



Local Climate Adaptation Pilot

Island Bay / Houghton Bay Water Catchment

April 2025

Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

Contents

Introduction	1
Guiding principles	2
About the pilot	3
What the pilot process will involve	5
Part 1. Explore values and vulnerabilities	5
Part 2. Explore options to adapt	6
Types of adaptation options in the scope of this project	6
Assessing climate adaptation options	6
Working together as a community	8
Mana whenua involvement	8
Community input	8
The Community Panel	8
Location and timing	10
Delivery timeline	10
Proposed location of the pilot	10
Proposed pilot area: Suburbs within the Island Bay / Houghton Bay water catchment area	11
Evaluating the pilot	12

Introduction

In Pōneke|Wellington, our unique landscape of coasts, low-lying land, and steep hills offers both beauty and challenges. of rainfall causing flooding in low-lying areas and slips around our hill suburbs, while sea-level rise will worsen the impact of coastal storms, threatening coastal communities and infrastructure with flooding and erosion.

In the future climate change will continue to negatively impact our city, environment, economy and communities, with disproportionate impacts for many already disadvantaged groups.

And it's important to remember that this whenua – Te Upoko o te Ika a Māui – has also changed in the past, through natural processes and human actions. Our approach will be guided by our partnership with mana whenua who have been adapting here for centuries.

Wellington City Council has established a long-term Community Climate Adaptation Programme as part of its climate change strategy, [Te Atakura – First to Zero](#). The programme aims to help Wellington's most at-risk communities prepare for and adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change in a fair and sustainable way.

Within the Community Climate Adaptation Programme, we are launching a pilot project to test a fair and scalable process to investigate suitable options for us to adapt to increasing climate disruption in the capital. The pilot will focus on one area of the city – we are proposing to start in the Island Bay / Houghton Bay water catchment area – with the intention to work in other priority areas once the pilot is completed and evaluated. This is an important step in making the city more resilient to climate change, by working together to reduce risks and improve our ability to adapt.

This document outlines our approach for the pilot, explains how communities who live and have an interest in the pilot area can participate, and describes how we will identify and assess adaptation options.

The pilot is scheduled to start in July 2025.

Guiding principles

The following principles, drawn from [national guidance](#), will be used to guide decision-making during the pilot. The Council's [Tā kai Here](#) partnership is reflected in the addition of a foundational principle of partnering with mana whenua.



Be proactive:
Anticipate change and take practical steps to adapt.



Think long term:
Take an intergenerational perspective that spans political, planning and financial cycles, to plan for a changing climate.



Maximise co-benefits:
Choose adaptation actions that achieve complementary goals while avoiding maladaptation.



Promote equity:
Prioritise helping the people, places and infrastructure that are most vulnerable to climate impacts, while building adaptive capacity for all.



Collaborate:
Adapt in partnership with iwi, hapu, Māori and all New Zealanders – ara whakamua (the path forward).



Adjust as we go:
Design actions and decisions to be revisited and adjusted as circumstances change.



Mainstream adaptation:
Embed climate resilience as a core consideration in all decision-making.



Make well-informed decisions:
Use the best available evidence, including science, data, local knowledge and mātauranga Māori.



Work with nature:
Policies, planning and regulation should protect, enhance, and restore nature, and any impacts on nature should be mitigated as much as possible.



Adapt locally:
Enable communities to prepare for the unique risks and opportunities they face, and tailor interventions to the local situation.



Partner with mana whenua:
Develop adaptation responses in partnership with mana whenua, elevate te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori and empower Māori to plan for Māori.

About the pilot

We all need to work together to support our communities in Pōneke|Wellington to prepare for climate change. We need to take steps to prepare for the climate impacts we're already facing, like landslips and coastal flooding, which will only get worse in the future.

Many infrastructure and service providers, including the Council, need to begin making decisions on how to adapt the places, spaces, services, and infrastructure which support our communities to address the growing risks of climate disruption. However, we currently lack an evidence base that tells us what will work where, and what aligns with the values of mana whenua and our unique, diverse communities who know their places best. These decisions, which will need to be made over the next 10, 25 years and 100 years, will affect how future generations live in the places we love.

This pilot will support the development of a scalable and fair process to identify and assess suitable local climate adaptation options for an area of Pōneke|Wellington that is facing considerable coastal and inland flooding risk.

