



13 June 2025

# Te Tiriti o Waitangi Review

Completed for Horizons Regional Council  
By Buddle Findlay

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Buddle Findlay was engaged to carry out an independent Tiriti o Waitangi review for Horizons Regional Council (**Council**). The Tiriti review is an independent assessment by Buddle Findlay of how the Council implements its Tiriti o Waitangi obligations in engaging with iwi and hapū within the Manawatū-Whanganui region (**region**).
- 1.2 The objective of the review is to *"understand the state of existing relationships with tangata whenua partners in the Horizons region and identify opportunities to improve relationships to ensure they are respectful and mana-enhancing"*. In particular, the review seeks to understand:
- (a) What is working well?
  - (b) What are some of the challenges?
  - (c) What are the opportunities for improvement?
- 1.3 This report sets out:
- (a) the methodology for the review;
  - (b) the legislative context;
  - (c) the Horizons context;
  - (d) current structures and processes within the Council;
  - (e) survey results;
  - (f) what is working well;
  - (g) what are the challenges and opportunities for improvement; and
  - (h) our overall conclusions and recommendations for improvement.

## 2. METHODOLOGY FOR THE REVIEW

- 2.1 The methodology for the review involved the following:

### Documentation review

- 2.2 We reviewed a range of relevant documentation provided by Council and available on Council's website. This provided us with a good understanding of some relevant background and context. We summarise our key findings arising from this documentation review in section 5 below.

### Online survey for iwi and hapū representatives

- 2.3 Feedback was sought by way of an online survey from a number of iwi and hapū representatives identified by the Council. These iwi and hapū, and where relevant their representative organisation, are set out in **Appendix 1**, with the survey being sent to representatives at governance, managerial and operational levels of the relevant organisations or groups. The form for the survey is provided in **Appendix 2**. The questions for the survey were developed with a focus on what is working well, what some of the challenges are, and potential opportunities for improvement.

- 2.4 The period for the survey was initially Monday 14 April to Friday 2 May, however, this was ultimately extended to Friday 30 May to provide more time for responses. During this period, several reminder emails were sent encouraging representatives to complete the survey.
- 2.5 The email communication also offered representatives the opportunity for a follow-up call to explore matters in more depth.
- 2.6 Some of the iwi and hapū representatives preferred to provide feedback by way of a meeting. One representative requested a meeting with us. This meeting was held on 6 June 2025. In the meeting, rather than stepping through the survey questions, we facilitated a general discussion on what is working well and what are the areas for improvement as the representatives preferred to give more qualitative feedback. In addition, one iwi representative requested a meeting with Council staff and provided feedback that way. That meeting was held on Friday 30 May 2025 and that feedback has been passed on to us and considered in this report.
- 2.7 We also received some direct feedback from the two groups referred to above, and one additional group who chose not to participate that they considered the survey methodology to be inappropriate and that a face-to-face meeting with the Council itself would have been more appropriate.
- 2.8 As described further below, unfortunately, we did not receive many responses to the online survey. This is a limitation of this review process as gaining iwi and hapū perspectives is critical to understanding what is working well and any challenges in their dealings and relationship with Council. However, the feedback we did receive provides some valuable insights into the current state of the relationship for at least some of the iwi and hapū of the region.

#### **Online survey for Council staff**

- 2.9 Feedback was also sought from key Council staff across a number of departments by way of an online survey. These key staff were identified by Council (refer to **Appendix 3**). The form for this survey is provided in **Appendix 4**.
- 2.10 The period for the survey was initially Monday 14 April to Friday 2 May, however, this was ultimately extended to Friday 30 May to provide more time for responses. During this period, several reminder emails were sent encouraging staff to complete the survey, both by us and by the Council's Policy & Strategy Manager.
- 2.11 The email communication also offered staff the opportunity for a follow-up call to explore matters in more depth, however, we did not receive any requests for a meeting.
- 2.12 As described further below, we received a good number of responses from Council staff, which provided valuable insights into the state of Council's relationships with iwi and hapū from the Council's perspective, across a number of Council departments.

#### **Online workshop with Councillors**

- 2.13 We facilitated an online workshop with Councillors on 13 May 2025. The PowerPoint presentation for this workshop is provided in **Appendix 5**. The workshop focused on three key questions:
- (a) What is working well?
  - (b) What are some of the challenges?
  - (c) What are the areas for improvement?

- 2.14 The workshop was well attended, with all but one Councillor in attendance. This workshop provided valuable insights into the state of the relationship from the perspective of Councillors.

### 3. THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

- 3.1 In undertaking a Tiriti o Waitangi review, it is important to first acknowledge the legislative context for Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations in a local government context.
- 3.2 There is no one coherent framework of statutory obligations for the relationship between Māori and local government. Rather, discrete statutory obligations have been developed on a statute-by-statute basis over many years, and they are framed in different ways depending on the statute in question.
- 3.3 There are different obligations that may apply to a council depending on the circumstances. For example, under the Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA**) there are certain obligations that are relevant to a council in its regulatory capacity; and others when acting as an applicant for resource consents (eg when seeking resource consents for infrastructure). The statutory obligations arise under a range of statutes, including:
- (a) local government legislation (such as the Local Government Act 2002 (**LGA**));
  - (b) planning and environmental legislation (such as the RMA);
  - (c) Treaty settlement legislation;
  - (d) customary rights legislation (such as the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011); and
  - (e) other legislation (such as the Reserves Act 1977).
- 3.4 There are also other obligations to Māori that arise, for example, under RMA national policy statements such as the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 or the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (**NPSFM**).
- 3.5 The specific legal obligations on the Council vary depending on the statute and the context, and those differences are important. Obligations may focus on (for example):
- (a) Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi;
  - (b) recognition of tikanga Māori, values, culture and traditions;
  - (c) understanding of tikanga and mātauranga Māori;
  - (d) customary rights (for example in the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act context);
  - (e) participation for Māori in local authority decision-making;
  - (f) recognition of areas or resources of particular significance to Māori; and
  - (g) processes such as consultation.
- 3.6 The inconsistencies and gaps in the legislation present challenges to both Māori and councils in terms of understanding what is required in the relationship context. Where legislative requirements change, this also present challenges.

- 3.7 One important matter to be continuously explored is the extent to which the legislation is enabling or constraining in terms of advancing the partnership aspirations of the parties.

#### **4. THE HORIZONS CONTEXT**

- 4.1 In undertaking this Tiriti review, it is also important to understand the unique context of the area serviced by the Council. By unique context, we mean:

- (a) population structure and demographics for the region;
- (b) the iwi and hapū of the region; and
- (c) relevant Treaty of Waitangi settlements.

- 4.2 We consider each of these elements below.

##### **Population structure and demographics**

- 4.3 The 2023 census put the population count for the region at approximately 251,412 people<sup>1</sup> spread over an area of 22,200 km<sup>2</sup>. Within that population, over 25% (or 25.1%) of the population were Māori.<sup>2</sup> Comparatively, the 2023 census found that Māori (including people of Māori descent) make up 19.6% of the total population of the country.<sup>3</sup>

##### **Iwi and hapū**

- 4.4 There are a number of different iwi and hapū who have interests in the region. We understand that there are approximately 30 iwi, 110 hapū and more than 60 marae in the region,<sup>4</sup> and that the Council engages with more than 26 iwi and hapū groups.<sup>5</sup>
- 4.5 The Council has entered into seven signed memoranda of partnership and relationship agreements with iwi and hapū groups, as listed at paragraph 5.25. A further three are in development.<sup>6</sup>

##### **Relevant Treaty settlements**

- 4.6 Some iwi and hapū with interests in the region have settled their historical Treaty of Waitangi claims against the Crown through deeds of settlement and Treaty settlement legislation.
- 4.7 There are also other significant iwi and hapū groups who have not yet settled their historical Treaty claims with the Crown, including Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Muaūpoko, Mōkai Pātea and Whanganui Lands.
- 4.8 The relevant Treaty settlement legislation includes:<sup>7</sup>
- (a) Ngaa Rauru Kaitiaki Claims Settlement Act 2005;
  - (b) Ngāti Apa (North Island) Claims Settlement Act 2010;
  - (c) Maraeroa A and B Blocks Claims Settlement Act 2012;

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics New Zealand "2023 Census maps and data" [2023 Census population change | 2023 Census maps and data](#)

<sup>2</sup> Statistics New Zealand "Our Region: Manawātū-Whanganui" 11 March 2025, [Our region: Manawātū-Whanganui | Stats NZ](#).

<sup>3</sup> Statistics New Zealand "People of Māori descent living in Aotearoa New Zealand" 13 February 2025 [People of Māori descent living in Aotearoa New Zealand | Stats NZ](#).

<sup>4</sup> Horizons Regional Council, Long-Term Plan 2024-2034, at 1. See also the Te Kāhui Mangai list at <https://tkm.govt.nz/regionalauthority/horizons-regional-council-manawatu-whanganui/>

<sup>5</sup> Based on the list provided on the Council's website. [Iwi and Hapū Contacts - Horizons Regional Council](#).

