



Focus a year on: house repairs, resilience

THE visible reminders of Cyclone Gabrielle are all around town for Tātau Tātau o Te Wairoa chair Leon Symes.

Twelve months on, grass tries to spread across exposed silt, and anxiety levels climb each time it rains — while getting people back in their homes remains a key focus for the post-settlement governance entity.

Mr Symes says that like everyone, he was overwhelmed when Cyclone Gabrielle hit on February 14 last year.

“Seeing the aerial photos of Wairoa and the destroyed roads and bridges, it spurred us to do something with the resources and connections we have outside the district.”

The trust’s networks facilitated supplies getting into Wairoa once State Highway 2 reopened between Wairoa and Gisborne.

“We were able to get supplies transported in, whether it was fuel, water or toilet paper,” says Mr Symes.

“There was a constant stream of information going both ways.”

Passionate people around the country who see Wairoa as home helped with resources.

“They will do anything to help, if Wairoa is under stress.

“We saw that as an opportunity to leverage those resources of people living in bigger regions.”

Progressing with the immediate aftermath of the recovery, Mr Symes said a month on there were concerns on what resources would be available for Wairoa.

“There were promises being made and we were not seeing much of that come to fruition until about the six-month mark.

“Obviously there are government processes and we got through that.

“From the cyclone to now, we have had the pātaka food supply and temporary housing that is adequate for the time being.”

There is still work to be done to the



NORTH CLYDE UNDER WATER: The devastation of ex-Tropical Cyclone in Wairoa is captured from air on February 14 last year over North Clyde and Carroll Street towards Frasertown Road. More local perspectives on the anniversary of the flooding on pages 7 to 11.

housing repair sector, says Mr Symes.

“We need funding for about 50 percent of the uninsured spaces.

“Insurance companies are stopping their accommodation support being one year on.”

That support and river protection are two big work-ons to move forward, says Mr Symes.

“Stakeholder groups are discussing options for flood resilience.”

A meeting was held on Friday regarding the subject.

“There needs to be some compromises —

who will compromise land is going to be the issue.”

Could farming land be compromised, was something Mr Symes queried.

“Some farmers will need to be compensated for that.

“A balancing act is needed — do you move marae, urupā, whare or production farmland?”

The deadline for options to be shared is by the end of next month.

Mr Symes says it is obvious what the issue is — it is a matter of how much protection

is wanted.

“If we want full protection, it will have more effects on landowners; if we want slightly less protection, it will have less effect — so that needs to be figured out.”

A flood resilience plan, to him, is one that does not impact whānau, marae or urupā.

“The less impact on them the better because that land affects so many people.

“Will they get bought out on market value?”

“A lot of them will not want to move because that is their whenua.”

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