

Auckland's Emergency Budget 2020/2021

Online Community Webinars

Additional Questions and Answers

Online Community Webinar - West
Sunday 31 May, 2020, 5pm-6.30pm



All questions that were discussed during the session can be viewed by either watching the webinar video or reading the transcript. The below are additional questions and answers that were submitted but not covered during the session.

Q. Will we get the local tracks open in Titirangi that are not related to the Waitaks, but are local and are important to the enjoying a quality of life? At the moment our beaches aren't good for swimming and there are very few local tracks that are open to walking. This defeats the purpose of living in the area.

A. Around half of the regional kauri dieback track upgrade programme across both local and regional parks would be deferred based on the current Emergency Budget Proposal. The budget proposes deferring \$7 million of capital expenditure from 2020/2021 to 2021/2022. This equates to \$3.365 million for work in Regional Parks, \$3.295 million for Local Parks and \$340,000 for other regional work programmes.

Details of which specific works will be deferred have not yet been determined at a track level. However, the deferrals will slow the pace of delivery with upgrades of some of the Waitākere Ranges Local Board tracks being deferred to the following financial year. To mitigate this effect we will adjust our schedule as much as we are able, so that tracks that were scheduled to begin at the end of the 2020/2021 financial year (e.g., March 2021), commence at the beginning of the next construction season (e.g., November 2021). This will mean upgrades are not delayed by more than four to six months where possible.

Q. Could there be a reduction in the cost of the Waitak track work, i.e. by reducing the spending on parts of the tracks where there are NO Kauri. An example is the Omanawanui Track where they have put in very steep and rather dangerous steps where there are absolutely NO KAURI. They should have only spent money on the part of the track that has kauri on it. i.e. where the track goes into the bush on the rock face. This needs to be looked at before future work is started on tracks in similar situation. This could save a fortune.

A. Track upgrades being undertaken consider Unitary Plan requirements, general track standards as set out in the New Zealand Tracks and Outdoor Structures Handbook, guidance from the Ministry of Primary Industries including the draft National Pest Management Plan and associated standards for kauri dieback track work.

The council must also ensure that tracks subject to a Controlled Area Notice can meet the requirements of the notice. In the Waitākere Ranges, this includes the need for hygiene stations and preventing movement of soil on footwear and gear both into and out of the area. This means tracks need to be of a dry-foot standard throughout the year. For sloping sections of tracks, stairs or the use of geocell may be necessary to ensure that the gravel surface remains in place.

All track upgrades are individually scoped taking into account the required standards with the best methodology determined by the council's parks and biosecurity teams along with any necessary specialist advice, such as engineering input.

Q. Re: Kauri Dieback, why would you defer this if you're still going to spend the money? We are in a race against time with Kauri dieback. As we research, the disease keeps spreading, and killing. Surely keeping the research going is more important than track work? opening tracks again, even if safer for trees, isn't going to fight the disease.

A. Auckland Council's research and treatment workstream focuses on answering operational research questions to better inform our management of the disease within our parks. In recent times, this has included commencing larger scale phosphite trials to determine the most effective treatment frequency, concentration and neighbouring effects to protect trees.

This research is complementary to the primary national strategic research programme which aims to protect our iconic trees. This programme is run by the NZ Biological Heritage Challenge and funded to the value of \$13.75 million through central government. For more information on Ngā Rākau Taketake, the programme leading the funding and prioritisation of research to prevent the spread of kauri dieback and myrtle rust diseases visit <https://bioheritage.nz/research/saving-our-iconic-trees/>

Under the proposed Auckland Council consultation budget, one fifth of the kauri dieback treatment and research budget would be deferred. At this time, the exact way in which this savings has been achieved is not yet confirmed. We may reduce the number of trees treated with phosphite in the trial underway in the Waitākere Ranges next year, but it is also possible that we will reduce our operational research budget instead. The Waitākere Ranges monitoring and surveillance survey will not be affected.

Q. Will the local boards fight for the West Auckland share of the money for kauri dieback? Keeping in mind that North Shore got 43% of that budget last year. leaving 57% to be split between West, East and South Auckland. i.e. 19% for each of those areas. The number of tracks in West local areas is far high than North Shore.

A. Kauri dieback funding for track works is allocated based on the need and scope of mitigation works to protect kauri that are in close proximity of walking tracks. Kaipātiki Local Board has 16 kilometres of kauri track network in local parks compared with approximately 20 kilometres of kauri track network in local parks combined across the remaining board areas. In contrast, Waitākere Ranges Regional Park accounts for 83% of the investment in kauri track upgrades for Regional Parks. On the shore a number of local park tracks have also been indefinitely closed to protect kauri.

The deferred work will be spread across the Auckland region and will not be concentrated in any one particular area. Track construction work will be scheduled across five regional parks, including the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park.