<sup>6</sup> Horizons Regional Council, Annual Report 2023-2024, at 46 (**Annual Report 2023-2024**).

<sup>7</sup> Based on the Te Kāhui Mangai list at <https://tkm.govt.nz/regionalauthority/horizons-regional-council-manawatu-whanganui/> and the Council's website.

- (d) Ngāti Toa Rangatira Claims Settlement Act 2014;
- (e) Rangitāne o Manawatū Claims Settlement Act 2016;
- (f) Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā (Wairarapa Tamaki nui-ā-Rua) Claims Settlement Act 2017;
- (g) Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017 (**Te Awa Tupua Act**);
- (h) Ngāti Tūwharetoa Claims Settlement Act 2018;
- (i) Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act 2019;
- (j) Maniapoto Claims Settlement Act 2022;
- (k) Ngāti Maru (Taranaki) Claims Settlement Act 2022;
- (l) Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Tāmaki nui-a-Rua Claims Settlement Act 2022;
- (m) Te Korowai o Wainuiārua Claims Settlement Act 2025; and
- (n) Ngāti Hāua (Upper Whanganui) (signed deed of settlement on 29 March 2025, bill introduced 9 April 2025).

4.9 Consequently, these iwi also have established post-settlement governance entities (**PSGEs**).

4.10 Some of the Treaty settlement legislation listed above imposes specific requirements or obligations on the Council, including the following:

- (a) A number Treaty settlement Acts<sup>8</sup> include statutory acknowledgements over statutory areas throughout the region. The Council must have regard to those statutory acknowledgements, provide summaries of resource consent applications that may impact those statutory areas to PSGEs, and attach information recording a statutory acknowledgement to statutory plans.
- (b) The Te Awa Tupua Act, which recognises Te Awa Tupua and declares a legal personality of the Whanganui River, requires the Council, as a relevant local authority, to appoint members to Te Karewao (an advisory group that provides advice and support to Te Awa Tupua),<sup>9</sup> and to Te Kōpuka (a strategy group for Te Awa Tupua).<sup>10</sup> In addition, each time Te Heke Ngahuru or an amendment to it is approved, the Council must consider its RMA planning documents in light of the Te Awa Tupua status, Tupua te Kawa, and Te Heke Ngahuru and may initiate a review of those documents in order to meet its statutory obligations.<sup>11</sup>
- (c) The Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act 2019, includes the Te Waiū-o-Te-Ika framework for the Whangaehu River, and requires the Council to recognise and provide for Te Mana Tupua (recognising the mana of the river) and Ngā Toka Tupua (the intrinsic values that represent the indivisible water body) when exercising particular statutory functions or powers relating to the Whangaehu River.<sup>12</sup> The Council is also required to appoint a member to Ngā Wai Tōtā (a joint committee that provides strategic leadership to promote Te Mana Tupua and Ngā

<sup>8</sup> Maniapoto Claims Settlement Act 2022, Maraeroa A and B Blocks Claims Settlement Act 2012, Ngāti Apa (North Island) Claims Settlement Act 2010, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Tāmaki nui-a-Rua Claims Settlement Act 2022, Ngāti Maru (Taranaki) Claims Settlement Act 2022, Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act 2019, Ngāa Rauru Kītahi Claims Settlement Act 2005, Ngāti Tūwharetoa Claims Settlement Act 2018, Rangitāne o Manawatū Claims Settlement Act 2016, Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā (Wairarapa Tamaki nui-ā-Rua) Claims Settlement Act 2017 and Te Korowai o Wainuiārua Claims Settlement Act 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Te Awa Tupua Act, s 28(1)(c).

<sup>10</sup> Te Awa Tupua Act, s 32(1)(c).

<sup>11</sup> Te Awa Tupua Act, s 38(1).

<sup>12</sup> Including under the Biosecurity Act 1993, Local Government Acts 1974 and 2002, Reserves Act 1977, and the RMA; see Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act 2019, Schedule 5.

Toka Tupuna and advance the health and well-being and integrated management of the catchment).<sup>13</sup>

- (d) The Rangitāne o Manawatu Claims Settlement Act 2016 provides for the establishment of the Manawatu River catchment advisory board.<sup>14</sup> The board may provide written advice to the Council in relation to freshwater management issues concerning the Manawatū River catchment, and the Council must have regard to that advice, and report back to the board how the Council has considered that advice.<sup>15</sup>

## **5. CURRENT COUNCIL STRUCTURES, STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS**

5.1 This section summarises information we have gathered regarding current Council structures, strategies and projects, based on our review of relevant documentation. This includes a summary of:

- (a) governance structures;
- (b) other statutory bodies;
- (c) key strategies, policies and plans, including the long-term plan, annual plans, annual reports, the One Plan, the future development strategy for Palmerston North and the significance and engagement policy;
- (d) formal memoranda of partnership and relationship agreements with iwi and hapū; and
- (e) specific projects and strategies that provide for Māori participation.

### **Governance structures**

5.2 The Council's governing body is made up of 14 publicly elected councillors representing the following constituencies: Raki Māori, Tonga Māori, Ruapehu, Whanganui, Manawatū-Rangitīkei, Palmerston North, Tararua, and Horowhenua.

5.3 Raki Māori and Tonga Māori are the Council's two Māori constituencies, which were established in 2022. The Council is required to hold a poll on whether these constituencies should be retained under the Local Government (Electoral Legislation and Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Act 2024. This poll will be held from 9 September to 11 October 2025.

5.4 There are eight committees of Council as follows:

- (a) Strategy & Policy (Committee of the Whole);
- (b) Integrated Catchment (Committee of the Whole);
- (c) Audit, Risk & Investment;
- (d) Regional Transport;
- (e) Passenger Transport Committee;
- (f) Climate Action Joint Committee;

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<sup>13</sup> Ngati Rangi Claims Settlement Act 2019, s 118(1)(e).

<sup>14</sup> Rangitāne o Manawatu Claims Settlement Act 2016, s 42(1).

<sup>15</sup> Rangitāne o Manawatu Claims Settlement Act 2016, s 45.

(g) Manawatu River Users' Advisory Group; and

(h) Linklater Bursary Subcommittee.

5.5 The Climate Action Joint Committee includes eight council members and eight non-Councillor members to represent the views of tangata whenua. These members are appointed by Council on the recommendation of iwi leaders.<sup>16</sup> One Co-Chair must be a tangata whenua representative. The objective of the committee includes developing a climate action plan; working collectively to engage with central government and deliver on responsibilities under the national adaptation plan and emissions reduction plan; and encourage partnerships with iwi and others in central and local government, health, education, youth, NGOs and business.<sup>17</sup>

5.6 The Manawātū River Users' Advisory Group includes one councillor and a number of appointed members representing the various parties interested in the Manawātū River, including river interest groups and river users. This group includes representation from Tanenuiarangi Manawatu Incorporated, the mandated iwi authority for Rangitāne o Manawātū.<sup>18</sup>

### Other statutory bodies

5.7 As described at paragraph 4.10(b), (c) and (d) above, the Council is required to appoint members to statutory bodies established by Treaty settlement legislation, including Te Karewao and Te Kōpuka (Te Awa Tupua Act), Ngā Wai Tōtā (Ngāti Rangī Claims Settlement Act 2019) and the Manawātū River catchment advisory board.

### Long-Term Plan 2024-2034

5.8 The Council's Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 (**LTP**) includes a strategic priority of strengthening partnerships with tangata whenua and "*responding constructively to changing expectations, realising the potential contribution of Māori leadership, building mana-enhancing relationships.*"<sup>19</sup> The plan also sets performance measures which include to undertake this Tiriti review, and then to develop an action plan for improvement which will be a focus for years 2 and 3 of the LTP.<sup>20</sup>

5.9 The LTP records that the Council offers a cultural confidence programme for elected members and staff to increase their understanding of te ao Māori,<sup>21</sup> and, in year 2 of the LTP, the Council proposes creating an additional policy and relationship advisor role to support its relationship building with Māori.<sup>22</sup>

5.10 The LTP also outlines how the Council approaches the Treaty partnership, through fostering partnerships enabling participation, supporting capacity and protecting Māori interests. This includes action such as:<sup>23</sup>

(a) entering into relationship agreements;

(b) taking iwi management plans into account in planning and decision-making processes;

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<sup>16</sup> Horizons Regional Council. Terms of Reference, at 16 [COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE](#) (Terms of Reference).

<sup>17</sup> Terms of Reference, at 15.

<sup>18</sup> Manawatu River Users' Advisory Group Agenda for meeting on 5 June 2019.

<sup>19</sup> LTP, at 7.

<sup>20</sup> LTP, at 7.

<sup>21</sup> LTP, at 145.

<sup>22</sup> LTP, at 149.

<sup>23</sup> LTP, at 12.

