



# AGENDA

## Integrated Catchment Management Committee Meeting

**Date:** Wednesday, 27 May 2026

**Time:** 1:00 PM

**Location:** Council Chambers  
Waikato Regional Council  
Level 1, 160 Ward Street, Hamilton

**Members:** Cr Robert Cookson – Chair  
Cr Noel Smith – Deputy Chair  
Cr Kataraina Hodge  
Cr Keith Holmes  
Cr Chris Hughes  
Cr Tipa Mahuta  
Cr Warren Maher  
Cr Gary McGuire  
Cr Jennifer Nickel  
Cr Garry Reymer  
Cr Liz Stolwyk

# Integrated Catchment Management Committee

## *Ngā Tikanga Whakahaere* | Terms of Reference

### 1. *Mana ā-Ture* | Status

This Committee was established by Council under [clause 30\(1\)\(a\) of Schedule 7](#) of the *Local Government Act 2002*. It is a discretionary committee that can be created or disestablished by Council resolution.

### 2. *Kawenga* | Responsibilities

The Committee is responsible for:

- a. Providing governance oversight of Council's science, biodiversity, biosecurity, catchment planning and management, flood protection, river management and land drainage activities.
- b. Guiding the development and implementation of regional, sub-regional, catchment and community plans and fostering community-led and iwi-led partnerships for integrated catchment outcomes.
- c. Receiving infrastructure performance, state of environment and ecosystem monitoring reports to inform adaptive management and policy review.
- d. Considering emerging infrastructure and environmental issues and recommending actions to strengthen infrastructure sustainability, ecosystem resilience and biosecurity protection.
- e. Recommending to Council actions and partnerships that support integrated freshwater, biodiversity, and biosecurity outcomes.

### 3. *Ngā Apatono* | Powers

The Committee has the following powers required to carry out its responsibilities:

- a. Receiving monitoring and performance reports on biodiversity, biosecurity, catchment planning and management, flood protection, river management and land drainage activities.
- b. Approving regional, sub-regional, catchment and community plans, and recommending funding priorities to Council.
- c. Considering and distributing funds from the Natural Heritage Fund.

### 4. *Ngā Tūranga* | Membership

#### 4.1 *Ngā Mema* | Members

The Committee has eleven members:

- a. Ten councillors appointed by Council
- b. Chair of Council

#### 4.2 *Ngā Kairiwhi* | Alternates

The Deputy-Chair of Council is the alternate for the Chair of Council on this Committee, unless otherwise appointed.

#### 4.3 *Ūpoko me te Ūpoko Tuarua* | Chair and Deputy-Chair

The Chair and Deputy-Chair are appointed by Council in accordance with clause 25 of Schedule 7 of the *Local Government Act 2002*.

### 5. *Herenga Tokoiti* | Quorum

Two members. One of whom must be an elected member of Council. Refer [clause 23\(3\)\(b\) of Schedule 7, Local Government Act 2002](#).

### 6. *Ngā Tikanga Pōti* | Voting

- a. Decisions are made by majority vote of members present.
- b. If votes are equal, the Chair has a deliberative and casting vote.

Refer [clause 24 of Schedule 7, Local Government Act 2002](#).

### 7. *Ngā Hui i te Tau* | Frequency of meetings

Quarterly or as required.

**Order Of Business**

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**1 KARAKIA TIMATANGA**

<b>Whakataka te hau ki te uru</b>	<b>Cease o winds from the west</b>
<b>Whakataka te hau ki te tonga</b>	<b>Cease o winds from the south</b>
<b>Kia mākinakina ki uta</b>	<b>Bring calm breezes over the land</b>
<b>Kia mātaratara ki tai</b>	<b>Bring calm breezes over the sea</b>
<b>E hī ake ana te atakura</b>	<b>And let the red-tipped dawn come</b>
<b>He tio</b>	<b>With a touch of frost</b>
<b>He Huka</b>	<b>A sharpened air</b>
<b>He hau hū</b>	<b>And promise of a glorious day</b>
<b>Tīhei mauri ora!</b>	<b>Behold we live</b>

**2 APOLOGIES****3 CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA****4 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Members are reminded of the need to be aware of maintaining a clear separation between personal interests and duties and their role as an elected member.

If any member has an interest that creates an actual, or could be perceived to create, a conflict in relation to any item on the agenda, it is recommended that this be disclosed.

**5 MINUTES FOR CONFIRMATION OR RECEIPT**

Nil

## 6 GENERAL ITEMS

### 6.1 NATURAL HERITAGE FUND APPLICATIONS

<b>Rā   Date:</b>	<b>22 January 2026</b>
<b>Kaituhi   Author:</b>	<b>Andrew Thomas, Senior Biodiversity Officer</b>
<b>Kaituku   Authoriser:</b>	<b>Greg Ryan, Director, Integrated Catchment Management</b>
<b>Mana whakatau   Delegation Status:</b>	<b>Committee has delegated authority to make the recommended decision</b>

#### TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. To consider the recommendations for the Natural Heritage Fund (NHF) for the 2026/27 funding round.

#### KŌRERO WHAKATAKI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The NHF 2025/26 funding round opened on 27 January 2026 and closed on 24 February 2026 with six applications received. The total budget allocation for this round of the NHF is \$2,021,122 and the total funds requested in this round was \$3,277,797.

#### TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report *Natural Heritage Fund Applications* (Integrated Catchment Management Committee, 27 May 2026) be received.
2. That the ICMC approve a total distribution of \$1,899,116 to four applications, as follows:
  - (a) That a Natural Heritage Fund grant of \$1,140,300 be granted to Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust for the Maungatautari – the seed source of biodiversity and community well-being project
  - (b) That a Natural Heritage Fund grant of \$340,000 be granted to Thames Coast Kiwi Care Incorporated for the Mountains to sea: Thames Coast predator control and habitat protection project
  - (c) That a Natural Heritage Fund grant of \$72,816 be granted to Mokaihaha Kōkako Trust for the Mokaihaha Predator Control and Kōkako Survey project
  - (d) That a Natural Heritage Fund grant of \$346,000 be granted to New Zealand Landcare Trust for the Taiea te Taiao Maungatautari to Pirongia Ecological Corridor project.
3. That the ICMC decline the following Natural Heritage Fund applications:
  - (a) Ngāti Tumutumu Iwi Trust (\$477,185 for the Tumutumu Kaitiaki Taiao project)
  - (b) Te Puāwaitanga o Ngāti Hinerangi Iwi Trust (\$305,567 for the Wairere Mahi project).
4. That \$122,006 of unallocated funding be transferred into the Natural Heritage Fund reserve for distribution in the 2027/28 funding round.

## HOROPAKI | BACKGROUND

3. The NHF was established in 2005 to assist organisations with environmental projects in the Waikato region and is funded through the natural heritage targeted rate.
4. The NHF is intended to support community led, collaborative projects that have long term, landscape scale, intergenerational ecological benefits, including assisting in securing public assets and public access.
5. Funding is allocated in accordance with the Natural Heritage Partnership Programme (NHPP) Funding Policy, that was adopted by the council on 24 April 2024.
6. Between 2024 and 2027, the funding policy prioritises projects that achieve landscape scale biodiversity outcomes or those that link multiple smaller biodiversity projects to achieve landscape scale biodiversity outcomes. Land purchase is not a current priority for funding.
7. Funding can be provided as per the NHPP Funding Policy, to specific projects that score highly against the assessment criteria (see **Attachment 1** for more information).
8. The previous NHF round was run in 2025/26 with six applications funded, totalling \$1,658,108.
9. **Figure 1** shows NHPP projects that received funding in the 2025/26 financial year and **Figure 2** shows the geographic distribution of the 2026/27 NHF applications.

## PŪTEA | FINANCES

10. The revenue for the NHF is sourced from the natural heritage targeted rate of \$15 per property per annum and was designed to allow any unspent funds to be put into a reserve. Staff time spent administering the NHF is drawn from the total natural heritage rate revenue, reducing the amount available for grants accordingly.
11. Through the 2024 Long Term Plan process, the council supported additional investment from the natural heritage targeted rate for the Collective Impact project (\$50,000) and to undertake a scoping exercise to evaluate options for how council supports owners of shared Māori land to protect biodiversity (approximately \$60,000).
12. When considering the commitments outlined above, there is a total of \$2,021,122 available for distribution in the 2026/27 funding round.
13. The NHF 2026/27 funding round opened on 27 January 2026 and closed on 24 February 2026. A total of six applications were received, requesting \$3,277,797 in funding from the council as shown in **Table 1**.
14. Staff recommend a total of \$1,899,116 be granted across four projects as follows:
  - (a) The four highest scoring applications to receive funding in this round. Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust to receive partial funding by funding the first two years of the three-year application and the remaining three applicants (Thames Coast Kiwi Care Incorporated, New Zealand Landcare Trust and Mokaihaha Kōkako Trust) to receive full funding as requested.
  - (b) The two lowest scoring applications (Ngāti Tumutumu Iwi Trust and Te Puāwaitanga o Ngāti Hinerangi Iwi Trust) to be declined funding from the Natural Heritage Fund and invited to apply to council's Environmental Initiatives Fund in June 2026. This fund is

considered more suitable for the level of council investment in these projects currently.

- (c) That \$122,006 of unallocated funding be transferred into the Natural Heritage Fund reserve for distribution in the 2027/28 funding round.
- 15. Two additional applications were withdrawn by the applicants prior to the assessment process and therefore have not been included in this report. Both of these applications were better suited to the council's Environmental Initiatives Fund, opening in June 2026.
- 16. Details on each of the applicants and their projects along with funding requested and funding recommendations for the committee's consideration are described in **Table 1** and **Table 2**.
- 17. Once approved, successful applicants will be required to sign funding agreements and meet project accountability and reporting requirements detailing how funding has been used and outcomes achieved through their project.

