

FAQs – Quay Street pōhutukawa tree and stormwater infrastructure work

1. Why is the pōhutukawa tree being removed?

The tree's roots are tightly interwoven with a key stormwater pipe that needs upgrading. Unfortunately, this makes it impossible to carry out this essential work without removing the tree.

2. Isn't this Bay of Plenty Regional Council's project?

Yes – the wider flood protection work (Project Future Proof) is led by Bay of Plenty Regional Council. However, the stormwater pipe affected by the tree is part of Whakatāne District Council's infrastructure. We're stepping in to ensure the critical upgrade isn't left behind or delayed, which would be more expensive and disruptive later.

3. Wasn't the tree meant to be protected?

Yes. Both councils committed to protecting the Quay Street pōhutukawa trees wherever possible. At the time, it wasn't known that this tree's roots were directly affecting a pipe that needs urgent renewal. Only once further site investigations were carried out did this become clear.

4. Can't the pipe just go around the tree?

Unfortunately, no. Rerouting the pipe would add \$250,000–\$350,000 in unbudgeted costs, delay the project, and still require major pruning that risks the tree's survival. It also clashes with other infrastructure like EV chargers and high-voltage cables.

5. Why not delay the stormwater upgrade until later?

Delaying would mean tearing through the brand-new flood protection structures in a few years – a costly, disruptive, and inefficient approach. It would also require new consents and bylaw approval, adding risk and complexity.

6. Is this tree removal really necessary?

We believe so. After careful consideration of all the options, and with input from both technical teams this has been identified as the only viable way forward to protect the town's long-term resilience and flood management.

7. Why wasn't this identified earlier?

The stormwater pipe was originally assumed to be a 1400mm pipe. Recent inspections confirmed it's actually a 1200mm concrete pipe from 1969, smaller than needed for today's demands. It wasn't until detailed site investigations that the proximity of the roots became fully understood.

8. What's being done to mitigate the loss of the tree?

We're committed to working with Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa and the community on meaningful

mitigation. This could include planting mature replacement trees or other options you believe are appropriate.

9. What happens next with the removal of the pōhutukawa tree?

We'll continue engaging with mana whenua and the wider community as work progresses. While this outcome isn't what we hoped for, we're focused on ensuring it's managed in a respectful and open way.

10. Who can I contact to talk this through?

You're welcome to get in touch with our Customer Services Team on 07 3060500. They'll connect you with the right Project Manager to help answer your questions and talk through any concerns.