- (c) recognising Māori kaitiakitanga as part of policy development;
- (d) developing a regional marae locations map;
- (e) using te reo in Council mahi;
- (f) supporting development of Iwi Management Plans and keeping appropriate records;
- (g) sponsoring Māori to undertake RMA training;
- (h) enabling student internships and secondments;
- (i) maintaining an accurate Māori contacts directory;
- (j) consulting on resource consent applications; and
- (k) engaging early with iwi groups in the process of settling Treaty claims.

### Annual plans

- 5.11 The Council's Annual Plan 2022-2023 included investing in the capacity of iwi and hapū so that they can be appropriately involved in the design and content of the Council's new freshwater plan.<sup>24</sup>
- 5.12 In 2022, the Council also began to implement Horizons' Climate Action Plan, and progressed the Joint Climate Action Plan alongside iwi and territorial local authority partners.<sup>25</sup>
- 5.13 The Council's Annual Plan 2023-2024 identifies that the vision for the region is to continue to build *"mutually beneficial iwi/hapū relationships"* including in the climate change, emergency management and freshwater areas. The plan notes that the target *"iwi and hapū satisfaction with their collaborative relationships with Horizons"* was not achieved (the required surveys were not completed to assess this), but the target of holding hui annually has been achieved.<sup>26</sup> It also includes the following Māori participation targets:
- (a) recognise the enduring presence, aspirations, and cultural practices of Māori as kaitiaki in the region;
  - (b) actively consider the recognition and protection of Māori rights and interests within the region and how the Council contributes to the needs and aspirations of Māori;
  - (c) where a decision relates to land or a body of water, take into account the relationship of Māori, and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, wāhi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga;
  - (d) recognise the entities and governance frameworks established by treaty settlement legislation and the intent of that legislation;
  - (e) establish and maintain processes to provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to our decision-making processes, including collaborative and partnership approaches;
  - (f) support Māori capability and capacity building; and
  - (g) build ongoing relationships with Māori that enable early engagement in the development of plans and policies.

<sup>24</sup> Horizons Regional Council, Annual Plan 2022-2023 (**Annual Plan 2022-2023**), at 7.

<sup>25</sup> Annual Plan 2022-2023, at 3.

<sup>26</sup> Horizons Regional Council, Mahere ā-tau 2023-2024 | Annual Plan 2023-2024 (**Annual Plan 2023-2024**), at 29.

## Annual reports

- 5.14 The Annual Report 2022-2023 stated that the Council will contribute to vibrant and empowered communities by building mutually beneficial relationships with iwi and hapū.<sup>27</sup> One way of building such relationships was through the Oranga Wai | Freshwater Future Programme for the implementation of the NPSFM (**Oranga Wai programme**) which is described at paragraphs 5.27 to 5.29. The report noted that the work through this programme has lifted the level of engagement between tangata Māori and local government from an informing form of engagement to that of a collaborative decision-making process based on participation and reaching consensus.<sup>28</sup>
- 5.15 The Annual Report 2023-2024 also records the value that the Council places on relationships and partnerships with tangata whenua.<sup>29</sup> This included funding five climate change wānanga across the region to support iwi/Māori climate change mahi.<sup>30</sup> The Council intends to continue investing in partnerships to input into a range of activities, including the Oranga Wai programme.<sup>31</sup>
- 5.16 The report also notes that the Council continues to work with iwi and hapū to prioritise their involvement and to support their capacity and capability needs.<sup>32</sup>
- 5.17 The report notes that the Council was to continue to advance iwi and hapū relationships through partnership and relationship agreements and by holding at least two hui between tangata whenua and Council's governance and executive levels.<sup>33</sup>

## The One Plan

- 5.18 The Horizons Regional Council's One Plan (**One Plan**) combines the regional policy statement, regional plan and coastal plan for the region. Plan Change 3 to the One Plan has been operative since 16 May 2025, and helps to ensure planning decisions relating to urban environments take into account Te Tiriti o Waitangi (refer UFD-O4).<sup>34</sup>
- 5.19 The One Plan includes a chapter on resource management issues of significance to iwi authorities.<sup>35</sup> The chapter identifies the resource management issues of significance to iwi and hapū and how those issues are to be addressed. The chapter provides background on the region's iwi and hapū, their involvement in resource management, an understanding of Māori values and resource management issues of concern.
- 5.20 Kahu Environmental has recently undertaken an independent review on the effectiveness of the Te Ao Māori provisions in the One Plan. Their report is still in draft form and includes insights and recommendations that complement this Te Tiriti review. We understand that this report will inform the action plan to be developed by the Council in years 2 and 3 of the LTP.

## Future Development Strategy 2024 – Palmerston North

- 5.21 The future development strategy sets out the Council and Palmerston North City Council's long-term vision for the Palmerston North district and how the two councils intend to achieve well

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<sup>27</sup> Horizons Regional Council, Annual Report 2022-2023 (**Annual Report 2022-2023**), at 45.

<sup>28</sup> Annual Report 2022-2023, at 47.

<sup>29</sup> Annual Report 2023-2024, at 43.

<sup>30</sup> Annual Report 2023-2024, at 44.

<sup>31</sup> Annual Report 2023-2024, at 46.

<sup>32</sup> Annual Report 2023-2024, at 46.

<sup>33</sup> Annual Report 2023-2024, at 59.

<sup>34</sup> One Plan, at 2-146.

<sup>35</sup> One Plan, at 2-9.

functioning urban environments, sufficient development capacity for the next 30 years and integration of planning decisions under the RMA with other pieces of legislation.<sup>36</sup>

- 5.22 This strategy sets out tangata whenua aspirations, which include the recognition that Rangitāne o Manawatū are Te Tiriti partners and should develop the rules together with Council.<sup>37</sup> The strategy also records that regular hui take place between Council and Rangitāne.<sup>38</sup>

### **Significance and Engagement Policy 2023**

- 5.23 The Council has adopted a significance and engagement policy in accordance with the requirements of the LGA.<sup>39</sup> The policy notes that one of the factors the Council will consider in assessing the significance of matters includes whether the decision is of high interest to Māori.<sup>40</sup>
- 5.24 The policy acknowledges the Council's obligations to engage with Māori and provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to decision-making. In order to uphold this obligation, the policy records that the Council has committed to:<sup>41</sup>
- (a) recognise the enduring presence, aspirations, and cultural practices of Māori as kaitiaki in the region;
  - (b) actively consider the recognition and protection of Māori rights and interests within the region and how we contribute to the needs and aspirations of Māori;
  - (c) where a decision relates to land or a body of water, take into account the relationship of Māori, and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, wāhi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga;
  - (d) recognise the entities and governance frameworks established by Treaty settlement legislation and the intent of that legislation;
  - (e) establish and maintain processes to provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to Council's decision-making processes, including collaborative and partnership approaches where appropriate;
  - (f) support Māori to fully engage with the Council, for example through capability and capacity building; and
  - (g) build ongoing relationships with Māori through a range of approaches that enables early engagement with Māori in the development of appropriate plans and policies and Māori to guide how they want to engage with the Council.

### **Formal memoranda of partnership and relationship agreements with iwi and hapū**

- 5.25 The Council has signed seven memoranda of partnership and relationship agreements with iwi and hapū in its region, and a further three are in development.<sup>42</sup> It has committed in its LTP to develop further agreements with iwi and hapū groups. The existing agreements include:

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<sup>36</sup> Palmerston North Future Development Strategy 2024, at 8 (**Future Development Strategy**).

<sup>37</sup> Future Development Strategy, at 21.

<sup>38</sup> Future Development Strategy, at 20.

<sup>39</sup> LGA, section 76AA.

<sup>40</sup> Significance and Engagement Policy 2023, at 5.

<sup>41</sup> Significance and Engagement Policy 2023, at 6.

<sup>42</sup> Annual Report 2023-2024, at 46.

- (a) Kawenata / Partnership Agreement with Ngāti Hāua;
- (b) Memorandum of Partnership with Ngāti Kahungunu ki Tāmaki nui-a- Rua;
- (c) Memorandum of Partnership with Te Kāuru Eastern Manawatū River Hapū Collective;
- (d) Memorandum of Partnership with Ngāti Whakatere;
- (e) Memorandum of Partnership with Muaūpoko Tribal Authority;
- (f) Memorandum of Partnership with Tanenuiarangi Manawatu Incorporated and Te Mauri o Rangitaane o Manawatu; and
- (g) Relationship Agreement with Ngāti Rangi Trust.

### **Specific projects and strategies that provide for Māori participation**

5.26 Through the documentation review, we also noted a number of specific Council projects and strategies that have provided for Māori participation. A number of these were referred to in the survey responses and other feedback we received as well. Some of the more significant examples that were referred to are summarised below.