### **TE ARA AROMATAWAI | ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

- 18. All applications were scored against the assessment criteria from the NHPP Funding Policy (see **Attachment 1** – Section 7.4 for more information) by an assessment panel consisting of two staff members and an independent assessor.
- 19. Following assessment, a meeting was held with a panel of moderators to review the combined assessment scores and to agree on recommendations for the ICMC.
- 20. The moderation panel kept the following principles in mind when reaching their recommendations:
  - (a) Preference was given to projects with higher combined assessor scores.
  - (b) Continuing to support high scoring, well established groups who are successfully delivering outcomes for biodiversity.
  - (c) Funding to the full extent of the requested amount where appropriate and practical. Partially funding projects may affect project outcomes and overall project viability.

### **TE URUTAI KI TE HURIHANGA ĀHUARANGI | ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

- 21. This decision will increase the ability of the council or region to proactively respond to the impacts of climate change now and into the future.
- 22. Each applicant was required to state how their project will increase resilience to climate change and/or contribute to positive carbon sequestration in their funding application.
- 23. The decision to approve staff recommendations for funding is not sensitive to higher emission scenarios or more rapid climate changes.

### **TE WHAKAMAURU – TE WHAKAHEKE I NGĀ PĀNGA KI TE ĀHUARANGI | MITIGATION – REDUCING IMPACTS ON THE CLIMATE**

- 24. The decisions requested are likely to result in a small reduction in greenhouse gasses through the awarding of grants to projects undertaking a range of biodiversity enhancing activities.

**TE HAUTŪ ĀHUARANGI | CLIMATE LEADERSHIP**

25. The decisions to approve the grants recommended are opportunities for the council to demonstrate leadership by supporting community initiatives that encourage mitigation through actions that also restore biodiversity.

**TE AROMATAWAI I TE HIRANGA | ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

26. Having regard to the decision-making provisions in the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) and the council's Significance and Engagement Policy, a decision in accordance with the recommendations is not considered to have a high degree of significance. Staff are of the opinion that the content and recommendations in this report are consistent with the decision-making requirements contained in Part Six of the LGA and that the decision-making requirements of the LGA have been met.

**TE HOROPAKI Ā-TURE | LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT**

27. The decision is not subject to any decision-making requirements other than the Local Government Act 2002 and the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

**KŌWHIRINGA I MANAKOHIA | PREFERRED OPTION**

28. The preferred option is to approve the funding as recommended.

**NGĀ WHAIWHAKAARO KAUPAPAHERE | POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

29. To the best of the writer's knowledge, this decision is not significantly inconsistent with, nor is anticipated to have consequences that will be significantly inconsistent with any policy adopted by this local authority, or any plan required by the Local Government Act 2002 or any other enactment.

**TE TIRITI O WAITANGI | THE TREATY OF WAITANGI**

30. The council is obligated under the LGA to recognise and respect the Crown's responsibility to take appropriate account of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and to maintain and improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes.
31. Applications to the NHF are assessed against six criteria, one of which specifically relates to the value of the project to mana whenua and how the project involves iwi Māori including their cultural values, interests and associations, the effect on Māori historic heritage and the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, wāhi tapu and other taonga including fauna and flora. Additionally, one of the other criteria assesses the extent of mana whenua support of the project.

**WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION**

32. The Natural Heritage Fund 2026/27 round opened on 27 January 2026 and closed on 24 February 2026 with six applications received. Assessment of applications was completed through a multi-stage process. Four applications are recommended for support with NHF grants, for a total value of \$1,899,116.

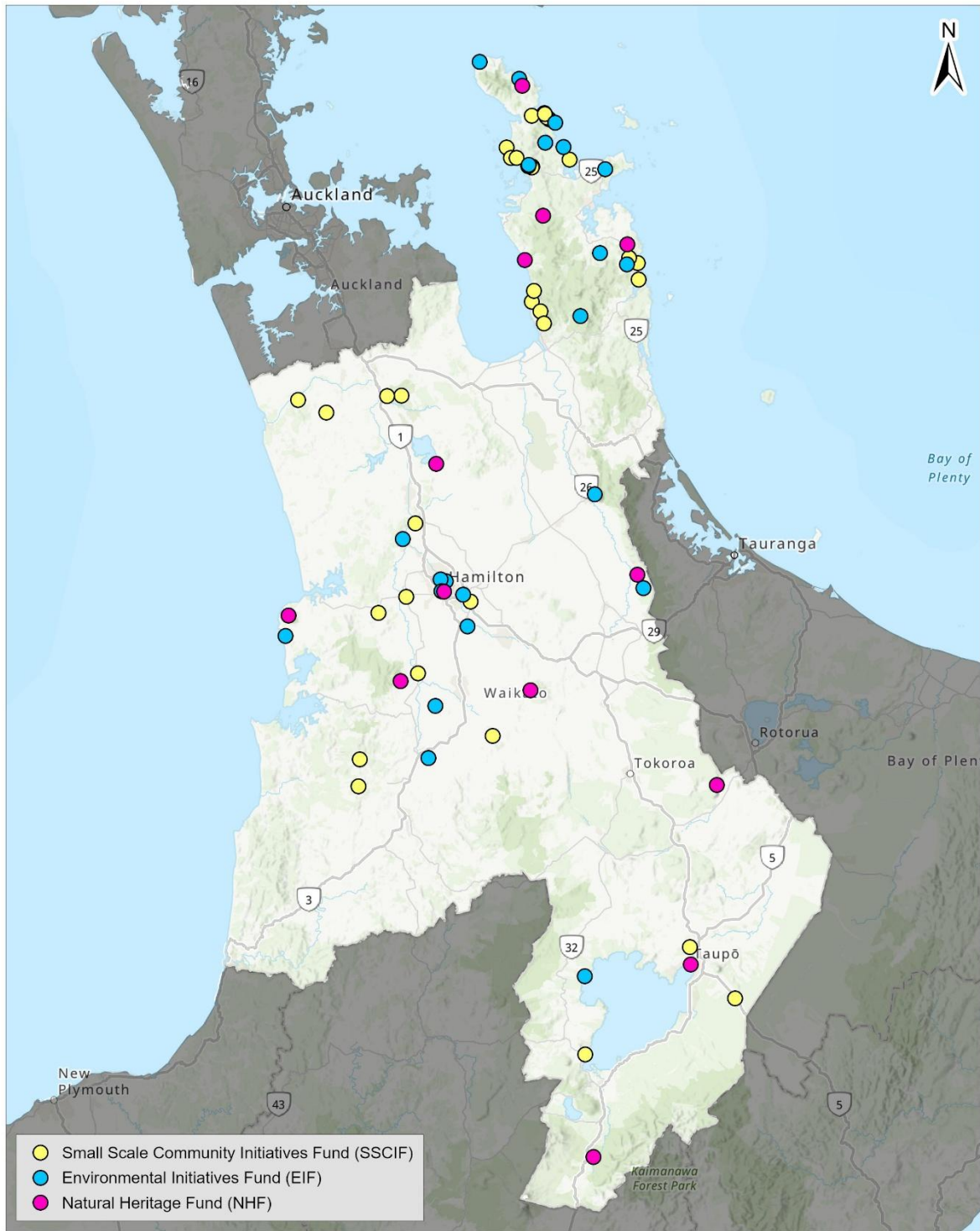
**Table 1: Funding requests and recommendations summary**

*Projects recommended for full funding (green), for partial funding (blue) and to be declined (red) are presented in ranked order from highest to lowest combined assessor scores. Funding period refers to funding term as recommended.*

Applicant Name	Project Name	Amount Requested	Funding Period (years)	Funding Recommended
Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust	Maungatautari - the seed source of biodiversity and community well-being	\$1,736,229	2	\$1,140,300
Thames Coast Kiwi Care Incorporated	Mountains to sea: Thames Coast predator control and habitat protection	\$340,000	4	\$340,000
Mokaihaha Kōkako Trust	Mokaihaha Predator Control and Kōkako Survey	\$72,816	2	\$72,816
New Zealand Landcare Trust	Taiea te Taiao Maungatautari to Pirongia Ecological Corridor	\$346,000 <sup>1</sup>	4	\$346,000
Ngāti Tumutumu Iwi Trust	Tumutumu Kaitiaki Taiao	\$477,185	0	0
Te Puāwaitanga o Ngāti Hinerangi Iwi Trust	Wairere Mahi	\$305,567	0	0
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$3,277,797</b>		<b>\$1,899,116</b>

<sup>1</sup> New Zealand Landcare Trust applied for \$490,000 but was successful in obtaining additional funding and requested their application be reduced by \$144,000.

