

# RD 9 Communities

Pukehāmoamo, Sherenden, Crownthorpe, Whanawhana, Waiwhare, Kurīpāponga, Kaweka Forest Park

## Community-led Recovery Conversation

Cyclone Gabrielle – 14 February 2023

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**HERETAUNGA  
HASTINGS** DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

*Sage* | Planning

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# 1 R D 9 Communities

## 1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to identify the context and key impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle on the R D 9 communities based on conversations to better understand how they see recovery looking for their community. A snapshot of the conversation with the communities is included in this report along with a series of actions and priorities based on key themes.

This report is the beginning of conversations between the R D 9 communities and the Hastings District Council.

R D 9 is a large geographic area and includes Pukehāmoamo, Sherenden, Crownthorpe, Ōtamauri, Whanawhana, Waiwhare, Kurīpāonga, and Kaweka Forest Park. There are a broad range of landuses including lifestyle living in the areas which are handy to both Napier and Hastings, an established farming community with a combination of large and small holdings, as well as large areas of viticulture and horticulture. Those who live in this area love the strong sense of community and the fact that the area is well serviced by community halls and schools which bring people together. The community pull together and support each other both in ordinary times and times of crisis.

This community shared willingly about their experiences in the response and early recovery phase after Cyclone Gabrielle. They shared what makes their community special and what their key priorities were going forward.

There is a strong awareness of the “big picture” in this community and whilst there was concern about the impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle there was also concern about what climate change might mean for this community going forward. The community have noticed differences in the way the landscape and the waterways are working together and are keen to understand the impacts of this.

The community acknowledge that they were not as impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle as much as other areas but the isolation and fragile roading network has taken its toll.

## 1.2 Context and Key Impacts

The R D 9 community sits between two rivers, the Ngaruroro and the Tūtaekurī and they are acutely aware of the influence of these rivers and their tributaries on their daily lives. Several bridges, Crownthorpe, Waiwhare and Matapiro were damaged or washed away and the Matapiro Bridge is yet to be fully reinstated. Cyclone Gabrielle isolated communities and they became distanced from town. There is a strong connection to Ōmāhu and Puketapu via Swamp Road and Korokipo Road and the devastation in these communities hit the R D 9 community hard. The Taihape Road suffered extensive damage and was closed for several weeks after the Cyclone.

The response and support provided by the team at Ōmāhu marae was greatly appreciated by the R D 9 community. There were community-led hubs operating from Pukehāmoamo School (immediately after the cyclone until the middle of May). Waiwhare Community Centre also operated as a distribution

centre in the same way that it does if the Taihape Road is closed because of snow. Matapiro Hall and the Sherenden Hall have been identified as locations that should and could operate as hubs to provide additional resilience through the winter but improvements including earthquake strengthening are required to ensure they are suitable long term.

The loss of communication impacted this community significantly both during the response phase and in the immediate aftermath. This impacted both the wellbeing of the community and their ability to get on with the work required as part of the recovery process.

The level of preparedness varied within the community as did the capacity to respond. The farming community have different resources available when compared to lifestyle properties however the community worked together to clear roads and re-establish connections. Those who work in town and have stronger connection with the urban centers faced different challenges during and after the cyclone i.e., they were not always as well prepared or as strongly connected to the land and this was problematic. For the farming community the Cyclone caused significant on farm damage, landslides, and damage to fencing and water infrastructure and the focus of this community continues to be on repairing the damage to ensure that stock is contained, fed, and watered.

