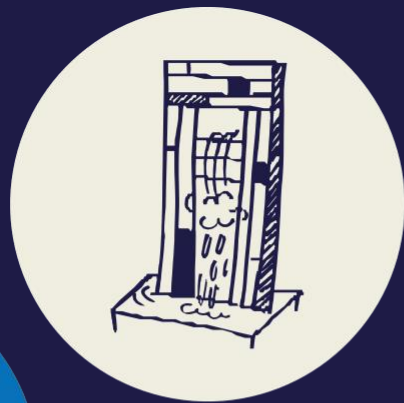


HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION

Inquiry into Climate Adaptation

Parliament's Environment Committee



1 November 2023



**Hamilton
City Council**
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa

Improving the Wellbeing of Hamiltonians

Hamilton City Council is focused on improving the wellbeing of Hamiltonians through delivering to our five priorities of shaping:

- **A city that's easy to live in**
- **A city where our people thrive**
- **A central city where our people love to be**
- **A fun city with lots to do**
- **A green city**

The topic of this submission is aligned to the priorities of **A green city** and **A city that's easy to live in**.

Council Approval and Reference

This submission was approved by Hamilton City Council at its meeting held on 31 October 2023.

Hamilton City Council Reference D-4911385 - Submission # 748.

Key Messages

1. We commend the Environment Committee's initiative to undertake the **Inquiry into Climate Adaptation**.
2. Hamilton City Council supports a nationally consistent approach to the local adaptation planning process and for managing retreat. It is a priority and responsibility for all councils to plan for the future, and this should not be left to discretion, or only given priority where risks are current and imminent.
3. Council is, and should continue to be, responsible for adaptation planning. This is best done in partnership with iwi and hapu. Councils are best placed to serve their community and it is in their interest to ensure a fair and transparent process.
4. Climate change risk assessments need to take place on a regional level, a local authority level, and be specific to a particular community, development, or significant infrastructure. Standard guidance is required to help rate the level of risk and ensure localities are then able to base decisions on the same level of consideration.
5. We believe central government should guide the requirements for a robust process for local decisions regarding managed retreat. However, we believe that local councils must continue to hold the ultimate responsibility for that decision, as they are best placed to understand and listen to the needs of the whole community.
6. We agree with The Expert Working Group on managed retreat that we should be guided by the principle that those affected should have as much choice as possible during the retreat process.
7. The private sector needs to be responsible for managing their climate risks and adapting to climate change. A range of legislative requirements, incentives and funding mechanisms should be in place to support adaptation and reduce the future costs to society of our houses and developments not being prepared.
8. Maaori-led adaptation is key and requires substantial investment. Government needs to work with iwi, hapuu and Maaori to uphold Maaori rights and interests and ensure there is adequate funding to build capacity to engage on multiple priorities.
9. Adaptation must be strongly implemented throughout the planning process, ensuring it is a core responsibility throughout the resource management process and addressed within regional spatial planning strategies and at the district planning level.
10. It is key that we reduce the need to fund more adaptation in the future by establishing appropriate rules on where and how we build now. Restoring natural systems is key to our adaptation response and should be integrated as a priority.
11. The National Adaptation Plan requires more significant investment from central government. Funding is required for managed retreat, adapting the infrastructure we have and the infrastructure we are building to withstand extreme weather events, and investment is needed to respond to disasters and to rebuild better.