**Figure 1: Natural Heritage Partnership Programme projects that received funding in the 2025/26 financial year**



**Acknowledgements and Disclaimers**  
 Basemap: Eagle Technology, LINZ, StatsNZ, NIWA, Natural Earth, © OpenStreetMap contributors., Eagle Technology, Land Information New Zealand

**NHPP projects that received funding in 2025/26 financial year**

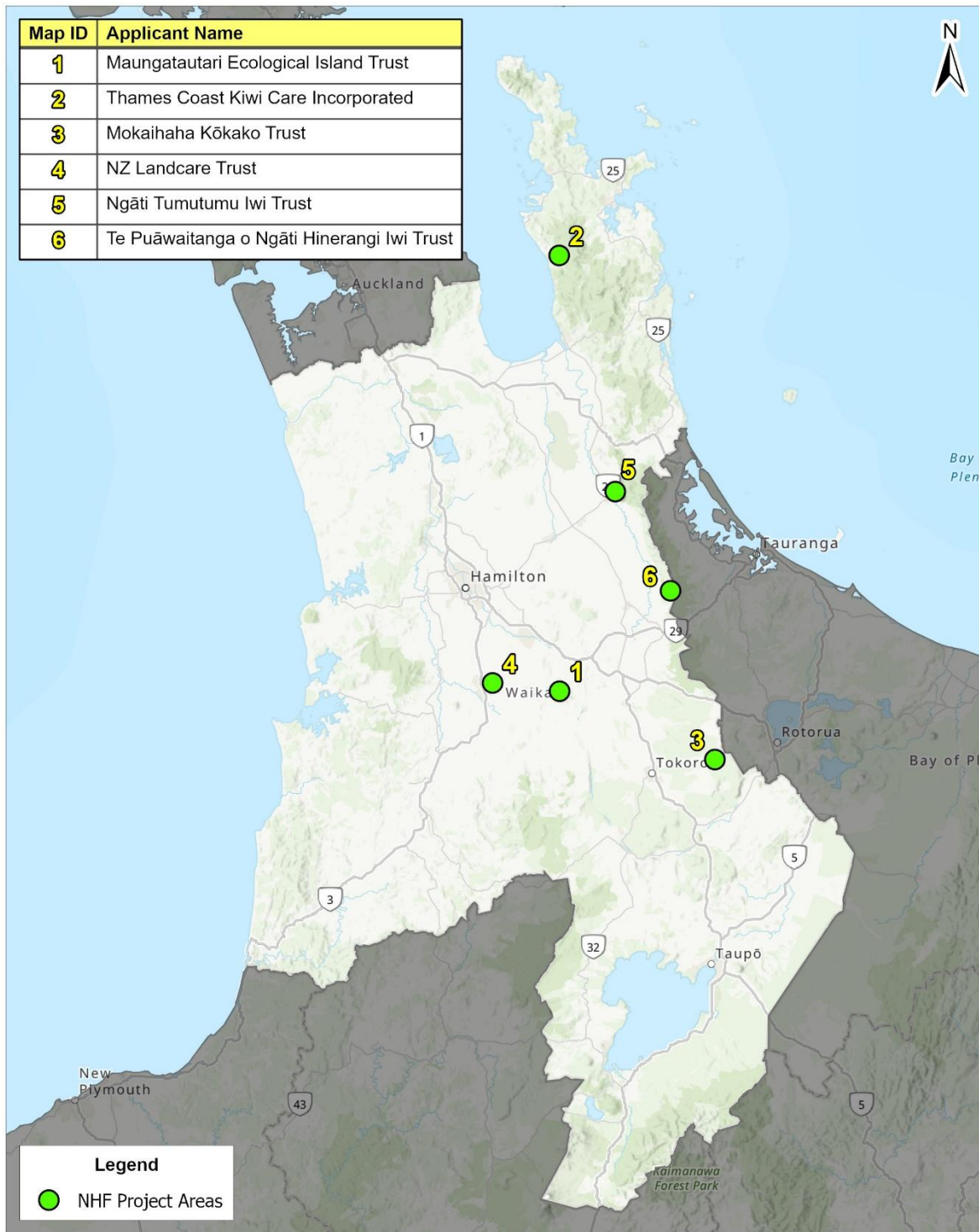


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Figure 2: Geographic distribution of 2026/27 NHF applications



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## Natural Heritage Fund applications 2026/27



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**Table 2: Project details and funding recommendations for the committee’s consideration**

*Projects recommended for full funding (green), projects recommended for partial funding (blue) and projects recommended to be declined (red).*

<p><b>Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust</b>                  With the support of council funding, a 47 km pest-proof fence was constructed by the trust between 2002 and 2006. All introduced pest animals were subsequently eradicated, with exception of mice, from the 3,363 hectare fenced biodiversity sanctuary. As a result, the trust, have been able to re-introduce many threatened species of birds, reptiles, fish and insect back into the sanctuary.</p>				
<p><b>Project Title</b>                  Maungatautari – the seed source of biodiversity and community well-being</p>	<p><b>Total Project Cost</b>                  \$6,933,909</p>	<p><b>Number of Years</b>                  3</p>	<p><b>Combined Assessor Score</b>                  95%</p>	<p><b>Previous NHF Funding</b>                  Yes</p>
<p>Applicant Requested: \$1,736,229 (25% of total project cost).</p> <p>Funding requested for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff labour – for operational delivery of the threatened species management programme, maintaining the pest-proof sanctuary and the environmental educational programme.</li> <li>• Materials – for threatened species management programme and materials required to respond to fence breaches and repairs.</li> </ul>				
<p>Staff Recommendation: Partial funding – \$1,140,300 (16% of total project cost).</p> <p>Providing full funding to the trust for the first two years of the three-year application as requested. This will allow the trust to continue to maintain the sanctuary, whilst also allowing council to support three other significant groups in the Waikato region in this funding round. The trust can re-apply to this fund again for year three funding onwards.</p>				
<p>Project Summary:                  The trust has been effectively maintaining the pest-proof sanctuary since 2006. Several threatened species have been re-introduced, and many have subsequently been transferred to other sites in New Zealand as a result of the successful breeding programmes within the sanctuary.</p> <p>Key Project Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining the 3,363 hectare pest-proof sanctuary</li> <li>• National threatened species recovery programmes</li> <li>• Increased environmental education and awareness.</li> </ul> <p>Key Project Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fence breach responses and repairs</li> <li>• Threatened species monitoring and translocations</li> <li>• Environmental education programme.</li> </ul>				

**Thames Coast Kiwi Care Incorporated**  
 The society was formed in 2006 in response to the community’s desire to protect the southern-most population of North Island brown kiwi on the western side of the Coromandel peninsula. In 2022, with funding support from council through the Natural Heritage Fund, they expanded their operational pest animal control to significantly expand their operational area and include a wider range of pest animals being controlled.

Project Title Mountains to sea: Thames Coast predator control and habitat protection	Total Project Cost \$1,334,960	Number of Years 4	Combined Assessor Score 94%	Previous NHF Funding Yes
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Applicant Requested: \$340,000 (25% of total project cost).  
 Funding requested for:

- Contracted labour – for project management and volunteer coordination
- Materials – to purchase traps and trap consumables.

Staff Recommendation: Fully fund – \$340,000 (25% of total project cost).  
 The society have been effectively delivering pest animal control over 5,000 hectares and have achieved significant increases in the local population of North Island brown kiwi.

**Project Summary:**  
 The society have been undertaking landscape scale pest animal control since 2006. Their focus on kiwi has expanded since 2022 and now includes better protection of long-tailed bats and other threatened species in the operational area.

**Key Project Outcomes:**

- Landscape scale habitat restoration
- Threatened species management (including long-tailed bats and kiwi)
- Increased environmental education and awareness.

**Key Project Activities:**

- Landscape scale pest animal control
- Environmental education programme
- Kiwi population survey.

<p><b>Mokaihaha Kōkako Trust</b>                  The trust was formed in 2017, to restore the Mokaihaha Ecological Area to a thriving ecosystem. The focus of the trust is on protecting a nationally significant population of kōkako. They have received both Natural Heritage Funding (2020) and Environmental Initiatives Funding (2025) to continue their project.</p>				
<p>Project Title                  Mokaihaha Predator Control and Kōkako Survey</p>	<p>Total Project Cost                  \$102,366</p>	<p>Number of Years                  2</p>	<p>Combined Assessor Score                  84%</p>	<p>Previous NHF Funding                  Yes</p>
<p>Applicant Requested: \$72,816 (71% of total project costs). Noting, the applicant did not include the Department of Conservation’s contribution to pest control in the project area. Had this been included then WRC’s contribution would be approximately 26% of the total project costs.</p> <p>Funding requested for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contracted labour – for pest animal control and for a kōkako population survey</li> <li>Materials – for trap and track maintenance.</li> </ul>				
<p>Staff Recommendation: Fully fund - \$72,816 (71% of total project costs).</p> <p>The trust has been effectively delivering pest animal control, with a particular focus on protecting the population of kōkako present within the operational area. They have achieved a significant increase in the kōkako population from 43 pairs in 2018, to 71 pairs in 2022. The funding sought by the trust will allow this pest control programme to continue and for them to demonstrate their biodiversity outcomes to council and other funders through the 2027 kōkako population survey.</p>				
<p>Project Summary:                  For the past nine years the trust has been delivering landscape scale pest animal control in Mokaihaha Ecological Area, east of Tokoroa.</p> <p>Key Project Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape scale habitat restoration</li> <li>Threatened species management (including kōkako).</li> </ul> <p>Key Project Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape scale pest animal control programme</li> <li>Kōkako survey in 2027.</li> </ul>				

**New Zealand Landcare Trust**  
 The trust was established in 1996 as an independent charitable organisation with the purpose of promoting the sustainable land and water management across the country. In 2021 the project received a significant boost in funding from central government whereby the trust was able to employ dedicated staff to deliver on the aspirations of developing a biodiversity corridor between the mountains of Pirongia and Maungatautari. The trust received an Environmental Initiatives Fund grant in 2023 to support project delivery.

Project Title Taia te Taiao Maungatautari to Pirongia Ecological Corridor	Total Project Cost \$2,912,600	Number of Years 4	Combined Assessor Score 82%	Previous NHF Funding No
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Applicant Requested: \$490,000 requested but reduced to \$346,000 (12% of total project costs) after the application had been submitted.

Funding requested for:

- Staff labour – for project management, administration and coordination
- Materials - for events and enhancement work throughout the corridor.

