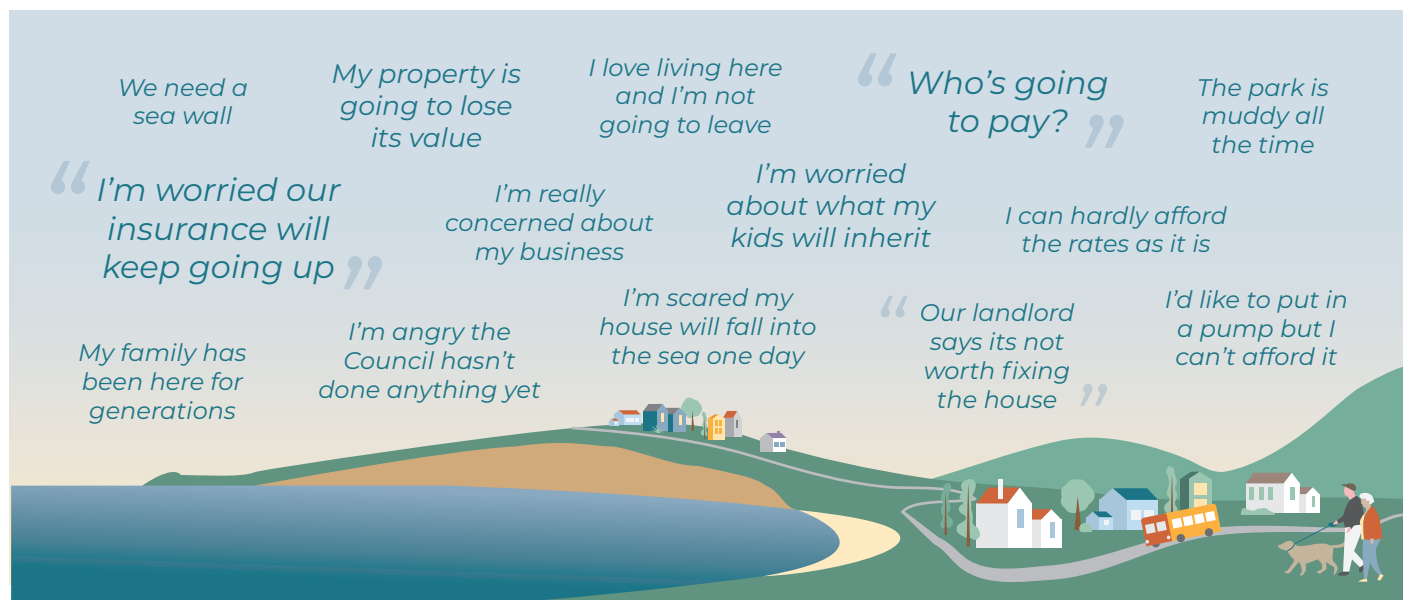


## Community Development For Adaptation (CD4A)

*Council-community engagement for a climate-impacted future*

**Many of New Zealand's urban settlements are likely to be impacted by climate-induced hazards such as coastal erosion, flooding and rising groundwater levels. Affected communities will face physical, social, financial and emotional challenges. To ensure successful adaptation, local authorities will need to adopt new approaches to engagement with communities that are exposed to these hazards.**

This summary forms part of the research findings of the Climate-Adaptive Communities project of the Deep South National Science Challenge. We have drawn from the stories and insights shared with the research team by community members, iwi members and council staff. Our warm thanks to you all / nga mihi mahana ki a koutou.



### Why should councils engage with communities?

- Climate change will affect communities in the short term (e.g. more frequent and more severe storms) as well as the long term (e.g. sea level rise leading to homes becoming uninsurable and/or unliveable).
- As well as the physical impacts on property, many people are likely to be affected financially, emotionally and may suffer a decline in health and wellbeing unless care is taken.
- Effects may not become serious for a few decades, but initial decisions on adaptive pathways will need to be made in the near future.
- Community members may be unequally affected (e.g. if a family's home is their only asset they may be forced out of home ownership as its insurability and value declines; second home owners have more options; renters may end up in increasingly substandard housing; people in already deprived situations may suffer most).
- Affected communities don't necessarily already have a collective 'voice' so there is the potential for the most confident voices and opinions to dominate; as a result, solutions could favour the more powerful.

## What is engagement?

Engagement for climate adaptation means developing active and ongoing relationships between local government and affected communities, as opposed to episodic public participation on an issue-by-issue basis.

## What's different about engaging on climate adaptation?

Most council consultation processes have a particular end in sight – e.g. to inform a decision on an annual plan or a resource consent. And councils usually use just a few standard forms of engagement (e.g. public meetings, submissions, hearings).

### Engaging for climate change impacts is very different because:

- Adaptive decisions will need to be made at many points in time, probably over decades
- These decisions must often be made without a full understanding of what the future holds (i.e. lacking a strong evidence-base with high levels of uncertainty)
- Multiple individual decisions could result in inequitable outcomes unless council has an overview of implications for the entire community
- The community members most severely affected may well be those who are least empowered and least accustomed to 'having a say' in council decisions
- It takes time to build the trust and capacity to be involved in decisions that have such far-reaching implications.

