

### Kenepuru Road ratepayers shocked by roading funding change

Fixing the Kenepuru Sounds roading system is vital for Sounds businesses, communities and visitors, the Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association says.

The Marlborough District Council has published draft proposals for funding the road repairs throughout the Marlborough Sounds, and Association President Andrew Caddie says it is good to see the work take another step in what has been a long and complex process.

He encouraged people to take part in the public consultation process.

Andrew says the Kenepuru area in particular has been left isolated for more than two and half years after two severe storms damaged the roads in 2021 and 2022. Since the August 2022 storm, Kenepuru road has been closed to the public, with residents able to use it only in a limited way at some risk and uncertainty as to insurance cover.

He says the proposals to make Sounds residents pay more for the road repairs goes against the traditional council policy that saw all ratepayers pay the same amount for all roading costs throughout Marlborough. Under the Council's preferred option a Kenepuru ratepayer with a land value of \$350,000 would, quite quickly, be faced with a special rate bill of a thousand dollars and rising. "This proposed policy change has big implications for the future, particularly for Marlborough's many rural communities. Today, it's the Sounds, but next time, it could be the Awatere Valley, and then the time after that, the Waihopai Valley. People need to think carefully about this, and the reasons for this dramatic shift to a more divisive policy need to be better explained by the council."

Andrew Caddie also questioned the council's earmarking of more than \$40 million of the Council funding for "marine improvements" in the Sounds. "This hugely inflates the costs, and quite frankly, the council needs to do more to justify this vast expense on marine facilities few want to actually use, let alone pay for.

"The reality is that people want to drive on the existing road network, 90% of which is undamaged. They need to have trucks and other vehicles access the roads for many activities, such as taking livestock out, or bringing in building

supplies or tradesmen to maintain services. Going by water is just too expensive.”

Repairs for the first storm damage had barely got underway on the Kenepuru roads when the second storm swept through, he said.

“There was more than \$10 million of allocated Government funding for repairs on the Kenepuru roads that was then reallocated for road repairs elsewhere in Marlborough by council. This does not seem to have been factored in. Our community is feeling let down and isolated.

“The Kenepuru community has not been well-served during this difficult time. The road needs to be efficiently and competently repaired, soon, and at a fair shared cost. After all, the Sounds are put front and centre when Council promotes Marlborough as a tourist destination.”