Staff Recommendation: Fully fund - \$346,000 (12% of total project costs).

The trust has been successfully engaging with landowners and the wider community to deliver the project throughout the corridor since 2021. In the last five years they have collaborated with over 100 landowners, iwi, hapū, marae, and local councils to plant over 300,000 native trees, install predator control, and hosted numerous community events.

**Project Summary:**  
 The trust has taken a holistic approach to delivering a biodiversity corridor project through catchment intervention activities, such as planting and land retirement as well as biodiversity enhancement work through trapping initiatives.

**Key Project Outcomes:**

- Landscape scale habitat restoration
- Increased engagement and empowerment of the community.

**Key Project Activities:**

- Restoration planting and pest animal/plant control work within ecological corridor
- Environmental education and awareness programme.

<p><b>Ngāti Tumutumu Iwi Trust</b></p> <p>The trust operates across a broad portfolio of activities including social services, cultural preservation and environmental stewardship. The Tumutumu Kaitiaki Taiao pest plant control and native restoration project sits within the environmental kaitiakitanga arm of the trust. In 2021 the trust was one of the subprojects to receive central government funding through Jobs for Nature as part of the Kaimai Mamaku Restoration project. The trust received council funding in 2025 through the Environmental Initiatives Fund to continue to deliver this project work.</p>				
Project Title Tumutumu Kaitiaki Taiao	Total Project Cost \$1,384,219	Number of Years 3	Combined Assessor Score 72%	Previous NHF Funding No
<p>Applicant Requested: \$477,185 (34% of the total project costs).</p> <p>Funding requested for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff labour – Operational delivery of the pest plant control and planting programmes</li> <li>• Materials – required for pest plant control work.</li> </ul>				
<p>Staff Recommendation: Decline funding – The intended biodiversity outcomes are not clearly defined in the application, and staff consider the project is not sufficiently developed to justify the level of council funding requested. At this stage, it would be more appropriate for the Environmental Initiatives Fund (EIF), which supports projects at an earlier stage. Staff will work with the trust to improve its outcome monitoring framework and encourage it to reapply to the EIF in June 2026.</p>				
<p>Project Summary: Primarily a pest plant control programme on Te Aroha maunga to restore the forest habitat.</p> <p>Key Project Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape scale habitat restoration</li> </ul> <p>Key Project Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape scale pest plant control work</li> <li>• Native planting programme</li> <li>• Supporting other groups within and adjoining the project area.</li> </ul>				

<p>Te Puāwaitanga o Ngāti Hinerangi Iwi Trust</p> <p>The trust operates across a broad portfolio of activities including social services, cultural preservation and environmental stewardship. The Wairere Mahi pest animal control project sits within the environmental kaitiakitanga arm of the trust's wider programme of work. Wairere Mahi is one of the subprojects to receive central government funding through Jobs for Nature in the Kaimai Mamaku Restoration project. In 2025 the trust received council funding through the Environmental Initiatives Fund to continue to deliver this work.</p>				
Project Title Wairere Mahi	Total Project Cost \$1,890,241	Number of Years 3	Combined Assessor Score 70%	Previous NHF Funding No
<p>Applicant Requested: \$305,567 (16% of total project costs).</p> <p>Funding requested for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff labour – for project management, administration and project delivery for the pest animal control programme</li> <li>• Materials – for operational delivery of the pest animal and pest plant control programmes.</li> </ul>				
<p>Staff Recommendation: Decline funding – Staff consider the project is not sufficiently developed to justify the amount of council funding requested. At this stage, the project is better aligned with the Environmental Initiatives Fund (EIF) which supports projects at an earlier stage. Staff will provide technical advice and support to the trust and encourage it to refine the proposal and reapply to the EIF in June 2026.</p>				
<p>Project Summary:</p> <p>Primarily, the project focusses on a pest animal control programme with the addition of a small subproject delivering restorative planting and pest plant control work at Killarney Lakes in the Kaimai Range.</p> <p>Key Project Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape scale habitat restoration</li> </ul> <p>Key Project Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape scale pest animal and plant control</li> <li>• Native planting programme</li> <li>• Supporting other groups within and adjoining the project area.</li> </ul>				

## ĀPITI HANGA | ATTACHMENTS

### 1. Natural Heritage Partnership Programme - Funding Policy (Doc #28557027) [↓](#)

Waikato Regional Council Policy Series 2024/08

# Natural Heritage Partnership Programme Funding Policy

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	Name	Date
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# 1 Introduction

Waikato Regional Council places a high priority on supporting individual and community initiatives that enhance the environment and protect our natural heritage including our native plants and animals, special landscapes and ecosystems.

Council supports these initiatives through the Natural Heritage Partnership Programme (NHPP). This programme comprises three separate contestable funds for small, medium and large projects respectively:

- the Small Scale Community Initiatives Fund or SSCIF (for project grants under \$5,000);
- the Environmental Initiatives Fund or EIF (for project grants \$1,000 to \$40,000);
- the Natural Heritage Fund or NHF (for project grants over \$40,000).

# 2 Objectives of the Natural Heritage Partnership Programme

The objectives of the Natural Heritage Partnership Programme are:

- Increasing positive biodiversity outcomes across the region.
- Supporting the community to develop and lead their own biodiversity projects.
- Inspiring and educating people in the region to either be involved or supportive of biodiversity work and to understand and place value on it.

The NHPP objectives align with Waikato Regional Council's Strategic Priorities as follows:

**Biodiversity and Biosecurity.** People working together to protect and restore our unique local native plants and animals, and the indigenous ecosystems they live in:

- Support and empower people to protect and restore the natural environment and taonga species by integrating their efforts with councils and other agencies.
- Work with others to protect ecosystems, human health and economic activities through effective pest management.

**Community Connections.** Contributing to creating vibrant communities that are well connected with each other.

Beneficial social outcomes are a well-documented positive outcome of community led biodiversity and conservation projects are known to enhance wellbeing among communities and foster social cohesion and connectedness.

The **Natural Heritage Fund** is designed to support community led, collaborative projects that have long term, landscape scale, intergenerational ecological benefits, including assisting in securing public assets and public access.

The **Environmental Initiative Fund** supports community groups undertaking projects which enhance ecological outcomes, or those that provide environmental education and/or raise community awareness of the benefits of preserving and restoring our regions unique native biodiversity.

The **Small Scale Community Initiatives Fund** provides funding to small community groups or individuals undertaking predator control and / or pest plant control. This is primarily aimed at

the purchase of materials to support these activities and includes the ability to allocate a percentage of the funds to one or more sub regional community hubs for distribution to smaller groups or individuals.

For the period 2024-2027, priority will be given to projects that achieve landscape scale outcomes or link to multiple smaller biodiversity projects to achieve landscape scale biodiversity outcomes, and noting that during this period land purchase is not a priority while an analysis is undertaken of how to implement a programme that looks at securing public assets.

### 3 Funding source and allocation

The revenue for the NHF and EIF is sourced from the natural heritage targeted rate which is set through the Long Term Plan.

The total budget each year for the NHF and EIF will comprise the year's rate revenue plus the previous year's closing reserve balance, as any unallocated funds are carried forward to the next financial year.

The NHF allocation will be approximately 80% of the natural heritage targeted rate and the EIF approximately 20%, not including the reserve.

The full project costs (including any multi-year commitments) must be allocated from the year in which the funding was applied for, to ensure surety of funding each year and so that future funding decisions are not constrained. Successful applicants will receive funding in the year in which they need it. External borrowing can be considered for land purchases.

Staff time spent in administering the EIF and NHF is drawn from the total natural heritage rate revenue, which reduces the amount available for grants accordingly.

The SSCIF allocation is sourced from the uniform annual general charge (also a targeted, per property rate) with a fixed allocation of \$195,000 per annum. This is the total amount available for grant allocation - staff time for administering these grants is additional to this and is also drawn from the UAGC.

### 4 Applicant eligibility

A wide range of organisations are eligible to apply for funding through one or more of the NHPP's three contestable funds. They include:

- community groups
- iwi/hapu
- kaitiaki groups
- incorporated societies
- community trusts
- resident and ratepayer groups
- landowner groups
- educational institutions
- businesses and industries
- individuals (SSCIF only).

Organisations must be a legal entity with a track record that satisfies Council.

Those ineligible include:

- Central government departments and agencies and territorial authorities. (Applications from community groups with these agencies as partners or co-funders are encouraged. However, the lead must clearly be the community group).
- Crown Research Institutes.
- Groups that are funded through other Waikato Regional Council programmes or central government programmes.
- Organisations that are based outside of New Zealand.
- Individuals – except for applications to SSCIF.

Only one application from any group (or individual in the case of SSCIF) will be accepted per financial year. Groups applying to the NHF or EIF may be funded for more than one year for a particular project (up to four years for NHF, and up to two years for EIF); however, a different project can only be funded once any prior project has been successfully completed. Applicants to SSCIF may only be awarded funding for a maximum of three consecutive years and will then be required to take a minimum of one years break before applying to the SSCIF again.

## 5 Eligible projects and costs

Projects must:

- be located within the Waikato region, noting that funding is available for lands of all tenure;
- have clear objectives that are consistent with Council's statutory functions, Regional Policy Statement and overall environmental objectives and priorities;
- demonstrate the necessary capacity to undertake the project, including responsibility for prudent financial management and ensuring all occupational health and safety requirements are met by volunteers or contractors;
- ensure that funding may only be used for the purpose and amounts for which it was granted, and the recipient must meet any conditions decided upon by Council;
- demonstrate the administration of fund money in accordance with standard accounting procedures; and
- have no potential conflict of interest for Council as a consent authority.

