

Interviewee: Graeme Campbell

Title: Principal Flood and Resilience

Interview Date: 01/26/24.

Interview Time: 9:00-9:45

Aileen: Can you explain your role at the GWRC?

“I am currently working in a semi-structured role”

- “Manager of Flood Protection department that provides much of the resilience to local communities”
 - “Four areas of responsibility”
 - “Emergency Management”
 - “Oversees the awareness, warning, and preparedness of the community”
 - “Land use matched to flood risk”
 - “Flood protection structures”
 - stop banks
 - “Management of river corridors”
 - Ensuring the river doesn’t erode out of the corridor
 - “With management of the river corridor there are many opportunities” i.e. environmental opportunities, recreational, etc. “which is where your project fits in”
 - “manage river corridors with a broader umbrella”

Aileen: Have you ever done work or projects along the Hutt River Corridor?

- Can you explain this work in more detail?
 - “My team facilitates the development of the Hutt River Corridor”
 - “When the project first began this included working with Rotary”
 - Other developments include:
 - “Planting along the corridor” (i.e. willows mixed with natives)
 - “Erosion protection structures”: lines of rocks, lumps of rock structures sticking out from the bank

- “Railways that create fences to slow down the water during a flood where the water speed can pick up”
 - Also “oversee the maintenance of banks”
- “Riverlink started in 2019, GW and my department lead this project”
 - Flood plain management plan
 - In 2000-2006 they did the Boulcot Stop bank and “the project has only grown from there”
 - “This project is much bigger than just putting in stop banks”
 - Need to widen the river
 - This work is linked with Hutt City and the NZTA, “many other organizations have been brought in since this project has grown”
 - In 2015 GWRC begins buying more properties

Aileen: Can you explain how flooding affects the Hutt River Trail specifically?

- What risks does flood along the Hutt River Corridor pose to the community
 - The Hutt River Corridor is the “most fantastic asset in the whole of the Hutt Valley”
 - The river is “fierce” when it gets into a flood
 - There are strong erosion forces at play
 - Can’t just add stuff to the Corridor, “everything needs to be planned” given that it is a floodplain

Aileen: Do you believe recreational use of the River Corridor is important, why or why not?

- “It’s a great place to be 99 out of 100 days”, beautiful river for cycling
- Such a “valuable ecological Corridor”
 - Big open space
 - Kept like that so we can “manage all the floods that come through”
- Get people coming through that want to use it for recreational purposes
- People forget that the corridor is “only kept open and available because of flood risk”

- Understand that people want to use it but the Corridor is “primarily an ecological Corridor with the purpose of flood risk”

Aileen: Do you believe all the trails along the corridor could be expanded? If so, how much?

- Do you believe the GWRC could pull the funds to do so and how quickly?
 - Limits: “the amount of paved surfaces that can be added”
 - Need to keep in mind that GWRC accounts for “acceptability of damage and management of use”
 - Where do people go if there’s a flood?
 - The Environmental Action Plan is a great document to review
 - Explains “how to prioritize the river when making suggestions”
 - Gives value to the space
 - “Still allow it to be Te Awa Kairangi”
 - “Not enough space in some areas to have separate users” (commuters and non-commuters)
 - “Shared space is different than commuter usage”
 - “Commuters often have more demand for a separate space”
 - “Widening of the paths and the addition of new paved surfaces speeds up the flooding and erosion of the area”
 - Need to “consider maintenance, planting, and erosion protection”
 - “Planting directs the water back into the river”
 - Additionally, “varying the straightness of the path is good” as there is not a straight flat path for it to run on and speed up
 - Generally, “new paths are more of a risk than expanding existing paths”

Aileen: What are your thoughts on adapting the corridor for increased commuter cyclists use?

- “More complicated than it seems”
 - “Keep the commuter cyclists away from the river”
- “Commuters require special needs”
 - Need both the space and time to “get from point A to point B”
 - “Different than a recreational user”

- Roading authority grants commuter cyclist paths
 - They want to put cyclists in the River Corridor instead of on the motorways
 - Might not be as quick a solution as they think
- “Perhaps cyclists should be on the road instead of by the river”
- “Ideally commuters would be placed as far away from the river as possible”
 - Them being closer to roadways provides “more lighting for their path”
 - Ex. Harcourt Weary Drive could provide a useful connection along the edge of the motorway
 - Close to the highway poses a challenge as there are often slopes and those would need to be retained
- Graeme is not a cycling expert and doesn’t know what the commuters are expecting or what they want

Aileen: Are you a user of the Hutt River Corridor?

Follow up if yes: What activities do you use the corridor for?

- I have used the Corridor for more “recreational purposes and long distance cycling”
 - Takes kids for bike rides
 - Generally no conflicts with other users
 - “There are some funny parts where you have to slow down”

Solutions for mediating group conflicts:

- “Wide enough for everyone” (maybe 4-5 meters width)
- “Not feasible to widen everywhere due to issues with space”

Do you believe providing more transport opportunities for commuter cyclists is important?

- “Commuting is important as it provides a way to get around”
- There are more options for getting up and downtown
- “The addition of the new cyclist path in Petone is a part of increased cyclist use”
 - Te Ata Teupo
 - Its a resilience project that can protect the city from storm surge

Does the addition of a commuter route in the Hutt River Corridor affect your work with Flood management? If so, how?

- GWRC would be “drawn into the management side of this commuter route”
- It's “more complex to work within the River Corridor”
- “Because they own the land, they need to manage the conflict that occurs within it”
- Introduction of new paths means that the Corridor would need to “accommodate machinery which gets more challenging in some areas where there is limited accessibility”
- Brings in the question of why the river is there in the first place
- “Most intensely developed floodplain in New Zealand”
 - Flood plain management plan
- A “flood through the Hutt Valley would be a national disaster”
- Graeme does work with representatives from across New Zealand
 - Chair of NZ River Managers
 - Work together to address concerns in areas that are high risk for flooding