#### *Oranga Wai | Our Freshwater Future programme*

5.27 Through the Oranga Wai programme, the Council has been working on a plan change to manage the well-being of freshwater in the region. We understand that this programme has involved various rounds of engagement with tangata whenua and other stakeholders.<sup>43</sup> However, notification of the plan change has been postponed until late 2026 / early 2027 due to the government changing the notification deadline to better align with new national direction. More recently, the government has also paused the notification of plan changes until 31 December 2025 due to proposed changes to national direction and new legislation.

5.28 As noted at paragraph 5.14, the Annual Report 2022-2023 stated that the Oranga Wai programme has changed the nature of engagement between Māori and local government from informing to collaborative decision-making. The Annual Report 2023-2024 also noted that this programme has "*continued in the spirit of partnership*".

5.29 This programme was also identified by the Council staff and Councillors we heard from as a positive example of developing relationships with iwi and hapū working together in a partnership.

#### *Arawhata wetland project*

5.30 The Council has successfully applied for a resource consent to construct Arawhata wetland in Horowhenua. The project aims to create improved habitats for native bird and fish species that will lead to better environmental outcomes through nutrient reduction in the Arawhata Stream and Punahau catchment.<sup>44</sup> A governance group has been established to oversee this project. This group includes representation from Muaūpoko Tribal Authority and Te Rūnanga o Raukawa.

5.31 We received feedback from Council staff that the Arawhata wetland project is a positive example of it partnering, collaborating and engaging with iwi and hapū on key projects.

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<sup>43</sup> [About | Oranga Wai](#)

<sup>44</sup> [Arawhata wetland complex to be one of largest in the country - Horizons Regional Council](#)

### *Te Awahou Foxton Flood Mitigation Project*

- 5.32 The Te Awahou Foxton Flood Mitigation Project was established to address persistent flooding issues in Foxton.<sup>45</sup> The project involves reinforcing the river bank with sheet piling and utilising temporary tractor pumps to provide for the removal of surface water during rain events. A governance group has been established to oversee this project that includes representation from the Council, Horowhenua District Council and local iwi and hapū.
- 5.33 We have received feedback from Council staff that the Foxton Flood Mitigation Project is a positive example of the Council partnering with iwi and hapū.

### *Tōtara Reserve Management Plan*

- 5.34 The Tōtara Reserve Management Plan has been developed to provide for the use, enjoyment, maintenance, protection and appropriate development of the Tōtara Reserve. It is the only regional park in the Manawātū-Wanganui region and includes seven of the region's most rare and endangered ecosystems. The Plan is structured into six management areas, including mātauranga Māori. The Plan seeks to explore the reserve's heritage in partnership with mana whenua and look for opportunities to incorporate traditional knowledge, practices and spiritual connection.
- 5.35 The Plan acknowledges the requirement in section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987 that decision-makers must give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti/the Treaty and sets out the principles that are relevant to Tōtara Reserve to achieve that requirement. The Plan also acknowledges that Rangitāne o Manawātū and Rangitāne Tamaki nui-ā-Rua have interests in Tōtara Reserve and provides some detail of their connection to the land.
- 5.36 The Tōtara Reserve Advisory Group is responsible for guiding and supporting the management of Tōtara Reserve in alignment with the vision and management plan. There are two representatives of Rangitāne o Manawātū and two representatives of Rangitāne Tamaki nui-ā-Rua on the Advisory Group. We received feedback from an elected member that the iwi have been "*amazing to work with*" and that through this project there has been a shift in incorporating mātauranga Māori.

### *Manawātū River Leaders Accord*

- 5.37 The Manawātū River Leaders Accord is a collaborative partnership between leaders from the iwi, industry, interest groups, local government and other members of the community who are working together to improve the state of the Manawātū River. This project encourages groups to work in partnership, set clear goals and provides accountability around clean-up actions and activities.<sup>46</sup>
- 5.38 We received feedback from an elected member that this project encourages mana whenua to get involved and stay involved in decision-making and provides a positive example of how Council and iwi can work together in partnership.

## **6. SURVEY RESULTS**

- 6.1 The survey was sent out to Council staff and iwi and hapū representatives on 14 April 2025. A high-level summary of the responses we received is provided below.

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<sup>45</sup> [Te Awahou Foxton Flood Mitigation - Horizons Regional Council](#)

<sup>46</sup> [Details - Horizons Regional Council](#)

### Survey responses from iwi and hapū representatives

- 6.2 The survey was sent to 53 iwi and hapū representatives, and we received 9 responses. As noted above, this low level of response means we have not been able to obtain fulsome feedback from iwi and hapū as part of this review process, which is a limitation, and there may be opportunities for further stages of the review to gain a deeper understanding of iwi/hapū views.
- 6.3 Nevertheless, the responses that were received provide some valuable insight into how some iwi and hapū feel about the state of their relationship with the Council.
- 6.4 Of those that responded to the survey, 22.2% stated that they were somewhat satisfied with how the Council manages its overall relationship with them. 44.4% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 33.3% were either somewhat or very dissatisfied. These results are set out in **Table 1** below.<sup>47</sup>

**Table 1: Iwi and hapū satisfaction with how the Council manages its overall relationship with them**

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
How satisfied are you with the way in which the Council manages its overall relationship with your group?	0%	22.2%	44.4%	11.1%	22.2%

- 6.5 Within this overall response, the survey prompted a more fine-grained response to how iwi and hapū may feel about particular aspects of their engagement with Council – see **Table 2** below.

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<sup>47</sup> Please note that the percentages in this report have been rounded to one decimal point, meaning that in some instances the percentages do not add up exactly to 100%.

**Table 2: How iwi and hapū feel about aspects of Council engagement**

How satisfied are you with the way in which the Council:	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
engages with your group on resource consent applications that it receives?	0%	22.2%	11.1%	44.4%	22.2%
engages with your group on strategic planning?	0%	11.1%	33.3%	11.1%	44.4%
engages with your group on Council projects?	0%	11.1%	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%
engages with your group on other matters?	0%	33.3%	11.1%	11.1%	44.4%

- 6.6 The survey also asked representatives to provide their feedback on how they would rate the Council's understanding of Māori matters – see **Table 3** below. The results show that there is an opportunity for Council to improve its understanding of relevant matters, which may help to support stronger relationships with iwi and hapū.

**Table 3: How iwi and hapū rate the Council's understanding of Māori matters**

	Very good	Good	Average	Somewhat unsatisfactory	Entirely unsatisfactory
Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi and its principles	0%	11.1%	66.7%	0%	22.2%
Council's statutory responsibilities with respect to Te Tiriti/the Treaty	0%	22.2%	55.6%	11.1%	11.1%
The iwi and hapū of the region	0%	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%	11.1%
Tikanga Māori	0%	0%	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%
Te reo Māori	0%	0%	55.6%	22.2%	22.2%

- 6.7 The survey also asked representatives which parts of Council the iwi or hapū group had engaged with over the last five years. The responses received indicate that the following Council departments had been engaged with the most (in descending order): Regulatory Team – Consents and Compliance; Iwi and Hapū Relationships; Executive; Customer Services; Strategy and Policy; Freshwater Partnerships; and Environmental Data. The results also showed that there had been some engagement with all of the listed departments.
- 6.8 The survey also posed a number of questions to obtain further information about what may be working well, and what some of the challenges are. This feedback is summarised in sections 7 and 8 below.

#### **Survey responses from Council staff**

- 6.9 The survey was sent to 25 Council staff, and we received 16 responses.
- 6.10 These responses provide some valuable insight into how the Council feels about the state of their relationship with iwi and hapū.
- 6.11 Of those that responded to the survey, 56.3% were somewhat satisfied with how the Council manages its overall relationship with iwi and hapū. Further details are provided in **Table 4** below.

**Table 4: Council staff satisfaction with how the Council manages its overall relationship with iwi and hapū**

Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
0%	56.3%	37.5%	6.3%	0%

- 6.12 The survey asked representatives to evaluate the Council's understanding of Te Tiriti and other Māori matters – see **Table 5** below. The results show that the Council considers that there is an average to good level of understanding of Te Tiriti matters, Council's statutory responsibilities with respect to Te Tiriti and knowledge of the iwi and hapū of the region, but there is an opportunity to improve on tikanga Māori and te reo Māori knowledge in particular. Increasing capability across all of these matters will help to support a stronger relationship with iwi and hapū.
- 6.13 We note that a much higher percentage of Council staff indicated satisfaction with relationships with iwi/hapū (56.3%) compared to iwi/hapū (22.2%). However, a significant proportion for both Council staff and iwi/hapū indicated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the relationship (37.5% and 44.4% respectively).

**Table 5: How Council staff rate the Council's understanding of Māori matters**

	Very good	Good	Average	Somewhat unsatisfactory	Entirely unsatisfactory
Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi and its principles	0%	18.8%	56.3%	25%	0%
Council's statutory responsibilities with respect to Te Tiriti/the Treaty	0%	25%	43.8%	31.3%	0%
The iwi and hapū of the region	6.3%	25%	31.3%	37.5%	0%
Tikanga Māori	0%	18.8%	37.5%	43.8%	0%
Te reo Māori	0%	6.3%	37.5%	56.3%	0%

- 6.14 The survey also posed a number of questions to obtain further information about what may be working well, and what some of the challenges are. This feedback is summarised in the following two sections of this report.

