

Report No.	25-86
Decision Required	

TE TIRITI O WAITANGI PARTNERSHIP HEALTH CHECK

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi Health Check, carried out by Buddle Findlay as an independent review of how Horizons Regional Council (Council) gives effect to its obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi in its relationships with iwi and hapū across the Manawatū–Whanganui region.
- 1.2. The review is a performance measure set in Year 1 of the 2024–2034 Long-term Plan. It reflects Council's strategic commitment to strengthening partnerships with tangata whenua and building relationships that are respectful and mana-enhancing.
- 1.3. The key objective of the review is to understand the current state of relationships with tangata whenua partners, and to identify practical opportunities for improvement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 25-86 and Annex.
- b. thanks Buddle Findlay for their report and presentation.
- c. receives the Te Tiriti o Waitangi Review Report dated June 2025.
- d. notes that officers will commence development of an implementation plan in 2025/26 in response to the recommendations of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi Health Check.

3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. The cost of undertaking this independent health check was anticipated in the Long-term Plan 2024-2034. The costs associated with any future actions for improvement are yet to be identified.

4. TANGATA WHENUA AND INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. Engagement took place from 14 April to 30 May 2025.
- 4.2. Engagement with Tangata Whenua was carried out by way of online survey with the offer of opportunities for follow-up calls or a face-to-face meetings.
- 4.3. Feedback from selected Horizons staff across all departments was sought by way of online survey.
- 4.4. Feedback from councillors was sought via a workshop held on 13 May 2025.

5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. No significant business risks have been identified associated with receiving this report.

6. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT

- 6.1. There is no direct climate impact associated with this item.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Council's Long-term Plan 2024–2034 outlines a strategic priority to deepen partnerships with tangata whenua by “responding constructively to changing expectations, realising the potential contribution of Māori leadership, and building mana-enhancing relationships.”
- 7.2. In developing the Long-term Plan, Council recognised the difficulty of measuring relationship quality through numbers alone. After several workshops and feedback from audit and elected members, Council adopted a three-year cycle to support ongoing improvement:
- Year 1: an independent Te Tiriti health check (this report).
 - Years 2–3: implementation of an action plan based on the health check recommendations.
- 7.3. Buddle Findlay was engaged in February 2025 to carry out the Year 1 review. Buddle Findlay has extensive experience working with councils on Te Tiriti issues and Māori partnerships and has worked previously with Horizons and in the region.
- 7.4. The methodology included document reviews, online surveys with iwi/hapū, staff, and councillors, and targeted online workshops to gather in-depth feedback.
- 7.5. The report covers:
- 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) overall conclusions and recommendations for improvement.
- 7.6. Buddle Findlay will present their findings at this Council meeting.

8. PERFORMANCE MEASURE ALIGNMENT

- 8.1. This report fulfils one of the Year 1 performance measures in the 2024–2034 Long-term Plan: *Iwi and Hapū relationships*.
- 8.2. These measures reflect Council's view that the quality of relationships with tangata whenua cannot be meaningfully assessed by numbers alone. Instead, the framework supports continuous improvement and deeper understanding of what strengthens enduring partnerships.
- 8.3. The relevant performance measures for this financial year are as follows:
- Performance Measure 1.1 *An independent Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership health check of the organisation is completed in Year 1.*
 - Status: Completed (this report).
 - Performance Measure 1.2 *Develop an implementation plan based on recommendations from the independent health check.*
 - Status: This target will not be achieved within the 2024/25 financial year due to the timing of the health check. Development of the implementation plan will begin in early 2025/26.

8.4. The relevant performance measure for next financial year is as follows:

Performance Measure 1.3 *Implement steps and reflection process for areas for improvement raised in the health check.* Council will reflect annually in Years 2 and 3 of the performance cycle (2025/26 and 2026/27) on the following questions:

- What were our areas for focussed improvement?
- What steps did we take?
- What happened as a result?
- What difference did this make?
- What did we learn and how can we improve further?

9. TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS

9.1. Following receipt of this report, officers will need time to consider the recommendations and provide input into the development of an implementation plan.

9.2. Officers will begin work on the implementation plan in early 2025/26, informed by this report, the One Plan – Te ao Māori Chapter Review work, and Council’s guidance. A Council workshop will be scheduled to support this process and ensure alignment with Council priorities.

9.3. Actions arising from the implementation plan will be delivered and reflected on over the following two years. Progress and learning will contribute to performance reporting and inform the development of the 2027–2037 Long-term Plan.

10. SIGNIFICANCE

10.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council’s Policy on Significance and Engagement.

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ANNEXES

A Te Tiriti o Waitangi Review Report