



Regional Council functions

Serving the Palmerston North community and environment

June 2026

Service centres

Kairanga

Cnr Rongotea and Kairanga
-Bunnythorpe Roads,
Palmerston North

Marton

19 Hammond Street

Taumarunui

34 Maata Street

Regional houses

Palmerston North

11-15 Victoria Avenue

Whanganui

181 Guyton Street

Depots

Taihape

243 Wairanu Road

Woodville

116 Vogel Street

Contact

24 hr freephone 0508 800 800
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Cover photo: Manawatū River

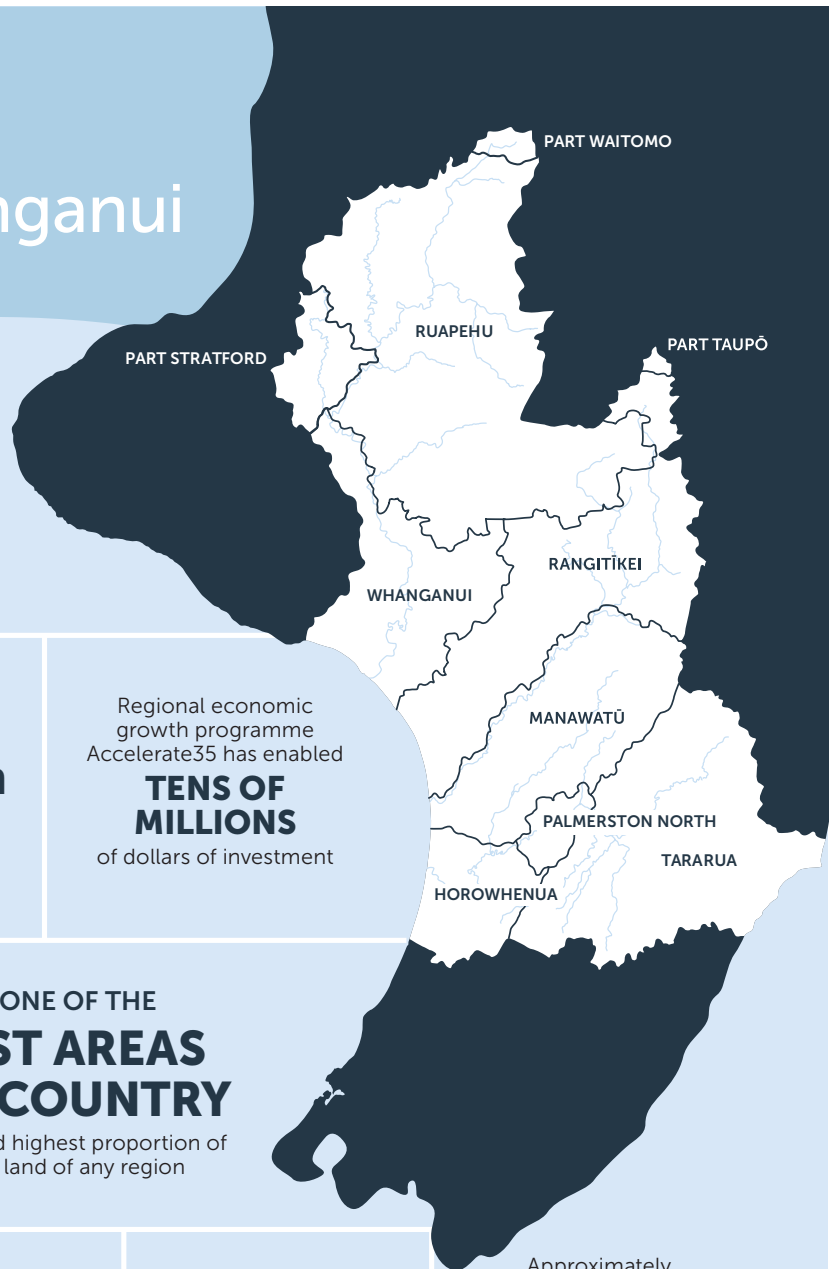
Ngā ihirangi

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Our Region

Manawatū-Whanganui



Around
251,000*
PEOPLE
call it home
*2023 Census data

WE HAVE THREE
major river systems,
two coasts and the
Central Plateau

We have
SEVEN
DISTRICTS
and approximately
70%
of our ratepayers
live in urban centres

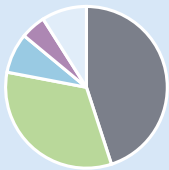
THERE ARE OVER
35,000km
of waterways in the
Horizons Region

Regional economic
growth programme
Accelerate35 has enabled
TENS OF
MILLIONS
of dollars of investment

Mean annual rainfall
in the region ranges
from 900mm
TO OVER
2,000mm

WE HAVE ONE OF THE
LARGEST AREAS
OF HILL COUNTRY
in New Zealand and highest proportion of
highly erodible land of any region

LAND USE IS:



- 45% Sheep and beef
- 33% Native cover
- 8% Dairy
- 5% Forestry
- 9% Other

The Horizons Region
is made up of
2.2 MILLION
HECTARES

of land (8% of New Zealand's
total land area), plus 31,000
hectares of marine area

MW LASS provides
shared services for
SEVEN
COUNCILS
in our region and others
outside of the region

Approximately
117,000
RATEABLE PROPERTIES
contribute to our
work programmes

206,000
HECTARES
or 18% of the nation's versatile
soils are in the region

We also have
two coasts with
jurisdiction extending

12

NAUTICAL
MILES
out to sea

THERE ARE

40

ESTUARIES

in our region, including Manawatū
Estuary, an internationally
recognised Ramsar site

WE HAVE OVER

230
LAKES

This includes 67 dune,
44 riverine, 24 landslide,
7 volcanic lakes and 88
artificial reservoirs

OVER
27%

of our region's
people identify as Māori
There are approximately
30 iwi, 110 hapū
and more than 60 Marae

Regional Council functions – serving the Palmerston North community and environment

Ratepayers in the Palmerston North City District contribute approximately \$22.44 million to deliver regional council functions, which is approximately 32.22% of Horizons' rate take (2024-25 financial year). This document provides an overview of Horizons functions in your district, what your district ratepayers contribute to those activities and work that is undertaken with some key operational examples.

The information presented is a combination of financials from the 2024-25 financial year, data and informed estimates, while also allowing for reasonable assumptions because in many cases due to the catchment management nature of Horizons' business, it doesn't typically report on activity levels at a district level. All tools have been used to condense some information, to assist officers with pulling the document together quickly.

Your place

The largest population centre in the Horizons Region, Palmerston North City is home to about 95,000 people. The city's location, at the crossroads of major state highways and railway lines, makes it a strategic economic hub. Te Utanganui leverages this location to position Palmerston North as an intermodal distribution hub creating connections via road, rail, air and sea. Massey University, UCOL and IPU New Zealand bring people to the city for education and innovation, while Linton Military

Camp – Aotearoa New Zealand's largest army camp – is a hub for army activity and provides Palmerston North with a key asset during emergencies. Palmerston North also acts as a key entertainment, shopping and hospitality location for the wider Horizons Region, given its status as a large city in the centre of a region dominated by agriculture. The visibility and economic strength of tangata whenua Rangitāne o Manawatū has grown rapidly in recent times, partly aided by their Te Tiriti o Waitangi settlement with the Crown in 2016. Recent work has seen the city turn more towards the Manawatū River, with the construction of the He Ara Kotahi walkway, Turitea Pā lookout and Urban Eels site helping to enhance this connection.

Growth, housing, infrastructure investment, connectivity and innovation are recurring themes throughout Palmerston North City Council's strategic planning documents. Horizons contributes to many of the outcomes sought by Palmerston North City Council through environmental management, flood protection, public transport, science and long-term planning, creating opportunities for continued collaboration across the city and wider region.