## **7. WHAT IS WORKING WELL?**

- 7.1 This section provides a summary of what we heard in terms of what is working well. This is based on the feedback we received from iwi and hapū representatives, Council staff and elected members.
- 7.2 As noted above, it is important to be clear that we have not received comprehensive feedback from iwi and hapū and, as a consequence, there is a risk that the summary provided below is not a full or accurate picture of what is working well. A similar disclaimer applies to the following section, which describes some of the challenges.
- 7.3 Bearing in mind that limitation, this section summarises the feedback we received about what is working well. The particular themes that were reported to us as positives or things working well are as follows:
- (a) The Council has made a number of commitments to strengthen its relationships with iwi and hapū.
  - (b) Additional resources have been dedicated to support Council in developing its relationships with Māori.
  - (c) There is a growing awareness within Council of the importance and value of engaging well with Māori.
  - (d) There are examples of projects that have helped to foster strong relationships.
  - (e) There are some good relationships between Council and iwi/hapū.
  - (f) There are some formal structures in place that help to support relationships.
  - (g) The Iwi and Hapū Relationships team is highly valued.
  - (h) The Council is improving its level of cultural competency.

### **The Council has made a number of commitments to strengthen its relationships with iwi and hapū**

- 7.4 Through the documentation we reviewed and the feedback we received, it is apparent to us that the Council has made a number of commitments to strengthen its relationships with iwi and hapū.
- 7.5 This includes the LTP, which identifies strengthening partnerships with tangata whenua as one of its four strategic priorities. The first step toward this priority is the commissioning of this independent Te Tiriti review. The implementation of recommendations from this review have been identified as a key focus for years two and three of the current LTP.
- 7.6 The other specific strategies outlined in the LTP to strengthen partnerships include:
- (a) responding constructively to changing expectations, realising the potential contribution of Māori leadership, and building mana-enhancing relationships;<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> LTP, at 7.

- (b) developing meaningful partnerships with tangata whenua, by seeking their participation in planning and decision-making, by supporting capacity and capability building;<sup>49</sup> and
- (c) enabling tangata whenua involvement in policy development, monitoring and regulatory processes.<sup>50</sup>

7.7 The Council's Annual Plan 2023-2024 also sets out its commitment to building mutually beneficial relationships with iwi and hapū and incorporates specific Māori participation targets, as described in paragraph 5.13 above.

7.8 Some of the survey responses we received from Council staff indicated that they felt this commitment had led to tangible changes and initiatives, such as providing additional resources, implementing cultural competency programmes and approaching engagement with a focus on working together and partnership.

#### **Additional resources dedicated to support Council in developing its relationships with Māori**

7.9 We heard of several examples of additional resources that the Council has committed to developing its relationships with Māori. The specific examples reported to us include:

- (a) carrying out this Te Tiriti review process and a commitment to implement recommendations in years two and three of the LTP;
- (b) creating additional resource in the Iwi and Hapū Relationships team;
- (c) developing and implementing a cultural competency programme for Council staff and elected members;
- (d) developing the Ngā Pae taonga app to educate Council staff about Māori culture; and
- (e) investing in formal relationship agreements and documents with iwi and hapū.

7.10 We were told that these initiatives have contributed to the Council building stronger relationships and developing its cultural competency.

7.11 It is important to note, however, that we were also told by several iwi and hapū representatives that resourcing remains a significant challenge for iwi and hapū. We address this further in the following section 9 of this report.

#### **There is a growing awareness within Council of the importance and value of engaging well with Māori**

7.12 The feedback we received demonstrates that there is a growing awareness by Council's elected members, and Council staff of the importance and value of engaging well with Māori. This awareness is supported by some positive examples of engagement that have led to positive outcomes and supported the relationship between Council and iwi/hapū (we comment on this further below).

7.13 There is an awareness, at least in some parts of Council, that for effective engagement, Council staff need to be culturally aware and competent, and need to engage early, proactively and in an open and transparent manner.

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<sup>49</sup> LTP, at 12 and 146.

<sup>50</sup> LTP, at 156-157.

- 7.14 Some Council staff observed that the Council's approach to engagement is improving and there is greater consistency than in previous years (although, as we comment on further in section 9 below, it appears more can be done to ensure a consistent and appropriate approach across all of Council).
- 7.15 It was also noted that Council leadership is becoming more aware of the benefits of engaging and working in partnership with iwi and hapū.

**There are examples of projects that have helped to foster strong relationships**

7.16 As identified earlier in the report, several Council projects and initiatives have been developed to provide for Māori participation. We heard that these have been helpful in fostering relationships between the Council and iwi/hapū and have demonstrated the value of Council working collaboratively with iwi and hapū.

7.17 Feedback was received from survey participants on the following projects and initiatives in particular:

- (a) **Oranga Wai programme:** The Oranga Wai programme for implementing the NPSFM was noted in the Council's Annual Plan 2022-2023 as having lifted the level of engagement between tangata Māori and local government from an informing form of engagement to that of a collaborative decision-making process based on participation and reaching consensus.<sup>51</sup> This was supported by feedback from a Council staff member who commented that:

*"The Oranga Wai work programme to implement the NPSFM has been a catalyst for building relationships with iwi and hapu and there has been a strong sense of partnership throughout this programme. Levels of trust are building with some iwi which enables better sharing of information. There seems to be a desire from some iwi to work with Council to help navigate the governments resource management reform."*

- (b) **Climate Action Joint Committee:** The Climate Action Joint Committee, established by the Council in 2020, was designed to provide a coordinated local government response to climate change issues across the region. It includes equal representation from council members and representatives appointed by iwi leaders,<sup>52</sup> ensuring that tangata whenua have substantial input into the strategies developed to address climate change.

The Joint Climate Action Plan, adopted by the joint committee in 2023, draws on both te ao Māori and Western world views to create a unified approach towards climate change. The plan sets out recommended actions for councils and communities to respond to climate change and its related risks.

We received feedback that this committee had been positive and had helped to develop stronger relationships.

- (c) **Arawhata wetland and Foxton flood mitigation projects:** As described earlier in the report, the Arawhata wetland and Foxton flood mitigation projects are examples of partnership projects that have involved active participation from iwi/hapū throughout each of the project stages and at a governance level. An elected member recorded that where

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<sup>51</sup> Annual Report 2022-2023, at 54.

<sup>52</sup> LTP, at 21.

partnership projects are in place, there is good engagement and collaboration and a genuine sense of working in partnership.

- (d) **'On the ground' activities with iwi and hapū:** Council staff recognised that working 'on the ground' with iwi and hapū across various activities, like monitoring Lake Horowhenua, has been beneficial and helped to develop relationships at an operational level. However, it was also acknowledged that there is room for improvement and there are some inconsistencies in terms of how Council engages at an operational level.

7.18 However, despite the positive feedback outlined above regarding these projects, we also note that 22.2% of the survey responses from iwi/hapū representatives recorded that they were very dissatisfied with Council engagement on projects and 55.6% were somewhat dissatisfied. This indicates that engagement across projects is not always considered to be consistent or positive. A common theme from iwi and hapū representatives was that there was inconsistency in the Council's approach, described by one representative as "*hit and miss*". We comment on this further in the following section 9 of this report.

#### **There are some good relationships within Council**

7.19 As noted above, survey feedback from iwi and hapū representatives shows mixed levels of satisfaction among iwi and hapū regarding their relationships with the Council, and higher levels of satisfaction among Council staff than among iwi/hapū. This may show that there is a disjunct between how Council perceives its relationships and what iwi/hapū experience. Further feedback would be required to confirm this (including further feedback from more iwi and hapū, and more Council staff).

7.20 However, bearing that initial observation in mind, we did receive feedback from both Council staff, elected members and iwi/hapū representatives that there are some strong and positive relationships between Council and iwi/hapū.

7.21 Some staff told us that particular Council projects had helped improve relationships, as well as formal structures and processes such as relationship agreements and/or regional hui.

7.22 We were also told that Council leadership recognises the importance of strong relationships and that this is being fostered at a leadership level.

#### **There are some formal structures in place that help to support relationships**

7.23 We heard that there are some formal structures in place that help to support the relationships between Council and iwi/hapū:

- (a) **Formal relationship agreements and memoranda of partnership:** Various memoranda of partnership and relationship agreements between iwi and hapū and the Council date back to 2007. We heard that recent efforts have been made to ensure these documents deliver tangible outcomes. For example, we were told that some of these agreements now include appendices with action lists, clear expectations and budgets, which helps to ensure actions are followed up on and resourced appropriately. We also heard that the Council plans to enter into additional memoranda and relationship agreements with iwi and hapū throughout the region.

