

Kenepuru & Central Sounds



Kenepuru & Central Sounds Residents Association Inc.

Marlborough District Council
Marlborough Sounds Future Access Study

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Request to Participate in a Survey dated 18 December 2022 re Marlborough Sounds Future Access Study (Study) – Zone 3 – Kenepuru

Dear Neil

On 18 December the Marlborough District Council released a media package concerning the Study. Part of that release contained a stakeholder survey with the suggestion that interested parties may wish to respond to all or some of the Questions posed.

Accordingly, I am writing in my capacity as President of the Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents Association (**KCSRA**).

KCSRA (and its 320 (mainly household) members) is indeed a very interested party in the Study, primarily in so far as the Study pertains to the Kenepuru Road and the associated road network originating from it. I note Zone 3 (labelled Kenepuru) in the media package includes Queen Charlotte Drive by which the Kenepuru Road network is accessed via Linkwater. However the focus of these initial comments is in relation to the Kenepuru Road network.

Background

Kenepuru Road is integral to the road access network to the Mahau, Kenepuru and Central and Outer Sounds and has been for many generations. Many hundreds of property owners, residents, and businesses along with thousands of visitors rely on its availability for their social, cultural and economic wellbeing. Kenepuru Road is over 100kms in length including a number of significant side roads. It is the only way in and out of this area by road. To cut or sever part renders it like a bridge without a middle span.

Accordingly, since KCSRA was formed back in 1991, the resilience and security of the network and the safety of its users has been a core part of the work of KCSRA Committees over the decades.

However by 2017 the timely and competent repair and maintenance of the Kenepuru network (particularly around basic water management/carriage structures eg culverts) was increasingly seen as being less than reasonable or satisfactory leading to a concerning and accelerating degradation in the effectiveness, efficiency, security and resilience of the network both in the short and longer term. This is, in our view a significant reason why these two recent storm events have been particularly damaging to some sections of the Kenepuru network.

In any event, from 2017 there was a renewed effort by KCSRA to understand the contractual arrangements by which our Council had delegated operational control of the network to the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) under the banner of Marlborough Roads (MR) and then why in turn NZTA and its then contractors were failing to deliver a satisfactory level of service.

This was a time consuming and intensive work stream. However by early 2021 NZTA's new contractual arrangements and MDC/NZTA taking on board some of KCSRA's suggestions as to implementing more efficient and effective work and maintenance practices meant that KCSRA was hopeful matters might at last be improving.

However the July 2021 storm event had a significant adverse impact on various sections of Kenepuru road and indeed across the wider Marlborough Rural network and took the focus away from business as usual repairs and maintenance to achieving recovery of the Kenepuru Road network. After a very slow start the substantive recovery work was gathering steam but the August 2022 event has further disrupted matters. In particular the diversion of the moneys allocated to the Kenepuru Road network recovery response to the July 2021 event away from Kenepuru Road. This reallocation brought work on significant July 2021 event areas to a halt.

The financial reallocation is particularly galling given the fact that of the \$20 million agreed to be allocated to the Kenepuru Road network recovery after the July 2021 event, by August 2022, only around \$9 million had been spent. Of that sum over 40 percent of the spend was on the likes of "P&G", traffic management costs **with only \$5 million actually spent** on repairs to the road.

I have spent a little time on this background as KCSRA believes it is **very important** for those involved in the Study to grasp that KCSRA is not coming from a standing start but rather a detailed history of dealings/understandings in terms of advocating in the public interest that the Kenepuru Road network be an effective, efficient and safe land transport system for current and future users.

Further, KCSRA wishes to make it very clear that we believe many of the issues now facing us are a legacy of under investment in practical, competent and timely basic road maintenance¹. Going forward we believe this requires a fundamental shift in attitude and organisational culture to say nothing of Council urgently correcting the glaring omission of not having an experienced in house road engineer.

¹ Figure 11, page 25 of the Marlborough Roads report "*Unsealed Road Renewal Design Report*" August 2020 records the under investment in unsealed road maintenance compared to the Council's peers.

The Future Access Study

After a review of the Study materials we have been supplied with to date, as we see it the process envisaged is to ascertain options for what is required to repair and maintain the Kenepuru Road Network so it can provide a given level of service to users.

It is clear that in selecting options there is to be a great emphasis on affordability with little emphasis on matters such as outcomes that improve wellbeing and better social and economic connectivity. Hundreds of households /ratepayers live along this road.

In any event these options could range from public access (use) without restrictions as to types of vehicles, loads and lengths to access with varying degrees of restrictions and the facilitation of alternative transport means eg barge/water taxi, together with new and improved associated water transport infrastructure.