Manawatū River and city from Te Motu o Poutoa Anzac Park

District priority/outcome	How Horizons contributes
Growth and urban development	Supporting growth through regional planning, environmental management, flood protection, catchment planning and long-term infrastructure resilience.
Community wellbeing and resilience	Flood protection, river management, hazard planning, emergency management and climate science.
Economic growth and innovation	Supporting productive land use, transport services, environmental management, and the resilience of communities, businesses and infrastructure.
Environmental sustainability	Environmental stewardship Freshwater management, biodiversity programmes, land management, environmental monitoring and climate change adaptation.
Connected and accessible communities	Public transport services, regional transport planning and supporting connectivity within the city and across the wider region.
Infrastructure planning and investment	Supporting evidence-based planning, catchment management, natural hazard resilience and long-term infrastructure decision-making
Partnerships and city outcomes	Working alongside iwi, communities, catchment groups and partner organisations to support local outcomes.

What Horizons does for your communities

Horizons Regional Council is here to serve the 251,000 people who call the Horizons Region home. With 117,000 rateable properties to service, a total budget of \$78 million per annum and accountability for more than 30 pieces of primary legislation and dozens of pieces of secondary legislation, the equivalent of 320 full-time equivalent staff spread across seven territorial authority areas deliver services at a regional scale. Those services are provided through groups of activities: Catchment Operations; Strategy, Regulation and Science; Transport and Regional Services; and Partnerships, Governance and Leadership. Horizons has staff based at multiple locations across the city, with Regional House on Victoria Avenue serving as the main office for Horizons' activities. Te Ao Nui, built by Horizons' holdings company next door to Regional House, houses Horizons' emergency management staff and the Manawatū-Whanganui Emergency Management Group Emergency Coordination Centre.

Horizons' priority areas in Palmerston North

- Te Āpiti – Manawatū Gorge
- The country's first fully electric public transport network
- Palmerston North flood resilience along the Manawatū River and Mangaone Stream
- Community grants
- CDEM
- Manawatū River Leaders' Accord
- Alligator weed monitoring and management
- Economic development via Accelerate35

Funding regional-scale delivery, locally

Horizons funds activities through a range of sources, including rates, grants and subsidies, fees and charges, investments, and reserves. These funding arrangements ensure ratepayers get value for money through the economy of scale regional service delivery provides. It also ensures Horizons can leverage co-investment from partners such as central government, landowners and territorial authorities. A good example of leveraging co-investment comes from the Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI). While almost no work is done under SLUI in Palmerston North City, the funding provided by the city's ratepayers – along with central government co-funding and landowner investment – sees work done further up the Manawatū River catchment to improve water quality and reduce downstream flooding. This integrated approach to catchment issues ensures issues are addressed at their source, with the benefits fairly paid for by everyone who gets to enjoy them.



Electrofishing in the Mangaone Stream

Mahi on the ground – Catchment Operations Group

This group is made up of the following activities:

- Land Management
- Freshwater and Partnerships
- Biodiversity and Biosecurity
- River Management and Flood Protection

The Catchment Operations Group promotes the health and resilience of the region's land and water ecosystems. It works to ensure an integrated approach to land and river management. This includes biosecurity management for animal and plant pests. With the Palmerston North City being in the middle of the large Manawatū River catchment, the district is a significant contributor to and beneficiary of work done across the wider catchment.

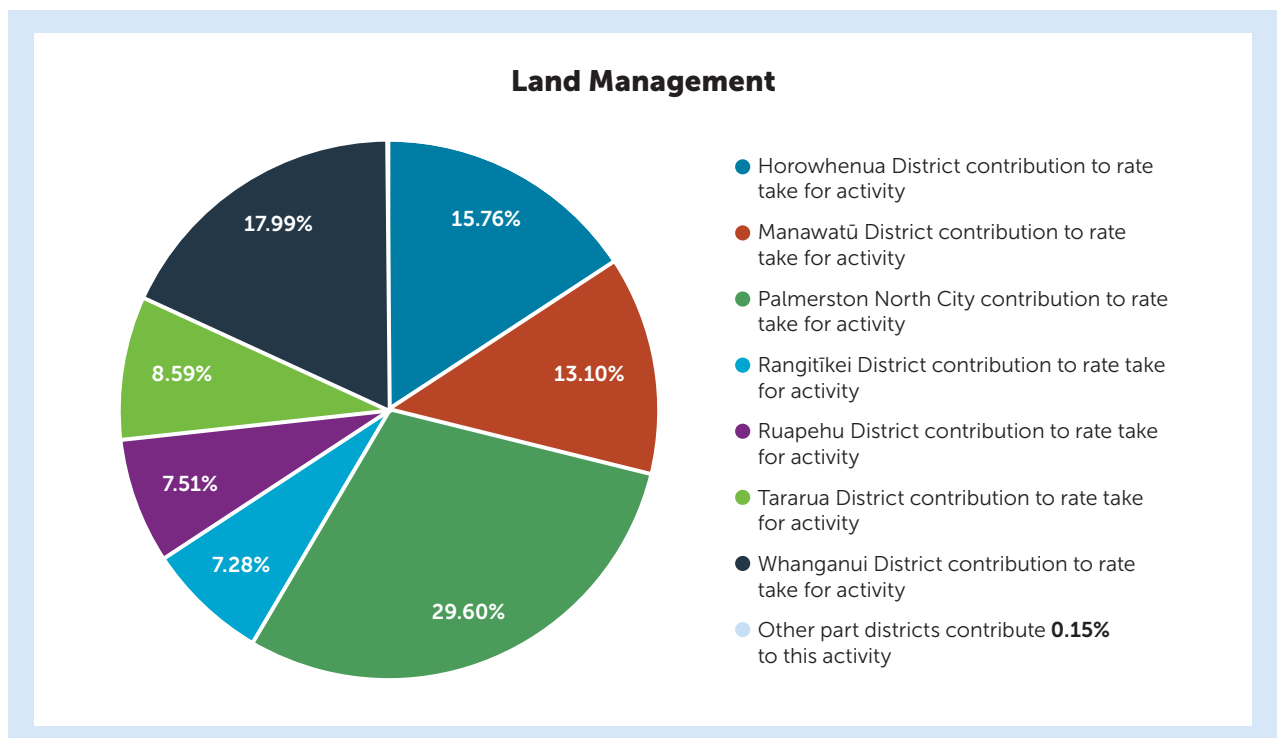
Catchment Operations Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year

	Land Management	Freshwater and Partnerships	Biodiversity and Biosecurity	River Management and Flood Protection
Regional rates	5,114,164.31	3,672,349.08	10,457,457.77	17,846,633.19
Grants and subsidies	910,000.00	1,920,000.00	-	10,887,326.00
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	144,230.30	-	-	-
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	858,127.94	-	166,630.00	2,013,715.14
Funding surplus/ shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	-107,711.60	45,157.58	-172,523.26	9,859,794.70
Total Operational Expenditure	7,134,234.15	5,547,191.50	10,796,611.03	20,887,879.63
Palmerston North City District rates	1,513,728.99	957,845.15	2,642,522.20	4,123,287.98
Palmerston North City contribution to rate take for activity	29.60%	26.08%	25.27%	23.10%

Land Management Activity

Land Management at a glance

- Aim of the activity is to reduce hill country **erosion**, and improve **water quality** and **flood capacity** in our region's waterways.
- The work done at the top of catchments ensures benefits all the way to the bottom so is **funded universally** through UAGC, general rates and user charges.
- Regionally, **63,000** hectares of erosion control works benefit downstream communities such as Palmerston North.
- Budget for the region: **\$7.13 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$1.51 million** which is a **29.6%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- Land Management activity undertaken in the city in 2024-25: **\$58,000**.
- **4 of the 102** soil quality monitoring sites located in Palmerston North City.
- Current SLUI central government contract runs until **June 2027**.
- **3** whole farm plans have been developed under SLUI.
- **1,751** hectares of land mapped and 0.2ha of erosion control works completed.
- **1** Palmerston North property Horizons have worked with has won the regional Balance Farm Environment Awards.
- Modelling suggests erosion work could reduce sediment load in the region's rivers (including the Manawatū River) by about **50%**.
- Maintaining an integrated catchment approach with the Manawatū River catchment crossing **4** different territorial authorities will be a challenge.





