

1 November 2023

Environment Committee
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Canterbury Mayoral Forum Submission to the Environment Committee on the Inquiry into climate adaptation

1. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum thanks the Environment Committee for the opportunity to provide a submission on its inquiry into climate adaptation.

Background and context

2. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum comprises the mayors of the ten territorial authorities in Canterbury and the Chair of the Canterbury Regional Council (Environment Canterbury), supported by our chief executives. The purpose of the Forum is to promote collaboration across the region and increase the effectiveness of local government in meeting the needs of Canterbury's communities.
3. The eleven local authorities are: Kaikōura, Hurunui, Waimakariri, Selwyn, Ashburton, Timaru, Mackenzie, Waimate and Waitaki District Councils, the Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury.
4. In this submission, the Canterbury Mayoral Forum provides comments where there is regional agreement on the key issues as we see them for local government and our communities in adapting to climate change. We are aware that some Canterbury councils are making more detailed individual submissions and we ask that these are carefully reviewed by the Committee. As the Committee will be aware, the Christchurch City Council and the Waimakariri District Council have their own recent experience in retreat and relocation, following the Canterbury earthquakes. There are valuable lessons to be learned from these councils on retreat, relocation, use of land after retreat, and post-retreat roles and responsibilities. The Christchurch City Council has made an individual submission and we ask the Committee to consider their key points closely.

Mayors standing together for Canterbury.

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Kaikōura District Council - Mackenzie District Council - Selwyn District Council - Timaru District Council
Waimakariri District Council - Waimate District Council - Waitaki District Council

General comments

5. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum recognises climate change as the biggest challenge of our time. Canterbury has 800 km of coastline and 11,620 km² of coastal marine area. The region covers a diverse range of land and seascapes and many coastal settlements, including Kaikōura, Timaru and New Zealand's second most populous urban area, Greater Christchurch. This, along with the region having more than 78,000 km of rivers and streams, means that we are only too aware of the risks climate change brings to our region and its communities.
6. In our Plan for Canterbury 2023-25, we highlighted climate change mitigation and adaptation as one of our three priority areas, alongside sustainable management of our environment and shared prosperity¹. As a key priority area, the Mayoral Forum is committed to reducing our carbon footprint, working together on climate action planning, building community resilience, and making our infrastructure as strong as it can be.
7. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum welcomes the Committee's inquiry into climate adaptation. We have been keen to see progress on climate adaptation legislation for some time, and hope that the outcomes of this inquiry will help form the basis of a robust and enduring national approach to adaptation and particularly retreat/relocation.
8. In this submission, we have focused our key points on the range of issues outlined in the report of the Expert Working Group on Managed Retreat and the key themes from the Ministry for the Environment's options and issues paper that was developed to support the inquiry, in keeping with the inquiry's terms of reference.

Canterbury climate change collaboration experiences

9. For context, throughout this submission we refer to our region's collaborative approach to climate change, with examples in regard to risk assessments and adaptation planning.
10. The staff-level Canterbury Climate Change Working Group is the driving force behind this. With representation from each council, the working group meets regularly and has an ambitious work programme. The Mayoral Forum lends political support to the group, giving it the mandate and authority it needs to progress its initiatives. To support development of the Canterbury Climate Partnership Plan (discussed in the local adaptation planning sector of this submission), the Forum has set up a governance group of elected members from across the region, which provides advice on the project and acts as a sounding board for the Working Group. In past terms, the Forum has also had a Climate Change Steering Group, made up of a subgroup of its members, to oversee climate change matters more generally.
11. These groups have supported Canterbury to collaborate successfully on climate change, now and into the future. This has all been enabled through the Mayoral Forum on the

¹ <https://www.canterburymayors.org.nz/forums/plan-for-canterbury-2023-2025/>

basis of political willingness; there is no legislated requirement for it, yet it has been a success anyway. The Committee may wish to consider whether the regional collaborative model Canterbury works under is something other regions could pick up to support adaptation planning, or one that could form the basis of a more standardised approach the rest of the country could adopt and adapt for their own purposes.