The NHF and EIF will generally contribute to materials, labour costs, contractor costs and costs associated with supporting volunteers. The NHF can also support land purchase and other mechanisms to protect land. The SSCIF will fund materials related to pest plant and pest animal control and up to \$1,000 of contractor labour where this is essential to achieving the outcomes of the project in an efficient and safe manner.

EIF and SSCIF funds will be allocated with the aim of supporting projects that collectively encompass a wide range of ecological and biodiversity outcomes and an even disbursement across the region.

## 6 Ineligible projects and costs

The following projects/costs will not be funded:

- Projects located outside the Waikato Regional Council administrative boundaries.
- Debt repayment, refinancing of existing loans, deposits, or underwriting projects.

- Projects receiving funding from other Council programmes (however; aspects of a project not covered under another programme may be eligible to apply for funding).
- Projects more appropriately funded through other Council programmes.
- Projects which the Council considers are core business of other agencies.
- Overseas travel or conference expenses, legal expenses, expenses incurred through participation in statutory processes.
- Landscaping, beautification, food gardening and wildlife pond projects that do not have appropriate environmental outcomes.
- Proposals designed to generate personal or commercial benefit, political or religious objectives, or for private pecuniary profit or gain.
- Projects which seek to redistribute, at their own discretion, funds to recipients, other than those funds awarded to sub regional community hubs via the SSCIF.
- Consultants' fees or salaries that are not directly linked to an activity or programme with proven benefit to the community and/or environment.
- Purchase of large capital items of equipment or infrastructure (e.g., vehicles, solar panels, buildings, building renovations, roads, and bridges etc.).
- Any works/activities that are required as conditions of a resource consent or as mitigation as part of a resource consent.
- Projects that require resource consent but have not received one at the date of the close of the funding round.
- Retrospective funding for projects or items completed or acquired before the application closing date.
- Any project that would have significant adverse impacts on the environment, regardless of the positive impacts.

## 7 Application and assessment process

Only those applications that rank highly against the criteria and have good supporting justification will be funded. Funding will depend on the project's merits and the available budget for that financial year.

### 7.1 Natural Heritage Fund

There is no formal application process for the NHF. An expression of interest process may be held and interested parties are encouraged to contact Council directly at any time to discuss their projects.

Multi-year projects will be considered (to a maximum of four years).

Council also reserves the right to use the NHF to progress significant natural heritage projects arising from its core business.

### 7.2 Environmental Initiatives Fund

A formal application process will be held annually. All eligible projects will be assessed against the assessment criteria by multiple assessors. Assessment scores will be moderated by a moderation panel and external advice may be sought where required.

Multi-year projects will be considered (to a maximum of two years).

## 7.3 Small Scale Community Initiatives Fund

A formal application process will be held annually. All eligible projects will be assessed against the assessment criteria.

Multi-year applications will not be considered.

Thirty percent of the available SSCIF funding will be allocated to one or more sub regional community hubs to enable these umbrella organisations to distribute materials for smaller groups to undertake pest animal and pest plant control. This will be reviewed annually, and the percentage allocated to hubs scaled up or down depending on the success of this approach. The intent is to empower hubs to support smaller community groups, enable collective, landscape scale community action, and provide operational efficiencies for both Council and community groups.

## 7.4 Assessment criteria

Priority will be given to projects that complement Council's work and those of other organisations or existing community efforts. Projects should maximise collaboration between iwi Māori, groups and other partners and support the building of capacity and capability over time. Groups will need to demonstrate comprehensive monitoring and reporting of their impacts and outcomes.

Only those applications that score highly against these criteria and have good supporting justification will be recommended for funding.

- 1. Fit with Council's regional outcomes, strategic priorities, and policies**

- 2. Environmental enhancement**

How the project will directly promote, enhance or protect the Waikato region's environment, with a focus on improved ecological and biodiversity outcomes.

- 3. Community participation and awareness**

How the project involves iwi Māori, the wider community and increases public awareness of environmental issues. What is the level of mana whenua and community support for the project.

- 4. Collaboration and partnership**

Whether the applicants have explored and developed any opportunities for collaboration and partnership with others, including any co-funding and support from other parties.

- 5. Viability**

The likelihood of the project's success and the applicant's capability to deliver the outcomes of the project.

- 6. Value to mana whenua**

Relative to the scale of the project, how the project involves iwi Māori including their cultural values, interests and associations, the effect on Māori historic heritage or the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu and other taonga including fauna and flora.

## **7.5 Funding deed**

Successful NHPP applicants will be required to sign a Funding Deed describing the obligations of both parties, and to follow a reporting framework approved by Council.

## **7.6 Decisions**

Decisions on the NHF will be made as per the Integrated Catchment Management Committee's Terms of Reference.

Decisions on the EIF and the SSCIF will be determined by staff.

Community hubs, responsible for distributing SSCIF funds, will follow guidelines, as a condition of their agreement with Council, to ensure equitable access to materials.

Council decisions on NHPP grants are final and there is no process for unsuccessful applicants to appeal the decision. At times a funding decision to not approve an application may solely be based on the fund being oversubscribed.

## **8 Reporting on the Natural Heritage Partnership Programme**

Quantitative information and qualitative commentary on the NHPP will be reported to Council each year. The aim of this reporting is to attempt to demonstrate the value and benefits of the funds to the region.

## **9 Review of the Natural Heritage Partnership Programme**

It is anticipated that the Natural Heritage Partnership Programme and associated Funding Policy will be reviewed at least every three years in line with the Long Term Plan.

These reviews will help inform any recommendations to improve the NHPP to ensure that the funds are still relevant and useful for the community and Council.

## 6.2 TRIAL OF THE SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK IN THE MOTUKARAKA CATCHMENT

<b>Rā   Date:</b>	<b>8 May 2026</b>
<b>Kaituhi   Author:</b>	<b>Greg Ryan, Director, Integrated Catchment Management</b>
<b>Kaituku   Authoriser:</b>	<b>Chris McLay, Chief Executive</b>
<b>Mana whakatau   Delegation Status:</b>	<b>Committee has delegated authority to make the recommended decision</b>

### TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of the trial of the Sustainable Infrastructure Decision-making Framework (SIDF), including:
  - a. A description of the SIDF process and why this approach to flood protection investment decision-making was adopted by Council in 2019.
  - b. A summary of the trial of the SIDF on the Motukaraka catchment.
  - c. The lessons learnt from this trial of the SIDF that will need to be considered when identifying next steps for this approach to investment decision making.

### KŌRERO WHAKATAKI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The SIDF was adopted by Council to drive a more informed, affordable and sustainable approach to infrastructure investment decision-making. It is designed to bring together a wide range of catchment stakeholders to explore the social, economic, environmental and culture matters that contribute to the sustainability of flood protection infrastructure. It is a key method to achieving Council's 2024-2074 Infrastructure Strategy, which identifies the need to think differently about how new and existing flood protection infrastructure is managed and maintained.
3. Following adoption by Council in 2019, it was further agreed by this Committee to undertake the first trial of the SIDF in the Motukaraka catchment. This is the location of an existing pump station that has a declining performance due to significant peat settlement since it was commissioned in 1968. Like the wider Whangamarino Wetland catchment, it is also impacted by issues such as a degraded natural environment, pastoral land use that is under pressure from changing requirements, and diminished culture values and taonga.
4. A community panel and technical-advisory-group was assembled to apply the SIDF to the Motukaraka catchment, with representation from Council, iwi, mana whenua, landowners and the Department of Conservation.
5. Members of these groups made a significant commitment to the trialling of the SIDF, acknowledging that for many this was a new approach to infrastructure investment decision-making that required substantial time and resource, as well as patience. The groups were focused on agreeing the issues and developing/recommending to Council a package of work to address them.

6. Due to a range of issues, the early stages of the trial required additional time and resource that constrained what was available for later stages such as the development of an agreed Flood Risk Asset Management Plan. The decision was therefore made to limit the trial to the identification of a short-list of works. When working to this objective, the decision was also made to simplify several steps in the SIDF. It is important to acknowledge that this limited the elements of the SIDF that were able to be fully explored by this trial.
7. The trial produced a range of work that is required to address the agreed issues, however given the time-constraints on the project, further work is still required to develop several of these elements, as well as how these would be implemented.
8. A number of lessons have been taken from this trial:
  - a. The application of the SIDF to a catchment, regardless of size, is likely to be a complex engagement exercise that requires substantial time, effort and agility from Council and stakeholders.
  - b. Planning for the necessary time and resources to establish and sustain effective stakeholder engagement is critical. Instances where investment decisions are urgent need to be carefully considered to ensure the use of the SIDF doesn't create other risks.
  - c. The application of the SIDF requires a significant amount of information to be available at the right time. Where this information is not sufficient or available when needed, it will likely prolong discussions and slow the completion of the SIDF process.
  - d. The SIDF in itself is a complex framework, and the trial required some change and simplification to meet project objectives. There is need to consider whether these changes should become a permanent part of the framework. However, as noted above, Council also needs to ensure that the application of the framework is agile in response to the needs of a catchment or community.
9. While the project to trial of the SIDF received a significant amount of support, time and resource from Council and stakeholders, it had limited success in developing an agreed suite of work to manage the flood protection infrastructure and wider Motukaraka catchment. The lessons learnt from this trial will need to be addressed when the SIDF is reviewed prior to further application. This includes considering how this framework aligns to community adaptation processes that involve Council's flood protection infrastructure.

**TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the report *Trial of the Sustainable Infrastructure Decision-making Framework in the Motukaraka catchment* (Integrated Catchment Management Committee, 27 May 2026) be received.
2. That the Committee acknowledge and thank catchment stakeholders for their commitment, time and effort to participate in the trial of the SIDF on the Motukaraka Catchment.