Sheep on farmland

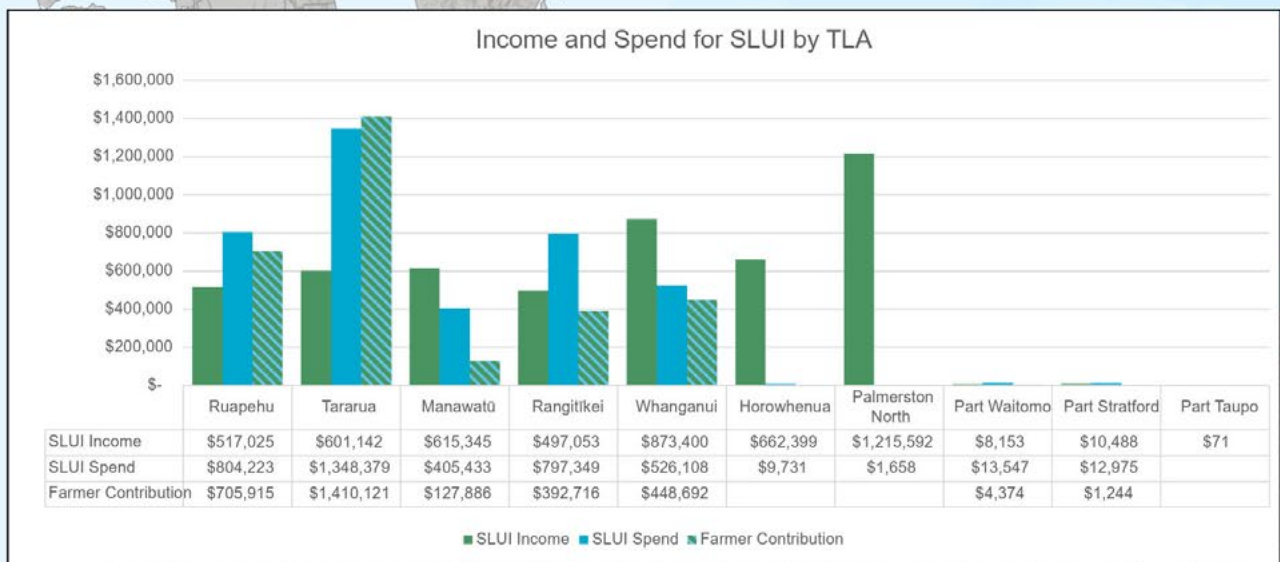
Understanding soil and keeping it where it belongs

The primary delivery of the Land Management activity is the Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI), which uses a variety of tools to treat erosion and address water quality issues. Horizons' land management advisors provide land use advice and targeted grant assistance to landowners and community groups to support the implementation of works programmes. An additional component of the SLUI programme is the ongoing management of some forestry right arrangements that were established with programme funding. Other Land Management programmes focus on providing land use advice (with limited grant assistance) to landowners, community groups, and others, undertaking soil health monitoring as part of national and regional programmes, partnering with industry and community groups to promote sustainable land use practices, and operating poplar and willow pole nurseries and supplying erosion control materials.

The primary focus of Land Management work is on unstable hill country areas. There is a limited amount of highly erodible land within Palmerston North City, and so relatively little direct SLUI work is carried out within the city boundary itself. Three whole farm plans, with 1,751 hectares mapped and 0.2 hectares of erosion control works have been completed since the programme began in 2006. A further 21 hectares have been completed under the Regional and Coast grant programme, including 1.3 hectares in 2024-25. Four of the 102 regional soil quality monitoring sites are located within the city boundary.

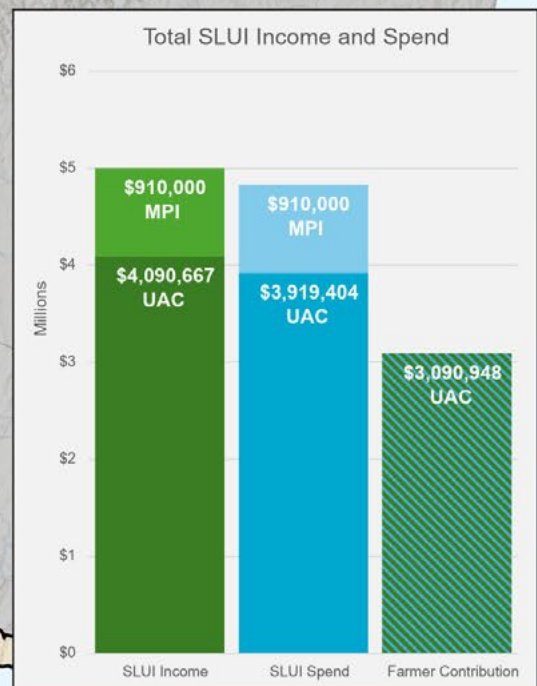
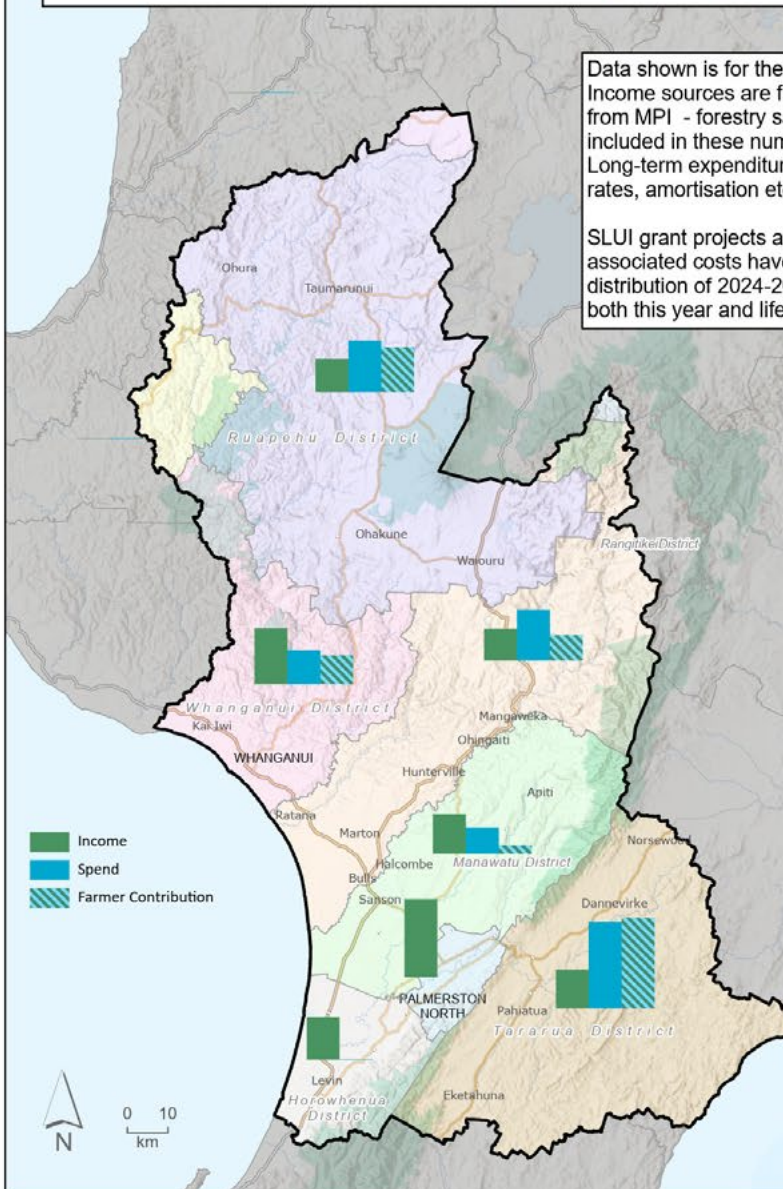
The story of this activity for Palmerston North City is primarily one of downstream benefit. The majority of SLUI work in the Manawatū catchment is carried out in the upper catchment areas upstream of Palmerston North. That work to reduce erosion, stabilise hill country, and improve water quality delivers direct benefits to the city. SLUI modelling suggests the work being undertaken could reduce sediment load in the region's rivers, including the Manawatū River as it flows through Palmerston North, by approximately 50%. Less sediment in the river also supports the longevity of the flood protection infrastructure protecting the city, as reduced sediment accumulation within the protection system means less maintenance and less risk of capacity loss over time. Despite contributing the largest rate contribution of any territorial authority, Palmerston North City has relatively little land management activity within its own boundary. This reflects the universal funding model, which ensures that those who benefit from catchment-scale work contribute to it, even when that work is done elsewhere.