Working with local communities and mana whenua, we want to:

- Increase the collective understanding of local climate change issues and opportunities for adaptation.
- Develop shared understanding of options for how to adapt to increased climate disruption locally, and build an evidence base to inform future city-wide adaptation planning and strategies.
- Ensure suitable options are identified and assessed, relevant to a wide range of groups who contribute to local adaptation, including home-owners, infrastructure owners, utility providers and developers.
- Strengthen local community resilience to climate impacts and disruption.
- Provide a positive experience for all partners.
- Develop a process that can be repeated in other areas of the city to support fair decision-making that aligns to other resilience-building activities in the city.
- Build capacity for ongoing climate adaptation planning, within the Council, communities and mana whenua partners.

This pilot will result in the creation of a Local Climate Adaptation Options Report, outlining suitable place-based options for increasing resilience to climate disruption in the short, medium and long term.

The main steps of the pilot approach are shown in the diagram below.

Local Climate Adaptation Options Report

Island Bay / Houghton Bay Water Catchment

The Local Climate Adaptation Options Report for the Island Bay / Houghton Bay catchment area **will outline possible options for adapting locally to increasing climate disruption over the short, medium and long term.** These options will be based on the involvement of communities, mana whenua and expert advice.

What's happening?

What matters most?

Working together as a community

Community Panel (8 people)

Brings together a diverse range of community representatives to assess adaptation options and shape community engagement.

Public

Wider public engagement activities to get input throughout.

Project Team

Led by Wellington City Council, the Project Team will facilitate technical advice and support to the community. This will also involve mana whenua, Greater Wellington Regional Council and others as needed.

What can we do about it?

Part 1. Explore vulnerabilities and values

Create a local climate change profile

Analyse local climate change vulnerabilities to key local climate change hazards:

- Inland flooding
- Sea level rise and coastal flooding
- Landslides
- Extreme weather events.

Explore local histories and knowledge

Understand what is important locally

Develop community values and objectives

Part 2. Explore options to adapt

Explore adaptation options based on:

Criteria for shortlisting options

- Effectiveness
- Feasibility
- Positive social, cultural & environmental outcomes
- Community objectives

Types of adaptation options

- Natural or built infrastructure
- Planning how land is used
- Build community resilience
- Living with the impacts
- Finding new approaches
- Relocation from high-risk areas

Technical assessments

(e.g. ecological impacts, cultural impacts, cost, engineering design, landuse planning etc).

Short-term options

(next 10 years)

Medium-term options

(next 25 years (2050))

Long-term options

(next 100 years (2125))

Guiding principles

What the pilot process will involve

Over time, we will need to be able to deal with more water – whether coming from rain or coastal storms, as well as the knock-on impacts of increased climate disruption (for example, disruption to food supplies in other areas or countries). Together with the community, we will explore locally relevant adaptation options to ensure we have the best possible evidence-base for decision-making.

We will explore with communities what adaptation could look like at the local level, taking a holistic view of what makes our places liveable and what we need to consider for long term climate resilience. We will consider things like public safety, transport routes, understanding insurance with climate change, and planning for disruption.

The process to develop the Local Climate Adaptation Options Report will be flexible and will be adjusted with the community but will include the following steps as outlined below. The final report will reflect community input and technical advice. This report will offer an evidence base to inform future decisions and strategic plans for Council and other stakeholders (including homeowners) who have a role in increasing local climate resilience.

Throughout the pilot, the project team will work closely with a Community Panel, engage with the broader public in the area, and facilitate technical assessments as needed.

Part 1. Explore values and vulnerabilities

There are a wide range of ways climate change will affect our lives. This first stage of the pilot will explore the impacts of climate change locally and what this will mean for local communities. The activities below will feed into a **local climate change profile** for the pilot area.

What matters most?

To begin, we will engage with communities in the area to:

- **Explore local histories and knowledge of place**
including changes in land use over time, and what climate impacts and resilience issues they are seeing now.
- **Understand what is important**
to the people who live in this place, and what they are worried about with climate change.
- **Develop community values and objectives**
building on previous community insights, that will be used to assess potential adaptation options.

What is happening?

