

SOUTH DUNEDIN FUTURE UPDATE



Six questions with Jonathan Rowe, programme manager

Kia ora Jonathan. Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your role?

I grew up in Dunedin, but have been away for 20 years on a mix of study, travel and work. Mostly I was

in Wellington working for central government, most recently in the Office of the Minister of Climate Change. But we were also offshore, largely in the Pacific Islands, where I've worked a lot with communities that are trying to adapt to the effects of climate change. Heading up the South Dunedin Future programme is a great opportunity for me to knit together my professional background with my youth growing up in Dunedin.

So it's welcome back. What made you want to take on this role?

The job is such an exciting and unique one, it was hard to resist. South D is such a wonderful place, I have so many fond memories of playing sport, going to the beach, hanging out at the Esplanade. It's concerning to think that a changing climate might mean that my kids, or their kids, might not be able to enjoy these things. It's great to have a job where I will play a direct role in helping to develop a plan for how South D adapts to climate change. That said, it's a complex set of issues – there's lots to wrap your head around.

For South Dunedin Future, what are the main goals?

The main thing is to produce a plan for how South D can adapt to our changing climate, over the short, medium and long term. It's not my job to say what should go in the plan – that's for the community and for the elected city and regional councillors. Rather, my job is to set the programme up in a way that provides all the relevant background information (like the natural hazards we face), to gather community views about what future they want for South D, then to help people work through the pros and cons of different options and decide on the best approach.

And what can we expect to see happen over the next year?

There has been lots of good work happening in South Dunedin in recent years. Learning about the land and the hazards we face, and all the community engagement, for example. Building on that, this year is about designing a really great programme, where everyone has access to information, can get involved, and has an opportunity to give their views. That's going to involve a bunch of workshops throughout this year, COVID-permitting. We want to hear from all the people and their groups about their vision and aspirations for South D – it's not just about protecting what we have now, but also about making that even better in the future. Next year we will need to start working up a long list of ways that South D could adapt to the risks.

What do you think will be our biggest challenges?

Uncertainty. We don't know exactly what the effects of climate change will be, especially after 2050. If greenhouse gas emissions go up fast, we will likely see big temperature increases and higher sea levels. If emissions slow down or decline, the changes in the climate might be less. We have to plan for all of these scenarios. We need to manage issues like flooding as best we can, but we also want to have one eye on the future to make sure our investments now will still pay off in what could be a very different environment.

One last question – what is your favourite part of South Dunedin?

That's easy – the beach.

For more information about South Dunedin Future visit www.dunedin.govt.nz/southdunedin, email us at southdunedinfuture@dcc.govt.nz or call the DCC on 03 477 4000.