



Topic 4: Natural Hazards

Introduction

As part of the District Plan Review, Timaru District Council has commissioned a Discussion Document on natural hazards to stimulate discussion and form a basis for public consultation. This can be found at www.timaru.govt.nz/dpr.

It identifies three main issues with how the current District Plan manages natural hazards, establishes potential options to address these issues and discusses the associated strengths and weaknesses. We seek your feedback on the issues and options.

Issues and Options

Issue 1

Should areas of known natural hazard risk be mapped in the District Plan?

Mapping natural hazards is an integral part of how Council manages, communicates and minimises the risk of natural hazards. The District Plan does not currently map natural hazards aside from the Coastal Inundation Line. Therefore any hazards not mapped are only considered by the Council at building consent assessment time, or if a resource consent application is lodged e.g. for a subdivision. This means that at present other significant hazards such as tsunami, landslides, liquefaction, lateral spreading, fault rupture, ground shaking, rockfall, alluvial fans, land instability, overland flow paths and fire that are known to exist in the district, with varying degrees of risk, are not specifically identified and addressed by the District Plan. The current approach also means that the presence of a known natural hazard is not necessarily a trigger for resource consent. Mapping of hazards could also be undertaken in a risk based manner – identifying areas of low, medium and high risk.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the status quo of only having the Coastal Inundation Line mapped; (ii) map some known natural hazards, such as tsunami, landslides, liquefaction, lateral spreading, fault rupture, ground shaking, rockfall, alluvial fans, land instability, overland flow paths and fire; or (iii) assign activity status (i.e. is resource consent required?) if a proposed activity is to be located in an area identified as being subject to natural hazard risk. A potential approach for identifying activities requiring resource consent is discussed in Issue 2.

This summary outlines the issues our district faces in relation to natural hazards.

We welcome your feedback on this topic.

Dave Jack
Timaru Ward Councillor





Issue 2

Should the District Plan take a sensitivity based approach to activities in natural hazard areas?

Assessing natural hazard risk on a sensitivity basis allows for the District Plan to provide for appropriate activities in hazard prone areas. In a rural context this could be restricting the use of land to grazing / farming as opposed to allowing a residence to be constructed. In an urban location this could be using flood prone land for a park or carpark as opposed to residential development. The other way a sensitivity approach can be applied is the restriction of activities that can influence or increase the hazard risk. In the Timaru District an example of this is activities influencing overland flow paths. Overland flow paths are the path water takes when the stormwater system reaches capacity. The construction of solid fences (for example) in overland flow paths can redirect floodwaters onto adjoining properties.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the status quo of managing natural hazard based on the presence of a hazard; or (ii) take a sensitivity based approach to land use in areas of natural hazard risk including identifying what activities are sensitive to certain hazards and what activities in natural hazard areas can worsen or create additional adverse effects from the hazard.

Issue 3

Should the District Plan include provisions relating to natural defences?

Natural defences, such as wetlands or vegetated dunes can mitigate against natural hazards. For example dunes can provide valuable protection against coastal erosion. The ability of dunes (as an example) to fulfil this function can be compromised by incompatible land use or activities such as vegetation removal, earthworks and the creation of vehicle tracks. Additionally, natural defences are in some instances a cost effective alternative to hard protection structures such as sea walls.

Options for addressing this issue are to (i) include provisions in the District Plan restricting inappropriate activities on or around natural defences; and (ii) include a policy framework that encourages the use of natural defences, where practicable.