Introduction

12. Hamilton City Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Environment Committee on the **Inquiry into Climate Adaptation**.
13. We commend the Environment Committee's initiative to undertake the Inquiry into Climate Adaptation.
14. We have provided feedback on the following statements as per the Inquiry's Terms of Reference:
 - The current approach to community-led retreat and adaptation funding, its strengths, risks and costs.
 - Lessons learned from severe weather events and natural disasters in Aotearoa New Zealand for community-led retreat and funding climate adaptation.
 - Effective mechanisms for community-led decision-making.
 - The role of the private sector in managing climate risk.
 - Potential institutional arrangements, including roles and responsibilities of central and local government agencies, iwi, and hapu.
 - Māori participation, Crown obligations, and how to best give effect to the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi, and integrate matauranga Māori and te ao Māori across the adaptation system.
 - Alignment and integration with existing legislation and regulatory framework, including the reformed resource management system and any changes needed to regulatory powers and potential economic or other incentives needed to support adaptation actions (both before and after extreme events).
 - Funding sources, access to them and principles and criteria for cost sharing.
 - Targets or indicators for assessing progress to more resilient communities and infrastructure.
15. In our climate change strategy – Our Climate Future: Te Pae Tawhiti o Kirikiriroa – we have an outcome to ensure our city is ready for Hamilton's climate¹. To achieve this, we are focused on improving our community's resilience and reducing the impact of climate change on their wellbeing.
16. The Strategy has the following key outcome focus areas:
 - By acting together, our emissions are reducing.
 - Our neighbourhoods enable low carbon living.
 - Our city is ready for Hamilton's climate.

Terms of Reference Statements

The current approach to community-led retreat and adaptation funding, its strengths, risks and costs

17. Hamilton City Council support that there needs to be clearer direction and stronger requirements for local adaptation planning and for managing retreat. While not at the scale of other cities, towns and settlements, managed retreat will impact some of our communities and cultural heritage sites and we are already thinking about how we will need to adapt to this and other impacts of climate change. It is more likely Hamilton will be on the receiving end of communities moving away from the coast and into areas perceived to be safer.

¹ Our Climate Future Strategy: Te Pae Tawhiti o Kirikiriroa <https://hamilton.govt.nz/strategies-plans-and-projects/strategies/climate-change-strategy/>

18. A nationally consistent approach to the local adaptation planning process is required from central government. All regions should undertake local adaptation planning as part of regional development and local plans. It is a priority and responsibility for all councils to plan for the future, and this should not be left to discretion, or only given priority where risks are current and imminent.
19. We support the requirements for adaptation plans to include a disaster response plan, including consideration of proximity and/or provision of alternative communication channels, electricity sources and water supply. We also support the proposal of the Expert Working Group on Managed Retreat, that local adaptation plans include a pre-disaster recovery plan to address recovery if a disaster occurs before the adaptation plan is implemented.
20. Adaptation plans should be based on assessments that align with the scientific scenarios and timeframes to meet the current global trajectory, within the lifespan of the infrastructure being built.
21. Climate change risk assessments need to take place on a regional level, a local authority level, community level and be specific to a particular development or significant infrastructure². They need to be established on different levels, not be set up in stages dependent on each other. For example, a detailed assessment for a development should not wait for a 'stage one assessment', to be done before completion. Although a regional assessment may inform a local assessment, the case may be the other way around.
22. Regional and local authority assessments should be made every six years, but detailed assessments must be made prior to (or if appropriate on condition of) the consenting of the development.
23. Standard guidance is required to help rate the level of risk and ensure localities are then able to base decisions on the same level of consideration. All assessments should be required to thoroughly consider the same factors (for example, considering the past, current, and future likelihood of impacts on people, species of plants and animals, water, and natural environmental processes). Although the same factors should be considered, the conditions will vary immensely. Risk assessments must involve the local knowledge around what the land or assets are used for and how they are currently impacted by local weather events.

Lessons learned from severe weather events and natural disasters in Aotearoa New Zealand for community-led retreat and funding climate adaptation

24. Infrastructure New Zealand's recent position paper accurately states that *"Our existing infrastructure is no longer fit for purpose. The impacts of recent weather events have exposed the fact that the majority of New Zealand's infrastructure is old and ageing and is ill-equipped to handle New Zealand's changing climate and more frequent extreme weather events."*³
25. Cyclone Gabrielle has also shown that we are not currently well placed to respond to the aftermath of disaster and highlighted the need for central government to provide better regulatory and funding frameworks for both reducing climate change risk and for disaster response and rebuilding. By having up to date risk assessments and dynamic adaptation planning we can better prepare for these events.
26. Although New Zealand is set up to respond to disasters and already has an effective civil defence system in place, there does need to be more investment to expand the capacity of this to deal with the continuing increased frequency in extreme weather events.
27. As well as ensuring adequate funding, central government needs to consider how New Zealand's construction industry can be improved to rebuild better, faster and more sustainably, and address labour and supply chain issues.

