

## Project Updates – supporting information version

FINAL at 15 March 2022

### Climate Change and Energy initiatives

Reducing our carbon footprint is a key part of our commitment to mitigating climate change. Our 2021-2031 Long-Term Plan included a commitment of \$1 million per year, in years 2 to 4, and again in years 8 to 10, to implement solar power initiatives across suitable council facilities.

Smart Power was contracted to investigate which of the council's facilities would be the most suitable for a solar-powered system and we are now working on a shortlist for final investigation.

Continued monitoring of the council's energy use has enabled incremental improvements to be made over the years, however a full energy and carbon audit is also underway. This audit will identify further opportunities for energy efficiency measures, transport, or equipment improvements to save both council money and reduce carbon over the long-term.

Whanganui District Council has recruited a Climate Change and Sustainability Advisor who is leading this work and has also built a work programme over five priorities for climate change mitigation and adaptation: leadership and collaboration; home and building energy; transportation and urban form; sustainable food systems; and waste.

We are also working regionally and participating in the Climate Action Joint Committee working with Tangata Whenua and supported by Horizon's Regional Council to build a regional climate change action plan.

### Coastal Action Plan

Through our 2021-2031 Long-Term Plan we committed to developing a comprehensive coastal plan for Whanganui. The key challenges we are facing on Whanganui's coast are erosion, significant natural sand movement, and ecological degradation. This plan will improve coastal amenity values, and protect and restore the native plants and species that remain along our coastline, as well as provide longer term solutions to the unique challenges in the coastal environment.

Engagement with Iwi and key stakeholders will take place in early 2022. The final action plan will be ready by mid-2022. Implementation activities are planned to start from mid-2022 and is budgeted at \$1.1 million across years 2 to 4, and another \$1.3 million across years 8 to 10.

### Housing

Aotearoa New Zealand is experiencing a nationwide housing crisis. The council recognises that there is a housing shortage in Whanganui, with a growing number of residents seeking urgent housing support. This requires both urgent and long-term action.

**Through the 2021 – 2031 Long-Term Plan we have added \$4.2 million across years 2022/23 and 2023/24 to work on housing projects.**

Whanganui District Council is taking a long-term view to housing and recognises the need to work in partnership. We will continue to lobby and play a facilitation role, both locally and with central government, in order to achieve the best outcomes possible for our community.

The council's planned work for this year includes:

- Working with government to advocate for social or community (public) housing and advance initiatives in Whanganui, including through the national public housing plan, which has Kāinga Ora programmed to build more homes for Whanganui.
- Supporting and enabling housing initiatives driven by Iwi. Our planning teams have responded to a sustained demand for private infill housing developments.
- Developing a residential spatial plan, which will enable residential growth over the longer term, and identifying where future development should be focused.
- Looking at ways to grow and improve our existing quality housing portfolio which provides council homes for older people in Whanganui with low to moderate financial means.
- Scoping the potential for more residential conversion in our city centre.

We have also been responding to an increasing number of people living rough in Whanganui. This is a complex issue, and each person experiencing homelessness has a unique set of circumstances. We are working with social support agencies through the Safer Whanganui initiative to explore solutions to address homelessness, including introducing a programme similar to the 'Housing First' model for Whanganui.

## **The Sarjeant Gallery Redevelopment Project**

The existing 100 year old Sarjeant Gallery is being earthquake-strengthened, restored and extended. Construction of a new, modern extension wing is well underway. The unforeseen complexities of strengthening the existing building, compounded by labour resourcing and material supply issues due to the COVID-19 situation, have resulted in the project's original 24-month programme being extended.

The restoration and construction phase of the project is forecast to be complete in late 2023, with a period of installation and the opening exhibition to follow.

## **Velodrome**

During the Long Term Plan 2021-2031 process the council supported the provision of \$2.5 million across 2021/22 and 2022/23 for works to the existing velodrome facility. The wooden velodrome track/facility has been closed since February 2021 due to safety concerns, and has deteriorated from 25 years exposure to the weather. During the 2021-2031 Long-Term Plan process the council supported the provision of \$2.5 million across 2021/22 and 2022/23 for works to the existing velodrome facility. Work is currently underway to identify low-cost options for the velodrome's track replacement.

Recent information obtained from a German wooden track suppliers is encouraging and confirms that a suitable and low-cost option is looking viable. Focus is being given now to pursuing this option

alongside activity to re-engage with various community groups on refreshing a fit-for-purpose development plan for the velodrome.

