

Ohiti Stopbank Report on the October 8 Community Meeting

Te Piringa Hapū and B2R hosted a public meeting to discuss the Hawke's Bay Regional Council's (HBRC) proposal for a stop bank along Taihape Road. The purpose of the stop bank is to protect flood-prone properties near Broughton's Bridge in the Ohiti area and reclassify the Ohiti properties from a Category 2C to Category 1. Approximately 50 community members attended the meeting, including councillor representatives from both the Hastings District Council (HDC) and the HBRC, as well as residents living within the flood catchment area who have been affected by flooding, bridge damage, and road closures.

Presentations by Council staff and consultants

1. The presenters emphasised that their sole responsibility was to reclassify 14 properties, from C2C to C1, that were affected by flooding during Cyclone Gabrielle. They declined to discuss the potential impacts of the proposed stop banks on road closures, bridge damage, or upstream flooding of homes, citing that these issues fell outside the scope of their work. Concerns were raised regarding the limited scope, as the project could potentially affect numerous landowners further upstream, an aspect that had not been considered in the current project outline.
2. Detailed costs were not provided - only the total budget of \$10m.
3. The timetable is tight and Council said there is '...zero opportunity...' to extend the cutoff date (2027).
4. Flow modelling results for the 'preferred option' below were presented and said to be within budget and enabling re-classification. Other options were not provided for feedback from the community. (That modelling is [available](#) on the B2R website.)
5. The current flow modelling accounts for floods up to a 1-in-100-year event. The impact of larger floods, such as 'over design' events like Cyclone Gabrielle, has not yet been assessed but is planned for future evaluation. This means the HBRC does not currently know if, or to what extent, the proposed option could pose a risk to the Omahu community and the bridge during significant flood events. HBRC has also indicated that the entire Heretaunga Plains is under review, with plans to redesign the stop banks for a 1-in-500-year flood standard. However, no timeline has been provided, as the project is still in the design phase.

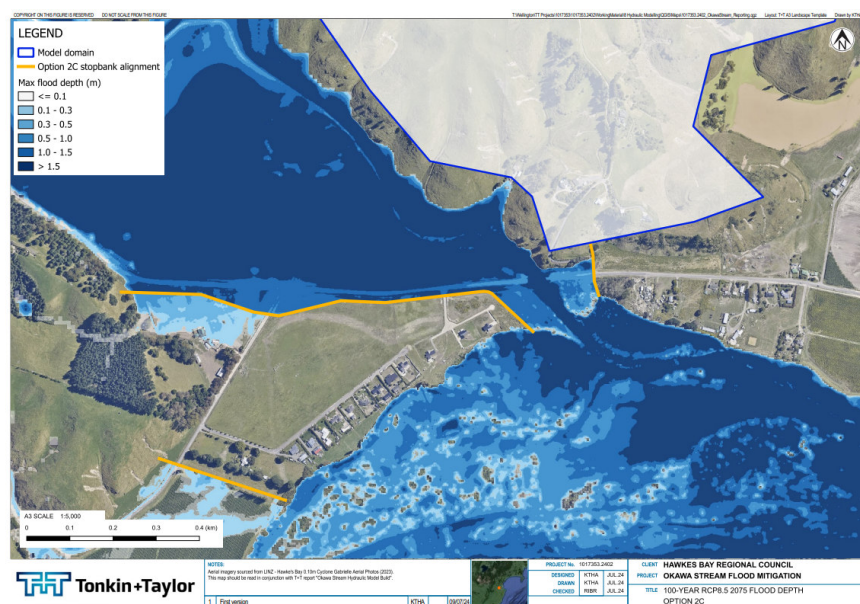


Figure 1. Predicted water depths for the 'preferred option' during a 1:100 year flood in the Ohiwia Stream.

Responses from community:

1. **Frustration Over Lack of Consultation:** The community expressed frustration at being informed of the HBRC intentions without the opportunity to fully understand or discuss all available options.
2. **Concerns About Premature Work:** There was concern that pre-construction work is set to begin in October and that land purchases seem to be underway, despite the fact that the scheme has not yet been consented. HBRC response to this was that they needed to secure the land to ensure the project was viable before informing the community.
3. **Poor Communication and Engagement:** The communication between HBRC and the affected property owners has been insufficient.
 - a. HBRC has largely focused its engagement on property owners whose land is directly required for the project. Even then, Council has failed to talk to or effectively engage with other impacted landowners whose land may now be used for or impacted by the revised design. Landholders upstream have not seen modelling of how the stopbank and bunds might impact their properties for the scenarios modelled (=1:100 year events) or in more severe events.
 - b. The last community hui was held in January 2024, making it nine months since the community has received a comprehensive update. While HBRC has stated that they have been distributing update newsletters, it appears that not all members of the community are included on the distribution list, and the updates provided have lacked detailed information regarding the project's progress.
 - c. The broader community has not been effectively communicated with and council appears to deem it unaffected. However, that community feels its concerns, especially the risk to Broughton's Bridge, have been downplayed even though modelling suggests otherwise and more severe events have not been modelled to determine access issues.
4. **Upstream Impact on Broughton's Bridge:** The community repeatedly raised concerns about the potential impact on upstream areas if Broughton's Bridge were damaged.
 - Modelling suggests damage is unlikely in a 1-in-100-year flood event.
 - An assessment of risk from larger 'overdesign' events, such as Cyclone Gabrielle, has yet to be completed.
5. **Order in Council and Expert Panel:** It was noted by HBRC that the Order in Council requires an Expert Panel to ensure any adverse impacts of the scheme are minimal before consent is granted. There is no right to appeal the Expert Panel's decision, and only the 14 landowners directly involved have the opportunity to provide feedback.
6. **Insurance Challenges:** Two property owners reported that insurance companies have refused to provide coverage, raising concerns that property owners may be unable to secure insurance, even if the stop banks are constructed.
7. **Council Advocacy with Insurance Companies:** HD Councillor Xan Harding reported that high-level discussions are ongoing between the HDC and insurance companies, though no timeline or specific details have been provided. He noted, however, that the HDC's ability to influence which properties are insured is limited, as insurance companies retain the right to make decisions based on the risk profile of each individual landowner.
8. **Flood Hazard Zone Questions:** Five properties lie within a flood hazard zone identified by the HDC before subdivision and building consents were granted. Questions were raised in previous meetings as to why these properties were allowed to be developed in the first place.

9. **Property Buyouts and Stopbank Relocation:** The meeting also explored the possibility of buying out these properties and relocating a section of the stopbank. This option would widen the gap for floodwaters near Broughton's Bridge, potentially reducing the risk of damage.
10. **Call for Alternative Modelling:** The community expressed a strong interest in seeing flow modelling for this alternative option. However, the Hawke's Bay Regional Council (HBRC) declined to consider it, stating that "protecting only 10 rather than 14 properties would adversely affect the business case for the stop bank." This decision was criticized, particularly given the issue of uninsurability, which many argue changes the business case, whether or not HBRC chooses to report that to the government.

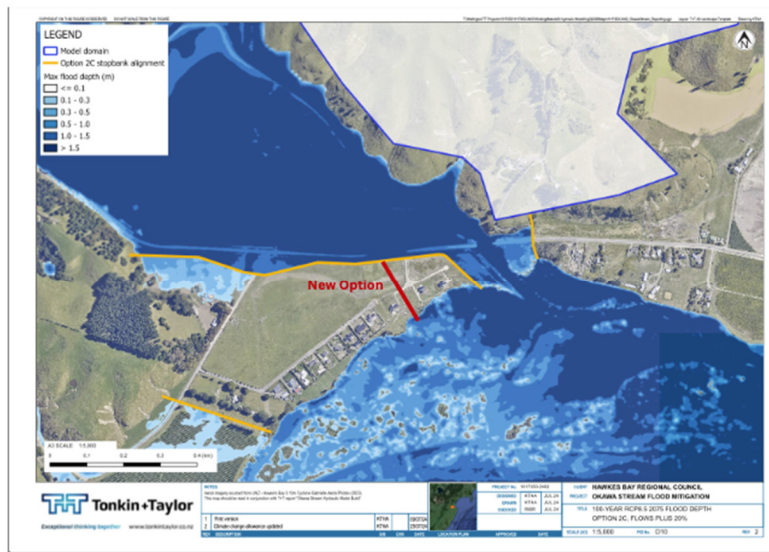


Figure 2. The suggested 'new option' which the hui requested be investigated.

The meeting considered and approved (with one dissenting voice) a motion that Councils (HBRC and HDC) act in accordance with the recommendation from the recent [Independent Flood Review](#):

"It is essential that HBRC treats the region's communities as project partners, rather than consulting and seeking feedback once much of the scoping and critical thinking has already occurred"

The meeting also recommended that Te Piringa Hapū and B2R be involved in setting the brief for, and reviewing the results from, analysis of 'over design' events to ensure adverse impacts are 'minimal'.

Council have committed to a second community meeting within 4-6 weeks.

B2R is now pressing councils to:

- model the new option to see if this presents a better solution for all the community, for
- release costings and analysis for all flood protection measures considered
- talk to all affected landholders
- come back to the community with this analysis before any final decisions are made.