² Our Climate Future: Te Pae Tawhiti o Kirikiriroa

³ [Infrastructure New Zealand Position Paper: Climate Resilient Infrastructure](#)

28. One of the biggest issues during and after a disaster is the huge amount of waste to landfill the disaster brings. We must consider how we build in ways that maximise the use of natural resources and natural systems and reduce waste.
29. Many of the impacts of the cyclone were worse because so many of our natural systems, including wetlands, riparian areas and waterways, have been degraded or destroyed. Restoring natural systems and integrating them into our planning must be a key part of our adaptation response. The use of swales and engineered wetlands and protecting permeable surfaces in urban environments can be achieved through land use planning.
30. The [three categories](#) for flood and landslide affected properties that were established in May 2023 provide a starting point for engagement on the need for adaptation or retreat following a disaster event. Establishing this in advance of future disasters will be helpful for communities and decision makers.

Effective mechanisms for community-led decision-making

31. Decisions about the adaptation pathway must be made at the local level because the decision made regarding one risk in one place will not translate as the same level of risk in a different place. Physical, geographical, financial, land use, community and many other factors will impact what the right decision is. We believe central government should guide the requirements to ensure that a robust process is followed for local decisions regarding managed retreat. However, we believe that local councils must continue to hold the ultimate responsibility for that decision, as they are best placed to understand and listen to the needs of the whole community.
32. National direction for community led retreat should ensure a just and fair approach, providing for early engagement, so that people understand their role, how they are able to participate and how decisions will be made. An inclusive approach should ensure vulnerable population groups are identified and individuals who may have specific needs, as well as addressing accessibility, language and communication barriers.
33. We agree with The Expert Working Group on managed retreat that a mix of voluntary and mandatory parts should be guided by the principle that those affected should have as much choice as possible during the retreat process. Where risks are known to be imminent, choice should most likely be limited to when to leave (and ideally, how) rather than whether to leave.
34. There needs to be legislative requirements for the communication required to ensure diligence is applied in informing property owners of risk assessments, adaptation plans, and community led retreat. Property owners must have clear legal responsibility for their own decisions when local councils have followed all communication requirements in informing the community and landowners.
35. We believe that managed retreat should be voluntary for as long a timeframe and with as many options as possible. The choice of whether to retreat should belong to the people affected, for as long as this is viable, allowing people to make decisions based on their personal views of the risks they face.
36. However, it will not always be feasible for managed retreat to be completely voluntary as the risk of flooding becomes imminent. As retreat occurs places are less safe for people remaining behind. Ratepayers and taxpayers should not continue to meet the cost of providing services to a smaller number of people (or then pay for the recovery when disaster does strike).

The role of the private sector in managing climate risk

37. The private sector needs to be responsible for managing their climate risks and adapting to climate change and must be responsible for providing a risk assessment prior to development. A central agency should play a key role in monitoring this and ensuring it is carried out independently without bias.

38. The cost for adaptation of private property should fall on the landowner, and funding mechanisms such as grants, and low interest loans should be established to incentivise this, and therefore mitigate the future costs to society of our houses and developments not being prepared. Matched funding and grants need to be in place to support small local businesses and low-income earners in protecting their properties and managed retreat. Low interest loans should be available for all private parties to incentivise effective climate adaptation.