Q. Could we go back to the old Waitangi Day where we recycle our own inorganics between ourselves?

A. The historic methodology whereby residents placed their inorganic items on the kerbside resulted in some swapping and reuse of items however the majority of the material placed out became damaged and broken. This method still involved council picking up the remaining material as well as cleaning up of the berm and kerbside. The system encouraged illegal dumping from commercial business with little enforcement consequence and the damage to items (e.g. smashing of TVs to remove precious metals) that had been left out was a significant H&S concern and risk to residents, particularly pedestrians. This was a costly exercise and involved the majority of material being disposed of at landfill which was both a financial and environmental cost to our region.

The inorganic collection was therefore modified to address the H&S and public mess issues. It has been replaced by an onsite, booked collection which has significantly reduced the H&S issues and has also enabled an increase in the diversion of material from landfill. The material collected by the re-use vehicle is distributed to charities, community organisations and social enterprises across the region for ongoing use or repair. This model is better aligned with Auckland's Waste Management and Minimisation Plans goals and the shift towards a more circular economy.

Q. Will the government's nearly \$2M grant to Arts and Heritage enable council to reduce their budget in this area?

A. The Government's additional funding into arts, culture and heritage through Creative New Zealand and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage has been welcomed by the sector which has been severely impacted by COVID-19.

Creative New Zealand and Auckland Council funding go towards very different areas. Council funding focuses on community engagement and participation, and audience development. Creative New Zealand has a strong focus on artist and arts practice development. Many of council's arts venues and programmes are not eligible for Creative New Zealand funding.

Council's Emergency Budget 2020/2021 is available for consultation now and outlines the cost savings proposed across our arts and culture, and heritage areas. You can read more about the proposed budget cuts here: <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/have-your-say/topics-you-can-have-your-say-on/emergency-budget/Documents/emergency-budget-2020-2021-consultation-document.pdf>

Q. Has consideration been given to pause the annual reduction in the business differential to ease the rating burden on residential ratepayers?

A. The council did not consider this.

Q. Has the light rail work for West been dropped? What about the busways work that was planned for the Western Motorway? Is that still on the table, and if so, can it be sped up?

A. The Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2018 gave responsibility for delivering North West Light Rail to Waka Kohati New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA).

Auckland Transport is currently working on an Early Deliverables NW Rapid Transport Corridor business case which will determine the investment required to establish bus priority along the existing corridor and reconfigure the local bus network to integrate with that bus priority. It is expected that this will be completed in the quarter of Jul-Sept 2020. At this stage there is no funding available in either the 2.5% or 3.5% rates increase scenarios to implement any recommendations from the business case.

Q. Given the legislative change in the RMA that negates consultation, what assurances do Māori have that Māori land won't be targeted. This happening now in the Bay of Plenty And in the same vein Council taking land under the Public Works out which is happening in Hamilton and in some cases owners are getting no compensation or choice in the land grab for Council projects - in this case a road & housing

A. The council takes care to ensure that it complies with its various legislative obligations and any relevant statutory processes. The council also recognises te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) as New Zealand's founding document. In relation to changes to the Resource Management Act 1991, we refer you to the Ministry for the Environment as the department that administers that Act.

Q. How does asset "recycling" help save money? aren't you selling, then spending all that money on a new asset?

A. When recycling assets, we take assets that are old or redundant or in some cases have been empty for many years and swap them for new and improved assets that deliver a lot more for the community in which they are placed. By re-investing the proceeds from asset recycling it means Council needs to borrow less money. As Council is at the limit of what it can prudently borrow without the proceeds from asset recycling a number of planned projects would not be completed.

Q. So to be clear, 100% of funds from a sale of an asset will be used on a better asset? is this money ring fenced? I'm not sure why this is mentioned as part of the emergency reaction. It seems like normal everyday activity. How does it help council face the emergency?

A. Asset recycling is part of Councils activity and the 10-year budget included targets for funds from this source. As part of the Emergency Budget we are proposing to accelerate and increase the target. By re-investing the proceeds from asset recycling it means Council needs to borrow less money. As Council is at the limit of what it can prudently borrow without the proceeds from asset recycling a number of planned projects would not be completed.

Q. Public transport needs development with a climate lens. To what extent is AT charged to consider emissions in its decision-making priorities?

A. Development of the public transport network is currently one of our main ways to address climate change – more people taking public transport means fewer vehicle trips are made, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Development of the public transport network occurs with two climate change lenses – the first is the impact of removing vehicles from the road, while the second is the opportunities to use lower emissions vehicles – primarily electric trains or buses - to reduce the emissions from public transport itself.

More widely, Auckland Transport is charged with considering emissions reduction as a key priority – alongside other factors such as safety, better transport opportunities and supporting growth – in its key decisions. For example, reducing environmental harm and achieving a significant reduction in greenhouse

gas emissions will be one of the major priorities in our forthcoming 2021 Regional Land Transport Plan.

*Together we can
recover stronger.*

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