
 3. Project landing page on website that links to stormwater modelling maps on Hazards webpage.
- Printed material: brochures, flyers, posters – budget dependent (for design, can be printed in-house)
- Public drop-in sessions

Council has never undertaken this type of exercise before and therefore some tailoring to our approach may be needed along the way. It is very important that Council takes note of this.

Financial Considerations

There are no applicable financial considerations. However there are major risks to the Council due to the release of the flood model information.

The two main risks associated with the Flood Inundation Mapping are as follows and the impacts have been assessed as 'Major':

1. Council Reputation – Adverse comments on local media, coverage in national media (two to three days) and public disquiet over majority of district e.g., Major issue affecting ratepayers.
2. Cultural & Community impact – Widespread significant community concerns including reversible or irreversible damage & disruption to the community.

The likelihood of both risks occurring has been assessed as 'Almost Certain' i.e., 90% chance within 12 months or 18 out of 20 years.

Overall assessment of both risks considering both 'impact' and 'likelihood' bring each risk to 'Critical' risk levels. For all critical risks, action must be taken to reduce the level of risk to acceptable risk tolerance levels being 'Moderate or Low'. The planned actions and approach outlined in this paper have been developed to reduce the level of risk to acceptable tolerance levels.

Other peripheral risks and impacts include:

- Poor communication, engagement, and the management of community expectations
- Financial and Insurance impacts for property owners
- Impact on saleability of affected properties
- Potential legal implications

The insurance perspective has been applied to the Flood Inundation Mapping exercise and from an insurer's perspective the following important messages for Council have been consolidated into our thinking about the planned actions we take and in our approach:

1. Insurers expect Council to act as 'prudent uninsured', as Council owes a duty of care to the community.
2. Insurers could view things dimly if available information is not acted upon.
3. By acting on the information we now have, Council is acting in a reasonable manner.
4. Council needs to know and consider its statutory obligations.

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2. Insurers could view things dimly if available information is not acted upon.
3. By acting on the information we now have, Council is acting in a reasonable and responsible manner.
4. Council needs to be aware of its statutory obligations.

Significance and Engagement

The release of this information has large significance with:

- The potential to impact on property values and inclusion of the information onto the associated Land Information Memorandum (property files).
- It will affect a large portion of the Whangamatā community.
- It will likely impact on present and future interests of the community.
- The community interest is high.
- The likely consequences are controversial.
- The community views on flooding are already known.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS | TE WHAIKUPU

That the Thames-Coromandel District Council:

1. Receives the 'Whangamatā Flood Modelling Communication Plan' report dated 18 July 2024.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Attachment A - Council Report Whangamata Stormwater Flood Modelling Communication Plan- 6Aug24

Whangamatā Flood Modelling Communication Plan

Communication Plan

- a) Development and deployment of Flood Model on the TCDC Hazards Page
- b) Development and issue of Letters to Ratepayers detailing flooding on their property
- c) Development of a Project Information Pack for Ratepayers including FAQs – issue at TCDC Offices or Drop-In sessions
- d) Web page, radio, media press release at start of Communication Plan implementation
- e) Run multiple Drop-in Sessions for Ratepayers to answer related questions
- f) Development and issue of information for Customer Services to be able to answer general questions
- g) Development of general flooding statements that are able to entered onto LIM property reports
- h) Briefings for TCDC Staff, Community Board Members and Councilors

Implementation Plan

Date	Activity/Topic	Channel	Cost	Status
12 Apr 24	General project update	Council newsletter	-	Done
19 Apr 24	General project update	Council newsletter , Whangamatā News	-	Done
May/June 24	Project webpage: Basic info and timeline (info made public so far) Tcdc.govt.nz/whangamatastormwater (not live as of 2 May) Host Q&As, modelling when complete (link to Smart Maps) Form for people to sign up for updates	Council website, send update to internal staff, incl. customer services.	-	
Jun/Jul 24	Video explaining project. Show improvements, modelling, benefits and timeline in a concise and accessible way	Web channels, targeted social media advertising, posters	TBC (internal or external produced)	
Jun/Jul 24	Letters/emails sent to local ratepayers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project info/overview • FAQ sheet • Advertise upcoming drop-in sessions, webinar, project webpage 	Letters/email	TBC	
Jun/Jul 24	Press release published on website. Publish as feature story in Whangamatā News.	Council webpage/local newsletter databases.	-	
Jul	Open days: General information, chance to ask questions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise through key channels above, radio, invites sent to local groups. 	Advertised through newsletter to Whangamatā ratepayers, ad in paper, targeted social media advertising, radio	TBC	
Jul	Online Q&A/webinar for those unable to attend in-person drop-in sessions. Public able to submit questions	Youtube/social media/newsletter		

The Communication channels that are planned to be used are:

- Paid channels: Budget dependent – newspaper, radio, digital.
- Media engagement with journalists – encourage positive coverage.
- Social media: Council's profiles.
- Owned channels:
 - News releases on website
 - Email newsletters at key stages.
 - Project landing page on website that links to stormwater modelling maps on Smart Maps.
- Printed material: brochures, flyers, posters – budget dependent (for design, can be printed in-house)
- Public drop-in sessions
- Potential video to explain the project, posted on TCDC website and social media

Media schedule:

- Whangamatā News (pre-booked TCDC ads): 31 May, 14 June, July TBC
- Elected members' radio slots: These are weekly on CFM, Nga Iwi FM and More FM and can occasionally be used for project updates.