



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

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Auckland City Council  
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Tēnā koe

The Auckland Council has recently released a technical report outlining risks caused by climate change (Auckland Council, 2019. *Climate Change Risks in Auckland*. Prepared by Arup), and is currently developing a framework for action on climate change (*Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland's Climate Action Framework: Draft for consultation*). These follow a growing body of reports relating the vulnerability of land and assets to coastal inundation, sea-level rise, and climate-induced extreme weather events.

The New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA; the Association) is concerned that the draft framework does not take into consideration the effects of climate change on Auckland's archaeological sites and unique heritage. The majority of archaeological sites are located in close proximity to the coast, and are vulnerable to the effects of sea-level rise and the extreme weather events caused by climate change. Māori archaeological sites in particular are predominately located in coastal locations, and therefore the unique heritage of tangata whenua is particularly vulnerable. There are approximately 18,500 recorded archaeological and other heritage sites within the Auckland region, of these around 8000 sites are recorded within 200 m of the coastline and 4000 are located on council land. The Auckland Council has a responsibility to protect this heritage and factor its preservation in its plans for resilience in relation to climate change. The Auckland Council has acknowledged its responsibility to archaeological and cultural heritage in the Auckland Unitary Plan, Auckland Council District Plan, the Auckland Plan 2050, and the Regional Parks Management Plan (outlined in Appendix 1). The draft climate change framework indicates that priorities including resiliency of building stock and resources, and providing for mana whenua values. There are clear areas of overlap between these priorities and protecting archaeological and built heritage, and archaeological understanding of the past has always made a significant contribution to our understanding of resiliency of both natural environments and the people that use them. The New Zealand Archaeological Association believes that a connection to heritage landscapes, and the protection of these, should be a major concern for Auckland Council in terms of its relationship and collaboration with tangata whenua.

The NZAA has for some time been concerned about the vulnerability of coastal heritage, including archaeological sites, and supports attempts to mitigate or ameliorate the loss of heritage and information primarily caused by rising sea levels, inundation and increasing frequency and severity of storm events. The association advises that the first step would be to produce a report outlining the risk and vulnerability of Auckland's heritage to climate change. The NZAA maintains a database of recorded archaeological sites, that Auckland Council has a subscription to through the ArchSite website and manages its own Cultural Heritage Inventory (CHI) database. These datasets could be used to outline sites at risk on council land and in the greater Auckland area. An assessment of the



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vulnerability of archaeological sites in the Hauraki gulf has already been produced as part of a Masters dissertation for the University of Auckland that could be used as a template for this work (Ramsay, R.S. 2014. *Waving goodbye to our heritage: Assessing the Vulnerability of Coastal Archaeological Sites Within the Hauraki Gulf*). The Auckland Council's framework for climate action would do well to consider an approach to at-risk heritage, informed by an understanding of the vulnerability of these sites.

The NZAA would like to offer its support in assessing the vulnerability of Auckland's archaeological landscape to climate change. The association also recognises that, unfortunately, there are likely to be cases where damage is unavoidable. In those cases, the NZAA, DOC, Auckland Council Heritage Unit, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga and other heritage organisations in partnership with mana whenua have a joint responsibility to mitigate the loss of these sites through archaeological excavation and recording, to salvage information and artefacts, and thereby make the loss of these sites meaningful through preservation by record.

Climate change has the potential to cause massive, lasting, and irreversible harm to numerous coastal archaeological sites within the Auckland region, and throughout New Zealand in general. Auckland Council has a responsibility to consider the vulnerability of these sites, and to take action to protect and preserve what it can. This responsibility is already recognised by the council in a number of plans, and is important that the council take actions to match its rhetoric. Inaction could result in the loss of significant heritage, the potential for developing our understanding of the past, and the tangible connection to our unique history that these sites provide. Given the severity and rapidity of the effects of climate change happening in New Zealand now, the New Zealand Archaeological Association strongly encourages immediate action. The NZAA recommends that the Auckland Council devote a section of the climate change framework to archaeological and cultural sites, produce a report indicating those sites at risk from the effects of climate change, and develop a plan with relevant stakeholders focused on the protection of these sites.

Ngā mihi,

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