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| Thursday, 2 March 2023 |

*He Tukunga Pāpāho***Media Release**

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| Subject: | Counting the cost of ex-Cyclone Gabrielle |

Counting the cost of ex-Cyclone Gabrielle

Hastings district has been hit hard by ex-Cyclone Gabrielle, and the cost of the essential response and recovery will have an impact on Hastings District Council’s funding priorities in the years ahead.

At their first full meeting since the cyclone hit on February 13, councillors heard today that to date the costs incurred to support the response were $1.3m – excluding roading and three waters (drinking water, stormwater, wastewater) infrastructure expenses.

The roading network has been damaged significantly by the event – nine bridges destroyed, seven badly damaged, and 19 with damage to their approaches. Thirty bridges are yet to be assessed.

Council is currently spending over $600,000 a day on essential roading repairs and access restoration alone, and some of this work may take months to complete.

Alongside this priority to get rural communities reconnected, clean-ups and repairs have also had to be carried out on areas such as the Ōmarunui Landfill, parks and reserves, and establishing a free service collecting flood-damaged items from areas where flooding occurred.

Hastings mayor Sandra Hazlehurst said that insurance and channels for funding assistance from Central Government were available to help offset the costs, but the event would still have a big financial impact on the Council.

“There’s no question that we need to be directing our immediate efforts on supporting our community facing the devastating impact of this event, and repairing the damage to our infrastructure to ensure we can keep providing our services.

“Just as important, if not more so, is the need to look ahead and turn our focus to our district’s recovery. This will involve multiple agencies across the region, and nationally, and will focus not just on our infrastructure but also the wider economy, restoring business confidence, and attending to cultural and social needs.

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“We are already in discussions with key partners and stakeholders to ensure we have a co-ordinated approach to support our district’s recovery; that this is done as efficiently and effectively as possible, targeting the areas of most need.”

In light of this unexpected and unprecedented event for Hastings district, Council’s existing financial strategy and investment priorities would have to be reassessed and possibly changed to meet the needs of the community and achieve sustainable recovery outcomes, she said.

“As we move beyond providing the emergency response, we are going to have to take a hard look at our priorities as outlined in the Long Term Plan 2021-31, and there may need to be changes to the planned investment activities.

“This is going to be a key focus area in the weeks and months ahead, and we will be asking the community for feedback on any proposed changes as we work through this process.

“Uppermost in our mind is the wellbeing of our people and the effective and safe delivery of our essential services. This event has tested us all and there are many who will need our help for months to come.”

ENDS

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