

Port Waikato update - 11 September 2019

Following the significant erosion that has occurred recently at Port Waikato, Council is providing weekly updates to the community about the situation and plans going forward.

- Following discussions with the surf club, the entire community hall will be fully demolished. It is currently closed and Council is helping users move equipment out of the hall. We will let the community know as soon as that work is due to start.
- Our reason for demolishing it is purely in the interest of public safety.
- The hall is being demolished because the “safe” 7.5m mark, which was determined a couple of years ago, from the front of the hall has now been passed. The “cliff face” is now about 6m away from the hall wall.
- Council staff are helping to find alternative location for regular users of the hall while the community hub is being built. Other groups such as Port Waikato Holiday Camp have put their hands up to help.
- Once the hall is demolished, work will start on the car park to increase capacity and reduce the impact of the narrowing effects the erosion has had on the car park.
- Debris has been cleared off the beach by contractors this week. They will be monitoring the situation at the beach and will remove debris as required.
- Council is monitoring erosion at the beach and it will be taking drone footage on a regular basis to improve monitoring.
- Extra signage will be put up in the car park warning people to stay away from the extra barrier that been put up at the car park.
- There will be more warning signs at the access way to the beach warning people to stay away from the dunes.
- The building team is continuing to speak to the owners of the two houses/baches which are near the cliff face on Ocean View Road about keeping out of those houses. It is our intention to help them where we can in terms of advice and potential consenting fees and timeframes to do with the need of moving houses/baches inland on their sections..
- We have a team working on a plan going forward which will involve Council and coastal erosion experts coming out to Port Waikato in the next few weeks to discuss with the community how we can continue to work together on this. As soon as a date, time and venue has been set we will let the community know.
- There has been much talk about the lack of Council action to protect Port Waikato from erosion. Unfortunately in the case of Sunset Beach protection is a fruitless exercise. In some forms it could have a temporary effect but if it is for any length of time it is incredibly expensive and does have adverse effects.
- As a long term attempt, a sea wall would cost ratepayers millions of dollars and the effect of a sea wall would be that you would lose the beach itself to erosion and would possibly make erosion problems worse further up the beach.
- As a short term attempt, sand bags would not work at Sunset Beach – this is the advice we have received from coastal scientists.
- Reasons include:

- The West coast is very dynamic, no sand bags will halt erosion at this site, if it wants to erode it will, taking sand bags with it.
- The erosion is primarily caused by a lack of sand in the beach system that has lowered the entire beach, is not a simple 'fix'.
- Localised sand bagging may increase erosion adjacent to the sand bag structure.
- Displaced sand bags may become a navigational hazard if sand escapes and they get into the water (last thing anyone wants is a bag wrapped around a prop going over the bar).
- The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement lists protection as the least favoured option to manage erosion and the effects of it. This topic was covered at a Coastal Hazards presentation in Port Waikato back in December 2018 as part of the Stage 2 Proposed District Plan engagement process. You can download the presentation below.