**HOROPAKI | BACKGROUND****1. The Sustainable Infrastructure Decision-making Framework (SIDF)**

10. Council's flood infrastructure assets were largely built during the 1960's and 1970's with the intention of enabling the productive use of land for agriculture, and protecting communities and infrastructure established within floodplains.
11. WRC has traditionally made investment decisions on its existing flood protection infrastructure assuming it will refurbish or replacing them with similar infrastructure, with the primary aim of preserving the current level of service and functionality. However, the cost of undertaking this work has increased significantly, and other matters such as changing climatic conditions, geomorphology and higher environmental performance standards now requires WRC to consider a wider range of factors when making infrastructural decisions, and likely undertake more complex and varied engagement with catchment stakeholders.
12. The challenge of undertaking this more complex level of community engagement was first addressed through the development of the Sustainable Infrastructure Decision-making Framework (SIDF), which was developed to support a sustainable and affordable approach to significant and long-term decisions on infrastructure investment. It provided a balanced and holistic approach to infrastructure investment decision-making, acknowledging the need to consider social, economic, environmental and cultural perspectives, and the active involvement of key stakeholders.
13. The SIDF was later integrated into the 2024-74 Infrastructure Strategy, which also reflects the need to transition to a more sustainable and holistic approach to flood protection infrastructure.
14. The use of the SIDF is guided by three core principles:
  - a. Integration: Recognising the interconnection between people, land, water and economy, ensuring that improvements in one area do not come at the expense of another.
  - b. Transparency: Applying a clear and traceable process so that all partners understand how evidence and values inform outcomes.
  - c. Partnership: Ensuring mana whenua, technical experts and the community co-design both the process and the solutions.
15. At the heart of the Framework are a set of Strategic Investment Objectives that aim to clearly identify what we are trying to achieve for the Waikato Region through our long-term infrastructure investments. These Investment Objectives are:
  - a. Improved community resilience to flooding effects so that the time taken to recover after an event remains the same as today for those areas protected by the scheme.
  - b. The quantum of land within flood and drainage area that can be used productively is maintained where appropriate.
  - c. Ecosystem services are maintained or improved.
  - d. WRC is able to make long-term decisions on investment need and communities and landowners are able to make long-term decisions on the use and development of their land.
2. The approach taken by the SIDF is not new or unique, and is similar the approach taken by other councils when undertaking floodplain management planning.

### **3. The trial of the SIDF on the Motukaraka catchment**

16. The SIDF was first adopted by Council in 2019, with a second version adopted in 2022. It was subsequently agreed by the Integrated Catchment Management Committee that the first trial

application on an actual catchment would be undertaken for the Motukaraka Catchment. The Motukaraka Catchment was selected as the first live trial due it being limited in size, having a small number of land holdings, being impacted by a number of infrastructure performance concerns, as well as environmental sensitivities, high stakeholder interest, and significant pending capital investment decisions:

- a. The performance of the existing pump station was understood to be compromised due to peat settlement.
  - b. The performance of the pump station was expected to be further compromised by issues such as the impact of climate change on rainfall. It also does not meet Council's objective to provide safe fish passage.
  - c. The pump station discharges directly to the Maramarua River, which borders the Whangamarino Wetland, recognised as a wetland of international significance, and an area associated with a number of issues related to hydrology, land-use, nutrient dynamics, habitats, invasive species, climate change, taonga species and personal connections to catchment waterbodies.
  - d. A weir has been constructed by DOC and Fish and Game to control the water level in the Whangamarino Wetland, driving both the tail-water level for the pump station, as well as the stopbank levels for the Motukaraka catchment. The resource consent for this structure is expiring shortly, with a future solution still being considered.
  - e. Land use in the Motukaraka Catchment is supported by a water take from the Maramarua River to maintain summer water levels in the drainage network.
  - f. There is significant stakeholder interest in the Motukaraka and wider Whangamarino Wetland catchment, including landowners, mana whenua and the Department of Conservation.
  - g. There is an existing resource consent in place for the operation of the pump station (to take 1,000,000 m<sup>3</sup> per day, expiring 2033), along with a resource consent to bring 14,256 m<sup>3</sup> per day into the scheme (expired and under renewal).
  - h. Significant investment is expected to be required to renew the pump station, a proportion of which will need to be serviced by targeted rates that are enabled by land use within the Motukaraka Catchment.
17. Council wished to progress the trial at pace, and so assigned a CE KPI requiring the trial to be completed within 1 year (end of June 2025).

4.

## 5. Project stakeholders

18. The trial of the SIDF in the Motukaraka Catchment commenced in June 2024 and required a significant contribution of time and expertise from a number of catchment stakeholders, as well as a range of WRC staff.
19. The Community Panel was initially formed, consisting of:
  - Landowner representatives (Brendan Balle, Mark Bon and Philip Pulman).
  - Iwi and manawhenua (Jackie Colliar and Nadia Coombe).
  - Department of Conservation (Michelle Lewis).

20. A Joint Technical Advisory Group (JTAG) was also established to enable a deeper dive into issues and to advise the Community Panel, which consisted of:
    - a. WRC water and environment SME (Dr Mike Scarsbrook, Manager Environmental Science)
    - b. WRC cultural and business process SME (Tutahanga Douglas, Kaitohutohu)
    - c. DOC water, environment and catchment SME (James Blyth)
    - d. Landowner business and catchment SME (Brendan Balle)
    - e. Consultant in agriculture and infrastructure (Fred Phillips)
    - f. Mana whenua culture and catchment SMEs (Kelvin Tupuhi and Nadia Coombe)
    - g. Iwi culture, iwi and infrastructure SME (Tamoko Ormsby)
  21. Several Waikato Regional Councillors also took up the opportunity to observe Community Panel meetings.
  22. The initial intent was to complete the trial of the SIDF within the 2024/25 financial year. However, there were several early delays that resulted in the trial being concluded in December 2025. These were:
    - a. The time required to establish the Community Panel due to the availability of some members.
    - b. Concern from some Councillors and members of the Community Panel about how the trial was being undertaken, requiring further discussion and a renewed commitment from Council at the end of 2024.
    - c. The ongoing availability of Community Panel members to review material, provide feedback and attend meetings.
    - d. The additional time to complete several steps in the SIDF process, in particular the initial stages of defining and agreeing the issues impacting the catchment.
  23. As noted, the trial was deemed to be completed in December 2025 with the completion of the “short listed options report”.
- 6.

#### **SUMMARY OF MOTUKARAKA TRIAL**

24. A summary of the application of the SIDF to the Motukaraka catchment is provided in Attachment 1. This includes an overview of the catchment, the issues identified and options to resolve them. It is important to acknowledge that while a preferred option has been identified, further work is required on several elements.

7.

#### **LESSONS LEARNT**

25. As noted earlier in this report, the SIDF has been developed to address the current and future challenges of maintaining Council’s flood protection infrastructure. It promotes a more holistic approach to managing and maintaining this infrastructure, and underpins the direction outlined in the 2024-2074 Infrastructure Strategy.
26. The intended outcome from the SIDF trial was the preparation of a Flood Risk Asset Management Plan that represents an agreed between stakeholders on the management of

the flood risk in the Motukaraka Catchment. It was also intended that at the conclusion of the trial a review of SIDF would be undertaken prior to wider application.

27. In summary, while the trial has improved our understanding of applying a comprehensive framework such as the SIDF, there were a number of barriers that resulted in the trial not achieving the intended outcomes within the allowed timeframe. These included the significant amount of time and resource to initiate and maintain stakeholder engagement, the information available to adequately inform various matters, and the complexity of the broader catchment issues and solutions (both the Motukaraka and wider Whangamarino catchment). Additional time and effort was also required to adjust various elements of the SIDF to suit the trial catchment, meaning that these were not fully tested by the trial project. This included the simplification of the Driver-Pressure-State-Impact-Response analysis, adjustments to the application of the multi-criteria-analysis, and the exclusion of the Flood Risk Asset Management Plan due to the need to consider how this fitted with existing plans and documents.
28. These matters are expanded as follows:
  - The comprehensive approach to investment decision-making, even on a limited spatial scale such as the Motukaraka catchment, requires a significant and complex level of engagement from catchment stakeholders, along with significant planning and resourcing to support this. While Council has been able to support some aspects of this engagement during this trial, it has placed significant pressure on a number of stakeholders and staff to actively participate in this process and maintain engagement.
  - The use of the SIDF broadens the range of catchment issues and interventions that are considered, which in the case of the Motukaraka catchment has resulted in wider and more complex discussions regarding issues such as water quality. This requires additional time and information to enable informed decisions. It also requires those participating in the SIDF process to have the time and commitment to enter into these more complex discussions that can take a significant amount of time to resolve and resources to implement.
  - The SIDF process needs to be underpinned by accurate and timely information to inform the range of discussions and decisions that are required. When planning a project such as this, significant effort is needed to plan for these requirements and ensure there is adequate resource allocated at the right time and available to support the full duration of the project.
  - While the scope of the trial was to apply the SIDF process to a small and contained catchment, the intent of the SIDF was to consider sustainable infrastructure investment at a broader scale. Therefore, several project challenges emerged that may have not been so acute if the trial was applied at this broader scale.
29. In addition to these general lessons, the JTAG and Motukaraka Community Panel participated in independently facilitated lessons-learnt sessions. These sessions identified the following things that went well:
  - a. The early and consistent involvement of key stakeholders and experts.
  - b. The trust and collaboration that was built through cultural engagement.
  - c. The active participation of all participants, enabling open, frank, honest and respectful conversations.

