



## Media Advisory

### Bluecliffs Transition to Recovery

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# Bluecliffs – Initial options discussed at community meeting

This is an official message from the EMS Group Recovery Manager Lucy Hicks

Bluecliffs residents discussed possible options for the future of their coastal community at a meeting in Tuatapere yesterday.

The local area is currently in a transition to recovery period following the state of emergency declared by Southland District Mayor Rob Scott on 8 February. This was in response to erosion of land behind private properties on Bluecliffs Beach Road following a storms that put homes and an old community dump at risk of falling into the sea.

Two pieces of work were directed under the state of emergency. One was to attempt to open the gravel bar that forms the lagoon at the Waiau River mouth to divert water and take pressure off the land behind the houses along Bluecliffs Beach Road. The second was to remove the material at the old community dump site.

Around 25 community members attended the meeting on Wednesday night and were updated on both pieces of work.

Southland District Mayor Rob Scott said the meeting was a good opportunity to share the two reports that were completed recently, answer questions, and start conversations about the next steps.

The two reports, one by Pattle Delamore Partners (PDP) assessing the bar opening, and one by Tonkin + Taylor on the erosion and mitigation options for the area where provided. Presentations focused on updating the community about the bar and further options for this.

“The assessment of the bar opening does indicate that further engineering work, such as creating a causeway, would be required to make any further attempt at a bar opening successful,” Mayor Scott said.

“Yesterday’s meeting was the start of a journey, and the recovery process would need to be a partnership between the community and councils.

“It will take time to work through different options,” he said. “These are hard decisions that don’t have a quick or cheap fix. Councils and communities throughout the country and around the world are facing similar issues.”

Both reports outline short, medium and longer-term options. These include ongoing monitoring, relocation options and a range of physical protections. The amount of future costs for these sorts of protections is varied, but from experience elsewhere these could be in the \$10s of thousands to \$100s of millions.

Mayor Scott said these, and any other options, needed to be explored in consultation with the community.

“We have to work this out together,” he said. “Whatever options are decided on have to be sustainable and affordable. At this stage no options are off the table.”

The attempt to open the bar took around two weeks, and struck several challenges including the weather, hard material and a larger volume of gravel than initially anticipated. The opening was short-lived, with the sea swells pushing gravel back into the cut quickly after it was made.

On Friday 8 March, residents were asked to evacuate so the work at the dump site could begin. Reports of explosives and investigations confirming asbestos-laden material meant the work site required an exclusion zone of one kilometre around the dump. No explosives were found, and about 2000 tonnes of material was removed before residents were able to move back to their homes on 20 March.

The report by Tonkin + Taylor is a preliminary hazard and geotechnical assessment of erosion damage that has occurred at Bluecliffs and provides an assessment of a range of mitigation options available for the area.

The report by PDP provides a review of the February cut of the gravel bar and the methodology used. It also considers the physical work that would be required to improve and maintain the existing cut for several months.

PDP’s report states an opening of the river mouth would not be successful unless supported by a causeway being constructed across the current river channel to divert the river through the cut, which would require significant expenditure and consent processes.

“I want to thank the Bluecliffs community for their ongoing cooperation and patience throughout this period, and I encourage them to continue reaching out either to Emergency Management Southland, Southland District Council or to other available support services.”

A Local Recovery Manager has been appointed and will take up the role after Easter. The next meeting with the community will be in April and will focus on further exploration of the options available.

ENDS

This release has been issued by the Duty Public Information Manager on the authority of the Southland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Controller.

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