

9 May 2025

## Regional Climate Change Risk Assessment Report FAQs

### 1. About the Climate Action Joint Committee

#### What is the Climate Action Joint Committee?

The Climate Action Joint Committee (CAJC) is a joint council and tangata whenua committee brought together to drive co-ordinated climate action in Hawke's Bay.

#### When was it formed?

In 2023, after the last local body elections.

#### What is its purpose/mandate?

The Committee aims to provide collaborative leadership to support the region to address the complex challenges of climate change and its impacts. Specifically to support co-ordinated and collaborative responses to climate resilience development, to promote action to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and to support communities and industries to become resilient to climate change.

The Climate Change Risk Assessment Report is a key deliverable for the joint committee.

#### Who are the members of the Committee?

The 20-strong committee comprises two representatives from each of the region's councils, representatives from post treaty settlement group entities, and two from Ngāti Kahungunu Taiwhenua and Board representatives on the Regional Māori Committee. The Chair of the Joint Committee is Hawke's Bay Regional Council (HBRC) Councillor Xan Harding, and the Deputy Chair is Napier City Councillor Hayley Browne.

#### Where does this committee sit in the hierarchy of committees within Hawke's Bay Local Government?

This committee is one of several regional joint committees. This committee has a regional mandate in recognition of the need to work collaboratively to drive climate action to make regional progress. The joint committee doesn't have the power to make decisions for each of the five councils.

### 2. About the Climate Change Risk Assessment Report

#### Why commission the report?

The report is a key milestone for our region. It's a technical report that has been produced and made publicly available so everyone in our community has the same information about our climate risks.

Climate change is happening, and it is affecting our natural and built environments and how we live, now and into the future. We need to understand those changes and how they could impact our way of life in Te Matau a Māui Hawke's Bay.

The role of the committee in producing this report is to support the region to address the complex challenges of a changing climate. Having a report that brings all the risks together at regional and district levels is an important first step to taking action to reduce our risks and seize new opportunities that arise with climate change.

### **What will the report do?**

It is the first ever comprehensive assessment of the full range of climate risks we are exposed to here in Hawke's Bay (not just flooding), and describes how climate change could impact the way we and future generations will live.

It will tell us about the climate risks we are most exposed to (regional and district level), and what impact those risks could have.

It will help inform us all – councils, mana whenua and communities, public services, lifeline services, industries and business of the risks we face.

It will help us make informed decisions about climate adaptation and resilience at regional and district levels, to reduce risks and adapt in ways that will have positive intergenerational impacts.

### **Where has the information come from to compile the report?**

A range of national, regional and district sources. This includes public information sources like the Hawke's Bay Hazard Portal (<https://gis.hbrc.govt.nz/hazards/>). Most of the data used to inform the assessment is held by councils, government agencies, research institutes and the economic sector. The report synthesises available and accessible data appropriate for this level of assessment with expert analysis to present a broad range of climate risks and their likely impacts.

### **Why do we need this report?**

Because climate change is happening and we need to be confident we are making the right decisions for future generations in the face of a changing climate. Understanding what we do know, where we need to know more, and sharing that information publicly is critical to everyone making informed decisions to respond to the risks and opportunities we face.

It's a foundational evidence piece for the region, to help inform and guide future climate adaptation work, including how and where we live and adaptation options to reduce our risks. It brings together existing data and information from councils and other sources with independent expert advice to form a cohesive picture of what we do know, right now.

It's not only for councils, but for everyone in our community including mana whenua and local businesses/sectors. We need to understand our current and likely future risks so we can be confident in our future investments and decision-making.

### **Who has done the work to bring together all the information – what are their credentials?**

Urban Intelligence are risk specialists who support their clients and communities to navigate climate change, by understanding climate change risk. Urban Intelligence has undertaken climate risk assessments and supported other local councils around New Zealand in their climate risk and adaptation work programmes. They also supported the work of the Climate Change Commission in 2024 to assess national adaptation progress.

### **What is the role of the report in decision making for councils? For the community?**

We expect that councils will use it to inform future climate adaptation work, support future planning, and to work alongside mana whenua to have conversations with communities about where to prioritise action to reduce climate risks and reduce vulnerabilities over time.

We would also expect councils to use it alongside their current climate work programmes relating to asset management, water security, land management, flood management and biodiversity. Councils should be embedding climate risk information into all their decision-making, at all levels. It will also help Councils to see where the gaps in knowledge are and consider how to obtain additional useful information.