Te Tiriti

12. As is well-canvassed in the Ministry's options and issues paper, and the Expert Working Group's report, Māori will be disproportionately impacted by climate change. Many marae, whenua Māori and other sites of cultural significance to Māori are vulnerable to sea-level rise and/or severe weather impacts as they are located close to rivers, lakes or near the coast.
13. We concur with the options and issues paper that iwi, hapū and Māori communities face a number of barriers to climate change adaptation. A key one is resource constraints, including limited access to funding and administrative and technical support. This affects their ability to engage in comprehensive adaptation planning and to implement actions, making them more vulnerable to climate change impacts. Māori are also often not able to fully engage due to the high demand from central government to engage on multiple priorities, at times simultaneously. We note that local government can at times also put a high demand on mana whenua to engage on projects or programmes. Because of this, it is crucial that iwi, hapū and Māori communities are provided with appropriate resource to engage in adaptation work with local and central government.
14. Canterbury councils and local rūnanga invest considerable time and effort in building and maintaining genuine partnerships with each other. As we noted in our submission to the Ministry for the Environment on the first National Adaptation Plan², system-wide reform of resource management – including regional spatial planning – will encourage a more long-term and proactive view that better accounts for climate change. We strongly support a strengthened partnership approach between central government, mana whenua, and local government to develop plans for how places will grow and change in the future in the context of the significant opportunities and challenges we face, with our response to climate change being the most significant challenge.
15. Regardless of the approach that is ultimately taken to adaptation and retreat, the solution will need to recognise Te Tiriti as well as the protections and processes under Te Ture Whenua Māori Land Act 1993, and enable Māori to make their own decisions for their whenua and taonga katoa.

² <https://www.canterburymayors.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/CMF-NAP-submission-3-June-2022.pdf>

16. We reiterate the point in Selwyn District Council's submission that Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu has provided clear advice on the Crown engaging with mana whenua on climate adaptation to the Māori Affairs Committee earlier in 2023³.

Climate change risk assessments

17. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum would welcome improved national direction and guidance for undertaking risk assessments (both regionally and locally).

18. When the Forum undertook its detailed regional climate change risk assessment⁴ in 2020-21, there was little guidance available at a national level. However, given the findings of the 2019-20 climate risk screening⁵ the Forum completed, it was clear to us that a detailed risk assessment for the region was urgently needed if we were going to manage climate change adaptation effectively and proactively. While the risk assessment was developed in alignment with the National Climate Change Risk Assessment framework, it could have benefited from access to more data, stronger direction and consistency with a national approach.

19. As well as the regional risk assessment, Canterbury has a number of examples of localised risk assessment work. Christchurch City Council embarked on an assessment of coastal hazards in the district in 2017, and updated this in 2021⁶. The Selwyn District Council has recently completed an update of its 2020 climate report on asset risk and vulnerability⁷, and the Kaikōura District Council, with the support of Environment Canterbury, recently reviewed natural hazard provisions including flooding, which has resulted in flooding provisions now taking climate change into account. In addition, the Waimakariri District Council has also undertaken full technical assessments of seawater inundation and coastal flooding and erosion to inform their District Plan review⁸. Spatial natural hazards information is provided to the public through the Council's Natural Hazards Interactive Viewer.

20. While recognising the benefits of a national approach to risk assessments, we are concerned that the considerable investment already made by local authorities in undertaking these assessments to date (in alignment with available national guidance) is

³ See [Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu - New Zealand Parliament \(www.parliament.nz\)](http://www.parliament.nz) and [Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu Supp1 - New Zealand Parliament \(www.parliament.nz\)](http://www.parliament.nz).

⁴ <https://www.canterburymayors.org.nz/canterbury-climate-change-risk-assessment-feb-2022/>

⁵ <https://www.canterburymayors.org.nz/climate-change-risk-screening-2020/>

⁶ <https://ccc.govt.nz/environment/coast/adapting-to-coastal-hazards/coastalhazards/how-we-assess-coastal-hazards>

⁷ <https://www.selwyn.govt.nz/community/our-natural-environment/climate-change>

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<https://gisservices.waimakariri.govt.nz/resources/HazardsReports/Phase2CoastalInundationModellingReportJacobs.pdf>

not disregarded. We welcome an approach that leverages the work already undertaken to inform adaptation planning, rather than requiring authorities to undertake new assessments at additional cost to their communities. For smaller councils particularly, cost can be a significant barrier to developing local risk assessments.

