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Media Release

Waimea Community Dam will not proceed

The Tasman District Council has decided increased costs for the Waimea Community Dam are unaffordable for ratepayers, meaning the project in its current form will not proceed.

The Council today decided in principle not to fund 51% of a \$23 million capital funding shortfall for the dam.

Tasman Mayor Richard Kempthorne said the decision effectively meant the project would not proceed, as public consultation cannot occur before the deadline of 15 December when the Government will withdraw its funding for the dam of over \$55 million.

“Unfortunately the additional costs are too high and the Council has decided it must look at other options for resolving our serious summer water shortages.”

Richard said because the decision signalled a significant change to the direction the Council had set through its Long Term Plan 2018 – 2028 (LTP), a formal public consultation process would be needed to change the LTP.

“The decision is significant on several levels – for urban water supply, for the environment and health of the Waimea River, for rural water supply on the Waimea Plains and for our ability to service growth in Richmond, Brightwater and Mapua and their rural extensions. The advice we have is that a change that significant must be consulted on with the public before we can confirm it.

“However, the indication we have now given our partners in the dam project is very clear and we have effectively lost external funding.”

Richard said urgent work on an alternative to the dam to secure the urban water supply would need to begin immediately. In the meantime, the “sleeper” no-dam rules in the Tasman Resource Management Plan will be activated, and will require significant water take cuts by both urban and rural water users on the Plains during extended dry weather until another solution is developed.

“That’s in addition to the new water permit allocations for irrigators on the Plains that will now be issued following a ‘bona fide’ review of all permits. Those new allocations cut the total water take by 27 per cent.”

The no-dam provisions are effective immediately and will apply this summer.

Richard said the Council would now urgently progress work on alternatives and begin the work needed for public consultation on amending the LTP.

“Water conservation is going to be increasingly important from now on, so we’ll be looking at education and information for the public on how to reduce their summer water use. We would encourage businesses and industry to think about their operations and develop Water Shortage Plans in preparation for possible summer restrictions.”

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