Kaitiaki Wai

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Wellington Water

Our water, our future.

Collaborating for customers, community and cost

By Michelle Guest

Our Consultant Panel, made up of Stantec, Connect Water and GHD, was established four years ago as a collaborative model to deliver greater value-for-money outcomes for customers.

Typically competing in the same market, our panel consultants work together instead, sharing jobs according to capacity, resource and skill. And on the rare occasion when it's necessary to tender, the process is straightforward.

> "A 250% time saving and 70% cost saving on the traditional approach."

Notwithstanding project allocation, our consultants do the job with Wellington Water's service goals and customer outcomes firmly in mind.

The introduction of the panel model brought fundamental shifts that go beyond relaying cost-savings, such as the move from single, unconnected or disconnected jobs to planning for the future with a regional perspective. The panel can impact projects before those projects are fully defined, and this is enhanced by bringing in wider expertise and disciplines from resource management, planning, geotech, transport, and environmental services. These different perspectives combine to find the best outcomes for the community and value for money methods.

Moving from a transactional to strategic model has given our consultants licence to work in pioneering ways and strengthened our relationships and trust. Consequently, the panel has acquired extensive knowledge and developed ways of working that have led to the generation of greater than anticipated value-for-money initiatives.

Flood Risk Survey Tool

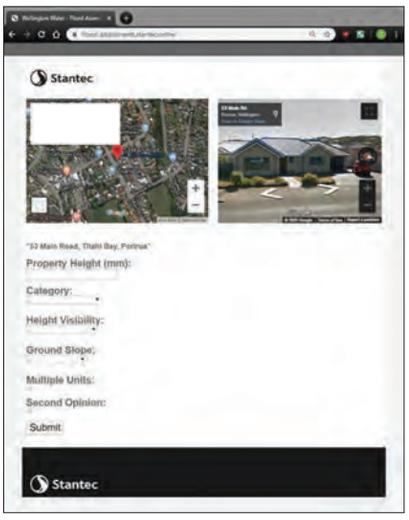
We recognised the need to identify all Wellington City properties at risk of flooding to help appropriately prioritise investment. So we approached our panel to come up with an alternative to the traditional on-foot collection methods that can be expensive, time consuming, and sometimes intrusive for residents. Our Network Engineering Team worked with Stantec to collect property information. By using models created by the Modelling Team, combined with open source data from Land Information New Zealand, they came up with an innovative online flood risk survey tool called the Visual Property Assessment Tool. This web-based tool allows users to easily find properties identified as being at risk of flooding and view them both in map and street view.

The project was largely desktop-based and supplemented by on-foot collection methods where street view imagery was obscured and it was difficult to collect information on ground floor height, property use and ground slope.

It was a huge success. Flood risk information for nearly 7,000 properties was collected by five users in a two-week period, which represented a 250% time saving and 70% cost saving on the traditional approach. Furthermore, the tool reduces our carbon footprint, as well as the health and safety risks associated with having staff out in the field for long periods of time.

The flood risk tool enables users to record property information, such as confidence levels on the data collected based on property visibility. Of the 7,000 properties surveyed, users were confident that 80% of houses captured had complete or partial visibility.

We are using this flood assessment data to develop a prioritised programme for future investigations and design for flood reduction solutions. Because the process uses nationally consistent and open-source data sets, the tool can be easily applied across the region.



Assessing properties for flood risk from the office rather than the field resulted in considerable time and cost savings.