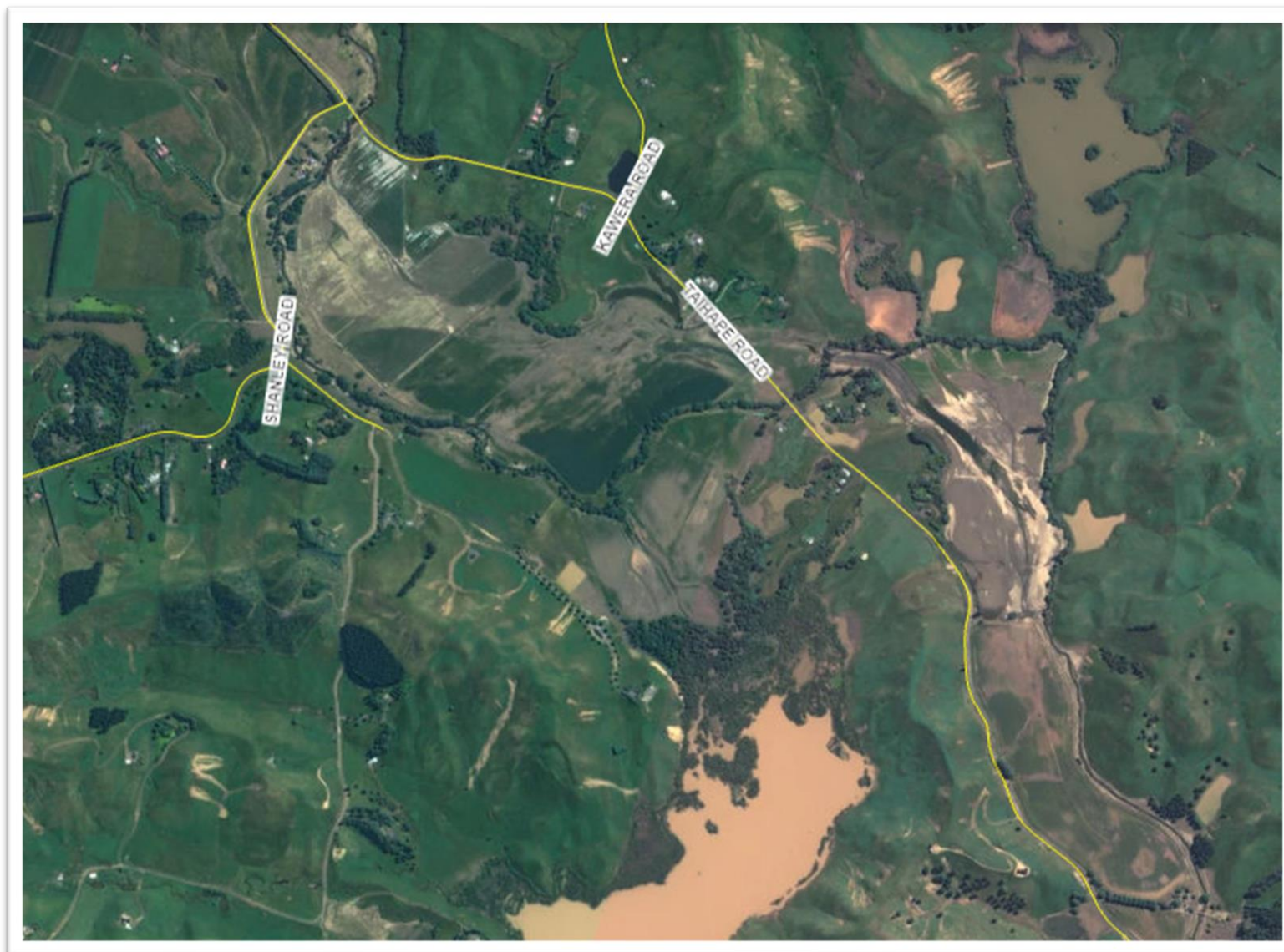
Figure 1: The R D 9 Communities



### 1.3 Placarded Buildings and Land Categorisation

There were 21 placarded<sup>1</sup> buildings in the RD9 community. Two yellow in Pukehāmoamo and one white and 18 yellow in Crownthorpe. This area was not impacted by Land Categorisation.

<sup>1</sup> Rapid building assessments were completed following Cyclone Gabrielle assigning access as follows. White – access allowed, yellow – access limited, red – access prohibited



*Photo – Okawa Stream and Lake Rūnanga after Cyclone Gabrielle (Source Hastings District Council Website – before and after)*

## 1.4 How the R D 9 Community Shared With Us

The R D 9 community actively engaged in two meetings. The first was with known community contacts to determine what would be an appropriate way to have a conversation with the wider community. A drop-in session was agreed.

- a. Sage Pre-engagement meeting 24<sup>th</sup> May (community contacts)
- b. Sage Comprehensive Engagement drop-in, Pukehāmoamo School 3 – 6 pm 25<sup>th</sup> July

Whilst the drop in was well attended, R D 9 is a large geographic area, and it was likely that those who lived some distance from Pukehāmoamo School did not attend and their voices are therefore not included in this summary document.

The engagement associated with this community-led recovery is the first step in the Council establishing an ongoing relationship with the R D 9 community. Whilst the community appears to be reasonably self-contained there was a sense that a stronger relationship between Council and the community is desirable particularly in relation to being better prepared and ensuring a greater level of resilience.