We expect that the community will also make use of it to inform their own activities, particularly in conversations about future development, shared investment in adaptation options to reduce risks, and for community or sector-led adaptation action, such as place-based or sector-specific adaptation plans.

### **Who is this report for?**

It's for the region, and for everyone – its people, businesses, Māori, lifeline services, central government, and for councils, because climate change affects us all.

### **I can see relevance for councils, how is it relevant for other audiences?**

The report will enable anyone that reads it to understand the risks that their community faces and take action, if they choose.

### **Why doesn't the report offer any adaptation action suggestions?**

It's up to individual councils to take the next steps regarding climate change adaptation within the areas they are responsible for. This includes having conversations with their communities about the findings to discover what kind of actions to reduce risks the community is and isn't willing to support. The report does highlight opportunities for further work for everyone to consider.

### **How will the report and its findings be communicated to the public?**

The Joint Committee has released the report to the public, via mainstream media and social media. It will be up to individual councils to decide how to use the report and how best to have conversations with their communities about the risks identified, and any potential actions to address these.

### **Is this report the definitive document on climate change in Hawke's Bay?**

It is the first time that all of the available data on what climate change means for us as a region has been pulled together in one report. It doesn't tell us everything, as there are some information gaps and variability in the datasets available across the region, that will need to be addressed over time. Our understanding and knowledge of climate change and its risks is growing all the time.

This report also only discusses climate risks and adaptation, not emissions reduction.

### **How do you envisage the findings of the report being used?**

In addition to the many ways the report can be used to support long-term decision-making, Councils can use the report to have community conversations at place about adaptation responses, planning and future action. This could include prioritising what risks to address. Iwi Māori, businesses and other parts of the community can use the report to inform decision making about their own future activities and development.

This first risk assessment is a comprehensive report and is a solid foundation for future work to build on. The report also notes opportunities for further work to enhance the existing evidence base and would mean future assessments could be more detailed.

### **3. The findings of the Climate Change Risk Assessment Report**

#### **What does this mean for the councils and people of Hawke's Bay?**

The report's findings pave the way for councils to have discussions with their communities about adaptation options, and what action the community is willing to support. Not all action needs to be council-led but councils will also use the report to inform current and future work. We envisage iwi Māori, sectors and businesses, community groups and individuals using the report to make decisions that affect how they live their lives and what actions they respectively want to take or support.

#### **Is this report a complete and full assessment of the climate risks that Hawke's Bay faces?**

No, it isn't. But it is the best report we can produce with the information and data currently available. We acknowledge there are some gaps and variabilities in the available district datasets, just as there are in other regions' climate change risk reports, and over time we will look to close those gaps.

#### **How reliable is the data that was used in the report?**

The assessment was undertaken using the best available and most up to date information, appropriate for this level of assessment.

#### **What does this report tell us that we didn't know before?**

It shows the full range of climate risks that Hawke's Bay faces – not just flooding, and we now have a complete climate risk assessment not only for our districts and cities, but also Hawke's Bay as a whole. Until now, the information hasn't been available in one comprehensive report. A lot of information used to inform this assessment sits with different organisations and agencies – the beauty of this report is that it brings it all together with expert analysis to tell a cohesive story about climate risks and impacts, to support more informed decision making.

Having this more holistic view of the risks and impacts we are facing also means councils and communities can discuss all the risks and opportunities rather than addressing them singularly. Climate change affects everything we do – this report really reiterates the need for us to be thinking about climate change in all the decisions we make.

#### **How does the report classify climate change risks?**

This first assessment identifies a wide range of risks, but it doesn't rank or prioritise them for action. Further engagement with communities is needed to prioritise risks.

At a regional level, the risk assessment assesses risks across six categories (called 'Domains'), consistent with the Ministry for the Environment guidance:

- Natural Environment: Including terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems.
- Built Environment: Encompassing infrastructure, transport, and buildings.
- Human: Covering skills, knowledge, health, social norms, and cultural aspects.
- Economic: Assessing impacts on production, distribution, trade, and consumption.
- Governance: Examining governance processes and institutions.
- Iwi/Māori: Whānau/hapū/iwi networks, businesses, assets and taonga.

At a district-level, this first assessment focuses on exposure of people and assets to a selected range of climate change hazards, and related risks from this exposure.

### **What are the key findings identified in the report?**

The report summarises the broad range of climate risks we and future generations are facing, and their likely impacts at regional and district levels.

