
Media Release

18 November 2024

TVNZ brings national focus to Westport's Master Planning process

The once-in-a-generation Master Planning process being undertaken in the West Coast, to guide Westport's future growth and development, has gained national media attention.

Veteran journalist and TVNZ's Chief Correspondent John Campbell's news item on Westport's Master Planning journey went to air on Saturday night on 1News at 6pm with a longer form piece available to watch on TVNZ's streaming platform TVNZ+ which people can subscribe to for free [see links below].

It covers Westport's journey via Master Planning to get ahead of any future natural hazards that might make living there challenging. This involves looking at how and why the town needs to look at lower-risk areas to grow and develop for its future economic and social wellbeing, and why doing nothing might not be an option.

TVNZ's John Campbell visited Westport in September to find out more about Master Planning. He spoke to a wide variety of people including Buller Mayor Jamie Cleine, Project Lead Paul Zaanen, urban design experts Isthmus, people who attended Master Planning workshops in recent months, as well as people on the street.

Buller Mayor Jamie Cleine says it is important that Westport's story is told nationally as well as locally.

"This is a crucial piece of work. I have been quoted before saying 'If not now, then when? If not us, then who?' and the same still applies. We have to begin an intergenerational process to address risk or our community will continue to be stuck in a "knock it down rebuild it" cycle, we can and should do better than that. It is so crucial to have an overarching vision of where and how Westport wants to grow and thrive, rather than continue on an ad-hoc journey where known hazards, not just flooding, but other risks as well will impact on us.

"Westport's flooding woes were national news in 2021 and 2022 but it is easy for us to be forgotten as time goes on and other issues come to the forefront, but our community is still living with the consequences of those events and this planning process is an important part of understanding how we progress together. Our pathways and decisions may come to be looked at by future generations, and others around the country, as a showcase on the power of confronting your challenges and making a plan for a way forward," says Mayor Cleine.

Master Planning Project Lead Paul Zaanen says the planning process this year has put the community at its heart.

"We have held regular stakeholder workshops made up of people from in and around Westport, to ensure that local views and thinking are at the forefront of Westport's Master Planning process.

“It was great to see John Campbell speak with so many people in the community about how they feel about living in Westport, as well as some of the people who have participated in our workshops - and help share their views with the nation. For me, and the Isthmus team who are spearheading this work, this was so affirming as we have tried hard to make sure this process stays true to the people of Westport. We do want this plan to be for Westport, by Westport. As part of that, we intend to share the draft Master Plan with the wider community in the coming months, to further engage people in the work, and ultimately empower them to help make it a reality, says Mr Zaanen.

The fifth and final series of participatory design workshops is being held this week. After that, the Draft Master Plan will be produced.

The community will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Plan in the new year.

The Master Planning Concept Plan is due for completion in the first quarter of 2025. It will require approval by the Buller District Council. The final Stage of the Master Planning process will be the implementation plan. A number of mechanisms can be used to implement the Master Plan, including legislation, land-use change applications and other mechanisms to assist in the delivery of the plan over time.

For anyone interested in learning more about Master Planning a briefing to Buller District Council (BDC) councillors and senior leadership will be held this week (Wednesday 20 November) from 2pm. This will be livestreamed on the BDC Facebook page.

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For further information please contact:

Resilient Westport Communications team

media@resilientwestport.co.nz

[For editors: Links to the John Campbell content below]

John Campbell's Small Town Survival Guide was published on Saturday 16 November 2024. He visited three very different regions – Ruapehu, Wairarapa and the West Coast – to gauge the mood of the towns and hear about their plans.

- The news item was broadcast on One News at 6pm on 16 November 2024 (approximately 11 minutes in). It can be found on TVNZ+ at the link below:
<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/one-news-at-6pm/episodes/s2024-e321>
- The full episode is on TVNZ+ at the link below:
<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/news/news-in-depth-1728513525535-4406-1731649604080/the-fight-for-options-hope-and-choice-in-small-town-new-zealand-in-depth>
- You can read John Campbell's interview with Emily Simpson below:

<https://www.1news.co.nz/2024/11/16/john-campbell-small-town-nz-the-optimism-and-the-challenges/>