

1 August 2024

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-28591

By email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Request for information 2024-152

I refer to your request for information dated 11 July 2024 which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 11 July 2024. You have requested the following:

"I am writing to formally request information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA) concerning the flood risks and mitigation strategies in place for the Tawa community, particularly in light of the planned housing developments in Stebbings Valley and upstream areas from Tawa and Porirua.

In July 2021, the Porirua Stream at Tawa experienced a significant peak flow event, with rainfall peaking around 1600 hrs on 17 July and stream flow reaching a critical point at approximately 15:55, measured at 77.692100 m³/sec. This event, observed as coming dangerously close to overtopping the banks, coupled with previous flooding in the Tawa business area and subsequent bank erosion, highlighted substantial vulnerabilities in our flood management infrastructure

Similarly, the recent flooding in Wairoa in June 2024 serves as a stark reminder of the importance of proactive flood management. On 26 June 2024, heavy rainfall led to severe flooding, impacting over 500 properties and resulting in a state of local emergency. Criticism regarding the management of river bar conditions during this event reinforces the need for continuous improvements in flood mitigation efforts. Specifically, the Hawke's Bay Regional Council faced criticism for not opening the river bar sooner, which could have reduced the severity of the flooding. The council admitted that earlier action could have mitigated the impact, emphasising the need for better preparedness and quicker response times in future incidents.

Request for Information

Given the ongoing risks to the Tawa community due to extreme weather events and the planned future housing developments, I request detailed information on the following:

1. *Enhanced Flood Monitoring and Warning Systems:
What improvements have been made to the real-time monitoring and early warning systems for flood risks in the Tawa region since the July 2021 event?*
2. *Infrastructure Upgrades:
What upgrades have been made to stormwater systems and drainage infrastructure to handle higher volumes of runoff during heavy rainfall events in Tawa? How effective have these upgrades been in reducing flood risks?*
3. *Impact of Future Housing Developments:
What flood mitigation strategies are being employed to address the potential increase in runoff from the planned housing developments in Stebbings Valley and upstream from Tawa and Porirua? How is the council ensuring that these developments do not exacerbate flood risks for the Tawa community?*
4. *Long-term Flood Management Strategies:
What long-term strategies are in place to manage and mitigate flood risks in the Tawa region, particularly in light of the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events?*

Purpose of Request

This information is sought to understand the measures being taken by the Greater Wellington Regional Council to protect the Tawa community from the devastating impacts of flooding and to ensure that effective measures are in place to mitigate future risks, especially considering the anticipated population growth and housing developments.

I request that the information be provided in an electronic format and look forward to your response within the statutory timeframe. If any part of this request is unclear or requires further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]

Greater Wellington's response follows:

We have transferred Part 2 'Infrastructure Upgrades' to Wellington Water Ltd (WWL) and Part 3 'Impact of Future Housing Developments' to Wellington City Council (WCC) on 15 July 2024 which we advised you of on that date.

1. Enhanced Flood Monitoring and Warning Systems – what improvements have been made to the real-time monitoring and early warning systems for flood risks in the Tawa region since July 2021 event?

Greater Wellington has been progressing a regional programme of improvements to warning and response. This programme is looking at capability across the Region and incorporates the following;

- **Flood Response** – In 2022 Greater Wellington adopted new flood response procedures covering all catchments managed by Greater Wellington. These procedures were developed collaboratively with the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO) and are regularly reviewed and updated. To support the new procedures, we implemented a comprehensive training and exercise programme for flood duty officers in flood warning and response which runs annually

Following the July 2021 event we have reviewed the current procedures for the Porirua Stream with Civil Defence and added an additional trigger level to ensure flooding of the Kenepuru Reserve is proactively captured.

We are currently reviewing and updating the emergency action plans for the flood detention dams in the Catchment.

- **Flood Monitoring Network Improvements** – In 2021 we commenced a programme to upgrade the flood monitoring network across the region. In 2023, following Cyclone Gabrielle we developed a new set of ‘Resilience Standards’ for the network covering key aspects such as power, infrastructure, data, and communication. We are now developing a long-term improvements programme to bring our network up to this standard. This will include key flood warning sites on the Porirua Stream.
- **Flood Forecasting** – Since 2020 we have been progressing a programme to improve our flood forecasting capability. This has entailed global system reviews and market sounding, optioneering and now system piloting. Once operational this system will have flood forecast models in place for all catchments managed by Greater Wellington’s Flood Incident Management Team including the Porirua Stream.

4. Long-term Flood Management Strategies – what long-term strategies are in place to manage and mitigate flood risks in the Tawa region, particularly in light of the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events.

The “scheme” to manage flood risk in the Porirua stream was developed in the 1980 s following severe flooding in 1976. It was agreed to provide:

- 50 year level of service from flooding of houses from the Porirua Stream down to Linden park
- 100 year level of service to property from Linden park to the mouth of the stream.

For clarification, the flooding considered by Greater Wellington is in relation to the Porirua Stream and not for the stormwater effects as it flows into the Porirua Stream. This is a matter for Wellington City Council (WCC) and why your questions 2 and 3 were referred to WWL and WCC, respectively.

The core elements of the scheme that provide the above levels of service comprise:

- *Seton Nossiter Detention Dam*
- *Stebbings Detention Dam*
- *Takapu Rd detention area*
- *Channel works, floodwalls, and stopbanks from Linden park to the mouth*
- *Maintaining a clear channel from Glenside to Linden Park*

Further works involving widening the stream and concrete lining sections above Linden Park have not yet been done and given the passage of time and a change of community values since that scheme was developed, are unlikely to be completed in the original form proposed without further review involving engagement with the community.

Greater Wellington has updated its flood modelling over the years, including allowing for the more extreme weather events. This information is used by Greater Wellington to provide flood hazard advice and for emergency planning. The information is also used to inform updates to Wellington and Porirua City Councils District Plans.

We are currently proposing the next update of the flood hazard information in the 2025/26 financial year. If the new modelling work proposed for 2025/26 shows a significant increase in flood risk to property then a review of the scheme will be triggered.

The table below shows the LTP work programme for the Porirua Stream.

2025-2026	2026-2027	2028-2034	2028-2034
Commence Porirua Stream Flood Hazard Modelling	Complete Porirua Stream Flood Hazard Modelling	Major dams maintenance	Major dams maintenance
Submit and implement Dam Safety Assurance Programme (DSAP)	Implementation of DSAP	Porirua Floodplain Management Plan ((FMP) or similar) implementation commenced	Porirua Stream FMP implementation completed

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where appropriate. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Lian Butcher

Kaiwhakahaere Matua Taiao | Group Manager Environment