- (b) **Impact of governance-level iwi representation:** We received feedback from both Council staff, elected members and iwi/hapū representatives about the benefits of governance-level iwi representation on groups such as through the Māori constituencies and the joint committee. Iwi representation was recorded as having been constructive and collaborative and a valuable way to get tangata whenua voices recorded. One Council staff member stated that *"greater Māori representation at a governance level has seen an improved understanding of te ao Māori and tikanga, which have given this deeper meaning than before"*.
- (c) **Regular meetings and operational-level engagement:** Iwi and hapū commented that where regular bi-monthly meetings had been set up by iwi with Council staff at an operational level, this had helped to strengthen relationships, to ensure regular communication and to enable joint problem-solving.
- (d) **Regional hui:** Some staff told us that the regional hui with iwi and hapū had helped to forge stronger relationships.

7.24 We also heard about some challenges in this area, including:

- (a) **Lack of understanding of relationship documents:** Some Council staff acknowledged in their responses that some of the relationship documents are not well known or understood throughout all areas of Council.
- (b) **Implementation of relationship agreements in daily operations:** Existing relationship agreements were identified as being good in principle but their application in Council's daily business and operations can be inconsistent. This inconsistency often stems from a lack of understanding at various levels within the Council. As one Council staff member noted, *"This means that the majority of the organisation goes in blind into places when we don't know about such agreements or even worse agreements that have commitments but we aren't aware we have made a commitment to something"*.

7.25 In summary, the Council has established multiple structures and agreements intended to support strong relationships with iwi and hapū. However, for these efforts to be genuinely effective, there is a need for comprehensive education and awareness among Council staff regarding these frameworks and their implications.

### **The Iwi and Hapū Relationships team is highly valued**

7.26 The Iwi and Hapū Relationships team has been established at the Council, tasked with supporting post-settlement co-governance structures and building relationships with Māori to enable meaningful engagement and partnership in policy development.<sup>53</sup>

7.27 Feedback from Council staff and elected members was overwhelmingly positive and highlighted the value of the Iwi and Hapū Relationships team. The team is recognised for providing dedicated support that enhances the Council's capacity to engage effectively with iwi and hapū on various projects and processes. One representative reported that iwi and hapū have *"begun lowering their barriers and are becoming more open to engaging..."*

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<sup>53</sup> LTP, at 140.

- 7.28 In recognition of the value of this team, the Council has committed to expanding the team by establishing an additional policy and relationship advisor in the second year of the LTP. This additional resourcing is intended to further increase the team's capacity to support and strengthen iwi and hapū relationships.
- 7.29 While Council feedback highlighted the benefits of the Iwi and Hapū Relationships team, iwi and hapū feedback was mixed. One representative recorded that their meetings with the Iwi and Hapū Relationships team had been "*proactively supportive*" and another recorded that they appreciated their support. However, others felt that the team's functions have been symbolic rather than substantive, and that they "*need to be more active in the RMA space particularly where developments are impacting our wāhi tapu, our awa and surrounding sites*".

### **The Council is improving its level of cultural competency**

- 7.30 Finally, we received feedback that the Council has been improving the overall cultural competency of the organisation. By cultural competency, we mean a range of knowledge and understanding that helps Council to engage appropriately and respectfully with iwi and hapū, including an understanding of:
- (a) tikanga and te reo;
  - (b) Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles;
  - (c) the tribal landscape of the region, including iwi, hapū, whānau, marae, Māori land-owning entities and post-settlement governance entities, and the complex relationships between these; and
  - (d) relevant Treaty settlements.
- 7.31 Council staff recorded a notable uptake in cultural competency training for elected members and staff, which was reported as having positively impacted the Council's ability to engage with iwi and hapū.
- 7.32 We were also told that Council staff are increasingly aware of the different iwi and hapū interests in the region and this is helping to support better quality engagement.
- 7.33 We also received feedback that Council is aware of the need for further investment in this training. One staff member commented that "*further investment in targeted, practical, and regionally grounded learning experiences is needed to lift overall competency and meet the organisation's long-term strategic and cultural obligations*".
- 7.34 Council staff acknowledged in their responses that their ability to work effectively with iwi and hapū can sometimes stumble due to a lack of knowledge, confidence, or capacity. Council staff expressed in their responses the need to "*keep the pressure on*" in terms of staff continuing to develop their cultural competency.
- 7.35 We were also told that there are varied levels of cultural competency among staff: Feedback from iwi and hapū representatives in particular emphasised that there can be a wide variation in the level of cultural competence and understanding among Council staff. One representative summarised the position as follows:

*"The ones who engage with a lot have a better understanding than those who don't engage with us. Some are also more committed to the journey than others. Staff who have been there for many years get it whilst newer staff are can often be very new to the concepts. Obviously key staff are fluent in the reo whilst others are not."*

- 7.36 A particular matter that was raised with us was Council's understanding of relevant Treaty settlements and legal obligations. As described earlier in the report, specific Treaty settlements relevant to the region, such as the Te Awa Tupua Act and Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act 2019, have established bespoke legal entities and structures which create specific obligations for the Council. These settlements and their mechanisms are critical and need to be thoroughly understood by all levels of the Council to ensure the settlements are being upheld.

## **8. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT?**

- 8.1 This section provides a summary of some of the challenges we heard about and some of the opportunities for improvement. Again, this is based on the totality of feedback we received from iwi and hapū representatives, Council staff and elected members.
- 8.2 As noted above, it is important to be clear that we have not received comprehensive feedback from iwi and hapū and as a consequence, there is a risk that the summary provided below is not a full or accurate picture of the challenges that may be being experienced and relatedly, the opportunities for improvement.
- 8.3 However, bearing that limitation in mind, the particular themes that were reported to us as challenges or areas for improvement include the following:
- (a) There is a lack of consistency in the Council's approach to engagement.
  - (b) There is an opportunity to further strengthen and formalise relationships with iwi and hapū.
  - (c) The Council is working within a complex iwi/hapū environment.
  - (d) There is an opportunity for the Council to continually improve its cultural competence.
  - (e) The Council is working within a changing legislative environment.
  - (f) Resourcing remains a challenge.
  - (g) Environmental concerns can undermine the relationship.

### **There is a lack of consistency in the Council's approach to engagement**

- 8.4 We heard that there can be a lack of consistency in how the Council approaches engagement with iwi and hapū. In particular, the following themes emerged in the feedback that we received:
- (a) **Different approaches across different teams:** As the Council is made up of a number of different teams, Council staff members noted that there can be inconsistent communication and relationship management across those teams. In addition to this, there is limited visibility and understanding of iwi and hapū priorities in some departments. Not all iwi and hapū regularly hear from the Council, including PSGE leads. One Council staff member considered that there is a need for deeper, more proactive partnerships, as opposed to reactive consultation. While some iwi and hapū have strong relationships with specific teams, others were under engaged with, or unclear about pathways into Council processes.

- (b) **Transactional approach:** Both Council and iwi and hapū survey participants expressed their concern that the relationships with iwi and hapū can feel too transactional. One iwi/hapū representative raised a concern that the Council's commitment to iwi and hapū and Te Tiriti is tokenistic and does not demonstrate a feeling of genuine obligation to their Tiriti partner.
- (c) **Lack of time and space to develop and maintain relationships:** Council staff members felt that it can be difficult to reach all iwi and hapū groups and to meet regularly to the frequency required to develop and maintain a strong relationship.
- (d) **Relationships not being nurtured at the right levels:** One iwi/hapū representative stated that there was a lack of direct engagement at the right levels from the Council, and iwi and hapū were not involved in big decisions.
- (e) **Lack of awareness of memoranda of partnership and relationship agreements:** Council staff members noted an opportunity for more communication with staff when formal mechanisms are adopted with iwi and hapū, and that there was not enough awareness of these documents.

**There is an opportunity to further strengthen and formalise relationships with iwi and hapū**

- 8.5 As noted earlier, Council has finalised seven memoranda of agreement and relationship agreements in recent years. However, there is scope to build on this work by developing agreements with more iwi and hapū and reviewing those already in place to ensure their effectiveness. It is also important that where formal documents exist, these are well known and understood throughout the Council.
- 8.6 Some of the specific feedback we received about the type of relationship that Council and iwi/hapū are aiming for and the kinds of structures that may assist include:
- (a) Some Council staff commented that there was an opportunity for the Council to move beyond a consultation approach to working in partnership.
  - (b) Some iwi/hapū representatives noted that their preference was to have an overarching strategic partnership with the Council that would enable the parties to better understand each other, and to work together towards shared objectives.
  - (c) To ensure there is direct engagement with iwi and hapū at the right levels, one iwi/hapū representative suggested engagement protocols and agreements could assist.
  - (d) There was a suggestion to create a central portal for contact details for iwi and hapū, as well as for memoranda of understanding and relationship agreements to ensure that these are well understood within Council.
  - (e) There was also a suggestion for an ongoing monitoring framework for how Council is engaging with iwi and hapū.
  - (f) We also received feedback that there was a need for the Council to have clearer arrangements and agreements with iwi and hapū about how their mātauranga and culturally sensitive information is to be protected if shared with Council.
  - (g) Finally, both Council and iwi and hapū recognised that building a strong relationship takes time, however, there can be changes to personnel within Council that can undermine

progress made in the relationship. With this in mind, putting in place strong systems that can endure through personnel changes and provide a strong foundation for the future are important.