21. The Forum agrees with the Ministry's options and issues paper that risk assessments to support adaptation planning need to work well with the resource management system, council planning processes and the emergency management system. We make some comments on links to the planning system later in this submission. It is clear that some improvements could be made here – and we will watch the development of the National Policy Statement on Natural Hazard Decision-making and national direction on a natural hazards planning framework with interest.
22. We also agree that standardising the approach to categorising risks as tolerable or intolerable will help improve the accuracy of risk assessments and make it easier for communities to understand when a risk reaches a threshold that triggers action.
23. Guidance around how often to review risk assessments would be welcome. In our regional assessment, we acknowledged that there are knowledge gaps, information is evolving and growing, and future research is needed. However, we do not specify when or how the assessment itself might be reviewed. We do note, however, that reviewing regional and local risk assessments does come at a cost for councils.

Roles and responsibilities

24. In terms of roles and responsibilities in developing and reviewing risk assessments, we consider councils should keep the primary responsibility to ensure these remain locally led (i.e. regional councils for regional assessments, territorial authorities for local assessments). However, regional planning committees will now need to have a role, and we see merit in the proposal of the Expert Working Group to establish a range of expert groups at national, regional and local levels to support the technical nature of risk assessment. How these groups might operate, and their mandate, would need to be carefully considered to ensure that local government and communities retain authority over the assessment and the process to develop them.
25. Based on the experience in Canterbury developing our regional assessment, we see merit in new legislation defining which entities are responsible for undertaking risk assessments, but consider that the detail of how such assessments are undertaken might be better approached by standardising some of the process through national direction, improved guidance or the development of national frameworks.
26. While legislation should identify who is responsible for developing risk assessments, Canterbury has demonstrated the value in taking a collaborative approach to regional risk assessments. The approach taken meant that there was buy-in from across the region throughout the process, and the views of all councils were taken on board at all stages of the process. We therefore consider there is value in regions collaboratively deciding how a regional risk assessment is completed and approved.

27. Given the responsibilities and functions of regional councils, we envisage they would play a key support role for territorial authorities in the development of local risk assessments.

Mātauranga Māori

28. We agree with the Ministry's issues and options paper that te ao Māori and local mātauranga should be central to the development of risk assessments throughout the process and adaptation planning at place. This is why Canterbury's regional risk assessment centres around an integrated framework, Te Tūtei o Te Hau: Surveillance of the Wind, aligned with a Te Ao Māori worldview as well as the National Climate Change Risk Assessment framework.

29. Development of the integrated framework sought to centre around Te Ao Māori. It built upon research into existing central and local government frameworks for resilience and climate change, while also building upon established thinking on indigenous framing of sustainability, Māori holistic views on health expressed through Te Whare Tapawhā model(s), and a kaupapa Māori framework for assessing resilience. From the project outset, a Rūnanga Project Steering Group was formed to advise on and help develop an integrated risk assessment framework. The collaboratively developed framework recognises and incorporates Te Ao Māori from the outset of the risk assessment process, includes kupu and mātauranga from Ngāi Tahu papatipu rūnanga, and enables alignment with wider community and extracted values.

Impact of new system on already completed assessments

30. Finally, because the Ministry's options and issues paper and the Expert Working Group's report both note that risk assessments that have been completed thus far vary in their quality and consistency across the country, we raise the question of whether, once a new standardised framework is in place, that those assessments already completed might have to be redone, or undergo significant review, if they don't meet all of the new criteria that will be set out.

31. Careful consideration of this question will be needed, given the time, energy and funding that was committed to completing them alongside partners. In Canterbury's case, for example, development of the regional risk assessment took more than one year. Our view is that the new framework should support, rather than replace, the assessments already completed.

Local adaptation planning

Adaptation planning in Canterbury

32. As the Committee will be aware, local adaptation planning is already under way across the country. In Canterbury, one excellent example of community-led adaptation planning

is the Hurunui District Council's Amberley Beach Coastal Adaptation Plan⁹. The Plan was adopted in June 2023, and is part of a wider climate change conversation with the district's coastal communities.