- d. Strong relationship building across the catchment community, enhancing knowledge and a shared understanding of catchment matters.
  - e. The sharing of a range of community and mana whenua aspirations, underpinned by field trips and site visits to enhance understanding.
  - f. The establishment of the JTAG to provide for detailed and focused conversations that enabled engagement and knowledge sharing.
  - g. The participation of Councillors in discussions to hear matters first-hand.
  - h. The leadership and effort from Council staff to lead participants through the SIDF process, including a willingness to pause and pivot.
30. The JTAG and Community Panel also identified a number of areas that will require further consideration for the future application of this approach to infrastructure decision-making:
- a. An initial focus on the wider regional context and why this approach is being taken, before dropping down to catchment-specific matters. This should include definition of what triggers are driving the need for the application of a framework such as this.
  - b. Clearer baseline information much earlier in the process, including an early gap analysis to help inform decisions.
  - c. Earlier cultural engagement with iwi and mana whenua to support a shared understanding of catchment interests and values, enabling more consistent analysis, reducing fragmented input, and supporting more durable and well-informed outcomes.
  - d. A clear understanding and acknowledgement of the range of legislative requirements, particularly those related environmental management and how they interact with the provision of flood protection and land drainage infrastructure.
  - e. An agreed approach to understanding economic costs and benefits, and in particular those that extend beyond the immediate catchment.
  - f. A comprehensive plan for the engagement of all stakeholders, including a consideration for the level of engagement and the necessary resourcing needed to support this.
  - g. A realistic project schedule that takes into account stakeholder requirements and constraints, including ensuring that tough conversations are not delayed.
  - h. A clear understanding and agreement of project outcomes and milestones, and a need to balance the achievement of these with the time that is necessary for effective engagement.
  - i. The early acknowledgment of options that are not viable, to enable a focus on those that may be.
31. Lastly, it is noted that Council is involved in a range of community adaptation projects that take a broadly similar approach to the long-term management of natural hazard-risks. When considering the next steps for the SIDF, Council should also resolve its relationship with these other related initiatives.
32. Consideration will also need to be given to other projects that will help Council to respond to the challenges that gave rise to the SIDF, for example the current review of how Council funds it's critical infrastructure.

**WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION**

33. Following adoption of the SIDF in 2019, Council has trialled the implementation of the framework on the Motukaraka catchment in response to the degraded performance of the existing pump station.
34. Is it firstly important to acknowledge the significant time and energy given to the trial by iwi, mana whenua, landowners, DOC, and a range of Council staff. The SIDF is a complex engagement framework, the implementation of which is reliant on the commitment that has been demonstrated throughout this trial.
35. Despite the commitment that has shown by stakeholders, the trial was only partially successful and was not able to explore some elements that were either simplified for de-scoped. A short list of work has been identified to respond to the issues that are impacting the Motukaraka catchment, however further time and resource is still required to develop and agree to several elements, how these will be implemented, and ultimately how these will be brought together to form a Flood Risk Asset Management Plan.
36. Importantly, a number of lessons from this trial have been captured from all stakeholders and need to be considered by Council when agreeing to next steps, acknowledging that the infrastructural challenges that drove the development of the SIDF and Council's 2024-2074 Infrastructure Strategy remain relevant and are expected to be more pronounced.

**NGĀ TOHUTORO | REFERENCES**

37. SIDF Shortlisted Options Report (Doc# 34003390)

**ĀPITI HANGA | ATTACHMENTS**

1. The Motukaraka catchment Doc# 35761854 [↓](#)

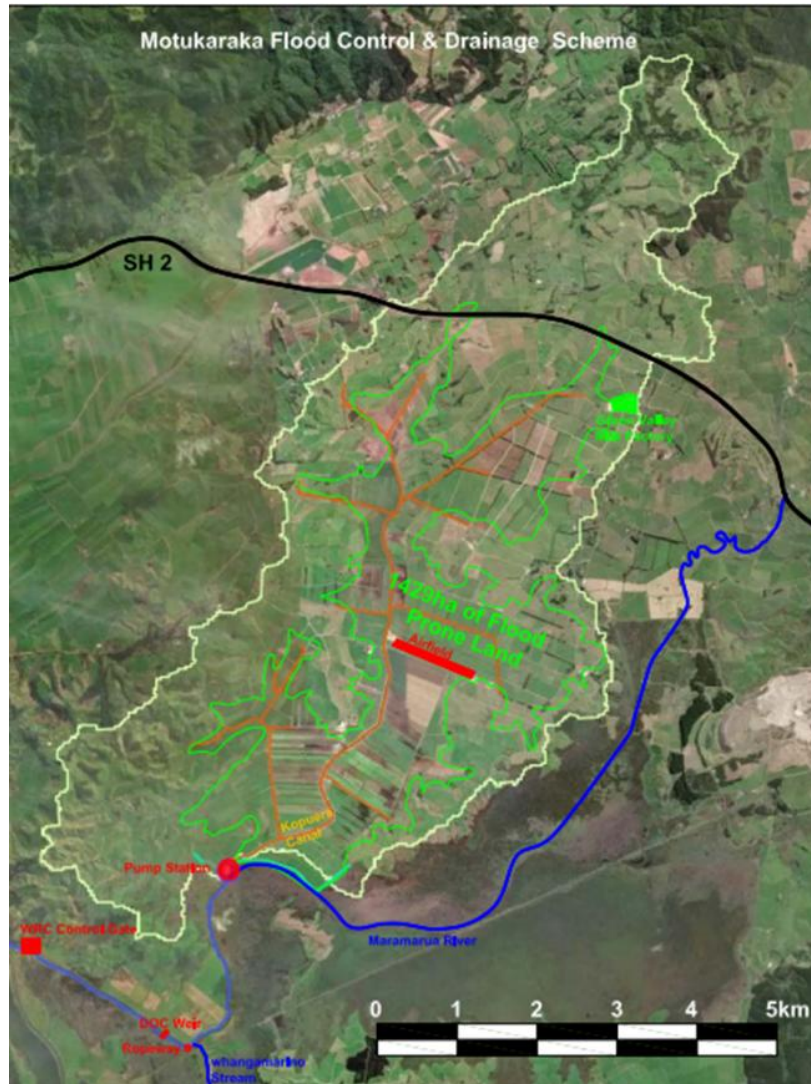
**Attachment 1: The Motukaraka catchment (document 35761854)**

1. The Motukaraka catchment is located in northern Waikato and is part of the larger Whangamarino Wetland Catchment. It covers 4,140 hectares and consists of drained peatland and some hill country to the northwest of the Maramarua and Whangamarino rivers.



2. The shallow waters of the northern Waikato, including the Motukaraka Catchment, were formed in pre-human occupation times when the Waikato River carved a path through the Taupiri Gorge. The Motukaraka Catchment borders the Maramarua River and Whangamarino Wetland, a RAMSAR-listed site of international importance and that, while valued for its biodiversity, tuna habitat and cultural heritage, has been degraded by fires and a change in water levels.
3. Following the arrival of the Tainui waka and settlement of Waikato and Hauraki iwi from around 1350, Motukaraka developed as a trading and transport area, with waterways supporting pā, kāinga and mahinga kai and shaping enduring relationships between people, land and water. From the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries onward, and following the invasion of the Waikato and land confiscation, european settlement and infrastructure development altered water levels and land use patterns.
4. Mana whenua continues to maintain cultural associations with the area through continuous occupation (ahi kā), guardianship (kaitiakitanga) and involvement in management and restoration initiatives. It is within the rohe of Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Tamaoho, Ngāti, Hine, Ngāti Naho, and neighbours the rohe of the Hauraki iwi. Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato is the primary document that sets the direction for the health and wellbeing of the Waikato and Waipā Rivers, and enables mana whenua to work in partnership with the Waikato Regional Council to maintain kaitiakitanga and mana whakahaere across the landscape.
5. The Motukaraka Flood Protection Scheme was commissioned in 1968. It is located within this broader catchment and provides direct benefit to 1,429 hectares of low-lying

