

Submission to Community-Led Adaptation and Retreat Inquiry Pukerua Bay Climate Action Group

Who we are

[Pukerua Bay Climate Action Group](#) is made up of residents of Pukerua Bay who are working together to address climate change here in our community. In October 2022, Pukerua Bay held its first ever workshop on climate change. Forty-five people came together to share their ideas for mitigating climate change and dealing with its effects. Then, in February 2023, a smaller workshop was held to strengthen our foundations and get more clarity on our direction. At this workshop, we began by constructing a deeper understanding of the role of Ngāti Toa Rangatira as mana whenua of Pukerua Bay.

We also took time to understand the mandate for action provided by the Pukerua Bay [Village Plan](#) and the resources we have in our community. Our community has identified the values of manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and kaitiakitanga as central to our work as a community, including on climate action. Since then, we have undertaken further mahi, including engaging with the community at the annual school gala and running a series of workshops on how to adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change.

Pukerua Bay has a significant number of houses on the beachfront at risk of coastal erosion, storm surge, and sea level rise, and has experienced a significant number of slips in recent years due to extreme weather events and flooding - which was severe enough to result in the closure of SH59 for a month in 2022, blocking the highway to the north.

We wish to make the following comments:

In terms of this inquiry, we believe that genuine leadership from communities and mana whenua is critical to ensure socially just climate adaptation and retreat.

We need a system-wide approach to community engagement that informs and empowers people to adapt to climate impacts. Support and resources must be put in place to enable community- and marae-based engagement that is grounded in, and driven by, the values, needs, and aspirations of communities and mana whenua.

Support and resourcing for climate adaptation (and mitigation) is needed for all communities, not just those at greatest risk of climate impacts. Effective community engagement for climate adaptation must empower people to acknowledge, address, and move forward from environmental injustices and economic drivers that impact on their communities, as well as support communities that are most insulated from these issues to recognise their shared responsibilities and obligation to act in ways that reduce the climate harms to vulnerable people and communities.

We wish to make the following recommendations:

Q1. Do you think we should use the term ‘community-led retreat’? If not, what do you think we should use and why?

On the one hand, we like this term because it makes explicit the source of the values that should be at the core of decisions made by and for individual communities. Communities are different in many ways, and they should be able to have solutions that suit them for their own reasons. When debating with our neighbours, we can find greater clarity about whose interests we are serving and gain access to the knowledge and perspectives of people whose voices may otherwise be omitted. We are a community and are motivated to work for the greater good in a mana-enhancing way.

On the other hand, we perceive a risk that use of the term ‘community-led’ retreat may leave communities stranded without the resources they need to lead. These are tough discussions to have, and hard decisions will need to be made. Support is needed to ensure all voices are heard and that the insights of tangata whenua inform local decision making. Divided community opinion may also increase risk.

Communities need to be supported, enabled, and resourced by a consistent regional and national science and policy framework. This will tie in with and support the best use of local knowledge and mātauranga Māori.

Information will need to travel in multiple and complex ways. In the midst of this, it would be useful to establish a nationally agreed set of principles or values to which we can all adhere and call on when needed. Partnership, reciprocity, and respectful engagement are three principles that come to mind. Another is adherence to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Community-led adaptation will inevitably look different for different communities - we have a Pukerua Bay Village Plan which has been developed over time and helped us identify the values that matter to us, which now can help guide us into an uncertain future. The construction of the plan is a community-building exercise in itself, with huge potential to build connection and resilience.

Q2 - Are there barriers to Māori participation in adaptation and upholding Māori rights and interests? How can we better support Māori?

Community (and government) representatives have an obligation to ensure Māori interests and values are included and respected. Risk assessment, engagement, and planning processes should be designed with mana whenua. This would help provide decision making and inclusion safeguards. Mana whenua need to be resourced to provide advice and information; this is critical specialist advice and should be funded as such.

It would be useful to reframe Māori participation as mana whenua leadership. We recommend working with local hapū and iwi to identify communities where mana whenua could lead the process, rather than participate in a process designed by others. Often the language implies that

mana whenua are to be invited in as guests to a process someone else is running. That positions them as outsiders, rather than kaitiaki of their whenua.