While there is minimal activity in the city boundary by this activity, the work which is done is recognised as being of high quality. The 2024 regional Ballance Farm Environment Awards supreme winner – Stewarts Dairyland – is located within the Palmerston North City boundary. This shows that even within an urban context, important and targeted land management and environmental stewardship work is taking place.



Data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year.
Income sources are from Universal Annual Charge from SLUI and income from MPI - forestry sales, and farmer contribution to works have not been included in these numbers.
Long-term expenditure on joint venture forests is also not included (leases, rates, amortisation etc.)

SLUI grant projects are directly linked to TLA. Management, staff time and associated costs have been appropriately extrapolated based on the distribution of 2024-2025 works as well as the area under SLUI farm plans both this year and life to date.



Stats NZ, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR

SLUI Income and Spend by TLA 2024 - 2025

Map prepared by: W McKay
Date: 30/01/2026



Note: The numbers in this map are accounted for within the figures of the district map on the next page. This map shows the activities of SLUI, which is the main activity of Land Management at Horizons. The district map below is about the whole Land Management programme which includes providing land use advice, soil health monitoring, partnering with industry and community groups to promote sustainable land use practices, and operating poplar and willow pole nurseries.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$7.13 million

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$1.51 million

Land Management is funded primarily through a SLUI Universal Annual General Charge for the SLUI programme, supported by a four-year contract with central government via the Hill Country Erosion Fund. Other land activities are funded through general rates (\$780,000) and user charges through pole nursery sales (\$750,000). The pole nurseries run on a breakeven budget, meaning no cost to ratepayers.

The current contract with central government via the Hill Country Erosion Fund runs until June 2027, with a new round of funding already applied for. If successful, SLUI would have government co-funding until June 2031. Funding agreements are also in place with the NZ Poplar and Willow Research Trust and the New Zealand Farm Environment Trust, which runs the annual Ballance Farm Environment Awards.

People and relationships

About 19 FTEs directly contribute to the Land Management activity across the region. There are no land management advisors based in Palmerston North City, although five land support staff are based at Regional House. The Palmerston North City area is serviced by Tammy Cooper from the Woodville office. Other support for the Land Management activity is provided by corporate staff (e.g. finance, communications, HR).

Key relationships for this activity include landowners, central government, the NZ Poplar and Willow Research Trust, and the New Zealand Farm Environment Trust.

Key considerations for delivery models

The Land Management activity illustrates the integrated catchment management logic that underpins much of Horizons' funding model. Palmerston North City is the largest single contributor to this activity's budget, yet relatively little of the work is done within the city boundary. This is by design. The work that reduces erosion and improves water quality in the Manawatū and Tararua districts upstream directly benefits Palmerston North: cleaner water flowing through the city, reduced sediment burden on flood protection infrastructure, and improved river capacity. The universal funding model ensures this upstream-downstream relationship is accounted for.

In an amalgamation environment, maintaining this integrated approach across catchment boundaries will be a key consideration. The Manawatū River catchment crosses multiple territorial authority areas. If the Land Management activity were to be restructured or funded at a sub-regional level, the upstream-downstream logic that justifies the current universal funding model would need to be carefully preserved — otherwise the incentive to invest in upstream work that benefits downstream communities could be weakened.

2024-25 Activities

\$1,514,000

Rate contribution from the city to
Land Management activities

\$58,000

Worth of Land Management
activities delivered in the city

2024-25 Key Outputs

0 Farms mapped

0 ha mapped area

1.3 ha erosion mitigation works

Total Outputs 2006-2025

3

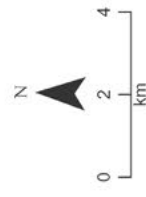
Farms mapped

1,751 ha

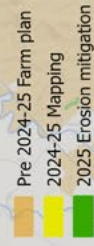
Total mapped area

21 ha

erosion mitigation works



Key



Land Management Activities In Palmerston North City 2025 FY

Prepared by: W McEay
Date: 3/06/2026
Contains Crown Copyright Data



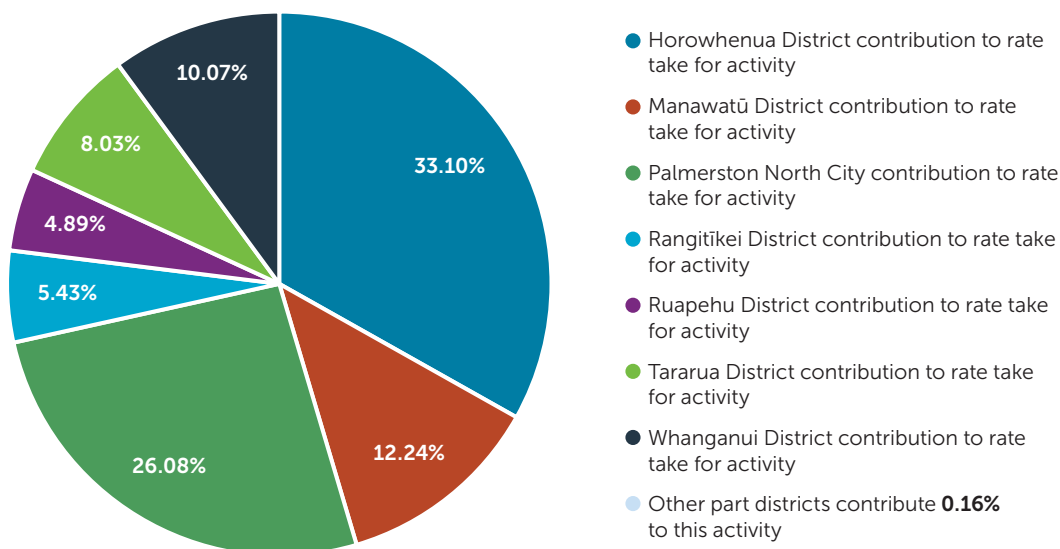
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Freshwater and Partnerships Activity

Freshwater and Partnerships at a glance

- The aim of this activity is to improve **aquatic habitat** and **water quality** by working with external partners.
- The work done has benefits at both a local and regional scale, so is funded via **targeted and general rates**.
- The health of waterways in the Horowhenua District is directly connected to land use and water management decisions made across catchments **spanning multiple territorial authority areas**.
- Budget for the region: **\$5.55 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$957,845** which is a **26.08%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- Freshwater and Partnerships activity undertaken in city in 2024-25: **\$185,000**.
- Freshwater improvement activities are funded through a combination of **targeted rates, general rates, and central government funding**.
- **7,400** plants were planted, **4** fish passage remediations undertaken and **0.2km** of stream fencing completed in Palmerston North in 2024-25.
- Rates for **Manawatū River Leaders' Accord** projects, which benefit Palmerston North City, are sourced from four districts.
- Freshwater does not adhere to lines drawn on maps, achieving meaningful water quality improvements requires coordinated action **across people-defined boundaries**, and a **shared commitment** to long-term outcomes.