Once the options are ascertained, the Councils commissioned consultant (**Stantec**) is to take the slew of data and information to be provided from various sources and critically assess options against undefined metrics in order to select a preferred option and develop the financial, management and commercial case for the same.

Comments on the Survey

Legal framework: As noted the primary focus of the Study appears to be on physical data (eg geotechnical, hydrology), economic impacts and feasibility of any proposed further investment in recovery of the damaged parts of the Kenepuru Road network to a defined service level. The likes of efficiency and effectiveness of connectivity do not appear to be a key focus in any decision-making.

In this regard, as far as we can ascertain, Stantec have not been briefed (at a high level) as to the statutory regime by which the Kenepuru Road network is vested in and controlled by the Council. Nor has it been advised it seems on the Council's legal obligations as to maintaining effective connectivity, safety and resilience of the network for current and future users.

If we are correct this seems a significant oversight, which might result in an option not correctly being assessed (eg one that assumes loss of access) and should, **we recommend**, be corrected.

If Stantec have been in fact so briefed then we **request a copy of the information/briefing** paper so supplied. If not we request that the Council prepare and supply such a briefing paper for public use.

We understand that part of Council's obligations as a road controlling authority is to prepare a Regional Land Transport Plan. We understand that such a document for the period 2021 to 2031 has been prepared and finalized. However, as far as we can gather there is no reference in the Study to this plan and query why that is.

Study Objective: The media release states that the objective of the Study is the provision of safe, resilient and an affordable transport system.

The Investment Logic Map (ILM) prepared by Stantec, of which we have a copy, has as its outcome Statement to “*Provide **affordable** access for the wellbeing of Marlborough Sounds Communities, through a safe and resilient transport system*”. This introduces an undefined criterion of ‘affordability’ whilst also neglecting the key requirements of **effective and efficient** connectivity.

However, nowhere have we been able to ascertain what constitutes “affordable” or how Council intends to measure that. We are very concerned that Council is proceeding without a clear understanding as to what constitutes affordable in this context. Without such criteria being known in advance then this is, with all due respect, far too broad a statement even for a high level statement/objective.

Accordingly we request Council outline to KCSRA what is meant by its use of the word “affordable” in the Study objective and how it fits into the obligations of Council under the appropriate statutory framework.

Stantec Investment Logic Map: The ILM proposes to identify and weigh identified ‘problems’ - disrupted access (20%), lack of alternatives (30%) and asset vulnerability (50%). We are told that the ‘weightings’ were agreed with stakeholders – however we do not know who these stakeholders are and what the logic is behind these perceived problems and their given weightings. Further, whilst we are given weightings, we do not know how these ‘problems’ are to be quantified or monetised in the first instance.

The Council supplied to Stantec a RFIP document (Version 4) setting out the proposed LTRP scope of work. This is a little more detailed and anticipates recommendations from Stantec based on “*agreed factors and weightings, including investment objectives, wellbeing, critical success factors and affordability*”. Please **advise** who agreed these nebulous metrics and how are they to be determined.

Further, conspicuously absent from any “problem’, ‘benefit’ or “possible strategic response” identified in the ILM is **connectivity efficacy**. If the ‘problem’ really is ‘disruption’ caused by road closures whilst roads are repaired, it may be that the public prefer this ‘disruption’ to the alternative of travel by sea that is significantly more disruptive at both a practical and economic level.

Land Use Information: Fundamental to understanding the utility of the roading network, and thus its amenity value, is understanding how the roading network is actually used and valued by the public – recreationally, residentially, commercially and by visitors and tourists as well. We note that Item 2 of the original Council prepared RFIP scope of work document was “*Analysis of current land uses, economic activities, their infrastructure dependencies*” albeit with inputs coming only from Council, business and industry users and barge and transport companies.

In the signed Council/Stantec contract Item 2 has been removed from appendix 1 and engagement on land use (i.e. public values) now only occurs at Item 4 of that appendix - where there is to be *effective engagement with stakeholders throughout the process to understand economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts, to discuss desired outcomes and to explain options.*

The concern is that the process anticipates public consultation only after initial options have been developed - i.e. initial options are being developed without any feedback on (or regard to) the efficacy of the options from the public's perspective.

For KCSRA members this goes largely to the efficacy of sea transport alternatives – e.g. for land users for whom boat ownership is unaffordable, for whom there is no practicable access to water transport, or that are too far from Havelock for water transport to be a feasible transport option - such as land users in the Beatrix Basin or outer Pelorus. There is also the need for connectivity as between land users and local resources and activities as much as there is a need to preserve connectivity of the Sounds to state highways/towns.