## 1.5 Snapshot of What the RD 9 Communities Shared

- People live here because it is handy to both Napier and Hastings and has a strong sense of community.
- It is important to get to know your neighbours.
- The community felt like they were largely left on their own. For some there was little or no contact from the Council or other agencies and this impacted on their ability to respond and has had negative impact on their wellbeing.
- For some they continue to feel like they are on their own as they try to navigate Council and insurance processes. This is difficult and frustrating.
- The communities acknowledge that as individuals they could and should be better prepared and they know that it is important for them to be prepared particularly in relation to communications.
- Communication from agencies was poor during and immediately after the event but some considered that it was good now.
- The Taihape Road is an important economic artery for this community, and it needs to be resilient.
- There is a need for good information to guide decision making and this should include listening to what the community have to say about their area. The community knows a lot about their area.
- Early warning systems for when roads are likely to be impassable would be useful. Not knowing causes much anxiety as friends and families are never too sure when they might be separated from each other.
- There has been a noticeable change in the way the water flows in and around the Okawa Stream, Lake Rūnanga, and Dorwards Spring. There is more flooding now than there used to be, and the water flows differently.
  - A collective solution to the management of stormwater and water in this area is required.
- Ōmāhu marae did things really well and supported the wider community. The community were grateful for this support and the coordinated effort of the marae.

- There were several hubs operating but damage to the roading network meant that communities and hubs were isolated from each other -
  - Pukehāmoama School was established as a community-led hub immediately after the cyclone and continued through until the middle of May
  - The Waiwhare Community Centre operated in a similar manner to what it does when the Taihape Road closes for snow – distributing goods etc.
  - There could be other hubs and there are a number of community halls in this district which could be used including Pukehāmoama, Matapiro, Sherenden (noting this hall is earthquake prone), and Otāmauri Playcentre
  - The community would like to be better prepared with hubs that are serviced with generators, Starlink and other communications.
- There is a risk of burnout in the community – the impacts of the event and the ongoing wet winter is affecting the roading network in particular and this is impacting peoples ability to confidently get on with their lives.
- There is a need for good information to guide decision making and this should include listening to what the community have to say about their area. The community knows a lot about their area.
- There is concern about the resilience of the roading network. The roads are not built for the traffic that is using them and they suffered significant damage in the cyclone. Every time it rains there is concern about the impact it might have on the roading network – culverts, tarseal/potholes, bridge abutments etc
- Thought needs to be given to the long-term challenges when short term fixes are undertaken. An awareness of the potential for unintended consequences is important. We don't want to make things worse!
- The event has created financial pressure and it is not clear where to get funding assistance from.
- A catchment collective has been formed called “Between two Rivers”. This is largely focused on water quality and security but with a strong strategic focus.



Figure 1 – Snapshot of what the R D 9 Community shared



## 2 Key Themes for the R D 9 Community

Several key themes have emerged from the conversations with the R D 9 community. Relative priority order for this community is shown and this reflects the emphasis that was given to each in the conversations. Under each a series of actions and priorities has been established. Ongoing conversations with the R D 9 communities are required to refine the actions and determine when and how these can be supported.



### 2.1 Resilient Infrastructure

The R D 9 community is geographically spread and the roading network is critical to the economic and social well-being of the area. The Taihape Road is a key connector into Hawke's Bay from the R D 9 community and beyond. The importance of this was highlighted during Cyclone Gabrielle. Since the Cyclone and for a period prior, there has been ongoing flooding across the Taihape Road. This community has noticed a significant change in the way the water flows in and around the Okawa Stream and Lake Rūnanga and this is having a detrimental impact on the roading network and the community who use it. For the community, particularly those in the lifestyle area who commute to Napier and Hastings for work, this has created a real concern and the uncertainty of whether there will be continued access during rain events is causing much frustration and anxiety. There is a view that something has changed over recent years that has impacted the drainage system.

The roading network in the wider area is also an area of concern as many roads and bridges were impacted by slips and flooding. The cyclone meant that many of the communities became separated from each other and from town. For the farming community this created uncertainty around decision making for their farming operation, but it also meant that they could not get to town for supplies. The community noted a number specific roading issues that required addressing however it is understood that these are largely programmed and in hand.

The Matapiro Bridge is still not fixed and there is frustration around the progress on the proposed solution and the timing for repairs. This bridge is particularly important for this community they are keen to ensure that communication around its repair is timely and accurate and that the repairs are done in a way which is cognisant of the community needs as they begin to reconnect and establish their new normal.

Key Resilient Infrastructure actions are:

- i. Progress the Matapiro Bridge repairs as quickly as possible and ensure that the community is fully informed about the timeframes so that they can plan accordingly.
- ii. Undertake an assessment of the stormwater management in and around the Okawa Stream and Lake Rūnanga and ensure that the community has opportunity to input into the technical assessment. Follow up/facilitate the necessary physical changes to the water bodies and the roading network to provide a greater level of resilience for the Taihape Road.
- iii. That Hastings District Council regularly informs the local community about the works that are planned on the network and seek local input into priorities where appropriate.
- iv. That a programme of immediate maintenance priorities is established for the drainage infrastructure at the lower end of the Taihape Road (Kawera Road/ Shanley Road and Lake Rūnanga) and implemented based on technical understanding and input from the community.

