

## **Tamahere-Woodlands Councillors' update March 2023: Cyclone clean-up, progress on local government reform, and more!**

Restoration of the damage caused by two major weather events in just two weeks in our District in the past month is ongoing and – at the time of writing - may have an impact on the Council's work programmes for a while.

Waikato District Council was one of 11 Councils to declare a State of Emergency before the Government declared a National State of Emergency as we faced the impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle.

More than 100 roads in the District were impacted with trees down, slips and flooding. People were evacuated from low-lying areas in the north of the District along the Waikato River near Port Waikato. More than 2,300 properties around the District lost electricity, and several areas also lost mobile phone connectivity.

Many of the roads and houses impacted by the wild weather need the ongoing attention of the Council's engineers, building inspection and roading teams as the restoration effort continues.

Overall, the Tamahere-Woodlands Ward was affected less than other Wards in the District, but still suffered road closures, electricity outages and some loss of connectivity which, together, had a considerable impact on some rural residents, especially those who needed to keep milking.

With the current focus on the clean-up and restoration effort, there will be a flow-on impact on some Council work programmes. Nevertheless, Mike Keir and I, Crystal Beavis, would still encourage you to continue to use the Council's online request system, or phone the Council on 0800 492 452, when you see things that need to be fixed (eg pot holes) and your requests will continue to be dealt with as soon as possible.

These recent weather events put a new light on the need for the Council to address climate change resilience and this will be a focus for the Council's new Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee moving forward.

Another focus in the past month has been the Government's resource management reform programme which will see the Resource Management Act 1991 repealed and new laws introduced to change the way we manage the environment. Two new Bills, the Spatial Planning Bill and the Natural and Built Environment Bill, are currently at Select Committee stage. They are expected to be followed by a Climate Adaptation Bill to address how New Zealand deals with climate change, particularly 'managed retreat'.

In submissions on the first two Bills, key concerns raised by Waikato District Council included:

- the loss of local voice - with planning decisions proposed to become a responsibility of unelected Regional Planning Committees,
- the funding and resourcing challenges for local councils and the need for central government to invest more in its own reform programme, and
- potential misalignment between the three pieces of resource management reform legislation, as well as with other major reforms (including Three Waters reform) that have the potential to fundamentally change local government and how services are delivered.

At the time of writing, the Council has yet to sign off its submission on 'He mata whāriki, he matawhānui' (the local government reform discussion document) which was released by the Future for Local Government Review Panel in October last year. The draft submission can be read in the Council agenda for 24 February on the Council website.

At its February meeting the Council is also expected to approve two new draft bylaws to replace its Public Places Bylaw, subject to consultation with the community this month (March). Traffic provisions in the current bylaw have been separated into a new Traffic Bylaw which will include some new provisions to provide a basis for policing 'boy racer' activities.

Among other Council activities, the first Creative Communities Scheme funding round for the year is currently open for applications, closing at 5pm on Friday 10 March. Its goal is to increase participation by the local community in the arts sector. Please check out the details on the Council website [www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz](http://www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz).

A final note - New Zealand's five-yearly census takes place on 7 March, so while most people in Tamahere-Woodlands can expect to get their census forms in the post, you may still see Government Census officers (in a recognisable uniform) out and about in the District delivering forms to rest homes and other residential facilities. You can also fill in your census online line at [www.census.govt.nz](http://www.census.govt.nz).

***Contact your Tamahere-Woodlands Councillors:***

Crystal Beavis, mob 0275 957 927, email [crystal.beavis@waidc.govt.nz](mailto:crystal.beavis@waidc.govt.nz)

Mike Keir, mob 027 449 3012, email [mike.keir@waidc.govt.nz](mailto:mike.keir@waidc.govt.nz)