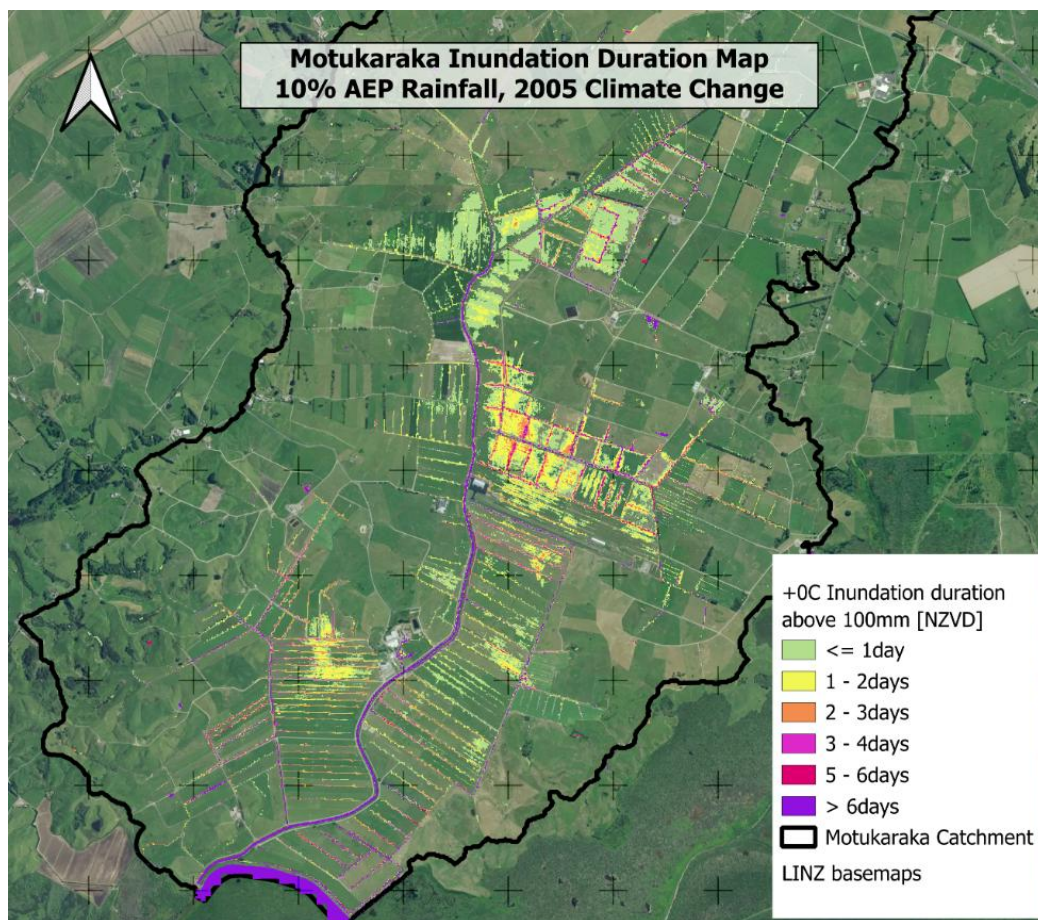
flood prone land. The scheme consists of a 25 km land drainage network and pump station that are designed to remove ponding from a rainfall event with a 10 % AEP within three days, thereby maintaining pastoral land use. The scheme also provides a stopbank that protects the catchment from flooding in the Whangamarino Wetland and Maramarua River.



6. The land that directly benefits from the Motukaraka Flood Protection Scheme consists of a range of land uses, anchored by high-value dairy production, that contribute an estimated \$16 million to regional GDP per year. Dairy operations dominate local output, supported by smaller horticultural and service enterprises, as well as the Mercer Airport and engine testing facilities for Rocketlab. This provides for approximately 180 full-time-equivalent workers across farming, processing (e.g. Green Valley Dairy factory) and support services.

**What is happening?**

7. As noted above, the application of the SIDF to the Motukaraka Catchment was driven by a range of infrastructural, environmental and stakeholder pressures. As a first step in the SIDF process, work was undertaken with a range of stakeholders and subject matter experts to identify core issues:
  - Drainage and flood protection works have changed water levels and flow paths.
  - Intensive land use has increased contaminant runoff into waterways.
  - Existing infrastructure is affecting native fish passage.
  - Pest species are impacting native ecosystems.
  - Recurrent ponding and flood damage is impacting farm productivity.
  - There are rising infrastructure costs (now and into the future).
  - There has been an erosion of mātauranga, practices and access to taonga.
8. Due to these impacts:
  - Natural environments are in a degraded state.
  - Ecological health and habitat complexity are significantly reduced.
  - Drainage infrastructure is aging and not consistently meeting performance expectations.
  - Farm operations face uncertainty due to changing drainage conditions and compliance costs.
  - Opportunities for iwi and mana whenua to maintain or restore relationships with water are diminished.
  - The cultural value of taonga are undermined by the degraded state.
9. With specific regard to the level of service provided by the Motukaraka Flood Protection Scheme, recent hydraulic modelling indicates that most of the catchment still meets the requirement to remove flooding from a 10 % AEP event within 3 days. However, field observations and soil monitoring show that high water tables can persist in low-lying paddocks after rainfall, increasing vulnerability to ponding. While the system performs to design expectations, its resilience has declined (and will continue to do so) due to land settlement and changing rainfall patterns.



### What matters the most?

10. A process was designed to evaluate the response options that are available. This process has included a “multi-criteria assessment” (MCA) that was designed to reflect the issues that matter most to catchment stakeholders.

11. The MCA consisted of the following matters:

#### Finance/economic

- Certainty of fiscal outcomes
- Delivers a desirable set of financial benefits
- Benefits and costs are distributed fairly
- Affordability

#### Environmental

- Impacts on water quality
- Impacts on water quantity
- Impacts on biodiversity

- Impacts on soil conservation

Cultural

- Papatūānuku – effects on land, soils, and the mauri of the whenua.
- Tangaroa – effects on water bodies, waterways, and freshwater mauri.
- Tānemahuta – effects on indigenous vegetation, habitats, and biodiversity.
- Tūmataunga – effects on human activity, land use, and community resilience.

Social

- Impact on community vulnerability to hazards
- Impact on carbon emissions
- Maintains flexibility of future land use
- Health and wellbeing of the local community

12. In addition to the MCA, each option was considered against the following “fatal flaws”, and was not progressed further if any one of these was not satisfied:

- Consistent with Te Ture Whaimana o te Awa o Waikato.
- Consentable under current regulatory settings.
- Technically and financially feasible.

**What can we do about it?**

13. Six options were developed and progressed through the JTAG and Community Panel. These options consisted of a range of catchment interventions that would be expected to improve the issues identified. It should be noted that these options have been considered at the conceptual level only.

14. Each option was assessed by members of the JTAG, followed by a process of moderation and challenging by the Community Panel to arrive at a preferred option. The assessment of the MCA criteria was undertaken using a qualitative scale that was developed to enable a comparison of options.

Strong positive alignment	Moderate positive alignment	Neutral or limited improvement	Weak alignment	Negative alignment
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15. A summary of the options considered, and their MCA assessment is provided in the following table.

		Options					
Intervention		1	1a	2	3	4	5
	New pump station (fish friendly)	✓ x 3	✓ x 3	✓ x 3		✓ x 4	✓ x 3
	Compartmental pumping					✓ x 4	✓ x 5
	Internal stopbanks			✓ 10km		✓ 10km	
	New drainage					✓ 50m	
	Siphon water take	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Telemetry and control upgrade						✓
	Land retirement and wetland*	10%		33%	100%		2 - 5%
	Scheme management plan	✓	✓				
	Water quality treatment						✓
	Riparian planting						✓
	Pest management						✓
	Cultural matters						✓
	Cost estimate (preliminary)	\$56.6m	\$15.6m	\$201m	\$457m	\$83m	\$41m
Environmental	Water quality	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Excluded due to fatal flaw	Green
	Water quantity	Green	Green	Green	Green		Green
	Indigenous biodiversity	Green	Green	Green	Green		Green
	Soil resources	Green	Yellow	Green	Green		Green
Cultural	Papatūānuku	Green	Red	Green	Green		Green
	Tangaroa	Green	Red	Green	Green		Green
	Tānemahuta	Green	Red	Green	Green		Green
	Tūmataunga	Red	Red	Red	Green		Red
Social	Vulnerability to hazards	Green	Green	Green	Red		Green
	Carbon emissions	Green	Yellow	Green	Green		Yellow
	Flexible future land use	Yellow	Green	Red	Red		Green
Economic	Health and wellbeing	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Red		Green
	Certainty of fiscal outcomes	Red	Green	Red	Red		Green
	Sustained financial benefits	Red	Green	Red	Red		Green
	Distribution of risks/benefits	Red	Green	Red	Red		Green
	Affordability	Red	Green	Red	Red		Green

\* Land retirement and wetlands involves the restoration of wetlands, the rewetting of peatlands and farming methods that produce improved environmental outcomes. The % is expressed as a percentage of the total catchment.

16. This assessment favours Option 5 as a concept for managing the Motukaraka Catchment, and there have been supportive discussions within the JTAG and Community Panel regarding the value of taking this holistic approach to the management of the Motukaraka catchment.
17. In saying this, it is important to acknowledge that there remains some differing views regarding several elements included in this preferred option. For example:
  - There is concern about the implications and achievability of the amount of land retirement being suggested as necessary to achieve tangible environmental improvements.
  - There is not universal support for the use of drainage pumping, including the proposal to expand existing infrastructure to include compartmental pumping.
  - There are differing views regarding the prioritisation of the elements that make up this preferred option. Some would prefer the renewal of the pump station to be given priority, whereas others place a higher value on the broader catchment interventions being implemented to improve water quality.
18. There are also matters that are supported in concept but require further investigation to provide confidence that the expected outcomes will be achieved. For example, the integration of tikanga and technology to manage the catchment and infrastructure.

**7 PUBLIC EXCLUDED ITEMS****RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC****HE TŪTOHUNGA | RECOMMENDATION:**

That in accordance with section 48(1) of the *Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987* (Act) and the interests protected by section 6 or 7 of that Act, the public is excluded from the following parts of this meeting. The general subject of the matters to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter, and the specific grounds for excluding the public are set out below:

Meeting item no. and subject	Grounds for excluding the public	Reason for excluding the public
<b>7.1 - Receipt of Legal Advice for Self Administration</b>	s7(2)(g) of the Act - To maintain legal professional privilege	section 48(1)(a)(i) of the Act - the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding would exist under section 6 or section 7

**8 KARAKIA WHAKAMUTUNGA**

**Unuhia, unuhia**

**Unuhia mai te uru tapu nui**

**kia wātea, kia māmā,**

**te ngākau, te tinana, te hinengaro,**

**i te ara takatū**

**Koia rā e Rongo**

**e whakairia ake ki runga**

**kia tina! TINA!**

**Haumi ē, hui ē, TĀIKI ē!**

**Draw on, draw on,**

**Draw on to the supreme sacredness**

**To clear, to free**

**our heart, body and soul**

**Our pathway prepared**

**Lo, there is peace**

**suspended high above**

**manifest!**

**draw together!**

**Affirm!**