- 8.7 Without a formalised approach, items appear to be falling through the cracks. One iwi / hapū representative expressed concern that they had never seen a resource consent at their table. Another commented that *"I hardly ever hear from Horizons"*.

#### **The Council is working within a complex iwi/hapū environment**

- 8.8 There are multiple different iwi and hapū groups within the Horizons region. From the iwi and hapū perspective, there are also multiple councils for them to work with, which increases the resourcing burden on them (this is addressed further below).
- 8.9 We heard that, in some instances, the Council struggles knowing who to engage with, given the many different groups and entities that may have interests in a matter. One iwi/hapū representative was concerned that the Council engages with different groups at the exclusion of their group. Another noted that there was a feeling that the Council played groups off against each other. In addition, there can be tensions between different iwi and hapū which sometimes play out in relation to Council projects or initiatives. This can be challenging for Council staff to manage, particularly without appropriate information and cultural competency.
- 8.10 Council and iwi and hapū representatives offered the following suggestions to address this challenge:
- (a) **Lead relationship managers:** A Council staff member considered that promoting and identifying lead relationship managers from the Council for each iwi group would be helpful. The suggestion was that these relationship managers could support staff so that relationships could be built at all levels of Council where needed, and so that the Council can get a better understanding of the group's concerns and aspirations.
  - (b) **Regular hui-a-iwi:** Another Council staff member suggested that more regular regional hui-a-iwi could provide a useful way for Council to engage with iwi about council activities and provide opportunities for iwi to get involved where they wish to. An iwi representative expressed a slightly differing view that the Council should not continuously ask iwi and hapū to come together, but instead encourage the iwi and hapū with mana whenua in that region to invite the other iwi and hapū groups, and the Council supports the iwi and hapū to do the hosting.
  - (c) **Engagement regardless of whether an iwi or hapū is settled or not:** One iwi/hapū representative provided feedback that they want to be assured that all iwi and hapū are being engaged with when issues arise in their respective areas, regardless of whether they are settled or not.

#### **There is an opportunity for the Council to continually improve its cultural competence**

- 8.11 In the preceding section, we summarised feedback about improvements in the cultural competency of Council.
- 8.12 Alongside this feedback, Council staff expressed a strong desire to continue to improve their competency and confidence in te reo and tikanga, Te Tiriti and understanding of the iwi and hapū of

the region and relevant Treaty settlements. Having regular training programmes in place, and induction programmes when staff first join a team were identified as being important. There was also feedback that increasing Council staff's capability in engagement would assist with reducing work burden on the Iwi and Hapū Relationships team and ensure that iwi and hapū relationships are front of mind for all staff, so that iwi and hapū can be more collaboratively included in work streams. Centralising and updating the training resources and ensuring that staff know where to go to get training was also reported as important.

8.13 There was also feedback from iwi and hapū representatives that there are varying levels of cultural competency within Council.

8.14 The following feedback was provided as to what could be improved:

- (a) **Reframing of views and mindset:** One Council staff member stated that their views can be set in their cultural landscape – predominantly western – and so exploring and understanding Māori values can be difficult and requires comprehensive training.
- (b) **Everyday tikanga training required:** Council staff members commented in their responses that there is more of a gap in understanding around everyday tikanga practices, rather than in formal protocols (like pōwhiri). Small group sizes for these training sessions would ensure that there is consistent understanding across all staff.
- (c) **Consideration of recruitment:** One iwi/hapū representative commented that another way of improving the Council's cultural competency is to ensure that it takes these skills into account in recruitment decisions.

#### **The Council is working within a changing legislative environment**

8.15 Central government has consistently focused on resource management and local government reform for the last five years, and the multitude of changes impacts Council's work with its Treaty partners.

8.16 It was reported to us that the changing legislative environment can result in the following issues:

- (a) **Frustration with delays or changes of direction:** We received feedback that Council processes move slowly due to the need to involve the community through consultation and submissions, particularly for resource management changes. This can be frustrating for iwi and hapū, and this is then compounded by changes introduced by central government, which can lead to further delays in implementation or a change in direction.
- (b) **Lost in translation:** We heard that changing legislative requirements can be complex and difficult to understand. It can be challenging to explain these changes and misunderstandings can occur.
- (c) **Undermining of the relationship:** We also heard feedback that these changes can be undermining of the relationship in other ways, for example, one iwi/hapū representative expressed concern that there had been a lack of leadership from Council in engaging with iwi about changing legislative requirements and what these would mean for them.

## **Resourcing remains a challenge**

- 8.17 Council staff recognised in their responses that there are significant demands on iwi and hapū from Council, and resourcing constraints. In addition, there are multiple competing demands for iwi and hapū from different government agencies and councils.
- 8.18 Iwi and hapū representatives also made similar comments and noted that sometimes there is not sufficient resourcing in place for iwi and hapū to complete the work that Council expects them to do. Some noted that there are times when iwi are overwhelmed by the demands that the Council put on them to provide feedback on policies, sometimes with short timeframes.

## **Environmental concerns can undermine the relationship**

- 8.19 A final theme, particularly in the responses from iwi and hapū, was that where there are environmental concerns, this can undermine the relationship. There was a particular focus on environmental issues such as water quality, protection of wetlands and dunes and biodiversity.
- 8.20 Some iwi and hapū also expressed a concern about resource management monitoring and compliance, and a belief that this is not as strong as it should be.
- 8.21 It appears to us that where there are environmental concerns and there are not clear systems in place for Council to work alongside iwi and hapū to address these concerns, this is undermining of the relationship. On the other hand, where processes or projects are put in place to address these concerns, this can be significantly enhancing of the relationship (for example, some of the projects noted in the preceding section).

## **9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 In conclusion, our impression is that the Council is genuinely committed to working towards a Tiriti based partnership with the iwi and hapū of the region. This commitment is demonstrated at senior levels of the organisation and in key documents, such as the LTP. Positive steps taken by the Council to build and maintain relationships with iwi and hapū include entering into partnership and relationship agreements with iwi and hapū, appointing policy and relationship advisors (the Iwi and Hapū Relationships team), implementing staff cultural competency programmes, developing tools like the Ngā Pae taonga app, and investing in partnership projects such as the Oranga Wai programme and Foxton Flood Mitigation Project.
- 9.2 However, it is also clear that much more can be done to ensure the Council is consistent and proactive in its partnership with iwi and hapū.
- 9.3 Our conclusions are limited to an extent by the low levels of iwi and hapū participation in this review and there may be an opportunity to seek more comprehensive views through future review processes. If the Council carries out further Te Tiriti reviews in future years, we recommend that the methodology includes a series of meetings with iwi and hapū to gather their feedback. Additionally, if iwi and hapū request, a Council staff member could be present at these meetings. We consider this would be a more effective methodology for gaining feedback and, importantly, we have heard clear feedback from iwi and hapū that this approach would be considered more respectful and enhancing of the relationships between Council and iwi/hapū.

9.4 Bearing in mind that limitation, we set out below our recommendations about how we consider that the Council could work towards further developing its relationships with iwi and hapū in the region:

- (a) Develop the Council's guidelines for engagement with iwi and hapū to ensure consistency across Council. This could include case studies or examples of successful previous projects, such as those referred to in this report.
- (b) Develop formal relationship arrangements with relevant iwi and hapū and review existing agreements to ensure their effectiveness, including consideration of the following matters:
  - (i) regular meetings;
  - (ii) moving from a transactional relationship to more of a strategic partnership;
  - (iii) iwi/hapū preferences for receiving and commenting on resource consent applications and other matters;
  - (iv) processes for recording actions and accountabilities; and
  - (v) resourcing.
- (c) Together with iwi and hapū, review options for iwi and hapū to provide more direct input into Council decision-making. This could include more regular regional hui-ā-iwi, or consideration of a working party or similar to bring together iwi and hapū representatives and Council to discuss Council projects and initiatives and opportunities for Council and iwi/hapū to develop a stronger and more strategic relationship.
- (d) Continue investment in staff cultural competency training programmes, including in tikanga, te reo Māori, Te Tiriti and its principles, the tribal landscape and relevant Treaty settlements.
- (e) Review Council's recruitment policies to ensure that cultural competency is appropriately prioritised and valued in recruitment and performance management.
- (f) Centralise existing memoranda of partnership and relationship agreements, and iwi and hapū contact details so that staff can easily access these.
- (g) Review the demands on the Iwi and Hapū Relationships team to ensure it is resourced adequately.
- (h) Develop guidelines for the reimbursement of iwi and hapū for their work on Council initiatives and projects, to ensure consistency across Council and that the appropriate resourcing can be easily accessed by iwi and hapū where needed.
- (i) Consider what other resourcing Council may be able to provide to support iwi/hapū. For example, we are aware of some councils that provide technical support (either through dedicated Council staff or external consultants) to help build iwi/hapū understanding and capability in areas such as resource management. This can lead to meaningful improvements, particularly when linked to specific processes, such as a review of a resource management planning document or the review of resource consent applications.