### Councils should start to engage with at-risk communities early, before they begin to experience severe impacts, by:

- Helping communities to understand the upcoming challenges
- Helping to strengthen people's ability to 'have a voice' in decisions that will affect them, particularly those who are less powerful or more susceptible to harm
- Helping build community resilience to deal with current and future stresses
- Helping ensure the community has sufficient trust, confidence and capacity to fully engage with councils for key decisions on the adaptive journey.<sup>1</sup>



**CD4A in action:** After a serious flood in 2015, and some tensions, the Council initiated a meeting to bring together different groups who did not usually meet. Before long the community took over the meetings and now sets the agenda and invites Council to attend. The meetings are inclusive of all, and seek to address a range of community concerns including adaptation. The council has also funded a community worker whose role is to connect individuals, groups, clubs and organisations to help build a more connected, collaborative and resilient community. An outcome is that the community has become more ready and more empowered to engage with Council on adaptation.

<sup>1</sup> The Ministry for the Environment recommends a *Dynamic Adaptive Pathways Planning approach* which involves pre-defining critical decision points for adaptation investments. A community development approach can underpin DAPP by building community readiness to engage at these decision points.

## What are communities?

Communities include homeowners, renters, businesses, service organisations, iwi, hapu, schools, clubs and societies within areas exposed to flooding and sea level rise. Impacts on infrastructure, recreational areas, schools, businesses and services may also affect many people outside of the exposed area, so identifying and engaging with these people will be important as well.



## Community development for adaptation (CD4A):

All of these factors point to a need for community engagement to be much closer to a community development approach, getting involved with residents in activities designed to improve their overall quality of life, rather than simply consulting on steps in an adaptation journey. CD4A means being:

### Holistic

- Committing to ongoing engagement on a regular basis over many years
- Building a strong community voice with which councils can engage for key decisions on the adaptive journey
- Considering all of the needs and issues faced by the community as a whole, not just those relating to adaptation
- Understanding how adaptation relates to the wider context of community aspirations.

### Supportive

- Providing support to help community members come together to share their concerns, visions and aspirations
- Providing information about climate impacts and adaptation options in ways that are easily understood and do not create undue alarm
- Helping build a collective understanding and readiness to be involved in adaptation discussions
- Enabling the community to share their knowledge and experiences with each other and with council
- Using a wide variety of ways to engage community members in thinking about and planning for their future, e.g. meetings in clubrooms, citizen assemblies, participatory design, people's panels, developing resources for people with low written literacy.

### Inclusive

- Engaging with as wide a range of affected people as possible, including those that are hard to reach and more susceptible to harm
- Recognising that some people may already be struggling to cope with everyday challenges, and adaptation is just another extra burden
- Engaging with people and groups in a wide variety of ways and places to suit their preferences (e.g. meeting with knitting club in the local community centre; the rugby players in the clubrooms)
- including young people, older people, people with disabilities, single parents, ethnic minorities, recent migrants, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people.

### Delivery-focused

- Involving community members in identifying possible options for the future, and in key decision points in any adaptation pathway
- Keeping the community regularly updated
- Looking for positive opportunities in the changes that will come with climate impacts e.g. removing old infrastructure, and building more resilient communities
- Delivering on agreed solutions.

## Why are councils currently hesitant about engaging with communities?

Our interviews with regional and city/district council staff members showed that many were hesitant about engaging with communities on climate adaptation.

*Here are the main perceived barriers to engagement, and possible ways forward:*

### ✗ Perceived barrier

- Staff are not sure of council's role

### → Ways forward

- There is currently a lack of clarity about how some roles will be shared across central and local government, but legislative changes are under way
- Councils will undoubtedly continue to have an important role in adaptation
- Councils can build on their existing responsibilities, for example their risk management and Civil Defence Emergency Management roles
- Early engagement with communities can help identify issues that need to be addressed nationally vs locally.

### ✗ Perceived barrier

- Staff aren't used to engaging with communities when they are uncertain about the scale and timing of impacts

### → Ways forward

- Engaging under uncertainty is an essential new skill for a climate-impacted future
- Being honest about uncertainty can help engender trust
- It is important to communities to understand the scope of uncertainty.

### ✗ Perceived barrier

- Staff are afraid of pushback from the public

### → Ways forward

- Early and ongoing engagement builds trust
- If communities have been involved in developing solutions they are less likely to push back on implementation.

### ✗ Perceived barrier

- Staff are unsure of how to engage

### → Ways forward

- The CD4A approach provides a framework for engagement.

**For more information, including background papers and multi-media, see**

<https://www.deepsouthchallenge.co.nz/projects/climate-adaptation-vulnerability-and-community-well-being>

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### ✗ Perceived barrier

- Different council departments are responsible for different aspects of the problem (e.g. infrastructure, planning, strategy, hazard assessment, communication) so they are not sure who should lead

### → Ways forward

- Set up cross-cutting units that bring together staff from all relevant departments
- Develop a collective understanding of the implications across council as a whole
- Take an integrated approach to engaging with the community so people don't get mixed messages.

### ✗ Perceived barrier

- Staff don't know what kinds of solutions will work

### → Ways forward

- Coming to the table with a pre-determined solution is not always particularly helpful in engaging communities
- Community members hold knowledge and experience which can help in developing solutions
- Involving communities in co-developing ideas can lead to more creative solutions that address a range of needs.

### ✗ Perceived barrier

- Staff are concerned about the financial implications of engagement

### → Ways forward

- The costs of climate responses are inescapable
- The social costs of not engaging are considerable - communities will become more anxious and angrier
- Supportive action from an early stage can assist communities to self-organise and become more resilient.

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