



Regional Update #1

From the Mayor



I would like to acknowledge everyone involved in the emergency response and subsequently all those who have been doing the hard yards, in particular our roading crews, as Marlborough transitions from response to recovery for this major weather event.

Our amazing Marlborough communities, in particular those in the Upper Awatere Valley and in the Marlborough Sounds, have helped each other through this difficult time. We thank them for their understanding and patience as the work continues to make our roading networks safe for residents to access.

Rest assured, everyone is working as hard as they can to get them connected again.

However, the task ahead to return some Marlborough roads to the way they were is monumental. The mahi will continue to see this happen, the best we can.



Background

Marlborough faces a lengthy recovery after a storm on July 17 2021 caused widespread flooding and damage, resulting in a local state of emergency in the region.

Devastation from the weather event in Marlborough was far greater than the 'storm of 1994'. The local roads hit hardest by the storm were Queen Charlotte Drive, Kenepuru Road and its various associated roads, Waihopai Valley, Northbank and the Awatere Valley Road. It's been said, in places, some of the damage is as severe as that seen following the Kaikōura Earthquake.

There were also evacuations of hundreds of properties in the communities of Spring Creek, Tuamarina and Renwick at the time and multiple power, phone and internet faults across the region.

The Marlborough District Council (MDC) declared a state of local emergency at the time. Marlborough Emergency Management coordinated the initial response effort but now MDC has established a dedicated Marlborough Recovery Team.

Marlborough Roads (MR) responded to this massive challenge in difficult conditions clearing minor slips, debris, blocked culverts and making minor repairs to get the roads open where they could.

Due to the widespread damage and to assist with recovery efforts, the region extended the Local Transition period to 20 October under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act (2002). This extension includes:

- The full length of Kenepuru Road and any associated side roads
- Queen Charlotte Drive from Havelock to Picton and any associated side roads
- Awatere Valley Road to Molesworth Station and any associated side roads
- Northbank Road, including Top Valley Road and any associated side roads
- Waihopai Road from the Avon Valley Road intersection to the top of the Waihopai Valley and any associated side roads

A Marlborough Roads Recovery Team (MRRT) has been established, bringing in considerable expertise to assist with the ongoing effort.

This team is working closely with MDC and MR to focus on getting the damaged roads back to a safe condition to allow access and to communicate with the affected residents.

Recovery efforts are taking place in a dynamic environment with constantly shifting risks and changes, including ongoing impacts from the weather.

Some communities, in particular the Kenepuru Sound, face a long period of disrupted access.

Queen Charlotte Drive was one of a number of roads badly affected by the weather event, which triggered many landslides and slips along its length. However, in a major milestone earlier this week, public access, with some restrictions, along its length has been restored.

Construction will continue along the 32km route, which provides access for hundreds of residents and holiday homes along its length as well as being a popular scenic drive for visitors to the region, through to October 2022.



Cullen Point, Queen Charlotte Drive



The first car through at Cullen Point, Queen Charlotte Drive, after it opened to public, with some restrictions, on 20 September

Community Support

Ongoing support is being provided to people in communities left isolated by the July storm. MDC has established a sector group which meets weekly – the Marlborough Weekly Recovery Group – to discuss impacts across multiple fronts and including the agencies involved in roads, lifelines, business, tourism, health and the rural sector.

The Council's recovery managers, Dean Heiford and Marianne Aitken, coordinate requests for support from the community via a dedicated email – recovery@marlborough.govt.nz – and continue to connect those affected with the appropriate support services.

Farmers, forestry and beekeepers in the outer Marlborough Sounds, in addition to clearing debris and reinstating fences on their land, have had to grapple with the disruption to road access and the ongoing logistical challenges this presents.

Work is ongoing between barge operators and the Marlborough Sounds farming community, with the help of the Council and Rural Support Trust, to better coordinate transport efforts and requirements for stock movements.

Sheep and beef farms in the Awatere Valley have also had limited road access which caused difficulties getting critical supplies and grazing stock into the valley, and stock out, but they now have truck and trailer access under strict controls.

The Council is continuing to support these Sounds' communities with subsidised barge trips to deliver fuel, household goods, feed, and to assist with vehicle movements.

Port Marlborough's parking and berthing initiatives to subsidise parking in Havelock and Picton Marina have also been rolled over into September to assist Sounds' residents.



Mayoral Relief Fund

Marlborough Mayor John Leggett established a Mayoral Relief Fund in early August to assist the region in its storm recovery effort.

The fund is for residents in the Marlborough District Council area who have suffered personal financial or emotional hardship as a result of the July storm.

To date, \$66,490 has been distributed to assist Marlborough residents, benefitting 52 households.



The fund received \$100,000 from the Government via Acting Minister for Emergency Management Kris Faafoi as well as two large donations of \$5,000 from the Tindall and Top of the South Foundations and \$10,000 from Rātā Foundation. A number of local individuals and businesses have also contributed.

The Ministry for Primary Industries has also contributed \$35,000 to the fund - part of \$200,000 in recovery funding unlocked in July to support flood-affected farmers and growers across Marlborough, Tasman and West Coast regions. The first funds tagged for Primary Industry businesses were approved recently for farmers in the Marlborough Sounds and Wairau Valley.

Business Support

The Flooding Economic Recovery Group has now been established to look at the impact of the weather event and to help identify some solutions for local businesses.

Members include central and local government representatives, local businesses, and iwi and business support agencies.

The role of the group is to:

- Discuss the current and future impact of flooding
- Discuss potential solutions
- Agree the picture of impact to be communicated
- Agree on solutions to be investigated for implementation by Government, Council and others
- Communicate with the community and other stakeholders

Surveys of the Kenepuru Sound and vicinity, Queen Charlotte Track and Awatere Valley and Waihopai Valley storm-affected businesses are underway. This will help identify the impacts and help the group work towards some solutions.