33. The Plan was developed in partnership with the community over two and a half years. It was based on the Ministry for the Environment's Coastal Hazards and Climate Change Guidance 2017 but was adapted to be appropriate for Amberley Beach. The Plan is flexible in nature so it can accommodate new information as it arises. The Plan will therefore be periodically reviewed and amended as required. The plan is not time-based, but trigger-based depending on climate change impacts.
34. It contains a number of action options, including progressive relocation of the coastal bund protecting the town from the sea, rock revetment along the existing bund, an inundation bund around the settlement to prevent floodwaters entering the settlement from behind, and managed retreat (or a combination of these options). There have been detailed conversations about the possibility of land banking and a potential land swap as an option to help facilitate managed retreat when, and if, required. This proposal is to be considered further as part of the implementation phase¹⁰.
35. Canterbury also has some other good examples of community-led adaptation planning across the region; for example adaptation planning conversations are under way with communities in Whakaraupō-Lyttelton Harbour and Koukourarata¹¹ (alongside local rūnanga). Another example in the Waitaki district is work local rūnanga is currently involved with in the Papa Wiri project¹² in conjunction with the University of Canterbury and GNS Science, looking at developing a response plan and gathering resources to prepare for climate change and large-scale natural disasters.
36. In terms of regional adaptation planning, after the Canterbury Climate Change Risk Assessment process was complete, Canterbury councils agreed to work collaboratively on a climate change action plan for the region. This action plan, entitled the Canterbury Climate Partnership Plan, acknowledges that climate change risks and impacts are different across the region, and that councils are at different stages in their planning.
37. The Plan has a collaborative strategic front-end (including a regionally-agreed vision, outcomes and urgency assessment), and back-end (including a funding plan and a monitoring and evaluation plan) but enables individual councils to develop and include

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https://www.hurunui.govt.nz/repository/libraries/id:23wyoavbi17q9ssstcj/hierarchy/Regulatory_Services/Coastal_conversations/Amberley_Beach/Amberley%20Beach%20CAP%20-%20FINAL.pdf

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https://www.hurunui.govt.nz/repository/libraries/id:23wyoavbi17q9ssstcj/hierarchy/Regulatory_Services/Coastal_conversations/Amberley-Beach-Managed-Retreat-Proposal.pdf

11 <https://ccc.govt.nz/environment/coast/adapting-to-coastal-hazards/coastal-hazards-adaptation-in-whakaraupo-and-koukourar>

12 <http://www.quakecore.nz/papa-wiri-programme/>

their own climate goals, targets and actions (for both adaptation and mitigation) for 2023-34 Long-Term Plans. This is to ensure that urgent actions are not only identified but also funded. The Plan will also include a set of collaborative actions. Individual councils will decide if they wish to create a standalone climate action plan for their council.

Principles for adaptation planning

38. Despite local and regional adaptation planning being already under way in many places, we agree with the general principles for local adaptation planning set out in both the Expert Working Group and the Ministry's options and issues paper, in that greater support from the government for local adaptation planning is needed, as is clear and consistent guidance. A clear mandate for action would be welcomed, as would nationally consistent approaches for assessing risks and different adaptation pathways, engaging communities, as well as guidance on overlapping roles and responsibilities between councils or between councils and iwi, hapū and Māori communities.
39. In doing so, it will be crucial that an appropriate balance is struck between setting national standards for adaptation planning, and enabling communities to develop an approach that suits their needs. Local government knows its communities best and must have the flexibility within the system to undertake adaptation planning in a way that will get the best outcomes for them.
40. Further, the Forum understands that once climate change adaptation legislation is developed, it will carefully consider the range of other adaptation measures available – risk avoidance (locating developments away from hazard areas), protection (e.g. seawalls), accommodation (e.g. building houses on stilts). The Forum would like to see due consideration given to planning and funding for all adaptation options, not just retreat.
41. We would like to make the point at this stage, however, that for local government to successfully resource and lead adaptation planning across all its communities, support from the government is necessary. We address funding and financing issues later in this submission.

Adaptation committees

42. The Expert Working Group proposes a formalised, legislative approach to adaptation planning, with the Crown to be given powers to direct the preparation of a local adaptation plan and legislated adaptation committees as the decision-makers on a plan. While the Expert Working Group offers some sound reasoning for this approach, we strongly feel that adaptation planning should be locally led.
43. We do agree that adaptation committees are worth considering from a regional coordination perspective. In reality, the make-up of the Expert Working Group's proposed committees reflects the way in which much of this work is already done – involving councils (territorial authorities and the relevant regional council) and iwi.