Potential institutional arrangements, including roles and responsibilities of central and local government agencies, iwi and hapu

39. Councils, in partnership with iwi and hapuu, should remain responsible for adaptation planning, including risk assessment and engagement, as well as building and maintaining infrastructure and nature-based solutions, such as wetland restoration.
40. We support that local councils should continue to have responsibility for climate change risk assessments for the region, and local authority areas. Councils are best placed to work with stakeholders to assess the risks, and it is in their interest to ensure a fair and transparent process to serve their community.
41. We support that a central agency should be established to ensure consistent standards are established and met. However, it would be ineffective, costly and result in time delays for a central agency to carry out local risk assessments.

Maaori participation, Crown obligations, and how to best give effect to the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi, and integrate maatauranga Maaori and te ao Maaori across the adaptation system

42. Maaori-led adaptation is key and requires substantial investment. Te ao Maaori and local maatauranga should be central to the development of regional and local risk assessments and adaptation planning. Government needs to work with iwi, hapuu and Maaori to uphold Maaori rights and interests, including through protecting Maaori land and upholding Treaty settlements, ensuring there is adequate funding to build capacity and manage the high demand from central government to engage on multiple priorities.
43. Hamilton City Council support that risk assessments for Maaori land are conducted by Maaori, with appropriate support, and the use of Maaori frames of reference alongside the standard approach – a range of expert groups at national, regional, and local levels to support the technical nature of risk assessment.

Alignment and integration with existing legislation and regulatory framework, including the reformed resource management system and any changes needed to regulatory powers and potential economic or other incentives needed to support adaptation actions (both before and after extreme events)

44. Adaptation must be strongly implemented throughout the planning process. Ensuring adaptation is a core responsibility throughout the resource management process and addressed within regional spatial plans and district plans is key. Legislation needs to give local government firm requirements and the right level of influence to look after the interests of their community and environment. It is key that developers are supported to prioritise effective adaptation and resilience over short term gain.
45. It is also key that we reduce the need to fund more adaptation in the future by establishing appropriate rules to ensure that people do not build in high-risk locations, and instead build in places and ways that reduce the need for adaptation in the future.

46. We support work underway to establish the Natural Hazards Planning Framework under the existing resource management legislation. This needs to support nationally consistent standards for natural hazard risk assessment and planning. Direction should include strong guidelines for data requirements and ensure there is particular regard to local maatauranga Maaori.
47. A dedicated approach to deciding between retreat and other adaptation pathways must also be developed. This needs to be embedded through our national planning frameworks and legislation.

Funding sources, access to them and principles and criteria for cost sharing

48. The National Adaptation Plan requires more significant investment from central government. Funding is required for managed retreat, adapting the infrastructure we have and the infrastructure we are building to withstand extreme weather events, and investment is needed to respond to disaster and rebuild better.
49. The cost of adaptation will be significant but must be addressed. The debt we will face in the future for lack of action now will be unequivocal and is not an acceptable burden to place on future generations. Not acting to strengthen our ability to cope with climate change now is the biggest risk to our national financial stability in the future. The earlier we spend to adapt, the less we will spend in the long term.
50. Central government must provide long-term certainty by establishing an enduring fund for adaptation, as recommended by the independent Review into the Future for Local Government and the Productivity Commission⁴.
51. We noted in our 3 March 2023 submission ([refer here](#)) on the Future of Local Government Inquiry Draft Report (October 2022) that: *“We support the draft report’s [Future of Local Government Inquiry, October 2022] call for funding from central government to local government on climate change. This is somewhere our priorities closely align with central government. However, funding hasn’t been available on the scale required.”*
52. A statement of spending priorities through a government policy statement, alongside the national adaptation plan, should be made to give a comprehensive account of central government’s spending priorities and should be provided for in legislation to add legal weight.
53. Funding mechanisms must incentivise the right action. As well as funding to support building the right things in the right place, there must also be a consideration into how we ensure the funding of current infrastructure is not building the wrong things or in the wrong place.
54. Our Hamilton Urban Growth Strategy recognises the importance of growing the city in a more compact manner and the need to ensure that our priority greenfield development areas provide *“ample greenspace to increase biodiversity and protect the natural environment and the areas we value.”*⁵ Ensuring this is possible requires additional funding from central government.
55. Councils are already poorly resourced to build and manage the current infrastructure needs of New Zealand. Central government need to provide a range of funding mechanisms for councils to adapt in the right way.
56. Councils significantly invest in the planning, building, and operating of three waters infrastructure to service communities, and protect public health and the environment. The nature of three waters infrastructure and locations means that rerouting to avoid orphaned infrastructure is difficult, and rebuilding infrastructure is costly. This means that it is critical that infrastructure managers and experts are at the table in adaption decision-making, for developing principles, and prioritising funding and investment and that central government funding for retreat and adaption is required to service the communities appropriately.