Many people don't understand the connections of Māori to the places in which they live, even if they think they are Te Tiriti-honouring. Tangata whenua may have a low profile in some communities and/or may be working on issues in the area that are not visible to the rest of the community. Further, there may be multiple iwi to connect with.

Q3 Are there other issues that affect the quality of risk assessments and local adaptation planning? How can we strengthen our approach?

Communities may lack capacity and capability; hence the need for a national overview and strategy. There is also variable resourcing and ability across local authorities to do this work. Some don't have the willing rating base to pay for it, while others don't have people with the capability and/or capacity to do it.

Te Tiriti based frameworks need to be in place at a local level to help identify the interests of mana whenua and their capacity to lead or participate. These frameworks would then establish the process for local adaptation planning, including community engagement.

Q4. Are there other issues that limit our ability to retreat in advance of a disaster?

We think the report addresses these issues satisfactorily. We recognise that there are a mixture of structural issues and personal factors that stand in the way of decisions that would be for the greater good. Structural issues include the government's inability to pay for mitigation and compensation. There may be a need for some government-level interventions to achieve equitable decisions that benefit the wider community.

Strong connection to place without an established, realistic and tangible structure and process for retreat is another issue. Establishing a land trade scheme would go a long way to incentivising people to move. Clear messaging around the real and tangible risks of climate change at place and within a lifetime is necessary for people to take the issue seriously.

Q9 What innovative approaches to adaptation planning do you have with your own hapori?

Our [Pukerua Bay Climate Action Group](#) has come together in recognition of the challenges we are facing. It builds on existing work done here to develop a [Village Plan](#), and to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our range of skill sets means that we are able to navigate policy, as well as immediately pressing issues. Together we have the skills and knowledge to make the community more resilient.

We have been sharing our knowledge through a series of workshops, and are organising events to enable our community to become more self-sufficient should we become temporarily cut off from the road and rail network, as has happened in the past. Our plans include sharing gardening skills

and resources, establishing a seed bank, drawing up a tool swap and skills register, establishing a pop-up repair shop, and hosting WREMO training. We are also contributing significantly to the local curriculum by supporting the inclusion of accurate information and novel approaches to climate topics.

In the interests of learning from work already done in this space, could there be an opportunity to connect groups like ours together within and across local communities, catchments, and other communities of interest to share ideas and information? Could Local Government New Zealand facilitate regional conferences? We understand that there is a national network of local government staff working on adaptation issues and we would benefit from connecting with this mahi.

Citizen's assemblies across communities that bring together intentionally diverse ranges of people are another idea worth considering. In our city of Porirua, work in this space is being led by Ngāti Toa Rangatira, and we believe that it has great promise.

At a local level, we have found Porirua's village planning framework a valuable way of surfacing the values and aspirations of our community, setting priorities, building community, and caring for our place.

Q10 How can we manage overlapping interests during adaptation planning, including where there is a conflict?

We recognise the very real risk that failure to manage overlapping interests may mean we (in local and regional communities and as a nation) delay taking necessary action, so that the necessary adaptation and retreat becomes a recovery response to natural disasters. We need to get in front of areas of potential conflict before they become a problem, and before emotions take over. Done the right way, opportunities to share perspectives and to be open with each other about our interests and concerns can enable us also to share our strengths and ideas and construct innovative solutions.

If communities are asked for feedback, don't always expect us to have a ready answer. Allow for discussion and decision making to take time - these are difficult issues. Providing processes for ongoing discussion at a local level enables relationship-based discussions. Processes like deliberative democracy could help communities invest the time needed to include a range of perspectives in a planned discussion over the time needed. Build conflict resolution and other skill building into the processes so communities are left stronger.

Decision making units should be kept at a fairly low level so that issues can be resolved, as much as possible locally. At some point, people do have to make their own decisions. Sometimes, they may not be the decisions others consider wise. But if they have been well informed, and are prepared to accept the consequences, then family and community members may have to accept this.

Q16 Do you think local risk assessments should be carried out or reviewed by a centralised agency or a local organisation? Why?

