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Residents threaten legal action unless council wipes erosion info

TINA LAW

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DANIEL TOBIN/FAIRFAX NZ

Residents threaten legal action if coastal hazards information, affecting areas including Lyttelton Harbour, is not removed from property records.

Coastal flooding and erosion information on Christchurch property records will be urgently reviewed, but it is not soon enough for residents who have threatened legal action.

The Christchurch City Council, at its meeting on Thursday, stopped short of immediately removing the details from Land Information Memorandum (LIM), despite pleas from residents to do so. The council instead decided to wait for chief executive Karleen Edwards to report back on the issue in two weeks.

A panel of scientific experts has told the council the information should be removed because maps used to identify at risk properties could be "legally unsound" and should be put to one side until new ones are completed.

Christchurch Coastal Residents United (CCRU) group spokesman Darrell Latham said removing the LIM notifications immediately was the right thing to do and he questioned the council's decision to wait two weeks.

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"Councillors, it's time to make a decision. No more procrastinating. What more do you require to make a decision?"

After the meeting, Latham said Edwards had the ability to remove the information straight away and he was concerned she would come back to councillors with a "watered down" version.

"We don't want to move to the situation where we are going to have to consider legal action and that may be a real possibility unless the CEO comes back with something more palatable.

"Many people have suffered enough. Please don't force a legal position."

Only the chief executive has the ability to change the wording on LIMs.

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LIMs were changed last year to reflect the potential risk of flooding or erosion as identified in a controversial Tonkin & Taylor report. The report, released in July 2015, identified 6000 Christchurch properties that could be susceptible to erosion and nearly 18,000 at risk of coastal inundation over the next 50 to 100 years.

The council decided in December to subject the report to a second peer review by a panel of scientific experts. The panel's final report has been released and it highlighted a number of aspects of the Tonkin & Taylor document that needed to be changed or re-assessed.

The panel considered the overall Tonkin & Taylor report to be fit for purpose, but only once those changes had been made.

Council staff, on Thursday, acknowledged the LIM notations needed to change, but they needed to discuss what they should be changed to.

Edwards said the council had a statutory requirement to meet when changing the LIMs.

Cr David East, who was the only councillor to vote against the Tonkin and Taylor report, said there was a clear expectation that the information should be reviewed.

Cr Yani Johanson said it was important to note, the chief executive could change the LIMs at any time, and if it could happen quicker, it should.

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