These are factors that, in our view, should have been consulted on and factored into the initial matrix of options from the outset – as well as sub-area specific factors such as the relatively resilient nature of the outer Kenepuru Road network.

A significant and predominant form of land use in the area serviced by the network is that of domestic dwellings. This land use transforms relatively small land areas into valuable properties. In turn this land use creates valuable income streams for both the public and the Council. As far as we can ascertain Stantec is not being supplied with details of the number, extent and value of domestic and other dwellings or the revenue streams these have or may generate for owners and the Council going forward.

It is unclear if the cost benefit analysis will or is required to consider how these private and Council revenue streams will be impacted by the initial long list of options. This needs to be **clarified** by Council.

Value of the existing Network: The Kenepuru Road network represents many decades of investment by ratepayers and developers and in more recent times from Central Government. Given the focus on the damage resulting from these events on parts of the road network it needs to be stressed that the **majority of the network has not been impacted** in any meaningful way. It exists in much the same state as it was before the events. To be clear KCSRA is strongly opposed to seeing this investment discarded.

In this context we note that there appears to be no information being supplied to Stantech as to the current value of the existing network in terms of historical cost or book value. This is concerning as it seems a relevant factor in any analysis. Accordingly, we request Council supply the figures/information it has or will be supplying to Stantech on this aspect.

Service Levels and Options: The Scope contemplates a review of different service levels that could be achieved through implementation of '*different forms of reconnection*'. There appears to be no requirement to consider if or how different service levels might be achieved through the implementation of different engineering solutions. We anticipated that the \$500K fee would go quite some way toward this sort of analysis - but it seems that little will actually be spent in this direction – with only \$150K going on 'data collation and analysis' – and this seems to be about collating and analysing historical/existing data - and the rest going to drafting and communications.

It would seem somewhat remiss, we respectfully suggest, contemplating the future of Sounds roads without a thorough look at the costs and feasibility of different repair or improvement options.

It would be most unfortunate if the option of a **one-off** upgrade (albeit potentially significant) of water carriage systems (i.e. **bigger** culverts and ditches to cope with the higher rainfall events anticipated through climate change) were not on the table as a preferred or targeted outcome.

As noted, we believe that a significant portion of damage arising from the 2021 and 2022 events was caused by inadequate design and maintenance of water carriage infrastructure (culverts and ditches).

For this reason the use of naked historical data to model future maintenance costs stands to give rise to a significant over-statement of costs. This is accentuated by significant historical inefficiencies caused, we believe, by the contractual arrangements entered into by Marlborough Roads on behalf of Council to repair and maintain the Sounds roads being largely unfit for purpose.

Accordingly, we are of the view there is a very clear need for Council/Marlborough Roads to **fully disclose** the data that it intends to use for its costing inputs in the analysis and the basis/logic behind that data/costings.

Costing of Alternative Transport Options: Currently the Council and NZTA are committed to supplying significant subsidies for Kenepuru Road users to use alternative transport means such as barge access and water taxis. For the six months ending March 2023 this is estimated at around \$1.4 million.

It is likely that one or more of the long list of options will be prefaced on various classes of road users being able to use subsidised (in whole or in part) alternative water based transport options if access to the Kenepuru Road network is severed in one or more sections.

However, as far as we can ascertain, costing information concerning such alternatives has not been supplied to Stantec. If correct this needs to be corrected and shared with stakeholders.

Alternative Transport Infrastructure: The use of subsidised water access to service the Kenepuru particularly in relation to farming and other businesses has, we understand, thrown up real shortcomings with the existing infrastructure and the generally viability of running alternative transport options. This is before the cost of barge ramps, jetties and maintenance of internal roading to a standard to allow heavy vehicles get to and from these sites is taken into account.

Accordingly, we enquire if any work has been done by Council on the cost of maintaining essentially a water ferry service into/across Kenepuru Sound which would run all year round and be available at set times a day. The service would need to be able to transport people, freight & vehicles on a regular and on-going basis.

Conclusion

It is appropriate that Council has given us the opportunity to comment on the Scope and Study documentation we have received to date. As can be seen we raise a number of fundamental and important questions.

However, for Council to discharge its statutory responsibilities as a road controlling authority to maintain connection effectiveness, efficiency, security and resilience of the Kenepuru Road network, to say nothing of the moral duties it owes to the public, then these questions need to be answered before Council or Stantec select the recovery options.

We look forward to your response.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Caddie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Andrew Caddie

President Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association