To develop a shared understanding of the climate risks to the area, we will:

- **Analyse the local climate change hazards**
and potential climate disruption for the local area and communities. Climate hazards will include inland and coastal flooding and landslips, and both extreme and repetitive “nuisance” events where possible.
- **Undertake vulnerability and risk analyses** to inform where and for what adaptation will be needed. This will include places and assets that the community have identified as being important or at risk.

Part 2. Explore options to adapt

There are many ways we can prepare and adapt to the local impacts. There are solutions in nature, in communities, in engaging with mana whenua and Māori knowledge, and in science, architecture, and engineering. Examples include improving community resilience and disaster preparedness, strengthening natural systems like dunes, wetlands and streams, and strategic and land-use planning.

With mana whenua partners, te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori will be prioritised and woven throughout the process of exploring suitable long-term adaptation options.

What can we do about it?

To do build an understanding of what suitable options we have, we will:

- **Building on the [Climate Adaptation Options Catalogue for Wellington](#), source ideas from the community for how we could adapt locally.**
Adaptation options will be identified through community input and expert advice, considering examples from New Zealand and around the world.
- **Assess the potential adaptation options**
with the Community Panel and appropriate technical assessments using criteria detailed below.

Types of adaptation options in the scope of this project

Over time we will need to increase our resilience to climate change impacts by accommodating the water, reducing our vulnerability, or relocating infrastructure. While the primary impact we are expecting to explore is related to water, we may also explore options to adapt to other impacts of climate change that may affect local residents (for example, disruption to food or energy supply, access to insurance, transport disruption).

Community spaces, services and infrastructure shape how and where we live, so we'll explore ways to adapt these neighbourhood elements - like transport, stormwater systems, community facilities, parks and recreation areas, to address the risks we face from climate change.

Additionally, the ability of our communities to respond well to climate disruption and extreme weather is also critical. This involves initiatives and networks that develop community resilience and disaster preparedness.

There is a wide range of ways we can adapt, with actions that help to manage, moderate, or cope with the effects of climate change. This pilot will consider climate adaptation options that reduce the risks of climate change such as using natural or built infrastructure, planning how land is used, increasing community resilience, or living with the impacts and finding new approaches. In some cases, we may need to consider moving away from high-risk areas.

Adaptation options vary in cost, duration, impacts, co-benefits and effectiveness. Our goal is to explore these together and make informed assessments based on community input and expert advice. While we do not yet have clear guidance on how some adaptation actions could be planned or financed fairly, we remain committed to finding equitable solutions.

Assessing climate adaptation options

Once we have a long list of adaptation options, they will be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Effectiveness**
Will the option effectively address the risks and vulnerabilities of the area?

- **Feasibility**

Are there legal, social, financial or engineering considerations that present significant implementation barriers?

- **Social, environmental and cultural impacts**

Does the option have positive social, environmental or cultural impacts?

- **Alignment to guiding principles**

Does the option support our guiding principles?

- **Community objectives**

Does this option align with what the community values and prioritises for the future?

These assessments will be undertaken by relevant subject-matter experts, the Community Panel and mana whenua, as appropriate.

These assessments won't provide a list of preferred options, but they will help us to refine the list. This process will help us rule out options that are not sufficiently effective, feasible or suitable.

Working together as a community

We will need to prepare for climate change together. This community-centred process aims to bring together diverse community perspectives - residents, business owners, recreational users, people who pass by, and the wider city - to help shape the local adaptation options. The project team will work closely with a Community Panel throughout the pilot.

We acknowledge that across the adaptation area are suburbs that have strong and unique identities and make-ups. This process will aim to honour these and work with the different communities in ways that support them.

Mana whenua involvement

We are inviting mana whenua partner representatives to be on the internal Council steering group for the project, and working with them on how they would like to participate in project delivery.

Community input

Throughout the process we will work with existing community groups and community leaders, through activities such as co-hosting or connecting with existing community events and initiatives, providing opportunities for community connection, partnering with schools and getting broad community input through a variety of channels. Building off existing community adaptation work and previous Council consultations we will explore:

- **What is happening?**

We will offer opportunities to learn about the local impacts of increasing climate disruption.

- **What and who is already available to help?**

We will share information about existing services and connect the community to available adaptation and resilience resources – such as emergency response, emission reduction efforts, and funding for local projects. We will also provide opportunities for community members to learn from each other, to empower community-led action.