## 2.2 Strategic Focus

The RD9 area is highly productive with a range of horticultural and agricultural landuses intertwined with lifestyle properties. There is an acknowledgement that it is time to think about the landscape and the community's relationship with their environment differently. Most have felt the impact of changing weather patterns and landuses on their ability to do the things they love. There is also acknowledgement that this work is complex and that there are likely to be conflicts that require resolution as different viewpoints and competing interests are worked through.

Between Two Rivers (B2R) is a catchment collective that was established just prior to the cyclone and funding has been provided by the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) for operational costs for the next 3 years. This catchment is defined by the water catchment between the Ngaruroro and Tūtaekurī Rivers. Its membership includes representatives from the community and their intention is to work collaboratively to provide initiatives and solutions that improve and protect their environment.

This group is in its first year and was established prior to Cyclone Gabrielle. The focus for the catchment collective is largely related to river management, water quality and security. For this community the Cyclone has strengthened the need for this group to take an advocacy role with a clear strategic focus. Representatives from the community want to share what they know to help inform future decisions around the streams and to a lesser extent land use.

Key Strategic Focus actions are:

- i. That the Hawke's Bay Regional Council and the Hastings District Council support and collaborate with the Between Two Rivers catchment collective providing technical input and administrative support.
- ii. That the recommendations from Between Two Rivers are used to inform Council decision making related to landuse and water management for the RD 9 area.
- iii. That the Councils provide information to Between Two Rivers to inform decision making and recommendations.

### 2.3 Preparedness

Cyclone Gabrielle created unprecedented levels of physical damage and has caused significant anxiety in the RD 9 community. The community feel that they could have been better prepared and that had this been the case they may have been able to respond in a more coordinated manner.

There is a strong desire to improve the level of preparedness in the community and it was noted that this should include being prepared for a range of possible natural disaster scenarios i.e., flood, fire, earthquake etc

Specifically, the community noted the importance of

- early warning systems
- knowing your neighbours
- having systems to account for people,
- individual preparation
- community preparedness noting that the RD9 community is made up of several smaller communities – Pukehāmoamo, Waiwhare, Sherenden, Matapiro, Otamauri.
- Establishment of known community emergency hubs

Key Preparedness actions are:

- i. That the Council in conjunction with community facilitate resilience planning session/s
- ii. That key messages around individual preparedness continue to be shared with the community and that the effectiveness of these is monitored to ensure that the message is being received.
- iii. That community emergency hubs are identified in conjunction with the community and CDEM and that a prioritised programme of works is developed and implemented to ensure that these are fit for purpose.
- iv. That a sustainable people structure is in place to support the emergency hubs (see 2.4 below)

## 2.4 Sustainable Hubs

Community hubs have functions greater than emergency preparedness and response. For the RD9 community there is a need to have a place/s to bring people together and provide for connectedness and wellbeing, and to be a community centre for activities and events.

This community was well supported by Ōmāhu marae (for those who could get there) in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone. This community felt like they were largely left on their own with little support from the agencies. This has highlighted the need for the communities to become self-supporting with established hubs that have a sustainable people structure with physical resources to support them.

A community-led hub was also set up at Pukehāmoamo School and continued to operate until the middle of May. The Waiwhare Community Centre was a drop off/distribution point and has been operating as such for many years when the Taihape Road closes due to snow. The winter resilience planning that has recently been completed has identified the Sherenden Hall and the Matapiro Hall as potential hub locations for the immediate winter needs and these have been resourced accordingly.

Community hubs have functions more than just for emergency preparedness and response. For the RD9 community there is a need to have a place to bring people together and provide for connectedness and wellbeing, and as a center for activities and events.

Key Sustainable Hubs actions are:

- i. That physical locations for community hubs are identified and that any necessary physical work required to upgrade these is undertaken i.e. prioritising earthquake strengthening
- ii. That community hubs are resourced with generator and / or generator plugs (if generators exist elsewhere in the community), and Starlink for communication.
- iii. That resources associated with preparedness including detail about the community and their resources, and Civil Defence Community Resilience Plans are available at the emergency hubs.
- iv. Establish a sustainable governance structure for the hubs in each locality that is clearly connected to the other response agencies (Civil Defence, Neighborhood Support, Hastings District Council etc)

## 3 Additional Resources

The following additional resources are also available:

- Hawke's Bay Regional Council Hazards Portal <https://gis.hbrc.govt.nz/Hazards/>
- HDC Cyclone Gabrielle before/after Imagery: <https://hdcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6ef8fe7c8ed643b2b9005bae7ca01162>