If 'local' refers to a community then yes, risk assessments should be supported and reviewed by local or central government to ensure they are feasible. Local knowledge needs to be met with other strands of knowledge to provide a robust assessment. Once a final assessment has been agreed upon, communities then need to be supported by centralised agencies and local organisations, should further action be required.

Q17 Should risk assessments be carried out only by technical experts or should other people also have a role? What role should other people and organisations have?

Local organisations in isolation can be subject to local lobbying, and this can distort outcomes. Assessments should therefore sit somewhere between local communities and central government, which will mean councils taking the lead and working to balance the various interests.

Local communities express their values, goals and what is important to them; the technical experts can advise on what is possible and what has to be done to achieve those local goals; and local government balances those by representing both what their communities want and what central government mandates has to be done.

So, carried out at local level, and possibly reviewed centrally, bearing in mind there will be a strong expectation that central government will pay for a lot of the adaptation and mitigation. Community decisions don't have to be the same everywhere, but there should be some consistency that allows for variable local values while ensuring responses are equitable, fair and affordable.

Mana whenua need to review risk assessments for their areas - they should be considered technical experts for their areas.

Q18 Do you think there should be a requirement to undertake local adaptation planning? If so, should the trigger be based on the level of risk or something else?

Risk is difficult for many of us to judge and decide when we should respond to it. We tend to find existing risks that affect us now more-or-less tolerable (we've become accustomed to them unless they affect us personally), while unknown risks fall into either the unacceptable and fearful categories (while feeling unable to do much about them), or are things we'll worry about when they become a big enough problem. There should be a requirement for local adaptation planning, but leaving it entirely to councils to do and pay for out of their current budgets will possibly see it done poorly or not at all in some cases.

The triggers can be:

- policy decisions to identify things we can do now at lower cost and with the largest impact to mitigate identified issues that aren't yet causing problems (e.g., schedule areas and habitats for protection that provide resilience against climate related impacts; these have no specific trigger apart from opportunity caused by some other actions.
- responding to existing problems in a way that mitigates worse problems (e.g., further coastal erosion mitigated by reinforcing a cliff face)

- communities' wishes to prepare for change and to mitigate future problems (e.g., understand high flood risk areas within a suburb and identify roads that are likely to become impassable during a flood event)
- not waiting to be forced to do something after a natural disaster (e.g., managed retreat when a road will no longer be maintained).

These are limited by our ability to predict disasters and understand probability. For example, a one-in-100-year flood could happen anytime, whereas rises in water levels at high tide can be noticed and monitored over time.

Q19 What direction should central government provide on local adaptation planning process?

There are implicit expectations that local and central government will pay for adaptation and litigation, but central and local governments have limited ability to pay for what is required (or expected).

If local communities and councils are going to expect central government to help pay for local adaptations, or cleaning up after disasters, they should be required to step in before this is needed. Central government could mandate it and set some effects-based criteria local communities have to meet, but leave room for local options and approaches that suit local conditions and are supported by the community and mana whenua (Local 'buy-in' will give solutions a stronger chance of success).

Q20 Do you think there should be a requirement to plan for different scenarios, such as changes in the level of risk or what happens if there is a disaster? Why or why not?

Scenarios should be a key part of analysis and planning, as long as people understand that scenarios aren't predictions or measures of probability. This presents a communication challenge that, if not done well, leads to arguments over whether the scenarios will happen or not, rather than taking action. Scenario planning should be designed to get people thinking about possible futures, based on good data and analysis, rather than defending or trying to protect the status quo. They should also be easily manipulated by the users and not set to a limited set of criteria.

Scenario testing should be mandatory in all urban and industrial developments and new or improved infrastructure. They seem to be a normal part of what councils and government agencies are now doing. No doubt there are lessons from this about how best to run scenarios.

Q21 How can we make sure that local adaptation planning is inclusive and draws on community views?

This raises the whole thorny issue that consultation may leave a lot of people out. The way we do it can often serve to amplify the voices that are already the loudest, and protect existing privilege. Those who 'count' as an affected community can be dominated by those who feel the negative impacts of change with less input from those who are its beneficiaries. This can happen, even when there is a real desire to engage with as many people as possible. Also, sometimes consultation is

more to inform a community of a decision. It is important that this is done in partnership, not designed in isolation and then rolled out to the community who then have no say.