Freshwater and Partnerships



Working with communities to improve freshwater health

The primary functions of the Freshwater and Partnerships Activity are to work with external partners to improve aquatic habitat and water quality. This is primarily done through stream fencing, riparian planting, giving advice on constructed wetlands, and other interventions. The programme also enables community projects through funding and advice, and provides guidance and raises awareness of rules and regulations.

Palmerston North City faces various freshwater challenges, particularly in terms of managing the urban impact on water quality for the Manawatū River. Palmerston North City sits in the middle of the Manawatū River catchment, meaning water quality issues and improvements at the top of the river catchment, in the Manawatū and Tararua districts, flow through to the city, then flow downstream towards Manawatū and Horowhenua districts.

There are multiple key projects underway as part of this activity which impact the city. Palmerston North ratepayers contribute to the Manawatū River Water Quality Enhancement programme, which supports delivery of projects to meet the goals of the Manawatū River Leaders' Accord. Another is the Jobs for Nature project, focussed on riparian planting, stream fencing and fish passage remediation, which continued a lot of work started under the Accord and accelerated thanks to \$18.4 million funding Horizons managed to secure from central government.

A notable project in this activity included collaborative work with Palmerston North City Council in the Gordon Kear Forest where monitoring of 15 km of waterways assessed native fish to understand habitat limitations. This identified fish barriers and resulted in fish passes being installed by Horizons or culverts being replaced by the city council. 7,400 plants were planted, 4 fish passage remediations undertaken and 0.2km of stream fencing completed in Palmerston North in 2024-25 for this activity.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$5.5 million

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$957,845

Grant funding and external subsidies (e.g. central government co-investment) are sought wherever possible. Where this is not available, freshwater improvement activities are funded through a combination of targeted rates, general rates, and central government funding. The Manawatū River Water Quality Enhancement programme is funded through a targeted rate on properties within the Manawatū River catchment, with costs shared across parts of the Horowhenua, Manawatū, and Tararua districts, as well as all ratepayers within Palmerston North City. Palmerston North ratepayers contribute through general rates to the Regional Freshwater Improvement programme and provided the ratepayer share of the Jobs for Nature Riparian Management and Fish Passage projects, and via general rates to the Regional Freshwater Improvement programme. This recognises the regional and inter-generational benefits of this work across catchments.

People and relationships

About 7 FTEs directly contribute to the Freshwater and Partnerships activity across the region. Other support for this activity is provided by corporate staff (e.g. communications).

Key relationships for this activity in Palmerston North City include landowners, Palmerston North City Council, iwi and hapū, community groups, the Department of Conservation, and central government agencies involved in freshwater management and biodiversity funding. The Manawatū River Leaders' Accord brings together a wide group of partners across the catchment, including territorial authorities, iwi, community organisations, and industry, to work toward shared water quality outcomes.

Key considerations for delivery models

Freshwater does not adhere to lines drawn on maps. The health of waterways in Palmerston North City is directly connected to land use and water management decisions made across catchments spanning multiple territorial authority areas. The Manawatū River Leaders' Accord exists precisely because achieving meaningful water quality improvements requires coordinated action across people-defined boundaries, and a shared commitment to long-term outcomes no single council could deliver alone.

The rating method for the Manawatū River Water Quality Enhancement programme reflects this reality, and is a strong example of the importance of integrated catchment management. Depending on how amalgamations are done, rating for this work, deciding where the work will be done, and allocating who does the work, must be considered carefully. Maintaining this kind of cross-boundary funding and governance arrangement in a post-amalgamation environment will require careful consideration, particularly if structural changes result in different parts of the catchment sitting under different entities with different priorities and funding mechanisms. This is especially relevant for Palmerston North City. At face value, it could appear the city does not get good value for money from the money rates from it for this activity. However, just like with the Land Management activity, this rating approach ensures the work is done where it can benefit the entire catchment.

More broadly, freshwater improvement work is inherently long-term. The ecological processes involved – riparian vegetation establishing, sediment loads reducing, fish populations recovering – play out over decades, not annual reporting cycles. This activity requires institutional patience, sustained funding, and consistent relationships with landowners and communities that span many years. These qualities may be challenging to preserve through structural disruption, and difficult to rebuild once lost.

2024-25 Activities

\$958,000

Rate contribution from the city to
Freshwater activities

\$185,000

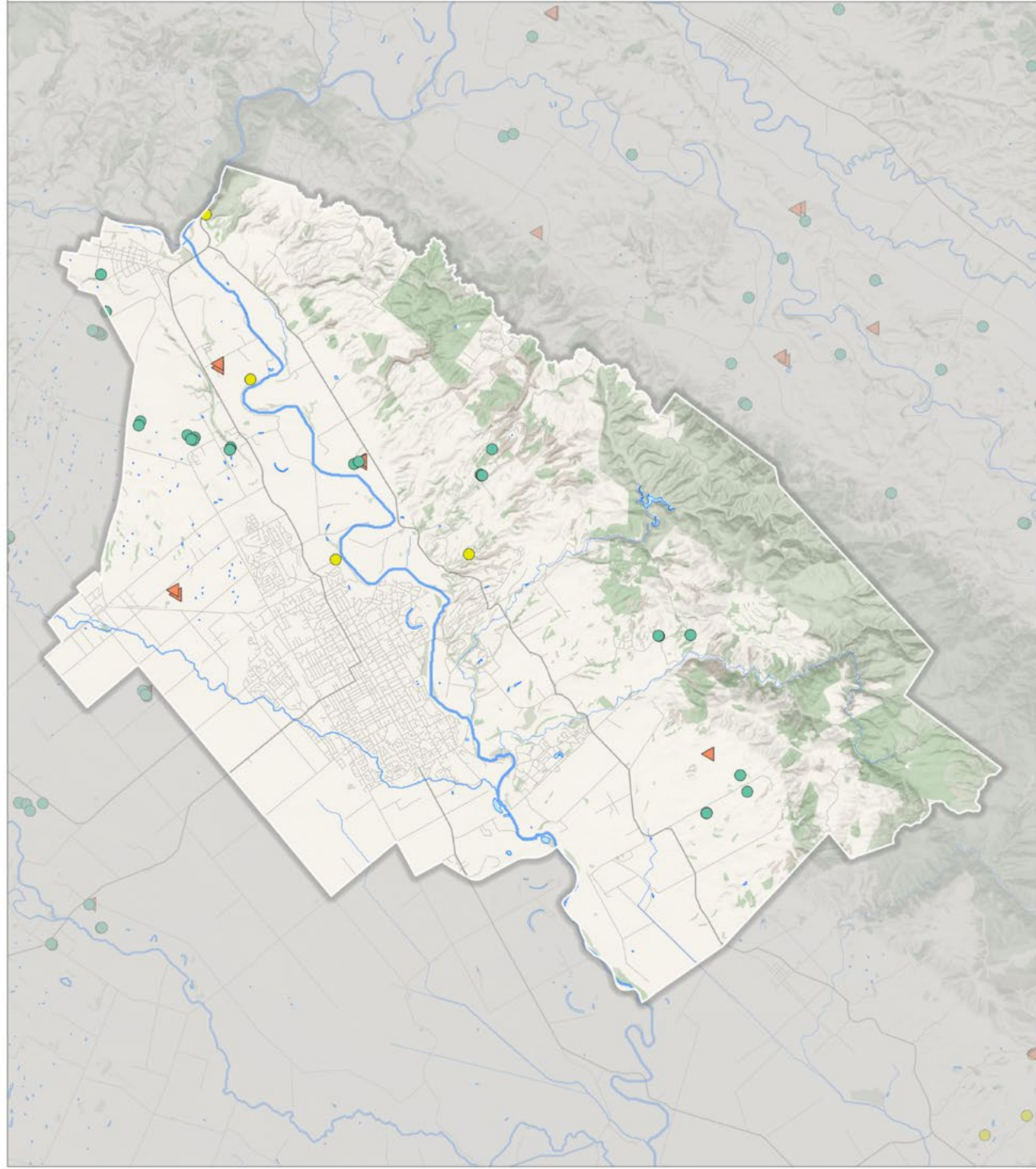
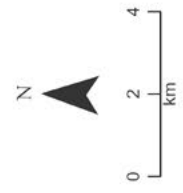
Worth of Freshwater activities
delivered in the city