- **What matters most?**

We will gather community perspectives on what is most important to them for a climate-resilient neighbourhood, and use these insights to develop a set of community objectives. These objectives will form a part of the criteria for assessing adaptation options. We will also explore local histories to understand how past changes have shaped current challenges, and collect community input on locations that hold significance or are at risk.

- **What can we do about it?**

We will gather community ideas for how we could adapt, and what the local adaptation options could be.

The Community Panel

The Community Panel, made up of up to 8 local representatives from diverse backgrounds, who will ensure community perspectives shape adaptation planning. Up to four young people (under 24 years old, including high school students) will be specifically recruited to the Panel, as well as representatives from different suburbs in the pilot area. **The Community Panel will be paid and meet around once a month during the pilot.**

Recruitment process

The Community Panel will represent a range of residents living in the area, as well as include city-wide and youth representatives. Our Tākai Here mana whenua partners may also choose to have representatives on this panel. For the pilot, we will invite key representatives and open expressions of interest to ensure broad participation, which will be available through our Let's Talk hub at the launch of the pilot.

Activities

The Community Panel will support the project team to engage with their local communities, including those who are often under-represented, for example youth, migrant communities and vulnerable communities.

Supported by the project team, the panel will:

- Review and refine the community engagement plan
- Review community objectives, derived from community feedback.
- Review the Local Climate Change Profile.
- Consider the risk, a vulnerability and technical assessments.
- Assess adaptation options against community objectives.
- Review the final Local Climate Adaptation Report.
- Act as community conduits to update and engage the communities they represent.

Location and timing

Delivery timeline

The pilot is expected to start in July 2025 and will take up to 12 months to complete.

Proposed location of the pilot

We have chosen to define the boundary of the pilot area using water catchment boundaries. By working at the catchment scale, we can build an integrated view of climate impacts and solutions that consider community resilience, ecosystem health and water management together.

We are aiming to start in the Island Bay / Houghton Bay water catchment area, which includes the coastal and valley suburbs of Island Bay, Houghton Bay, and Berhampore, as well as the hilltop suburbs of Southgate, Vogeltown, Kingston and Mornington, as shown in the map below.

This area is recommended due to the following criteria:

- **Climate risk profile**
This area has been identified as at risk of climate disruption including coastal flooding during storms, rising sea levels over time, and the risk of inland flooding and landslips.
- **Community interest**
This area has engaged community networks who are interested in discussing and shaping climate change adaptation solutions.
- **Significant exposure**
This area includes public infrastructure, residential communities, sites of significance to mana whenua and Māori, and non-council owned assets.
- **An integrated approach**
The catchment-based approach and location align with existing initiatives, such as the Coastal Reserves Management Plan, supporting both short- and long-term adaptation efforts.

Proposed pilot area: Suburbs within the Island Bay / Houghton Bay water catchment area