44. However, we suggest it is too early to form a definitive view on the value of adaptation committees, particularly given current uncertainty surrounding resource management reform. To be able to form a view on this matter, there would need to be clarity on who is leading the committees (i.e. the relevant territorial authority in partnership with mana whenua), whether other agencies might be a part of the committee in some way (for example, social or health agencies) and how the committees would be resourced and supported. Their authority would also need to be clearly laid out, as would their oversight, and they must be locally led. These committees would also have to work in with resource management requirements, in particular regional spatial strategies.

Links to the planning system

45. We agree with the statement by the Expert Working Group that:

“The whole system must prevent planning decisions that create natural hazard risks in the future, as climate changes, and therefore remove the need to reverse planning decisions rules made now, in the future. That is, we need to stop making decisions that create the need for adaptation planning and planned relocation in the first place. To achieve this, natural hazard risk, including climate change, must take primacy over all other considerations in the system. The interaction of any new system for retreat and adaptation with the system under the Natural and Built Environment Act and the Spatial Planning Act is of critical importance. For example, risk assessments will form part of a regional spatial strategy. The planned climate change adaptation legislation will need to ensure that consents have regard to the risk assessment that informed the RSS.”

46. We also note that local adaptation and emergency planning (including regional responses and lifelines plans) need to be well integrated.
47. We agree with the sentiments of the Expert Working Group, who noted that local adaptation plans will include the use of land-use tools as methods for adaptation and will specify what the tools should achieve, but they will not craft the exact wording of the rules. A link to the planning system is therefore required, so that planning-based adaptation measures can be applied through district and Natural and Built Environment Plans without additional processes, and to address the need for resource consents for adaptation works.

Role of private sector

48. We note that the Committee’s inquiry terms of reference include looking at the role of the private sector in managing risk. We know that the private sector is also facing adaptation challenges, and businesses must therefore build their resilience to climate risks.
49. Banks and insurers, for example, may be exposed through their mortgage portfolios and liabilities. As noted in the National Adaptation Plan, they can have a role in encouraging resilience-building actions through their advice to customers, by providing loans or build-back-better post-event payments, and by sending market signals via their lending and insurance policies.
50. The private sector will undoubtedly also have a role in retreat, in that it will be involved in developing areas for people and businesses to relocate to, as well as relocating culturally significant sites. Central and local government will need to coordinate with the

private sector as part of enabling retreat programmes to work successfully and with as little stress as possible for the communities being relocated to new areas. In particular, engaging with the insurance (including the Earthquake Commission) and banking sectors will be important to help limit the risks around unintended consequences and to identify innovative funding arrangements.

Retreat and relocation

A nationally consistent system for retreat

51. Given the number of communities in Canterbury – and across the country – that are on the coast, near a river or on a floodplain, retreat is an issue that will likely affect many Canterbury towns, cities, rural communities, and marae. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum agrees that an enduring and comprehensive system for retreat is needed urgently, for reasons well-canvassed in both the Expert Working Group’s report and the Ministry’s paper.
52. As the Committee is aware, some parts of our region have significant experience in retreat following the 2010-11 earthquakes, which set some precedents for managed retreat process and funding. Further one-off processes have set additional precedents following the flooding and cyclone events in parts of the North Island this year. A consistent, enduring and comprehensive framework is therefore sorely needed.
53. The Forum holds a strong view that sustainable finance arrangements for retreat must be established. We consider recent precedents that have been set for cost sharing of settlements on private properties between the Crown and local government are unsustainable and transfer private costs onto local ratepayers. Our preference is therefore for the Crown to retain responsibility for buy-out of private properties and local authorities to provide funding for community assets. Local authorities already face tremendous costs associated with the adaptation of community infrastructure including pipes, roads, and facilities and it is not tenable for us to meet these private costs within the existing funding system.
54. For example, as noted in Christchurch City Council’s submission, for the Christchurch district alone conservative estimates suggest with sea level rise of only 20cm the replacement value of council three waters and road networks is \$3.2 billion. The full scale of replacement costs for council infrastructure is likely to be far greater than this, including a range of other community assets. Adding in private properties the value of assets exposed within the district would be approximately \$18 billion.
55. We support the development of a nationally consistent framework for retreat decision-making which allows for some local flexibility, and reflects the roles that councils, central government, iwi, hapū and Māori, communities, businesses and individuals will play. The framework will also need to consider the breadth of communities that will be impacted – in Canterbury, for example, this could range from isolated properties to rural communities, and large parts of some urban areas.