2024-25 Key Outputs

4 Fish passage remediations
1.1 km of stream fencing
7,400 plants planted

Key

- Fish passage remediation
- Planting project
- Fencing project



Freshwater Activities In Palmerston North City 2025 FY

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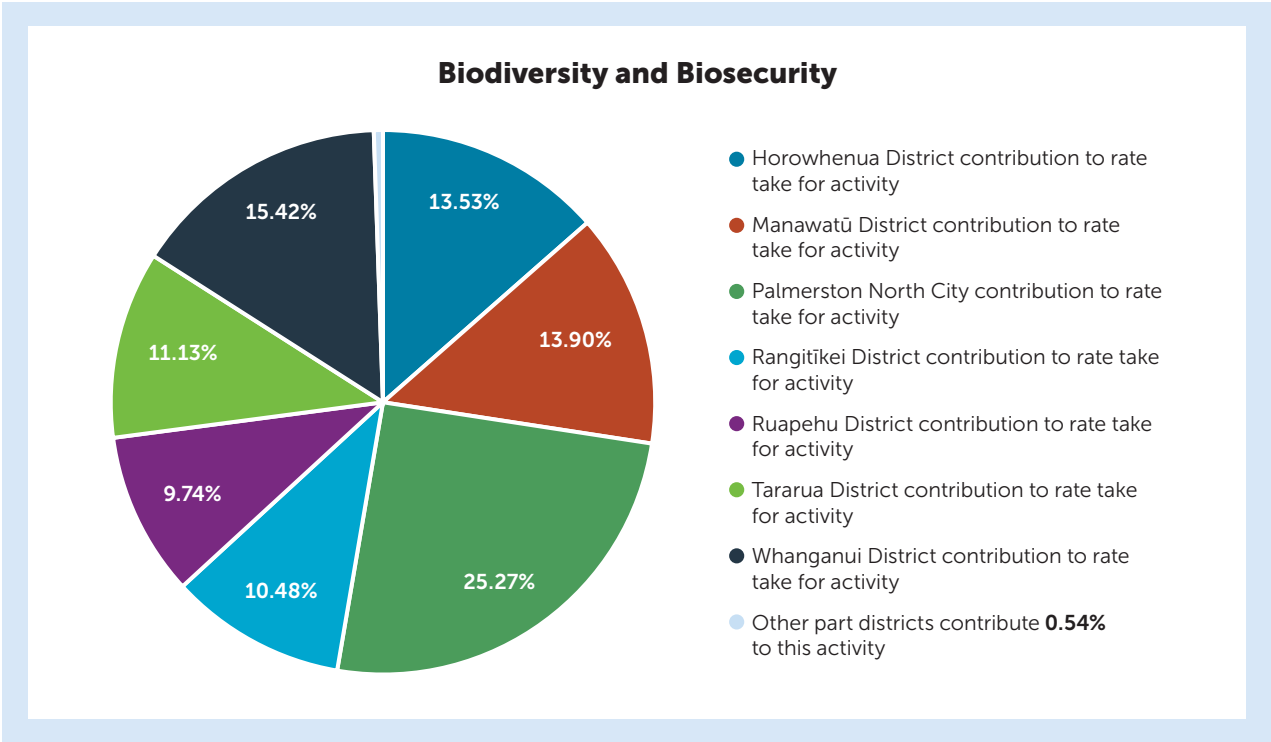
Biodiversity and Biosecurity Activity

Biodiversity and Biosecurity at a glance

- The aim of the activity is to protect and restore **indigenous biodiversity** and prevent or manage the spread of harmful **pest plants and animals**.
- Budget for the region: **\$10.8 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$2.64 million** which is a **25.27%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- **1** icon biodiversity site, Te Āpiti Manawātū Gorge, and **20** priority sites serviced in the district.
- Biodiversity activity undertaken in city in 2024-25: **\$153,833** OPEX and **\$500** CAPEX.
- **778** plant pest control sites are managed in the district.
- **3,268** possum bait stations in the district.
- Animal pest control activity undertaken in district in 2024-25: **\$20,000**.
- **85%** of biodiversity and biosecurity work is mostly from general rates and UAC to recognise the regional benefit.
- **15%** is funded via targeted rate to recognise economic benefits of biosecurity protection for rural properties over **4** hectares.
- Pest plants and animals **do not respect territorial boundaries**, so effective biosecurity work depends heavily on coordinated action.
- In Palmerston North City, pest species can spread across boundaries via **freshwater and terrestrial environments**.
- The Regional Pest Management Plan exists to ensure a **regional-scale** response to issues.
- Biodiversity relies on integrated **catchment management approach** in relation to biosecurity.
- There were no Kanorau Koiora Taketake – Indigenous Biodiversity Community Grant projects in Palmerston North in 2024-25.



Hihi (Stitchbird)



Protecting the environment today for tomorrow

The primary delivery of the Biodiversity and Biosecurity activity spans two closely related but distinct functions: protecting and restoring indigenous biodiversity across the region, and preventing or managing the spread of harmful pest plants and animals. Horizons’ biodiversity and biosecurity staff work with landowners, community groups, iwi, district and city councils, and other agencies to deliver pest management programmes, provide advice and support, and implement biodiversity restoration projects.

