



WELLINGTON
SHIRE COUNCIL

Fact sheet and FAQs for Wellington Shire coastal communities

In August 2024, we made a commitment to keep you informed with relevant updates and information as it becomes available. We have compiled the following fact sheet and FAQs to provide an update on the policy changes relating to flood overlay mapping in coastal areas of Wellington Shire and the changes this may have on some property owners of vacant residential blocks.

We remain committed to supporting coastal communities in their advocacy to the state government for land development. This matter is of great concern, and we are empathetic to landowners facing uncertainty about their ability to develop land, which has long been assumed to be developable.

Background information

- The Victorian Government, via the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA), provides the mapping and advice to Councils on all planning permits (including new residential builds) in flood-prone areas.
- In October 2021, the state government changed its planning rules, but WGCMA continued using an older flood risk measure (based on a 0.2-metre sea level rise) until early 2024.
- In December 2023, following consultation with the WGCMA, Wellington Shire Council revoked Policy 3.1.2 Assessment of development in relation to potential sea level rise. Revocation of this policy ensured we were aligned with the October 2021 change in state planning policy.
- In February 2024, the WGCMA updated its approach to align with the October 2021 change in state planning policy and the position adopted by Council in December 2023. From this point the WGCMA assessed development in the Wellington Shire area based on a sea level rise of 0.8 metres.
- Now, newly proposed developments in residential coastal areas of the Wellington Shire need to meet this higher sea level rise standard, in line with both WGCMA and state government planning policy.

- In August 2024, and in collaboration with the WGCMA, Wellington Shire Council sent letters to over 300 affected property owners to inform about future potential impacts. This included a fact sheet prepared by the WGCMA.
- The information below answers new questions and provides an update on where Council is at in regard to flood mapping and flood overlays in coastal areas. You should refer to the information provided from the WGCMA in August 2024, if needed.

What is Wellington Shire Council doing to assist coastal communities?

Council continues to support planning permit applications for single dwellings on single lots and will continue to do so (until an update to the Wellington Planning Scheme is complete). This interim position arrangement aims to provide some certainty to property owners while we work towards a longer-term solution. **In short, if you have a residential block, you can build (subject to criteria). Landowners should contact Wellington Shire Council to discuss any planning requirements for their particular land.**

Process for updating the Wellington Planning Scheme with new flood mapping – ensuring you can still build a new home.

Council officers are working with the WGCMA to update flood mapping within the Wellington Planning Scheme with the most up-to-date information available to show flood mapping extents under a year 2100 modelling scenario. Exemptions are also being proposed for the development of single dwellings on vacant residentially zoned lots. Council has been determined from the outset that property owners should be able to build houses on existing blocks, and this amendment will confirm this position.

Why is this important?

Updating the flood maps will:

- Ensure new developments are properly assessed to reduce flood risks – including risk to life.
- Help minimise damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure.
- Provide clear and transparent information about flood-prone areas in Wellington Shire.
- Fulfill Council's responsibility to recognise flood risks in planning decisions through the Wellington Planning Scheme. As a legally binding document, it provides confidence in decision-making and supports planning for all aspects of housing. The Wellington Planning Scheme is publicly available and serves as a key resource for property developers, real estate agents and prospective buyers, ensuring they have the necessary information to make informed decisions.

Next steps

- A formal update to the Wellington Planning Scheme will be facilitated through the Planning Scheme Amendment process. This is important to ensure landowners can continue to develop a single dwelling on a residentially zoned lot in the future.

How long will it take?

- The Planning Scheme Amendment is a legislative process which requires approval from the Minister for Planning. While we are eager to complete this work as quickly as possible for the local community, progress depends on state government legislative processes. During this time, Council will continue to support planning permit applications for single dwellings on single lots.