There is also free or low cost advice available for affected businesses. This support is being administered on the Council's behalf by Business Trust Marlborough and the Marlborough Chamber of Commerce.

The purpose of this funding is to provide advice that helps businesses that have been negatively affected by the recent floods to respond to the immediate impacts, and to remain sustainable as they do so.



Marlborough's Stopbank Network

The stopbank network in Marlborough withstood the significant weather event very well but there is still work to be done.

Emergency stopbank repairs at Morrins Hollow (Wairau Bar Road), Pukaka floodway and Waterfall Creek, Tuamarina were completed immediately after the flood. These will be strengthened and brought up to a permanent standard as soon as the ground is dry enough.

Permanent repairs have already been made to the over topped section of the Diversion stopbank and the stopbank next to the Waihopai River.

Repairs are well underway to the Gibsons Creek intake at the Waihopai River and the Southern Valleys Irrigation Scheme on the Wairau River so these will be ready for the coming irrigation season.

All drainage pump stations have been checked and where necessary intake screens cleared. One pump station at Blind Creek was 'drowned' and has had the pump removed for an overhaul. A new motor and switch board will be installed to complete the repair.

Initial repairs have been completed to 40m of the Diversion river bank edge on the north or Rarangi side at the sea (by the Department of Conservation camping area). Permanent reinstatement of the remaining 360m of berm which has been eroded is subject to Council consideration. In the meantime this popular area remains closed for public vehicle access.

Some areas of river berm such as off the end of Selmes Road also remain closed for public access until the area has dried out and gravel access tracks can be brought back up to a suitable standard.

Checking and assessing the remaining areas of damage to either edge protection works or stopbanks is progressing well with the aim of the Rivers Team reporting to the full Council in October.

This will include estimated damage costs and a recommended repair programme.



A strip of land from the Wairau River mouth was lost in the storm

The Marlborough Road Recovery

With more than 1,000 issues identified across the Marlborough roading network, parts of the district are still operating under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act (2002).

Significant progress has been made since the 17 July storm. The rain event closed an estimated 350km of road network across Marlborough. All roads have now been assessed for faults and through the response and recovery work to date there is now 55 km of closed road, 200 km of controlled access for residents only and 170 km of public access restored.

More than 50,000 cubic metres of soil and rock has been removed from slips so far. Early estimates predict more than 100,000 cubic metres of spill material will have been removed by the end of the clean-up.



This ongoing response is expected to take several more weeks before safe access is restored at a basic level of service across the entire network. Crews are working in the Kenepuru Sound, Queen Charlotte Drive and the Awatere Valley daily.

While major inroads have been made to restore safe access, with restrictions, where possible - including in the Waihopai Valley, the Awatere Valley and now the length of Queen Charlotte Drive - there is still a lot to do.

Once safe access is restored for residents and essential services, disruptions to people's journeys will continue for some time as works progress to get roads fully open.

The Recovery Team's priorities are:



The scale of the damage to date

1095 faults in the network			207 underslips
	384 overslips		26 structures damaged
141 culvert issues			

The scale of the operation to date

	>50,000 Cubic metres removed	
400 Workers site inducted		
25 Excavators		35 Trucks

As of 14 September 2021

Milestones

It's definitely not all doom and gloom.

There have been some fantastic milestones and these include:

- The installation of a Bailey bridge in the Waihopai Valley, a temporary replacement for the Māori Ford Bridge which was swept away
- The securing of 4WD access to the Awatere Valley Road for residents and strictly controlled access for truck and trailers to address animal welfare issues

- Restoration of public access to the Northbank Road
- Public access on Queen Charlotte Drive between Picton and Linkwater

While most of Kenepuru Road remains closed, crews are continuing to clear slips and are opening sections for resident access when it is safe to do so.



The temporary Bailey bridge to replace the Māori Ford Bridge in the Waihopai Valley which was swept away

Safety First

The safety of residents and work crews is paramount.

Public access cannot be restored until legal thresholds are met for safety. Just because a road appears drivable on the surface, does not mean that it's safe for the public. Until the recovery team is confident the road is safe, it cannot be opened, not even for resident access.

Queen Charlotte Drive, Kenepuru Road and its many side roads, are still fragile, and are at risk of further damage in heavy rainfall. The MRRT is focussed on getting all the damaged roads back to a condition where they are safely accessible for residents.

Ongoing Works

Damage of this scale has required several steps before Marlborough's roads can be safely repaired and reopened.

The massive scale and complexity of this event has meant that engineering assessments itemising every site and the work that is needed has taken time but this is now completed.

Now that these assessments are complete, a programme of works is being finalised. Resident access for most areas will be single-lane light vehicle access with no towing. Public access is likely to be more than a year away for parts of the Marlborough Sounds.



Kenepuru Road, near Portage - an overslip with 2,000 cubic metres of soil to be removed, above a 60m long and 30m deep underslip

A dedicated recovery page has been set up on the Marlborough District Council's website to provide people with the latest information on road closures and the state of local roads.

For the latest road status go to the Marlborough Emergency Management Official Public Information Map: www.bit.ly/RoadToRecoveryMarl

For the latest roading alerts, go to: www.bit.ly/RoadingAlertsMarl



Further Information

For regional recovery information please contact Dean Heiford or Marianne Aitken, Marlborough Recovery Managers on recovery@marlborough.govt.nz

For roading information and queries please contact Marlborough Roads on recovery@marlboroughroads.com