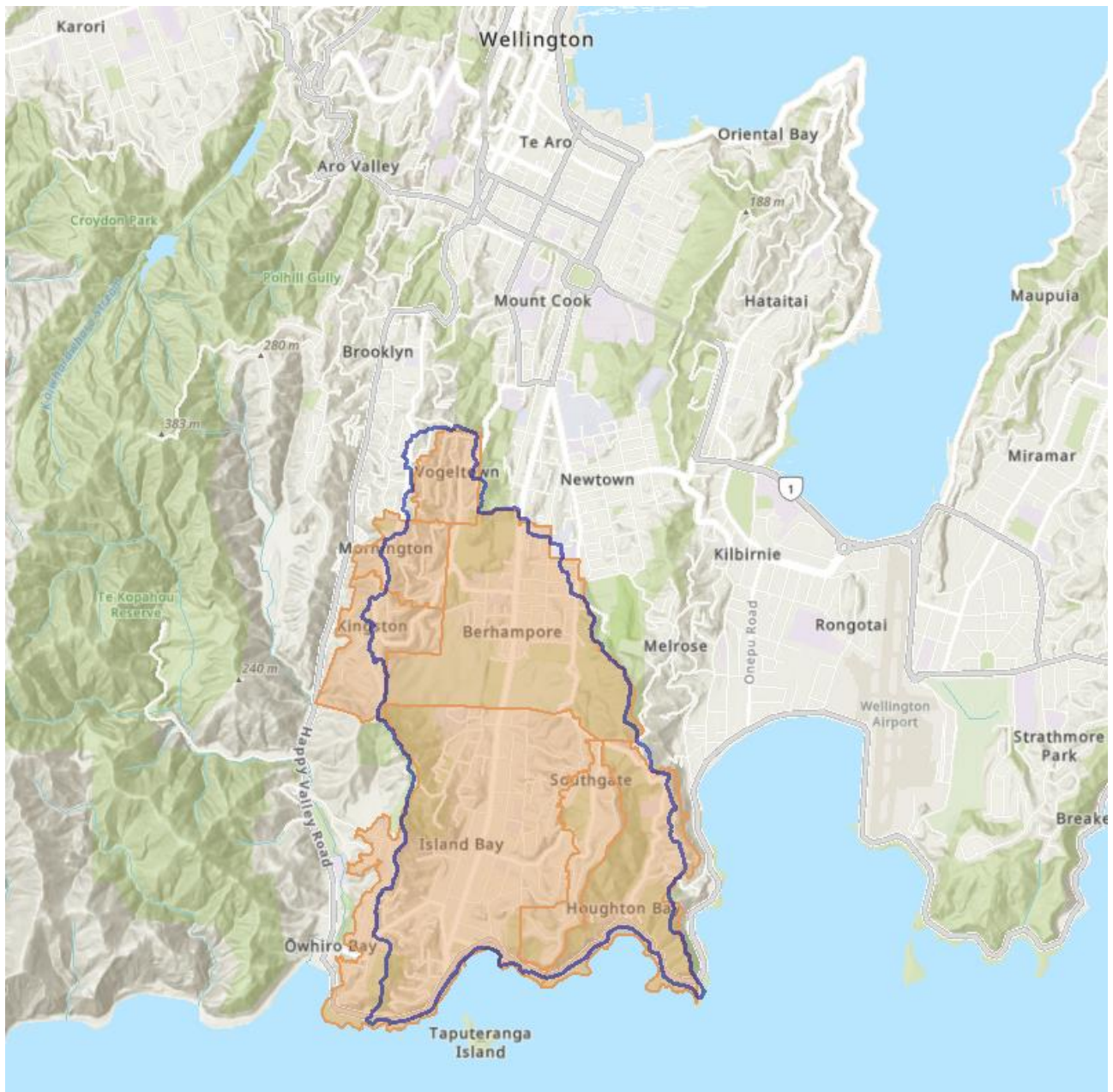


Figure 1. The orange area shows the extent of the proposed pilot location, guided by the reach of the Island Bay / Houghton Bay stormwater catchment (shown by the blue line).

Evaluating the pilot

This pilot aims to learn how we can best identify local climate adaptation solutions and support our most climate-vulnerable communities in adapting to climate change disruption, before scaling up the approach citywide.

The success of the pilot will be evaluated using the following measures:

- **Strength of mana whenua partnerships**
 - Measured by feedback from mana whenua on their ability to actively influence decision-making including how their rights, values, and aspirations were integrated throughout the process.
- **Communities feel connected, empowered, and actively involved in shaping their future**
 - Did the communities involved find the process valuable?
 - Was the process structured to enable inclusive and meaningful involvement for diverse communities?
- **Process is effective**
 - Did the process enhance local understanding of the local climate change risks, vulnerabilities and solutions?
 - Did the process effectively add value to existing community initiatives?
 - Did the Local Climate Adaptation Options Report provide useful insights for future climate adaptation planning activities?
 - Were the roles of the Community Panel and wider community appropriate and effective?
 - Were positive social, environmental, cultural and economic outcomes adequately considered?
 - Was there sufficient data available to support the process?
- **Process is replicable**
 - Was the size of the pilot area appropriate for the scope and duration of the pilot?
 - Could the process be easily replicated to other water catchment areas?
- **The process is fair and considers intergenerational equity**
 - Does the process provide a fair approach that can be applied citywide to support the communities most at risk of climate impacts?
 - Has sufficient regard been given to intergenerational equity in the process?

Climate Change Response
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[Letstalk.wellington.govt.nz/climate-adaptation](https://letstalk.wellington.govt.nz/climate-adaptation)

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