

Report No.	25-91
<b>Decision Required</b>	

## UPDATE ON HORIZONS APPROACH TO PEST MANAGEMENT

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this item is to provide an update on Horizons' approach to pest management, including progress on the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) review, and to seek endorsement in principle of current work programmes.
- 1.2. This report also outlines key topics discussed during a Council workshop on 30 April 2025.

### 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1. A workshop was held on 30 April 2025 to discuss our role in New Zealand's biosecurity system, our approaches to biosecurity, and the RPMP review process.
- 2.2. Staff sought feedback on a proposal to prepare a biosecurity strategy in conjunction with the RPMP review. Staff also provided updates on the key work streams currently being progressed in order to produce and consult on a RPMP discussion document.
- 2.3. During the workshop Councillors identified key issues they are hearing from their communities regarding biosecurity, and identified stakeholders for Council to engage with on biosecurity projects.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 25-91 and Annex.
- b. endorses in principle the key work programmes identified in Section 9 of this report, relating to preparing a biosecurity strategy and producing and consulting on a Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) discussion document.

### 4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 4.1. The RPMP review budget for the 2024/25 year was \$200,000. This has been used to fund the **Better Biosecurity Solutions Limited (BBSL)**, project planning, staff time, legal advice and technical work.
- 4.2. The RPMP review budget for the 2025/26 financial year is \$204,400. This is intended to be spent on staff time for preparing a discussion document and biosecurity strategy, legal advice, promotional material for the discussion document, technical advice and costs associated with engagement.
- 4.3. The total forecasted cost of the RPMP review is \$878,600. This amount has been allocated through to the end of 27/28. If forecasts change as the project progresses this will be communicated to Council.
- 4.4. The cost of preparing a biosecurity strategy is intended to be absorbed from the RPMP review budget, with the key cost being staff time. The intention is to produce this document in-house.

## 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1. Community engagement is a key component of the RPMP review. Engagement is proposed during both the discussion document phase and the proposal phase as outlined in the project plan.
- 5.2. Key stakeholders, including iwi/hapū and Territorial Authorities, will be consulted throughout the process. Initial engagement with these groups has already been initiated, as discussed in Section 9 of this report.
- 5.3. Under Section 72 of the Biosecurity Act, Council must be satisfied that appropriate consultation has been undertaken. This is a statutory requirement and will be addressed at key points in the review process.
- 5.4. Council approval will be sought at key points in the process. Supporting documents will be provided at each stage to inform Council decision making.
- 5.5. In relation to the biosecurity strategy, staff intend to seek Council approval to consult on the draft strategy at the same time as the RPMP discussion document to ensure alignment and efficient engagement.

## 6. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 6.1. There is no significant business risk impact associated with this item.
- 6.2. The proposed approach to the RPMP review contributes to ensuring Council's obligations under s100D of the Act (and as relevant when carrying out the review, ss68-78 of the Act) are met.
- 6.3. Key work programmes identified in this report align with Strategy and Policy Committee resolutions on 12 November 2024 ("*approves the commencement of the work programme associated with the Regional Pest Management Plan review*" and "*endorses the proposed phases identified for the review in principle*"), and discussions at the workshop on 30 April 2025.

## 7. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT

- 7.1. There is no direct climate impact associated with this item.
- 7.2. Pest management in general contributes to climate resilience by protecting indigenous biodiversity.

## 8. BACKGROUND

- 8.1. A review of the RPMP must be initiated from 26 September 2027 under s100D of the Act as the plan will last have been reviewed as a whole more than 10 years previously.
- 8.2. A workshop was undertaken on 1 October 2024 to familiarise Council with the relevant components of the Act and the proposed process to undertaking the RPMP review. A further workshop on the 30 October provided a presentation and opportunity for discussion about the evaluation report prepared by BBSL.
- 8.3. On 12 November 2024 a report went to the Strategy and Policy Committee to inform Council of the findings from the BBSL evaluation, to seek approval for the initiation of the review, and to seek endorsement of the proposed timeline of the review in principle.
- 8.4. Four phases were approved by Council as part of the review work programme. These consist of:
  - Phase 1 – Project establishment (Jan 2024 – Nov 2024) - completed
  - Phase 2 – Discussion document (Nov 2024 – mid 2026)

- Phase 3 – Preparation of a RPMP proposal (mid 2026 – Sept 2027)
- Phase 4 – RPMP decision (Oct 2027 – Jul 2028)

- 8.5. The key work programmes identified in Section 9 of this report are primarily to ensure the project plan requirements for Phase 2 are successfully completed.
- 8.6. Phase 2 builds on the BBSL evaluation of the RPMP. It involves the preparation of, and feedback on, the discussion document. The discussion document is intended to bridge the gap between our operative RPMP and what will ultimately be the review proposal document, setting out some issues found through the evaluation and options that might be used to address them as part of the review process. It will also set out what biosecurity management means when using the RPMP and define the scope of what is achievable. Any feedback received will be used by officers to scope the review proposal.
- 8.7. Council will determine when to release the discussion document for consultation.

