

Questions from Adapting to sea-level rise – Rāpaki and Allandale – 8 November 2023

Why is the money collected from emissions taxes not channelled into the building of dykes and seawalls?

To clarify the roles and responsibilities, local government (Council) collects local rates from ratepayers, but we don't collect different types of taxes. It is central government that collects taxes like the emissions tax. As local government, we don't have control over how these taxes are used.

In terms of dykes and seawalls, these are some of the options that could be used in the protect category of adaptation planning but there could also be other choices to reduce risk to at-risk locations, that might involve living with the hazard or moving away from the hazard.

Is there consideration of buying vulnerable properties to enable the owner to move to a new location - and then bowling the property to ensure that retreat from inundated areas actually happens?

Sounds like you're asking about managed retreat. The government has been talking for the last two or three years about introducing a new piece of legislation called the Climate Adaptation Act. The last government wasn't able to get it out in the last terms so what's been happening recently is, the Select Committee are doing an inquiry into community led retreat – that inquiry closed on the 1st of November but essentially what they were looking for is feedback from the community about who should pay, and how much should be paid to compensate private property owners for retreating from areas that are going to be at risk in the future. The Council put forward a submission to make it clear that we are looking for clarity sooner rather than later for private property owners so there is a way of owners being able to get compensation if retreat is the right option for an area.

Are any properties in the affected areas already having issues getting insurance?

We know from the work we've done with the Insurance Council that there will be some reduction of cover, perhaps partial cover or insurance retreat in parts of the country. Insurers don't tend to publish their datasets so there isn't a publicly available dataset where we could find out which areas insurance retreat is occurring, and council doesn't collect that data from insurers either. There is a bit of a gap in terms of understanding insurance coverage across the country and so that's something we are keeping an eye on. We have some [information for private property owners about insurance on our website](#)

Could the council not approach the govt for emissions tax funding for mitigation projects?

This is in the same space as the above question about roles and responsibilities. Local government lacks the clarity around the Climate Adaptation Act. At the moment our process is focused on public Council owned assets. Without central government providing direction on how we might support communities to move away from these locations or otherwise adapt, Council ultimately doesn't have that responsibility. If that legislation was to go into place, that would be the opportunity for groups like Christchurch City Council to advocate up for their communities and try to secure funding to support local communities and private landowners.

Where did you get the data and evidence regarding predictions for sea level rise?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – a group of international scientists - review the leading science on climate and coastal science, things like ice sheet melting and thermal expansion - the warming of the oceans and how that contributes to the sea level rise, and they come up with a range of sea level rise projections that we might see in the future. Groups like the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) in New Zealand then have a responsibility to take that information, localize it and then give it out to local government (like Christchurch City Council). We then use these and plan against the full range of possible futures that might occur.



When we talk about these projections in the next 30 years, we could see as little of around 10 to 13 centimetres of sea level rise or as much as 23 to 25 centimetres of sea level rise. We don't know exactly how much sea-level rise is going to go up, but we do know that it is going up. There is irrefutable evidence there.

Even if we stopped emitting today as a society, the climate system would take a while to respond to that, so there'd be a lag in the climate system, so sea levels will continue to rise irrespective of what people do, at least for a couple of decades. But largely it depends long term on us as a society and the choices we make to emit greenhouse gases or not.

We also use the Lyttelton Port Sea level rise data, one of the longest standing sea level rise records in the country that dates back to the early 1900s. Over that timeframe we can see around 30 centimetres of sea level rise has occurred and recently it has been accelerating.