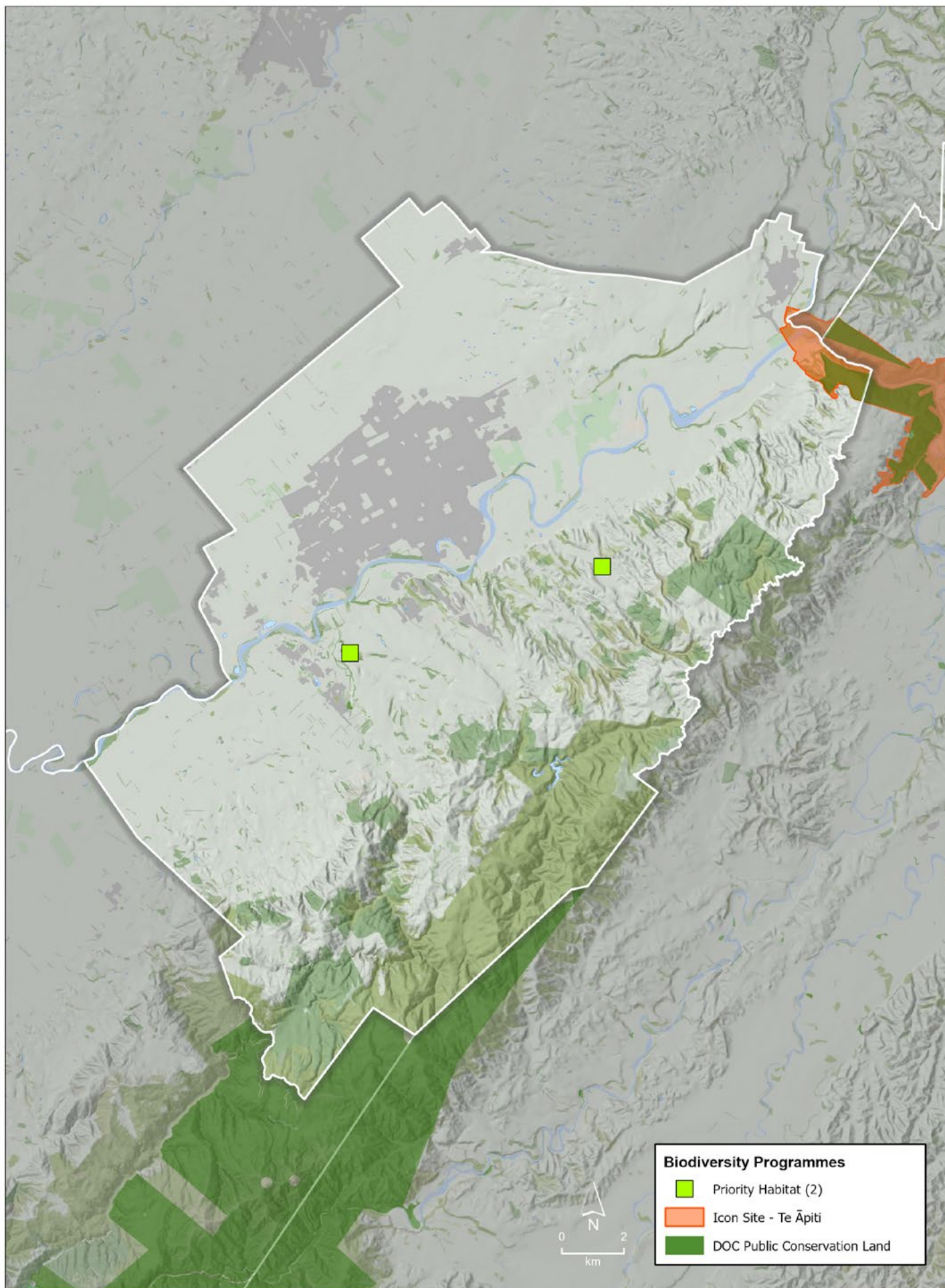
Horizons operates under a Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP), which sets out the rules and programmes for managing listed pest species across the region. The RPMP establishes different management programmes depending on the threat level and distribution of each pest. Horizons works alongside the Department of Conservation, regional and district councils, and community-led groups to deliver coordinated pest control across land tenures. The RPMP is currently being reviewed, with a formal consultative process expected to take place in 2027.

The biodiversity function focuses on supporting landowners and communities to protect and enhance areas of indigenous vegetation and habitat, including through advice, funding assistance, and partnerships with restoration groups.

Palmerston North City’s urban character shapes both the nature of biodiversity and biosecurity work within the city and its relationship to the wider regional programme. Direct programme expenditure within the city is relatively modest — \$180,833 in 2024-25 — but the city contributes 25.27% of the regional budget for this activity, the largest contribution of any territorial authority. This reflects the universal and general rate funding model, which recognises that the benefits of biosecurity and biodiversity work flow across boundaries and that all ratepayers benefit from a healthy regional environment regardless of where the work is done.

The possum control programme services 3,268 bait stations across 39,457 hectares within the city, mapped across five possum control operations. The animal pest advisory service responded to 85 enquiries in Palmerston North City in the most recent year — reflecting the significant peri-urban and urban pest pressure in an area where the major control programmes focus on larger land blocks and residents regularly encounter pest species on smaller properties.

The pest plant team manages 215 sites with an operational area of 604 hectares in the city. Species managed include African feather grass, alligator weed, blue passion flower, boneseed, cathedral bells, Chilean rhubarb, knotweed,



Biodiversity Programme Activities

Palmerston North City District

Prepared by:
C Tregurtha-Nairn
Date: 3/06/2026



climbing alstroemeria, moth plant, Mexican feather grass, purple loosestrife, Queensland poplar, sagittaria platyphylla, Senegal tea, and woolly nightshade.

The biodiversity team manages two priority habitat sites covering 26 hectares, as well as the Te Āpiti - Manawatū Gorge Icon Project, budgeted at \$130,000 and split across three districts. Te Āpiti is one of the most significant biodiversity projects in the region, spanning a landscape crossing Palmerston North City, Manawatū District, and Tararua District boundaries. Three sites in Palmerston North City receive ongoing funding and protection as priority habitat areas recognised for rare and threatened ecosystem types.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$10.8 million

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$2.64 million

Total operating budget for this activity in Palmerston North City: approximately \$180,833, comprising biodiversity (\$153,833 operating, \$500 capital), biosecurity animals (\$20,000), and biosecurity plants (\$7,000).

Biodiversity and Biosecurity work across the region is funded from a general rate (55% share) and Universal Annual Charge (30%), recognising the regional benefit of these activities. To recognise the additional economic benefits of biosecurity protection for rural landowners, a portion of this work is funded via a targeted rate (15% share) on properties larger than four hectares. Capital expenditure may be funded through borrowing.

Contractual obligations include memoranda of understanding and contracts with partners for the Te Āpiti project, and contracts for the bulk of pest control work undertaken in the city.



Te Āpiti

People and relationships

There are 38 FTEs in the Biodiversity and Biosecurity activity across the region. In Palmerston North City, 2.23 FTEs deliver biodiversity and biosecurity work programmes – 1.1 FTE in biodiversity, 0.5 FTE in biosecurity animals, and 0.3 FTE in biosecurity pest plants.

The biodiversity and biosecurity teams work with landowners, QEII National Trust, and Ngā Whenua Rāhui for on-site works. Staff work within the compliance requirements of the Regional Pest Management Plan and maintain relationships with Palmerston North City Council roading and parks staff, the Department of Conservation, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, and KiwiRail. Other important relationships include Environment Network Manawātū, the Te Apiti Governance Group, Rangitāne o Manawātū, Rangitāne o Tāmaki nui-ā-Rua, Ngāti Kauwhata, Ngāti Raukawa, and the Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA).

Key considerations for delivery models

Pest plants and animals do not respect territorial boundaries. In Palmerston North City, pest species move across boundaries via freshwater and terrestrial environments. The Manawātū River corridor, urban reserves, and surrounding farmland all provide pathways for pest spread between the city and neighbouring districts. The effectiveness of biosecurity work in the city depends on what is happening in Manawātū District, Tararua District, and beyond, and vice versa. The RPMP exists to ensure a regional-scale response to these issues regardless of where they arise.