We believe it is critical to make a genuine commitment to increasing the political power of disengaged and disadvantaged groups. These include children and young people, whose lives will be spent living with the consequences of decisions made today. Scenario could be useful.

We believe that all these processes should be designed with mana whenua. Further, we believe that inclusion means that local adaptation planning is not just about consultation but about meaningful involvement in decision making.

Q22 Who do you think should make decisions about the adaptation pathway we choose and why? How should others be involved in the process?

Again, these processes should be designed with mana whenua and involve as wide a range of people as possible including children and young people, elderly people, and the disabled.

To do this you need to make processes like this accessible to them. As it stands, these documents are long-winded, technical, and difficult to understand, which excludes much of the community from participating. One way of involving people in decision making is to involve them in designing communications. For example, there are many creative young people who could design effective communication pathways that could be effective in making information accessible to their peers and enabling their engagement.

Q23 - What do you think are the most important outcomes and principles for community-led retreat?

We agree with the outcomes and principles as listed in Table 7. We would like to strongly recommend the addition of a further outcome and principle: ensure access to full information and options available in clear, understandable language. This is based on the principle that informed and intentional action is more likely through understanding. Evidence suggests that a process where parties involved have access to up-to-date, understandable data and perspectives, are invited to participate in discussions where they can voice concerns and ask questions, and feel they have a contribution to make, is more likely to create buy-in to eventual decisions.

Q24 Do you prefer option 1 (voluntary) or option 2 (a mix of voluntary and mandatory parts)? Are there any other options?

There are two basic ways to bring about change: regulation, and education. These are not mutually exclusive but have different trajectories, and at various points a combination of each is likely to be needed. Whether a voluntary system or mixed voluntary and mandatory is chosen, community education and engagement must play a role in assisting communities to understand and take action. This will make transition easier and lead to a willingness to make further change when needed.

Technical decisions don't have sufficient regard for the very high emotional component in risk-management and the changes we have to make. Education could help people to balance 'objectively sensible' decisions against their personal aims and emotional attachments to the ways things are or have been (for example, historical connections and cultural importance of sites). This doesn't just apply to Māori, who have many historically and culturally important coastal sites and taonga that should be acknowledged and protected, but Pākehā who have lived in places for several generations (for example., well-established and multi-generational farming families, or people whose families have lived on coastal land for a long time — there are some on the beach in Pukerua Bay).

Q32 In what circumstances (if any) do you think ratepayers and taxpayers should help people pay for the costs of adaptation?

This is where principles of equity and fairness will be important. There will be expectations that people who have to move won't be any worse off than they were beforehand, and that government will return communities and land to the way they were before a natural disaster. An example is the red zoned area in Christchurch after the earthquakes. Government took the hard decision of paying people out and forcing them to move (take it or leave it) in order to avoid big payments to repair land then and possibly in the future.

We will need to be able to balance interests so that people with fewer resources (land, money and social capital) aren't left behind and lose what little they have. We also need to consider intergenerational equity; that is, how to pay for things that might leave people worse off now, but be better for future generations.

A coherent national plan is required setting out a framework and principles for prioritising and deciding on what actions must be taken.

Q33 In what circumstances should central government help councils to meet adaptation costs?

Refer to our answer to question 32 above.

New construction should consider costs and risks. It is unrealistic for local government to cover these costs, as they already cannot keep up with climate-related repair work to existing infrastructure in our district. It is our understanding that central government will be responsible for securing the necessary funding or co-funding required and substantial cost will likely also land on the individual, either in the form of land buy back, rates, taxes, or a combination of these.

Q43 Do you think our approach to community-led retreat and adaptation funding should be the same before and after a disaster? Why or why not?

It inevitably cannot be. Again, we need to get in front of issues before they become a problem, and we are forced into a recovery response. It is the responsibility of central and local government to halt the escalation of this problem, firstly by tightening up on the regulations relating to zoning of land. There are many instances where houses are still being planned and built in flood prone areas, erosion prone areas, and over ecosystems that provide a buffer to high rainfall and storm events.