

Waiheke down the queue for council's shoreline plans

Shoreline adaptation plans are being rolled out across Auckland in the wake of recent devastating floods - but with Waiheke's plan scheduled for 2025, the local board has asked to jump the queue.

Specialist teams are working on assessing different areas of the city, with the Waiheke Shoreline Adaptation Plan flagged for the latter half of 2024 and the start of 2025.

Local board chair Cath Handley says members have worked hard to advocate for this through their budget for several years.

"I have asked if we can jump the queue and if not, why not? So that we get an understanding of the weightings they've used to allocate timing and resource," she told *Gulf News*.

Meanwhile, across the Tamaki Strait, Beachlands' shoreline adaptation plan now has a stamp of approval by councillors.

At the Planning, Environment and Parks committee on 2 March, Kahawairahi ki Whakatiwai, Beachlands and East coast shoreline adaptation plan (SAP) was the third of its kind to be approved.

City-wide SAPs are being developed by Auckland Council to manage its coastal assets as erosion and rising sea levels bite into shorelines.

The Beachlands and East coast plan was divided into 31 coastal sections and, while the report said most shoreline areas could be managed over the short and medium term, there were several stretches where council staff recommended moving back walkways and infrastructure.

For the short and medium term these were Leigh Auton Reserve, western Omana Esplanade Reserve and western Maraetai Beach.

The long-term strategy also looks to set



This landmark pōhutukawa tree collapsed at Pūtiki Bay blocking the beach.

Photo Liza Hamilton

back infrastructure on six other stretches of coast.

Councillor Julie Fairey said coastal erosion was one of the difficult conversations in Auckland communities.

"[Some Aucklanders] are going through stages of grief. Denial's one of those right? Getting people to accept change," Fairey said.

Fairey asked how council staff were encouraging Aucklanders to back the process while developing SAPs.

Resilient Land and Coasts general manager Paul Klinac said people had a hard time seeing what managed retreat and naturalisation looked like.

"(They are) used to seeing a sea wall. We are talking about removing the sea wall and working with nature to restore what was there pre-modification," Klinac said.

He said being able to show people successful areas of naturalisation was helpful.

"Post-flooding and Cyclone Gabrielle I think we are still in a part of the conversation where communities are asking lots of questions around the why and what is next."

He said Aucklanders had an "appetite" for information and his team were trying to collect and provide as much information as possible.

Councillor Andy Baker said Aucklanders will be weighing up what the changing shoreline means to them.

"Time and time again the people look at what we are doing and how they can apply that to their land," Baker said.

Several public sessions were held on the Beachlands and Eastern Coastline SAP, including community engagement days, online public events and digital engagement, which Baker said were valuable to the community.

SAPs are continuing to be developed across the city, with the next two planned for Manukau South and Āwhitu Peninsula.

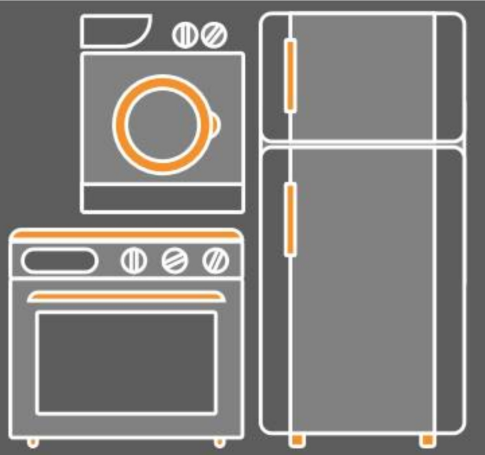
A sum of \$29 million has been allocated for the renewal of coastal assets for the next three years in the council's long-term plan. The SAP report acknowledged there would need to be a significant increase in funding for renewals.

Once all the SAPs are completed, the council will begin a prioritisation scheme to see how much money is needed. • *Laura Kvigstad, Auckland Council reporter funded by New Zealand on Air with additional reporting by Liza Hamilton*

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Commerce Commission complaint filed

Tired of waiting for politicians, Auckland Transport and Fullers to make progress in addressing longstanding concerns about the reliability of the Waiheke ferry service, a Waiheke woman is taking action. Belinda Fabris has filed a complaint with the Commerce Commission, alleging Fullers is failing to meet its obligation under the Consumer Guarantees Act to provide its service, as scheduled, with “reasonable care and skill”.

Belinda says cancellations and delays are so common, island residents can't rely on the ferry to get to the mainland in time for medical or work appointments. “You can't even tell somebody ‘oh I'll meet you [in town] at 12,’ because you can't know if you will make it on time - or ever. And that's not good enough for public transport.”

Despite years of complaints, and politicians promising to get something done, the service has not improved - so Belinda says it's time for Waihekians to make more noise and put more pressure on Fullers. She is sharing the Commerce Commission's phone number and links to its website on social media and community notice boards in a campaign to encourage others to lodge complaints. Belinda says she understands once enough people complain, the commission will investigate the issue and may impose fines or take Fullers to court if the complaints are substantiated.

The last straw for her came just over a week ago. Her friends, visiting the island for a wedding, needed to get back to town to pick up their son from the airport. She told them to try for the 3pm ferry, so they'd have some leeway - but it ended up taking three hours before they got aboard.

Fullers CEO Mike Horne has previously told *Gulf News* the company provides as reliable a service as possible, while dealing with an ongoing staffing shortage. Mike says the number of cancellations due to maintenance issues is actually fairly



Belinda Fabris is campaigning on community notice boards to get Waiheke residents to lodge complaints against Fullers with the Commerce Commission to put pressure on the company to improve its ferry service's reliability. Photo Paul Mitchell

low. “Of the 1,400 Fullers360 services to and from Waiheke in December 2022, 1.3 percent were cancelled due to general maintenance-related events.”

Critics, such as Auckland Central MP Chloe Swarbrick, say the problems with reliability, a lack of public oversight and transparency, and the service having the highest fares in the Hauraki Gulf are due to its exemption from the Public Transport Operational Model since 2013.

Last year, Minister of Transport Michael Wood announced he'd started the legal process to remove the exemption and Auckland Transport negotiated a new Quality Partnership Agreement with Fullers, setting new minimum service standards.

Auckland Council's Transport and Infrastructure Committee has asked staff for a report on how well Fullers is meeting those standards, which is expected back this month.

Chloe Swarbrick says she has also submitted written questions to the minister in

Parliament asking what is happening with moves to remove the exemption.

“There have been unsatisfactory delays to the timeliness of this but it is crucial that every step is followed to a tee because we are dealing with a potentially very expensive, arduous and litigious situation were it not to be.”

In the meantime, the government is making legal changes and reforms to replace PTOM with the Sustainable Public Transport Framework by 2024.

Chloe says just removing the exemption will go a huge way towards improving reliability and bringing fares in line with other Gulf ferry services. “While the Sustainable Public Transport Framework, as outlined by the Minister of Transport's declared intention, would also provide a far greater framework for transparency, convenience, affordability and servicing. How this may work in practice, though, is yet to be seen because we have not seen the bill/s” • Paul Mitchell

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