9.5 With all of the above recommendations, we also recommend that Council discuss these directly with iwi and hapū to ensure they align with their aspirations and priorities. This is particularly important given that we have not had fulsome iwi and hapū feedback as part of this review.

## APPENDIX 1 – IWI AND HAPŪ REPRESENTATIVES INVITED TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY

Iwi/Hapū Name	Organisation
Ngāti Tūwharetoa	Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tuwharetoa
Ngāti Tūwharetoa	Ngāti Manunui/Hinemihī
Ngāti Hāua	Ngāti Hāua Iwi Trust
Ngāti Maniapoto	Te Nehenehenui
Ngāti Maru	Ngāti Maru
Ngāti Uenuku	Uenuku Charitable Trust
Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa	Te Rūnanga O Ngā Wairiki-Ngāti Apa
Ngāti Whitikaupeka	Ngāti Whitikaupeka
Ngāti Whitikaupeka	Nga Puna Rau o Rangitikei governance & Taihape Environmental working party (EWP)
Ngāti Hauiti	Ngāti Hauiti
Ngāti Hinemanu me Ngāti Paki	Ngāti Hinemanu me Ngāti Paki Heritage Trust
Ngāa Rauru Kīitahi	Te Kaahui o Rauru
Ngāti Tūpoho	Whanganui Lands Settlement Trust
Whanganui Iwi (Te Awa Tupua)	Ngā Tāngata Tiaki o Whanganui
Ngāti Tamaūpoko	Tamaūpoko
Ngāti Raukawa	Te Rūnanga O Raukawa
Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga	Raukawa ki te Tonga Trust
Ngāti Maniapoto MMTB	Rangatahi/ MMTB Tuhua Hikurangi RMC
Ngāti Huia	Ngāti Huia
Ngāti Rangi	Ngāti Rangi
Ngāti Tamakopiri	Tamakopiri
Ngāti Tamakopiri	Nga Puna Rau o Rangitikei governance & Taihape Environmental working party (EWP)
Muaūpoko	Muaūpoko Tribal Authority
Rangitāne o Manawatū	Rangitane o Manawatu Settlement Trust
Rangitāne o Manawatū	Tānenuiarangi Manawatū Inc
Ngāti Kauwhata	Ngā Kaitiaki o Ngāti Kauwhata
Ngāti Kahungunu	Ngāti Kahungunu ki Tāmaki-Nui-ā-Rua
Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua	Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust
Ngāti Tūpoho	Te Rūnanga o Tūpoho
Ngāti Whakatere	Ngāti Whakatere
Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua	Rangitane o Tamaki nui a Rua Incorporated
Ngāti Uenuku	Raetihi Marae (RDC Māori Council)
Ngai Te Ohuake	Ngai Te Ohuake

## APPENDIX 2 – SURVEY FORM FOR IWI AND HAPŪ REPRESENTATIVES

Question 1: Could you please provide your name and the name of the iwi or hapū group that you represent?

Question 2: Which departments of Council have engaged with you or your group over the last five years?  
Please select all departments that are relevant.

- Executive Team
- Iwi and Hapū Relationships
- Strategy and Policy
- Science
- Regulatory Team – Consents and Compliance
- Freshwater Partnerships
- Biodiversity/Biosecurity Partnerships
- Land Partnerships
- River Management
- Emergency Management
- Environmental Data
- Customer Services

Question 3: How would you rate current Council staff's understanding of:

	Very good	Good	Average	Somewhat unsatisfactory	Entirely unsatisfactory
Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi and its principles					
Council's statutory responsibilities with respect to Te Tiriti/the Treaty					
The iwi and hapū of the region					

Tikanga Māori					
Te reo Māori					

Question 4: Please explain your ratings for question 3.

Question 5: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way in which Horizons Regional Council:

	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat satisfied</b>	<b>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very dissatisfied</b>
Manages its overall relationship with your group?					
Engages with your group on resource consent applications that it receives?					
Engages with your group on strategic planning?					
Engages with your group on Council projects?					
Engages with your group on other matters?					

Question 6: Please explain your ratings for question 5.

Question 7: What are three things that are going well in terms of Council's relationship with your group?

Question 8: What are three things that are not working well or which could be improved?

Question 9: If your group has a formal relationship arrangement with the Council (eg MOU, relationship agreement or other), how effective is that arrangement in strengthening the relationship between your group and Council?

Question 10: In your view, what are the three most important measures that Council could implement to improve its relationship with your group?

Question 11: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the way in which the Council works with Māori and/or incorporates Te Tiriti o Waitangi in its practices that is not covered by the questions above?

### APPENDIX 3 – COUNCIL STAFF INVITED TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY

Title	Team
Chief Executive	Executive
Group Manager Strategy, Regulation & Science	Executive
Group Manager Corporate & Governance	Executive
Group Manager Regional Service & Information	Executive
Group Manager Catchment Operations	Executive
Manager Media and Communications	Media and Communications
Senior Communications Advisor	Media and Communications
Regulatory Manager	Regulatory
Team Leader Consents	Regulatory
Team Leader Consents Monitoring - Rural	Regulatory
Team Leader Consents Monitoring – Infrastructure	Regulatory
Team Leader Investigations and Incidents	Regulatory
Manager Transport Services	Transport
Manager Emergency Management	Emergency Management
Manager Environmental Data	Environmental Data
Biodiversity, Biosecurity and Partnerships Manager	Biodiversity and Biosecurity
Land and Partnerships Manager	Land Management
Operations Manager	River Management
Manager Projects	River Management
Freshwater and Project Manager	Freshwater
Science Manager	Science
Policy and Strategy Manager	Strategy and Policy
Senior Iwi and Hapu Relationships Advisor	Strategy and Policy
Policy Advisor - Iwi and Hapu Relationships	Strategy and Policy
Cultural Development Advisor	Strategy and Policy
Team Leader Customer Services	Business Services

## APPENDIX 4 – SURVEY FORM FOR COUNCIL STAFF

Question 1: Could you please provide your name, and your position for the Council?

Question 2: How would you rate current Council staff's understanding of:

	Very good	Good	Average	Somewhat unsatisfactory	Entirely unsatisfactory
Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi and its principles					
Council's statutory responsibilities with respect to Te Tiriti/the Treaty					
The iwi and hapū of the region					
Tikanga Māori					
Te reo Māori					

Question 3: Please explain your ratings for question 2.

Question 4: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way in which Horizons Regional Council manages its relationships with iwi and hapū groups?

Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied

Question 5: Please explain your rating for question 4.

Question 6: What are three things that are going well in terms of Council's relationship with iwi and hapū?

Question 7: What are three things that are not working well or which could be improved?

Question 8: Do you have any comments on any existing formal mechanisms that provide for the relationship between iwi/hapū and the Council and/or their participation in Council processes (eg MOUs, relationship agreements or similar?)

Question 9: In your view, what are the three most important measures that Council could implement to improve its relationships with tangata whenua?

Question 10: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how Council works with Māori and/or how Council incorporates Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles in its practices that is not covered by the questions above?

**APPENDIX 5 – POWERPOINT PRESENTATION FOR ONLINE COUNCILLOR WORKSHOP ON 13  
MAY 2025**



**BUDDLE FINDLAY**

## Purpose

- The purpose of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi health check is to understand the state of existing relationships with tangata whenua partners in the Horizons region and identify opportunities to improve relationships to ensure they are respectful and mana-enhancing.



BUDDLE FINDLAY

## Context for the review

- Statutory context
  - Many different statutory obligations
  - Some strong directions (eg LGA, RMA)
  - Not always clear
- The Horizons' context
  - Many different iwi and hapū
  - Some have negotiated Treaty settlements with the Crown but many do not yet
  - Large region – many different issues

BUDDLE FINDLAY

## Process for the review

- Online survey with iwi and hapū groups; and key Council staff (**9 May**).
- Workshop with Councillors (**13 May**).
- Draft report by **30 May**.
- Opportunity for Council staff to provide any comments/clarification.
- Report finalised and provided to Council and iwi/hapū groups by **13 June**.
- Present the report to Councillors on **24 June**.
- Council will then decide next steps.

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## Survey responses

- Overview of responses so far.

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## Questions to consider

- What is working well?
- What are Horizons' strengths in working with Māori?
- What structures are working well?
- What are the challenges and opportunities/areas for improvement?
- What can be improved?
- How can those improvements be successfully implemented (ie next steps)?

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