## 9. KEY WORK PROGRAMMES

- 9.1. This section outlines key work programmes that staff are progressing in order to implement Phase 2 discussion document, and to prepare a biosecurity strategy.

### 9.2. Further Evaluation/Gap Analysis of the operative RPMP

- 9.3. The purpose of the further evaluation/gap analysis is to undertake some of the additional work recommended in the BBSL evaluation and to help to confirm the scope of the RPMP review. A gap analysis table will be produced to reflect the variety of views heard thus far about potential management programmes, and the technical information that has been developed. This will help to identify where options can be presented in the discussion document, and where further technical work is required. This work also includes:

- Assessing the current RPMP in the regional context, including Treaty settlement legislation, iwi and hapū planning documents, and the One Plan.
- Assessing internal agreement with the BBSL recommendations relating to individual pest species.
- Incorporating legal input around matters such as the Good Neighbour and Clear Land Rules, and Approved Management Plans, particularly in terms of enforceability.
- Continuing discussions with technical experts from Horizons' Biosecurity Team, including sense checking of findings from the BBSL evaluation report.
- Incorporating technical and operational reports.

- 9.4. Due to the timing of the upcoming local government elections, there will be a period during which Council will not be available to make decisions. To ensure continuity of the RPMP review process, officers propose that if required the Steering Group approve the continuation of evaluation work during this period. Final approval would then be sought from the incoming Council following the elections — ideally after an RPMP induction has been provided to new elected members.

### 9.5. Elected members involvement

- 9.6. A workshop with elected members was undertaken on 30 April 2025, as previously mentioned in this report. Feedback collected from the workshop will assist with preparing the discussion document and engagement. A summary of Councillor feedback is provided as Annex A to this report.
- 9.7. A future workshop is intended to be held after the local body elections to provide an opportunity for new elected members to both get up to speed on the process, and to provide a further project update.

- 9.8. Workshops with elected members will be held at key points throughout the process to keep elected members abreast of progress and provide opportunities for input.
- 9.9. Regular updates are to be provided to the Strategy & Policy Committee.
- 9.10. Council will determine when to release the discussion document for consultation.
- 9.11. **Iwi/Hapū and Stakeholder Engagement**
- 9.12. An initial letter was sent to iwi/hapū in March 2024 seeking to understand the extent to which involvement in the process was sought and to inform groups of the proposed review process. No responses were received as a result of this letter.
- 9.13. In March 2025, a second letter was sent out, which also included a fact sheet. This letter included a more detailed overview of the review process and included links to the Better Biosecurity Solutions evaluation. Again, the letter sought involvement in the review process, and also asked for any specific feedback on the Better Biosecurity Solutions evaluation. At the time of writing, one response has been received from Te Runanga o Tamaupoko.
- 9.14. In March 2025, a letter was sent to a list of key stakeholders identified by the Project Control Group. This letter sought stakeholder involvement in the process and asked whether they would like to be kept informed, to provide written feedback, or to actively engage. It provided an overview of the process and included a link to the Better Biosecurity Solutions evaluation with a request for specific feedback on that evaluation. A number of responses have been received through the RPMP designated email address. These responses have primarily been to provide a key contact or to acknowledge the letter.
- 9.15. Engagement will be ongoing throughout the whole project, in accordance with the project plan.
- 9.16. **Integrated Catchment Management (ICM)**
- 9.17. Staff are in the early stages of considering opportunities for an ICM approach to the RPMP Review.
- 9.18. **Drafting of the Discussion Document**
- 9.19. This is scheduled to occur during September to November 2025. This piece of work will be informed by the above work programmes and the BBSL evaluation of the operative RPMP.
- 9.20. **Biosecurity strategy**
- 9.21. As discussed at the 30 April 2025 workshop, a biosecurity strategy is proposed to be developed. This document is intended to be a piece of high-level direction, sitting above Horizons' regulatory and non-regulatory work. The document would make reference to other documents and work programmes. It is intended that this document would explain that the RPMP is only one of the tools we have available to us, the roles of other parties (such as the Ministry for Primary Industries and Territorial Authorities), and where to find further resources.
- 9.22. It would also inform readers about how to raise emerging pest management issues with Horizons. Currently, this will be through engaging with the RPMP review process, including the discussion document. We intend for the document to be reviewed after the new RPMP is made operative, including providing a new process for raising emerging pest management issues.

## 10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1. As outlined in this report, consultation has occurred, and will continue to occur, with key stakeholders.

- 10.2. The work programmes outlined in this report involve internal staff from the policy and strategy, biosecurity, science, and communication teams.

## 11. TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS

- 11.1. Staff intend to continue to progress the key work programmes discussed in this report, in order to progress the RPMP review programme in accordance with the Council resolution on 12 November 2024.
- 11.2. A workshop is intended to be held after the local body elections to provide an opportunity for new elected members to both get up to speed on the process, and to provide a further project update.
- 11.3. A workshop is intended to be held in early 2026 on the draft discussion document and draft biosecurity strategy. Council resolution will then be sought to undertake consultation.

## 12. SIGNIFICANCE

- 12.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance and Engagement.

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## ANNEXES

- A Notes from Council workshop 30/04/25