

Pākōwhai flood resilience project

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

April 2026

The Pākōwhai flood resilience project– prompted by Cyclone Gabrielle – is part of a wider effort across Hawke’s Bay to reduce flood risk. Climate change and recent extreme weather events have exposed the limits of our existing flood protection network. This project strengthens our region’s defences – and will help us adapt to a future where more storms are expected to be more frequent and intense.

About the project

1. What is the purpose of this project?

The new flood resilience network along the Tūtaekurī-Waimate Stream and Waiohiki Drain is designed to help better protect the community when the next serious weather event hits. The work will enable 74 Category 2C properties to have their risk category removed and give more time to evacuate in large events.

2. How will the project increase flood resilience?

This project will increase flood resilience by constructing a new 8.5km network of stopbank and flood walls along the Tūtaekurī-Waimate Stream and Waiohiki Drain, from the Ngaruroro River to Napier Golf Course. It also includes the realignment of 500m of stream and a spillway.

The new network will provide greater flood resilience to the community when the Ngaruroro and Tūtaekurī Rivers have an over-design event in excess of a 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP). In larger events, like Cyclone Gabrielle, it will still help slow flood water and give people more time to evacuate safely.

1% AEP (also known as a 1-in-100-year flood) refers to a flood that has a 1% chance of occurring in any given year. It’s a statistical measure, not a forecast – which means that these events can happen more than once in a century.

Construction

3. When will construction start – and how long will it take?

Enabling works – such as temporary access roads, fencing, vegetation removal, and stockpile areas –and contractor site establishment work is set to begin imminently.

Construction for Separable Portion 4 and 5 will begin in May, and with others following as designs are completed and seasons allow. We estimate construction to be completed by 31 May 2027.


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TE KAUNIHERA Ā-ROHE O TE MATAU-A-MĀUI

INFRASTRUCTURE RESILIENCE PROGRAMME

4. How can I be kept up to date with what work is happening where?

To keep everyone in the loop, we'll send out regular updates about what's happening and when so you can plan and stay safe. You can sign up to these, email project.enquiries@hbrc.govt.nz and ask to be added to the construction update mailing list.

We will also put updates online at [hbrc.govt.nz #Pakowhai](https://hbrc.govt.nz/#Pakowhai)

Spillway

5. What is a spillway – and how will it affect the community?

A spillway is a controlled overflow point – a way for water to flow in a controlled manner when water levels rise too high, like the drain in a sink. In Pākōwhai, the proposed spillway (located near 1856 Pākōwhai Road) will channel excess flood water away from residential areas, toward designated Category 3 land where it would naturally flow, helping to protect homes and critical infrastructure.

6. Why is a spillway being built?

After Cyclone Gabrielle, the Hawke's Bay Independent Flood Review recommended that we plan for what happens when floods exceed existing levels of service. One of the suggested tools was spillways.

7. What triggers the spillway to activate?

The spillway will only activate after the ponding has reached its maximum capacity on the western side of the stopbank.

The spillway is designed for very large floods in the Ngaruroro or Tūtaekurī Rivers (1-0.2% AEP events), stopbank compromises (like leaks or piping) during smaller floods, or a combination of these scenarios.

8. Are there any risks to Pākōwhai Road or other evacuation points?

The risk level for Pākōwhai Road next to the spillway remains the same as it is now at H1, meaning it's *still considered safe for vehicles*, though the depth and speed do increase.

However, it is anticipated evacuations will have occurred and the road closed if overtopping occurs from the Ngaruroro or Tūtaekurī Rivers.

With the stopbank and spillway in place, residents will have more warning time to evacuate and less areas of the road will flood in certain scale events.

Land categorisation

9. What needs to happen to shift properties from Category 2C to Category 1?

Category 1 was retired from the Land Categorisation framework in December 2025. This means that the category move for the 2C properties will be instead a removal from the Government's Future of Severely Affected Land (FOSAL) Risk Categorisation Framework and they'll no longer have a risk category attached.

To remove the risk category, Category 2C, from properties, three things need to be in place:

A sound concept that has a consenting pathway;	A legal interest in favour of HBRC in the relevant land;	Allocated and released funding
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We have the Resource Consent under the Order in Council, we have funding provisioned (but not fully released) from the Government's National Infrastructure Funding and Financing Agency, and we are working through the final land access arrangements.

10. Will this category change affect my insurance or property records?

Possibly – it's best to check directly with your insurance provider, as responses can vary. The hazard risk profile of your land category will be considered by Hastings District Council's District Plan and in Land Information Memorandums (LIMs).

Mana whenua

11. How is HBRC working with mana whenua on this project?

Our partnership with mana whenua is a key part of this project and will help to ensure the success and sustainability of the projects. Our mana whenua engagement process is ongoing as we strive for meaningful collaboration, and to weave mātauranga Māori into our project planning and delivery.

The bigger picture: the NIWE programme

12. What is the North Island Weather Event (NIWE) resilience programme?

The NIWE programme is a multi-million-dollar investment in flood protection across the North Island. In Hawke's Bay, it funds major resilience projects – including Ōhiti Road | Omāhu, Pākōwhai, Pōrangahau, Waiohiki, Waipawa, Wairoa, Whirinaki and Havelock North.

Alongside these builds, HBRC is also upgrading pump stations, stopbanks and river telemetry systems (which monitor and relay live river level and rainfall data).

13. How is it being funded?

Funding comes from both central and local government. Through its North Island Weather Event (NIWE) resilience programme, Central Government is covering 75.15% of the \$50 million budget, with the remaining 24.85% funded by HBRC through a general rate paid by all Hawke's Bay ratepayers – not a targeted rate.

Ongoing operation and maintenance will be funded through rates: 70% will be part of the Heretaunga Plains Flood Control Scheme targeted rate and 30% part of the general rate.