56. The Mayoral Forum has long been an advocate of locally led decision-making and the principle of subsidiarity. Local government's role in the community and its strengths must be reflected in the new framework to ensure communities subject to retreat and relocation decisions are at the heart of the process.
57. The Forum supports the government being proactive in how retreat is considered as an adaptation option. Based on experiences in our region after the 2010/11 earthquakes, the Forum knows how incredibly stressful and complex a relocation process can be for individuals, families and communities, and for local government there is a need to balance community wellbeing and the provision of services in areas which have elevated levels of risk.
58. We do have concerns about the terminology around retreat. While we understand the rationale for not using "managed retreat" (which has a particular association in Canterbury post-earthquake), we are not sure that "community-led retreat" is quite right either. While the process will involve communities, decisions about areas to retreat from will rightly be made based on evidence, rather than community wishes. We ask the Committee to carefully consider the terminology here, as it will need to reflect the fact that the process will be government-led (both central and local) but with meaningful involvement by the community.
59. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum broadly agrees with the principles and outcomes for the retreat and relocation system set out in the Ministry's options and issues paper. We consider this to be a good base from which to design the retreat system. Within this, we would like to particularly highlight the need to ensure fairness and equity among communities and generations, the importance of appropriate sharing of risks and responsibilities, and ensuring communities are meaningfully involved in decisions that affect them. Intergenerational fairness and equity are particularly important to us; we need to ensure the costs are shared fairly, and that decisions made now consider the impact future generations will bear.

Relocation programmes

60. We question the Expert Working Group's recommendation that draft relocation programmes be subject to a formal feedback process like those set out in the Local Government Act 2022. While communities must be at the heart of any relocation process, local government does need to balance the formality and timeframe of engagement with moving people away from unsafe areas in a timely manner. We suggest that perhaps a more flexible approach is needed, in order for local government to get that balance right. The feedback and engagement processes must also be flexible enough to suit the communities that the relocation programme impacts.

Options for a retreat system

61. In terms of options for a retreat system, although the detail is still to be worked through, our preference at this stage is for a system that has a mix of voluntary and mandatory parts. This would provide affected people with some level of choice about when and possibly how they retreat, while ensuring that people do actually move away from the

land at risk. Local government has a legislated duty to promote the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of its communities, so leaving the decision to retreat with individuals seems a derogation of this duty. Retreat decisions will be based on evidence, where the risks in not retreating will be evident and significant.

62. While a purely voluntary approach means communities will have a greater influence over staying where they are and allow them to keep the connections with the community, in reality this approach would mean that risk is unlikely to reduce. Further, it is also likely to mean that ratepayers and taxpayers would continue to meet the cost of providing services to a smaller number of people, places are less safe for people remaining behind and those visiting them, vulnerable people are drawn to these locations due to lower house prices and rent, and risks and costs increase when saving people in an emergency. A completely voluntary system could also lead to greater pressure on decision-makers to choose protective mechanisms (that may only be temporary) over retreat. People could also be incentivised to stay in place if they think a more generous financial assistance offer might be made after a disaster.
63. In preferring a mix of voluntary and mandatory parts, we note the importance of ensuring that the mix between the two is appropriate. Affected individuals should be given a reasonable degree of freedom of choice to make decisions that suit them at the time that suits them (i.e., some discretion over when to leave), while ensuring that the risks to the community can be reduced. We agree with the Expert Working Group that getting the balance right should be guided by a principle that the system should aim to provide those affected with as much choice as possible over the timeframe of the retreat and relocation programme, consistent with the efficient and effective implementation of that programme.
64. We refer the committee to the experience of the Christchurch City Council and the Waimakariri District Council on this matter following the Canterbury earthquakes. We ask that you carefully review the points made in the Christchurch City Council's submission on the challenges and lessons learned from the voluntary approach that was implemented at the time.

