

Meeting 21 November – KCSRA, MDC and NZTA representatives

Re-allocation of July 2021 Storm event budget to the event of August 2022 road recovery efforts and related matters concerning the Kenepuru road network.

Attendees: Mark Wheeler (MDC CEO), Dean Heiford (MDC/CDEM Recovery Manager), Steve Murrin (now MDC formerly Marlborough Roads (MR/NZTA)), Andrew Caddie (KCSRA), **virtually** - Tania Croucher (KCSRA), Trevor Offen (KCSRA), Emma Speight (NZTA – Director Regional Relationships).

An agenda had been prepared and circulated by KCSRA earlier.

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

Background

Following introductions Andrew turned to the letter from the CE of NZTA to Mark dated 5 October, which KCSRA had obtained via certain information requests concerning the above matter.

In that context KCSRA identified three July 2021 partially remediated complex sites on the Mahau to Portage section of Kenepuru Road. These sites being the Water tank slip area, the Portage drop out around the intersection of Kenepuru Road and Torea Bay Road and the Portage Heights site. These sites are located past Te Mahia driving to just past Portage. From the KCSRA perspective these fitted within the criteria of the NZTA letter in terms of reinstating viable transport connections and being sites, not much if at all, further impacted by the subsequent August 2022 event. KCSRA wanted to know what was happening?

Mass Movement Areas

Steve advised that the pressing concern were two areas of significant “mass movement” slip areas at Tara Bay and Te Mahia (roughly mid way in the Mahau to Portage section of Kenepuru Road) which were creating real concern for MDC/MR. Specialist geo technical engineers were working hard to better understand the degree of instability at these sites and advise MDC/MR accordingly. The concern was in another significant rain event these mass movement areas could really get going and effectively cut the Kenepuru road link in a very significant way. Under this scenario pending resolution of those studies and a workable solution existing there seemed little point, Steve opined, in progressing the other named sites. Further these sites seemed stable albeit, in Steve’s view, the Portage Height site was a bit bigger than it had been.

Post meeting Steve also added the Water Tank slip area as having suffered additional damage from the August 2022 event.

KCSRA pointed out that this approach was overlooking the linkage to the Torea Bay water access link meaning that completion of the Portage Heights area works and the

Portage drop out works are likely to be needed whether or not there is a complete road link from Portage to Linkwater.

Funding

Mark noted the uncertainty around the regional road recovery cost from the August 2022 event (initial estimates were in the range \$300 to 400 million) and how that might be funded given the lack of Council and NZTA budget, which in turn raised serious issues about sustainability. Emma commented on the national situation with Marlborough being but one of several regions whose road networks had been impacted by storm events. In this context Mark stressed that no predeterminations had been made and the MDC goal was to restore road access as widely as possible. MDC was very aware of the difficulties, socially and legally, of looking to close significant roads and something to be avoided if possible.

Emma noted that the NZTA Board was expecting the likes of MDC to very carefully assess sustainability of network issues and take an adaptive approach. Emma advised that this might well create the need for very difficult conversations with Councils and in turn with their communities as revised levels of road service and what that meant in practice were worked through.

KCSRA noted that they now had a good degree of visibility into the actual spending levels on Kenepuru Road after the July 2021 event. Around \$5 million. In this context KCSRA expressed concern at the very high level of spending on P&G, traffic management costs (\$1.7 M) and design work (\$1.27M) for the likes of the named July 2021 sites. Steve also noted significant barge and water taxi subsidy costs. Given the importance of the road and the risk of losing the effort and expense undertaken to date then why, KCSRA asked, delay the next phase of work.

Long Term Recovery Plan

KCSRA noted the three-phase approach set out by NZTA in its letter as part of its conditional approval of the July 2021 reallocation and inquired if MDC had undertaken any interim funding applications as envisaged by NZTA.

In essence MDC pointed to the Long Term Recovery Plan for which Stantec had been engaged to complete. This would provide the necessary assurances and level of certainty that the spend was warranted and stacked up when considered through a national lens.

KCSRA reiterated if the road past the potential mass movement areas was fixed then legal and safe access (for all residents past this point) to Picton could be achieved via Torea and access to Havelock via Portage and Fish Bay until such time as the Long Term Recovery Plan is finalised. The works in these areas would not be 'regrettable spend' but instead ensure the existing roading network is not allowed to deteriorate to a point where any form of upgrade to the network becomes cost prohibitive and Council are left in a position of having to fund in perpetuity an alternative access option for all properties along K Road (and feeder roads). This is the work that in the

view of KCSRA needed a funding application sooner rather than later. (Post meeting Steve opined that the work underway would improve access and try and minimise any further damage to sites from further weather events).

KCSRA sought detail as to what were covered in the terms of reference and when they might be available (shortly). In the context of discussion around Climate Change KCSRA sought comfort that MDC was clear on the scope of the Long Term Recovery Plan and what it is trying to achieve. A consensus seemed to emerge that it is not a Plan to solve Climate Change but instead a design analysis of roading options which use rainfall intensity and runoff rates that take into account the predicted impact of climate change.

KCSRA expressed real concern that this study could be 18 months to two years away and in the meantime the queue of other Council funding applications would not be getting any shorter. KCSRA urged MDC to consider interim funding applications as had been discussed rather than just rely on the Stantech study. MDC should be looking to spend time and money on key sites so as to retain the resilience, safety and drivability of the road. Emma expressed support for the MDC approach as minimising the risk of regretful spending but agreed that NZTA did anticipate further funding applications in advance of the Plan albeit there was something of a “chicken and egg” conundrum here.

Conclusion

KCSRA concluded the meeting on the basis that this was the first of an on-going sequence as KCSRA sought to better understand the July 2021 reallocation process, its impact on partially remediated key sites and the likes of the Improved Access program of works of which Mr Murrin distributed hard copies at the meeting.

Post meeting Mark commented that he saw little merit in revisiting the reallocation rather the focus should turn to the new short term work program and the levels of service, priorities and programmes after the new short term programme has been completed.

Andrew Caddie
President
Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association.
22 November 2022