

A Moment with our Mayor



Coastal erosion is everybody's problem

Most of us live in Kāpiti because we love being near the beach but we all know there is a downside. In the last couple of weeks a dose of reality has hit home.

A series of maps released by council show in stark detail the likely impact of climate change and a rise in sea levels on our coastline.

Climate change is an issue for communities worldwide and with its extensive low lying coast and expected increase in storm intensity, Kāpiti is particularly exposed. While most of us have known about the threat for sometime, lines on a map cutting through properties and coastal roads certainly drives the message home.

Clearly the news is a shock to some while others have greeted it with resigned acceptance. A small number are lawyering-up - attacking the message and the messenger.

Some facts: My council, along with every other council in New Zealand, was directed by the Government to assess how their district was likely to be impacted by climate change over the next 100 years. The assessment was carried out by leading coastal scientists and has been extensively peer reviewed.

As soon as we received this information, council was legally bound to include it on LIMs requested by purchasers of affected properties (in the same way that flooding hazard information is). Indeed, if Council withheld this information it would be open to legal challenge from any purchaser who bought a property that Council knew to be subject to coastal erosion.

A good analogy can be found in the operation of the share market. When a company becomes aware of an issue that could affect its share price they must make the information freely available to the market without delay, irrespective of whether it favours buyers or sellers.

Some have criticised council for including the information on LIMs before notifying owners - we had no option.

Residents can challenge the location of the lines or the rules relating to them through the District Plan hearing process but they'll need expert evidence to challenge the location of the lines on their property.

If experts agree, the lines for sites will be amended and the information on LIMs adjusted accordingly. If you are still not happy with the outcome you can take the matter to the Environment Court.

Climate change is an issue for our entire community and, while the news may be hard for some, the risk of erosion is not new. Council has a responsibility to alert residents and help the community prepare for predicted changes ahead. If we did nothing, we could be open to even greater legal challenge.

Have a good week

Jenny