Use of land following retreat decision

65. We agree with the Expert Working Group and the Ministry that powers will be needed to ensure land is no longer used (except to facilitate ceremonial events, recreation, mahinga kai and so on) once a decision has been made to retreat. The transfer of ownership of red-zoned land from the Crown to local government after the 2010-11 earthquakes is a good precedent for this. Requiring that people do not remain residing on the land will ensure that risk is properly reduced. However, we note that planning changes are not instantaneous, and from experience our councils know that people will remain in an area beyond when a plan says existing use should be extinguished.
66. In terms of uses the land might be limited to (as referenced above), the Committee may also wish to consider whether exceptions should be made for indigenous biodiversity enhancement and the development of blue and green infrastructure. These natural solutions can play a significant role in mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Community engagement

67. We note that the Expert Working Group also makes the point in its report that “it will be vital that the public accept the need for planned relocation as a means of adaptation to climate change effects, and that they have confidence in the way planned relocation decisions are made and implemented. Accordingly, community education and engagement will be critical, both generally and in the context of specific relocations”.
68. We strongly agree with this point. To support this conversation, in 2021 the Canterbury Mayoral Forum launched the regional engagement campaign *It's time, Canterbury*¹³. Managed by the regional council and supported by all of Canterbury's territorial authorities, this campaign brings together councils' climate change resources, knowledge and expertise on climate change. The Forum wholeheartedly supports this initiative and considers it a valuable model for other regions to follow.

An equitable funding and financing system

69. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum is pleased that both the Expert Working Group's report and the Ministry's issues and options paper acknowledge the huge gaps in the funding approach for adaptation and especially retreat. There are significant costs to local government of implementing retreat and relocation – most obviously, costs arising from investigating and assessing the identification of areas, uses and activities which are at risk, costs from implementing the actions to relocate communities and provide for them elsewhere, as well as costs that relate to managing the land following retreat.

Central government funding

70. To ensure local government can implement managed retreat, an additional funding stream must be provided from a central source, rather than leaving authorities to raise funds from ratepayers or user pay services that are already under strain.
71. We wish to highlight recommendation 62 in the Expert Working Group's report, which states that the funding source should match the level at which decisions are made or at which responsibility and accountability is located, and there should be a supporting mechanism from central government that will provide grant funding to local government to pay for specific planned relocation projects and/or specified costs, on an 'ability of local government to pay' basis. We argue that funding should consider local circumstances, which will vary across the country and across regions. Critically, funding should be proportionate to vulnerability and exposure to climate change induced hazards, rather than determined by the scale of a local authority or other arbitrary measures.
72. We would like to highlight a point made in Environment Canterbury's submission that examples in the Ministry's options and issues paper about local government receiving NEMA funding are not as experienced, where the regional council notes that only 35% of

¹³ See <https://itstimecanterbury.co.nz/>

costs for the May 2021 flood event have been funded, and not 60% as anticipated. Betterment expenditure is currently not eligible for funding, or staff time spent on response and recovery. This will need to be considered in the new system for funding.

73. The rationale for central government support of local government is outlined clearly and comprehensively in paragraphs 5.19-5.21 in chapter 5 of the Expert Working Group's report. We urge the Committee to carefully consider this.

Future for local government review

74. The National Adaptation Plan makes numerous references to the Future for Local Government review and the fact that its outcomes will equip councils for agile, sustainable and anticipatory decision-making, supporting councils, communities, businesses and individuals to consider and understand the adaptation options available in their area. One of the key actions in the Plan is action 5.2, which notes:

The Future for Local Government review will consider changes to local government funding and financing to ensure viability and sustainability, fairness and equity, and maximum wellbeing. The review will also consider when local authority funding should be shared across local government, or with other partners, and when central government co-funding might be justified¹⁴.

75. The Future for Local Government review report itself also noted that a significant fund is needed for local government to support climate change adaptation activities⁴. It recommended that "Central government develops an intergenerational fund for climate change, with the application of the fund requiring appropriate regional and local decision-making." The Forum strongly supports the establishment of such a fund – without it local government's ability to support our communities, now and into the future, is severely curtailed.
76. Despite the National Adaptation Plan's references to the Future for Local Government Review resulting in change, at the time of writing, there is no political commitment to implementing any of the outcomes of the Review, and local government is therefore none the wiser about what the plans are for supporting us to fund and finance climate change initiatives, including retreat and relocation activities.
77. As noted in the above section, while there are precedents set for managed retreat following the Canterbury earthquakes and the flooding and cyclone events earlier in 2023, we cannot continue on the ad hoc pathway we are currently on. The Future for Local Government Review also makes it abundantly clear that the current funding and financing system for local government is unsustainable and a new system is required.

