

Notes from a meeting held with KCSRA and Council on 13 September 2022 4pm – Road Recovery Matters post August 2022 Storm event.

Attendees: Mark Wheeler (CEO), Dean Heiford (by ZOOM) and Marianne Atiken (CDEM Act Recovery Managers), Richard Coningham (MDC Assets and Services Manager), Neil Henry (MDC Strategic Planning and Economic development Manager); Andrew Caddie (President KCSRA), Alistair Cameron (by ZOOM - Vice President KCSRA) and KCSRA Committee members Adrian Harvey, Kevin Bright and Stefan Schulz (KCSRA Treasurer).

An agenda had been prepared and circulated by KCSRA earlier. KCSRA acknowledged that the Kenepuru Road network represented a significant area of recovery work as a consequence of the August 2022 Storm event but other Marlborough road networks eg Queen Charlotte Drive, French Pass Road etc were also significantly adversely impacted by the August event. It was agreed that the adverse impacts of this storm event were more widespread and intensive than the July 2021 Storm event. Sympathy was expressed by all for those property owners whose houses and properties had been red or yellow stickered. KCSRA had requested that Marlborough Roads engineering staff not attend this meeting.

What follows is not necessarily in chronological order and is a summary of an intensive and wide ranging discussion.

KCSRA Road Recovery Objective: KCSRA noted their objective for the recovery of the Kenepuru network:

“That the Kenepuru Road Network is open for resident light vehicles and trailers as soon as possible.”

KCSRA explained that the reference to “residents” included full time residents as well as bach owners. The reference to “open” meant legally open, noting the road was currently closed but drivable as a result of the initial efforts of locally based contractors (and resident locals) who had worked hard to push a track through. KCSRA noted that the current closed status was a real difficulty for emergency response organizations in terms of using it and also created difficulties for the likes of Marlborough Lines. A most undesirable situation. Council staff stressed throughout the meeting that the safety of both contractors and road users was paramount.

Funding: Mark noted that of the NZTA approved emergency funding of around \$80 million for the July 2021 storm event approximately \$46 million was unspent. Waka Kotahi contributed the maximum 95% Special Assistance Rate to the 2021 programme. The thinking was that this be agreed by NZTA to be allocated to assist in the initial Marlborough wide response to the August 2022 event. MDC was awaiting a response from NZTA. Mark noted that the likely cost of this event was still unclear as much assessment work remained to be done but it seemed that it would be several times the

magnitude of the cost of the July 2021 event.

KCSRA was concerned that this re-allocation approach could mean the four or five outstanding July 2021 major event areas (such as the Portage drop out) for which we were still awaiting plans of work and design from MR would be pushed back. In response Richard pointed out that this re-allocation might be better than losing the unspent money entirely. He was currently unable to give an assessment of NZTA thinking to use of the \$46 million but it was being considered.

Mark noted a recent NIWA report concerning what climate change might mean in practice had postulated that high rainfall events could be 40 % more intense in the Marlborough Sounds. Mark emphasized that this latest event had raised serious issues as to what service level MDC could commit to maintain on a sustainable basis into the future. It was noted that MDC had yet to decide whom to appoint as consultants to assist MDC/MR in the medium longer-term recovery operation but the scope of work was being defined quickly.

From a Recovery Manager point of view Dean noted the current Marlborough situation was “*larger, deeper, wider and harder*” than last year. Their priorities included improving access for heavy machinery and people. To this end they were looking at extending and strengthening the new Fish Bay barge ramp. He intended to urgently push along the much-delayed Torea Bay barge ramp revamp. KCSRA applauded this initiative.

MDC/Marlborough Roads Response to date: Richard advised that the experience gained from last year would mean the road operational assessments would be done faster and more comprehensively. They had identified as priorities six key road networks (these included QC Drive, French pass road and Kenepuru Road (Linkwater to Moetapu Bay Road, Kenepuru Road (Torea Bay to the Heads), Kenepuru Road (Fish Bay to the Heads)). Their objective in the medium term was to bring the level of service to that of one-lane access for a light truck with traffic light management where needed. In the case of Kenepuru road several caveats were identified. Essentially the section from Mahau to Portage was not on the priority list of roads at present due to the expected complexity and costs of restoration.