⁴ Hamilton City Council submission on the Future of Local Government Inquiry Draft Report (3 March 2023).

⁵ Hamilton Urban Growth Strategy Te Rautaki Tupu Taaone o Kirikiriroa – April 2023.

57. Central government must listen to iwi, hapuu, Maaori communities and landowners to develop a flexible funding approach which addresses the diverse circumstances and supports them to adapt. To ensure equity an adaptation fund specific to iwi, hapū and Māori covering both retreat and other adaptation actions should be established.
58. A just transition must be considered in our response to climate change as part of our national adaptation response. As the divide between the wealthy and low-income earners continues to grow in New Zealand, those with money are more able to adapt and those without become more vulnerable. Those who are earning the most are contributing the most emissions. Those with less money, have contributed less to our carbon emissions, yet are the most vulnerable from the impacts.
59. Funding for adaptation needs to be provided for the most vulnerable communities. Means tested funds should be set up to support those who cannot afford to adapt and recover. A review into the impacts that climate adaptation and managed retreat will have on renters is required.
60. Funding mechanisms need to be provided for all people needing to retreat, so taxpayers do not have to foot a bigger bill when disaster strikes. This needs to be a range of means tested incentives, from grants to low and no interest loans. Government should be working with the banking sector to set up low and no interest loans for adaptation. This will make decisions to protect property much easier for owners.
61. There also needs to be a fund set aside for climate disasters. That will enable us to build more resilient and low carbon neighborhoods and infrastructure following any disasters, with more blue green infrastructure and roads that prioritise mass transport and multi modes.

Targets or indicators for assessing progress to more resilient communities and infrastructure

62. The government should continue to work with local government and technical experts to understand our data needs for adaptation indicators which support national, regional and local monitoring.
63. Targets and indicators for New Zealand should consider a wide range of indicators and capture what's at risk, what measures are in place and how we are able to withstand and respond to extreme weather events.
64. Indicators to understand what's at risk could include the amount of coastline identified as at risk, the amount of services and public infrastructure in flood zones, the number of properties and cultural heritage sites in flood zones, and the number of low income and vulnerable communities at risk and the number of local businesses at risk.
65. We should be setting targets and identifying the range of adaptation measures taking place, including the adaptation measures identified in regional spatial plans and carried out in new developments, new infrastructure and the energy and industrial sectors. We should have targets and measures for the restoration (and conservation) of natural areas such as peat and wetlands, the net gain/loss of blue green space in built up areas, and the number of nature-based solutions integrated into our cities, towns, and transport systems. Our transport strategy has identified targets under its climate change outcome focus area⁶.
66. Funding, finance, and insurance measures should include insurance trends and the distribution and awareness of funding support for adaptation.
67. We should also track how we are able to cope with extreme weather events, such as the loss versus continuation of essential services during (and after) flood and extreme weather events, and landslides and weather events effecting the transport network.

⁶ Access Hamilton Strategy (Hamilton City Council).

Further Information and Hearings

68. Should the Environment Committee require clarification of the submission from Hamilton City Council, or additional information, please contact **Charlotte Catmur** (Sustainability and Climate Change Manager) on **07 838 6538** or email charlotte.catmur@hcc.govt.nz in the first instance.
69. Hamilton City Council representatives **do wish to speak** at the Environment Committee hearings in support of this submission.

Yours faithfully



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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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