Flood protection infrastructure

78. Flood resilience is a good illustration of this point. One in seven of New Zealand's residents live in areas that may be affected by floods. Flood protection infrastructure is

¹⁴ National Adaptation Plan, p.85 - <https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/climate-change/MFE-AoG-20664-GF-National-Adaptation-Plan-2022-WEB.pdf>

our first line of defence, but ageing structures can no longer meet the levels of service needed to manage climate change impacts. Significant climate change-induced events across the country in recent years have highlighted the urgent need for a step change to the provision of flood risk resilience-improving infrastructure nationwide (including roading resilience). The potential impact of an Alpine Fault rupture on river capacity in the region serves to further highlight this. Canterbury, with its 78,000km of rivers and streams, is very much at risk of significant future flooding events – it is when, not if, such an event occurs.

79. The Mayoral Forum continues to advocate for funding to implement the regional and unitary councils' 2019 (updated January 2022¹⁵) business case on central and local government permanent co-investment in flood protection schemes. The outcome sought from these co-investment decisions would be New Zealanders having assurance that suitable 'fit-for-the-future', risk-aligned, climate change resilient and environmentally sensitive flood protection schemes are in place throughout New Zealand. Permanent co-investment in flood protection shifts the focus from disaster relief and recovery towards mitigation of flood risks, while reducing long-term costs.
80. The Forum is disappointed that the business case has not yet been funded. It is critically important that the business case be approved so that regions, including Canterbury, are as resilient as they can be if, and when, another event like Cyclone Gabrielle hits. Co-funding means the regional council and Canterbury's local authorities could get the work done much faster and therefore allow our communities to be much more prepared for when the next extreme event hits.

General approach to funding and financing

81. We note with interest the Expert Working Group's report where it notes past precedents and where in reality costs fall:

"As illustrated by the Crown response to the Canterbury earthquakes, even when schemes suggest many costs should fall on owners that is often not the reality. The Government's approach in making offers to Red Zone residents was extremely generous. Another example is the Government's recently announced intention to support councils in regions affected by Cyclone Gabrielle and the recent floods and to offer a voluntary buyout for owners of Category 3 designated residential properties. Designing a policy framework for anticipatory planned relocation must be undertaken in this context. The types of interventions that are common in post-event situations should inform the powers needed in an anticipatory risk reduction system. They should exhibit similar characteristics, albeit tailored to take advantage of the circumstances that accompany pre-emptive action".

82. Regardless of the solutions chosen, we cannot stress enough how important it is that the approach to funding and financing of adaptation and particularly retreat is long-term in focus and enduring – not beholden to either yearly Budget processes or three-yearly election cycles.

¹⁵See: [Reports | Ko Tātou LGNZ](#)

83. We are generally supportive of the approach to funding relocation laid out by the Expert Working Group, which aligns with option 3 in the Ministry's options and issues paper. We consider that a higher level of support than simply supporting the worst affected or managing support on a case-by-case basis would be consistent with the principles and outcomes for adaptation and relocation as outlined earlier. This is in keeping with precedents that have already been set following the Canterbury earthquakes and Cyclone Gabrielle. In particular, we agree that the focus should be on residential homes, buildings owned by not-for-profits, and buildings of iwi, hapū and Māori communities. Local businesses will also need some form of support.

84. It is difficult for us to provide a view on whether general tax revenue, or something like a special levy or some other fund paid for by taxes is the best approach to paying for retreat until there is clarity on the funding and financing of local government. However, if intergenerational fairness is one of the key criteria, which we strongly support, then we suggest a special fund would be the most appropriate. This aligns with the recommendation of the Future for Local Government Review Panel, as noted earlier. We therefore concur with the Expert Working Group when it states:

"Particularly due to sea-level rise, some future impacts are now 'locked in' although they may not become sufficiently significant to require planned relocations in some localities for several decades. It seems fair then that the funding mechanism should require current generations to contribute to these future costs. A dedicated fund will facilitate this, whether funded through a levy, periodic contributions from general tax revenue or both".

Conclusion

85. Thank you once again for the opportunity to make a submission on the inquiry into climate adaptation.

86. Our secretariat is available to provide any further information or answer any questions the Committee may have about our submission. Contact details are: Maree McNeilly, Canterbury Mayoral Forum Secretariat, secretariat@canterburymayors.org.nz , 027 381 8924.

Ngā mihi



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