Climate change is projected to substantially alter weather patterns and environmental conditions in the coming decades, with significant implications for the human, built and natural environments. Ex-tropical cyclones will likely become more intense, packing stronger winds and heavier rainfall. Fire seasons will get longer and more dangerous with increased risks of wildfires, droughts will become more common, putting additional stress on the primary sector and water resources. There will be more hot days, and fewer overnight frosts. This means warmer temperatures overall, which will affect everything from farming to wildlife.

The report assesses regional climate change risks across six categories; risk to the natural environment, built environment, human, economic, governance, and iwi/ Māori.

There are key findings relating to hazard data limitations and opportunities, and district-level findings too. The report also outlines opportunities for further work.

### **What are the adaptation options available?**

The report doesn't discuss or recommend adaptation options, because that is for councils and communities to decide together and individually.

### **Why are you not taking the next step and covering adaptation options?**

Because that is for councils and communities to decide collectively and individually.

### **What happens now – what are the next steps?**

We (the Joint Committee) now hand the report over to councils and the community, it is up to them to have conversations about adaptation options to reduce risks, across the board.

The report helps pave the way for councils to work alongside mana whenua to have discussions with communities about adaptation options, and what action the community is willing to support. Not all action needs to be council-led but councils will also use the report to inform current and future work.

Councils will need to take time to absorb the key findings and detail of the report and consider how their respective work programmes may embed and use this information.

### **The report is bad news for Hawke's Bay isn't it?**

On the contrary, we welcome this report. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. These risks exist whether there is an assessment report or not. We now have more information than we had

before that will enable conversations to manage risks and ensure we are making robust, future-focused decisions.

### **How might the report change the climate adaptation activities of councils?**

Climate change is changing how we are experiencing natural hazards. It is exacerbating the severity and frequency of natural hazard events, such as coastal inundation, flooding and droughts. One aspect of the report looks at the way that those risks are changing and how those impacts could be felt across different parts of the region. Councils will need to take time to absorb the key findings and detail of the report and consider how their respective work programmes may embed and use this information.

### **Is Hawke's Bay moving fast enough to adapt to climate change?**

The Climate Commission has already said that the whole country is not adapting to climate change at the pace we should be. It requires action on a number of fronts. Councils are moving as fast as our communities support them to. We could be moving faster, but that comes at a cost, and the community has been quite clear with councils following the Cyclone about its appetite for rates increases and what council-led work programmes should be prioritised. There is significant investment being made to reduce flood risks across the region, which is appropriate given how significant a risk it is across all districts. But we know flooding is not the only climate risk we must respond to.

### **Is enough being done to reduce climate change risk in Hawke's Bay?**

There's a lot of work underway that has been prioritised post cyclone to reduce our risks, but we know that there is so much more to do. The risks we face are broad and we can only address them by working together – collaborating across councils, iwi Māori, sectors, businesses and communities and supporting each other to take action. We welcome this report so that we can have further conversations about how we do this efficiently and effectively, both inside our councils and with our communities.

### **Was the release of the report delayed until after the decision from the Wairoa community on flood protection/mitigation?**

No. The report was only completed in mid-April and its release was timed to coincide with the next Climate Action Joint Committee meeting.

### **Why is 10cm used when talking about flooding? What is the significance?**

Flood depths less than 10cm have been excluded from flood maps and the assessment due to uncertainty about whether they represent actual flooding. .

### **Does the report take into account the stop bank strengthening work currently underway?**

No. The hazard datasets used in the assessment vary considerably in their methodology and coverage, including whether and how flood protection infrastructure (like stop banks) is accounted for. This variation in modelling approaches means the exposure figures in the report for buildings and infrastructure should be interpreted as indicating areas of potential risk rather than as predictions of outcomes during specific flood events.

This risk assessment is also based on current information about the present state. This means it does not account for potential future changes in land-use, investment in risk reduction

measures (like stop banks or other flood resilience measures), or population changes. This is why risk assessments must be periodically undertaken, as our risks will change over time.

**The report talks about exposure of properties and assets. Does exposure equal damage?**

No, exposure doesn't automatically equate to damage. Some assets may be designed to withstand a level of hazard without damage or disruption. For example, a building on raised foundations may be exposed to shallow flooding but experience no significant impacts. The exposure statistics in the report are not predictions of outcomes in an event but an indication of possible impacts, to help prioritise where action is needed.

**Can we compare findings district to district?**

No. Due to differences in datasets, and the variability of the hazard datasets across the region, the district-level findings in this report cannot be directly compared.

**END**