Further updates

- In March 2025 a letter was sent to the Minister of Planning raising awareness of a community e-petition (ref #202456, closing 18 April 2025) for a review and revision of current flood overlays in coastal areas, a tiered approach to varying flood risks with tailored regulations, financial support for impacted property and business owners, exemptions for low-risk areas and incentives for flood mitigation measures.
- Following concerns about property values, Council has communicated with the Office of the Valuer General Victoria seeking assurance that it will continue to monitor potential impacts on property values. The Office's response indicates insufficient sales data to consider an adjustment at this time. All properties in Victoria are valued by the Valuer-General Victoria. Councils do not influence property valuations. Ratepayers can contact the Valuer-General for information about their properties or to advocate for changes.

We are committed to keeping the community informed and welcome community input. We will keep you updated about ongoing work as the Planning Scheme Amendment process progresses. Affected landowners will have an opportunity to take part in a detailed consultation process. The details of this consultation process are currently being considered and will be communicated directly when confirmed.

In response to questions raised by the public, we have compiled the following FAQs:

1. Will the new Planning Scheme Amendment impact existing houses? Will they become inhabitable?

Homes that have already been built or are nearing completion will not be affected by the Planning Scheme Amendment, which applies to new development proposals. Extensions to existing properties and outbuildings will be exempt from the need for a planning permit where certain criteria are met. The updated policy accounts for future risks and ensures that life and property are better protected moving forward. While we can't change past decisions, we can plan for a safer future. It's important to note that changes in planning policy may have implications for insurance. We recommend speaking directly with your insurance provider to understand any potential impacts. Council is not responsible for individual household insurance matters.

2. Does Track Ten affect Loch Sports flood levels?

Track Ten has three sets of culverts that help water flow between the roadsides and keep the lake's water levels balanced at this location. The road's surface is about 0.8 meters above the Australian Height Datum (AHD). During major floods, like the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) flood at 1.9 meters AHD, Track Ten gets easily overtopped, allowing water to flow westward. Future predictions for the year 2100 indicate even higher flood levels, reaching 2.7 meters AHD. Reviews with WGCMA confirm that Track Ten does not affect Loch Sport's flood levels. We acknowledge

that some Loch Sport residents believe that Track 10 has a direct impact on Loch Sport flooding. To address these concerns, Wellington Shire Council plans to collaborate with an independent hydrologist to produce a fact sheet on Track Ten's characteristics and its performance during various flood events. This information will be made available once completed.

3. Why are our coastal areas being treated differently to other coastal areas in Victoria?

Every Council in Victoria adheres to the same mandatory state planning policies, which require all Council's to plan for a minimum 0.8m sea level rise scenario. In response to queries about new developments in the East Gippsland Shire Council area, they are responsible for adopting the same policies as Wellington Shire Council and other Councils across Victoria. We can only offer information on Wellington Shire Council's Planning Scheme.

4. What will the impact be on the wider community for future developments, if there is no growth in coastal areas?

Wellington Shire Council has a responsibility to manage growth where it is appropriate to do so and to ensure that the risk to life is managed within state policy boundaries.

As the responsible authority, Council is committed to supporting growth in areas where it is appropriate and safe to do so, in line with state policy. Encouraging well-managed growth helps create opportunities for housing, local jobs and investment, and supports essential services. Council will continue to work collaboratively with the community to plan for a strong, sustainable future in all towns, including coastal communities.

5. How many properties/blocks of land are impacted?

At the time of writing, there are approximately 378 property owners affected by the new policy changes along Wellington Shire's coastal areas.

6. Who did you send the original letter and information to and why didn't everyone get a copy?

The letter and information sent out in August 2024 was sent to 378 landowners of **vacant residential land** in the affected areas. This was because changes to state planning policy impact owners of vacant blocks. Current homes do not require any modification.

7. Where can I find out more information?

- The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority website has a community flood portal page with maps, and you can apply for Flood Advice about your property via the online application form. www.wgcm.vic.gov.au.
- For information on Wellington Shire Council's Planning Permit process, please contact Council's Statutory Planning team on 1300 366 244 or visit the Planning permits page on the website: www.wellington.vic.gov.au.