KCSRA noted that the MR objective appeared to fit in well with the KCSRA objective. Some robust discussion took place. Mark noted the initial response from Central Government to this approach was supportive. Richard noted that MDC/MR was assembling a contractor force to assist as field assessments were completed.

KCSRA comments re recovery response to date: KCSRA applauded the use of the locally based contractors in the response phase. KCSRA expressed at length their concerns that what they perceived as shortcomings of the current NZTA/JV was becoming apparent again. Alistair found it frustrating at the seeming lack of and haphazard organization on the ground/operationally. Why was it seemingly so difficult for MR to put the right people and equipment into action? Operational execution seemed

bedeviled by poor planning and a lack of common sense site supervision. KCSRA urged MDC, given the funding concerns, to correct this approach/culture as a priority.

Alistair took the dramatic scouring on the strategically important Torea Bay road as an example. Despite having a digger in the vicinity no effort was made to address the scouring. Alistair agreed to supply further details and photos for Richard.

KCSRA was most concerned to hear that Mr Price and his crew were no longer being deployed. As far as KCSRA could ascertain Mr Price met all the requisite Health and Safety standards and operational documentation. In this context KCSRA representatives emphasized the obvious efficiencies of using locally based and competent contractors again. Mark understood the benefits of local contractors but they had insufficient resource for the scale and complexity of these repairs and needed to comply with the required H & S standards. KCSRA noted the excellent way Mr Price and crew had responded to the challenges of the initial recovery work (again) and that KCSRA saw a role for locally based contractors such as Mr Price with respect to the more straightforward recovery and ongoing road maintenance work. KCSRA understood that the Price's held all the requisite H & S documentation.

Richard made the point that operational health and safety standards were a bottom line priority for MR and MDC. Richard produced photos of poor safety standards re truck tyres. This generated a vigorous response from KCSRA noting that these photos were nearly a year old and the matter had been resolved.

Richard acknowledged the KCSRA concerns over a seemingly excessive and thus expensive MR approach to traffic management. MR and MDC were investigating ways to streamline the traffic management approach bearing in mind the work was taking place on Council roads. However, Council was very aware of the need to avoid creating additional risk and liability issues. KCSRA offered some further suggestions for Council to consider here. Better public education/buy in and perhaps lowering of the speed limit to 30km per hour.

Greater participation by KCSRA in the recovery Process/planning: The MDC response was that they fully intended continuing to engage with the likes of KCSRA and the wider community but did not see efficiencies flowing from a more hands on approach as suggested. Marianne noted the upcoming Sounds wide ZOOM meeting as an example of their willingness to engage.

More General Operational matters: Dean was keen to hear where the recovery team could be of assistance eg rubbish collection, siting of additional Portaloo's, water taxi and barge subsidies. Andrew distributed some extracts from a position/discussion paper (Lessons from July 2021) that Alistair had prepared as part of the KCSRA meeting preparation.

Long Term Recovery Planning: Neil outlined the Long Term Recovery Planning work that is just getting underway. This will involve seeking government funding to undertake

some technical assessments such as geotechnical, land stability, economic and community impacts etc. The plan will include the following components:

- Plan for roading repair locations
- Locations/communities that will require alternative transport options, if any
- Future risks:
 - Climate change
 - Land stability
 - Safety
 - Economic impacts
 - Community impacts
- Land use planning
- Provision of key infrastructure – power, communications, water etc
- Stakeholder engagement

Next Steps

Richard was agreeable to being the KCSRA contact person for road related queries in the interim. KCSRA also issued an invitation to Richard to come out and see and for himself the drivable nature of the road by way of field trip.

MDC advised that it would take two weeks to allow for field assessments before it could consider reopening of Kenepuru Road for residents for light vehicles with trailers.

Andrew Caddie
President KCSRA
14 September 2022