## **UNESCO city of design**

In 2021, Whanganui was named as New Zealand's only UNESCO City of Design, recognising the city's historic and contemporary contributions to art and creativity. There are only 41 Cities of Design in the world and our creatives can take great pride in this recognition.

This status reflects Whanganui's historical contribution to creativity, from Māori designers' artistry and innovation alongside the Awa for more than 800 years, to the visionary architects who created the city's breathtaking landmark buildings.

The designation connects Whanganui to an active network of like-minded cities, helping to create international partnerships for council, major institutions and education facilities and enabling them to exchange and share important information and opportunities.

## **Te Pūwaha – Whanganui's Port Revitalisation**

Te Pūwaha, Whanganui's Port Revitalisation project, is a collaborative partnership between Whanganui hapū and iwi and four other groups invested in the development (Whanganui District Council, Horizons Regional Council, Q-West Boat Builders and the Whanganui District Employment Training Trust).

Te Pūwaha is governed by the values, referred to as Tupua te Kawa, that guide all decision making in respect of the Whanganui River. Tupua te Kawa is the natural law and value system of Te Awa Tupua.

Te Pūwaha will create a Whanganui port that will be a community asset for the next 50 years and beyond. Upon completion, Whanganui will have a modern marine precinct, rebuilt wharves and boat building facilities for Q-West boat builders. Additionally, dredging will make the river entrance safer for vessels and flood protection to the port and critical city infrastructure will be improved through work on Whanganui's north and south moles.

The first tranche of the project has been completed, with preparatory work undertaken for the build of the physical infrastructure. The council's portion of the first tranche is more than 50 percent complete and the consenting process for the infrastructure build is underway. Project partners, Q-West Boat Builders, have demolished cement silos on Tod Street to make way for a new boat building facility, and Horizons Regional Council has commenced work to rebuild the North Mole. Work this year includes construction and engagement around public resource consent for dredging, reclamation work and works to the South Mole.

## **Youth Hub**

Improvements to youth offerings with a focus on support for mental health and personal development, specifically connected to employment, were advocated for and supported through our 2021-2031 Long-Term Plan process.

In December 2021 the council invited tenders from contractors to conduct a feasibility study to determine the viability of a Youth Places and Spaces (Youth Hub) in the Whanganui District. Once the contract has been awarded, work on the feasibility study is expected to start in early 2022. Conversations about what our young people need, and actions to ensure we can best deliver this, will continue into 2022/23.

## **High frequency bus trial**

We are working with partners to improve and encourage uptake of our public transport services in Whanganui. With a focus on connecting people and enhancing our wellbeing and environment, this work also aligns with Te Rautaki Huringa Āhuarangi (Whanganui's Climate Change Strategy), so that our community can have access to safe and reliable low-emission travel choices.

In our 2021-2031 Long-Term Plan, we committed to match funding of \$180,000 per annum (in years 2 and 3) to work with Horizons Regional Council in implementing a high frequency bus trial on a spine route between Castlecliff and Aramoho.

Foundation planning work for the spine route service is well underway, and key stakeholder engagement is proposed for mid-2022, and the launch of the new service to begin in early 2023.

## **Splash Centre accessibility**

We are proposing to undertake a project to improve access and equipment options at the Splash Centre to meet ensure the pool facility is a place for all people of all abilities to enjoy.

An accessibility audit has been conducted and identified a number of improvements to increase access to recreational activities, rehabilitation and social connections for members of the community. The audit report also outlined the access difficulties for many members of our special needs and disabled community which places limitations on their options to enjoy, and independently navigate, the facility.

Council has budgeted initial seed funding of \$150,000 in its 2022/23 Annual Plan budget to attract the remaining funding support of approximately \$300,000 from charitable grant funding sources

## **Playground/Parks accessibility**

The Inclusive Play Spaces project aims to improve the accessibility of council playgrounds in Whanganui, recognising the importance of play for every child and their whānau.

The project group is being led by Whanganui District Council and will work with key stakeholders such as disability groups, to address the need for more accessible play spaces and equipment.

Recognising that we cannot cater for everyone in every play space, this project is about doing the best with what we have available now, and improving our understanding and operational processes so that inclusive play is part of the design process every time a play space is modified or created.

Capital expenditure of \$300,000 over three years was approved in the 2021-2031 Long-Term Plan, and \$150,000 per year included as revenue obtained through various funding sources, to support the project.