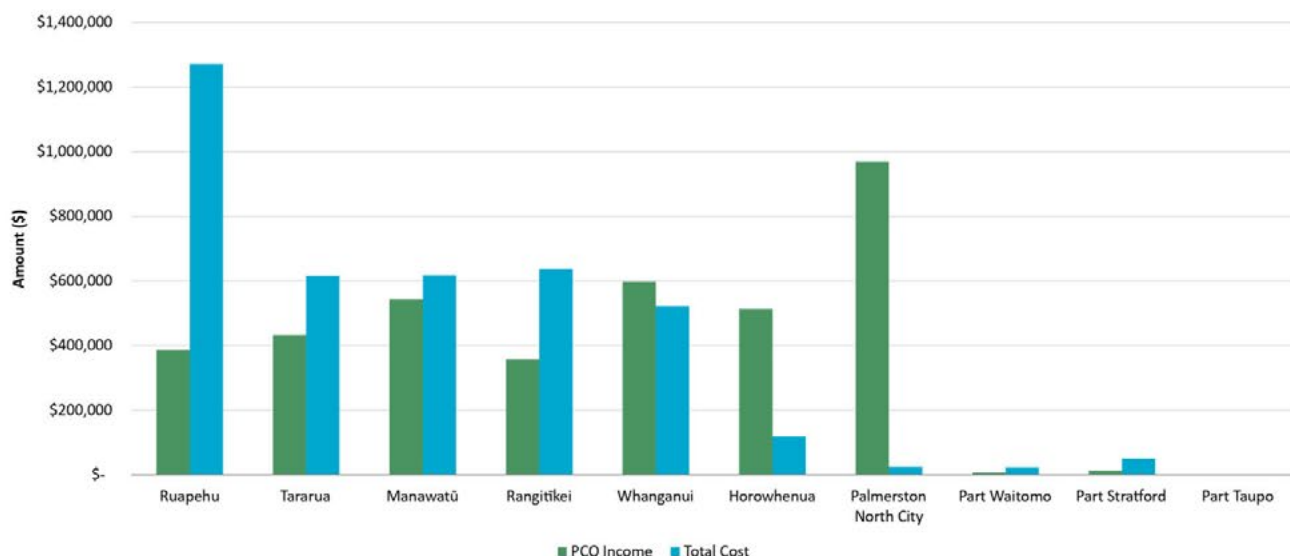
The Te Āpiti project is a direct illustration of this cross-boundary reality. Spanning three territorial authority areas, it cannot function effectively if managed at a single district or city level. The governance arrangements, funding contributions, and operational delivery all depend on a regionally coordinated approach.

Palmerston North City's position as the largest contributor to this activity's regional budget, while accounting for a small fraction of direct expenditure, warrants careful consideration in any post-amalgamation environment. The current model reflects the regional benefit of work done elsewhere: biosecurity programmes in the Manawātū and Tararua districts protect the city from pest incursion, and biodiversity work in the gorge and hill

country environments surrounding the city sustains ecological values that flow through to urban environments. Restructuring the funding model to align contributions more closely with local expenditure would risk undermining the upstream investments that deliver downstream benefits to the city.

Delivering the range of biodiversity and biosecurity work relevant to Palmerston North City at a standalone scale would be challenging. The current model relies on part roles functioning across a wide range of specialist demands – pest control, community group support, site and contract management, and advisory services – with expertise spread across multiple districts. Replicating this specialist depth at a city level would require either significant additional investment or acceptance of a reduced level of service.

Income and Spend for PCO by TLA



Data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year.

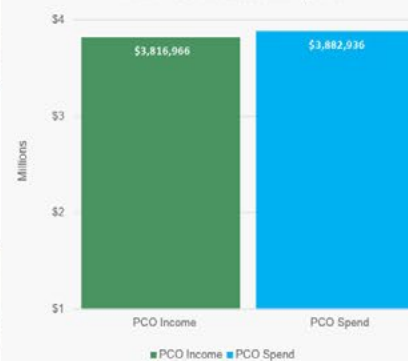
Income sources are from PCO Rates Revenue, comprising General Rate (55%), Environmental Initiatives (30%), and Biosecurity & Biodiversity >4ha rate (15%).

Spend represents Full Program costs (\$3.88M), including direct operational costs and allocated overhead (management, admin, depreciation, and program consumables). Overhead has been distributed to districts based on their proportion of total PCO hectares.

PCO costs have been allocated to districts based on the proportion of PCO area (hectares) within each district boundary. Where a PCO spans multiple districts, costs are split proportionally by area.

The programme covers approximately 1.6 million hectares of the 2.2 million hectares in the region. On a year to year basis, work moves around the region generally in the order of 900,000 hectares of control each year.

Total PCO Income and Spend



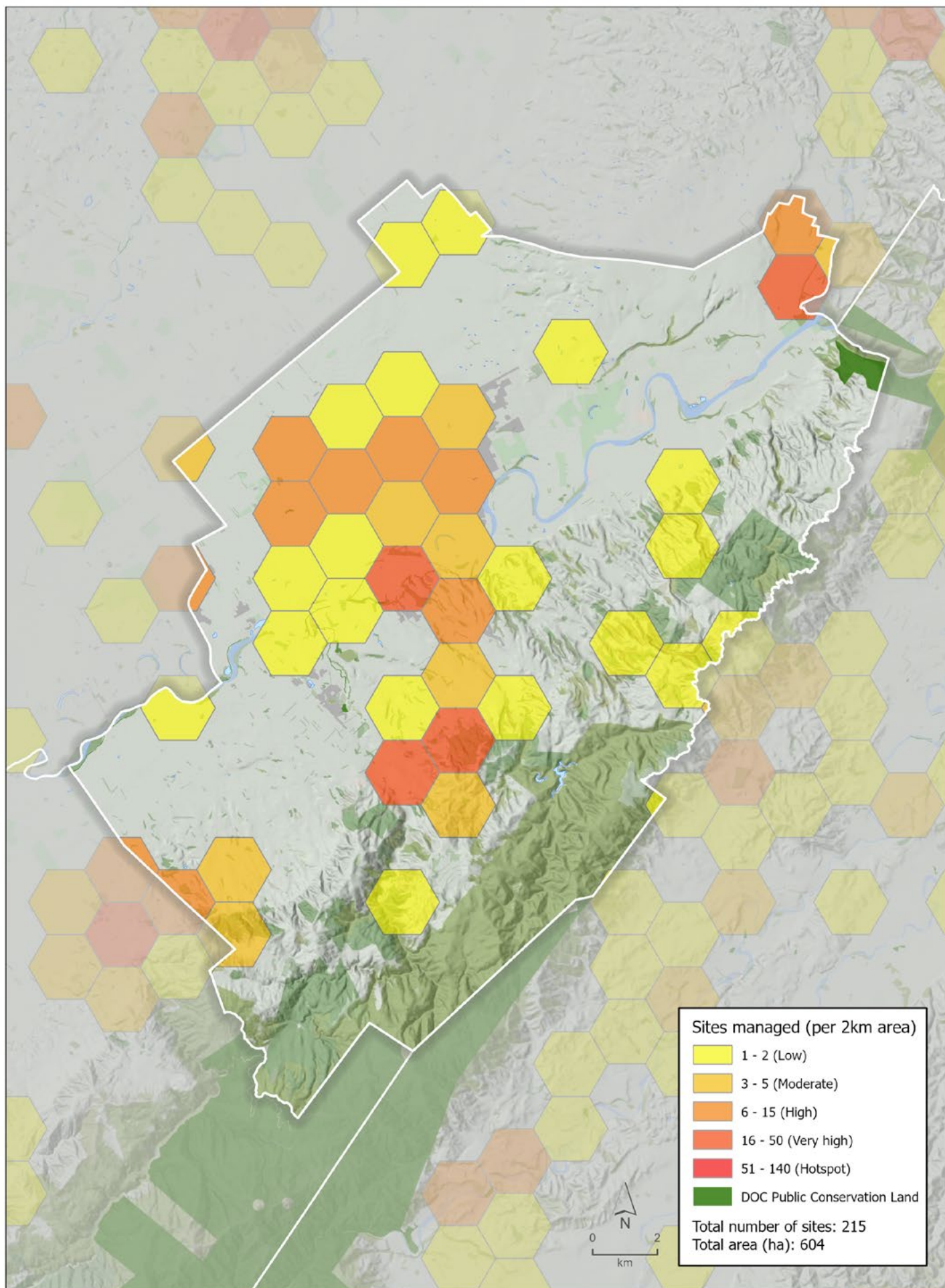
Income
Spend



Possum Control Income and Spend by TLA

Map prepared by:
C Tregurtha-Nairn
Date: 30/01/2026



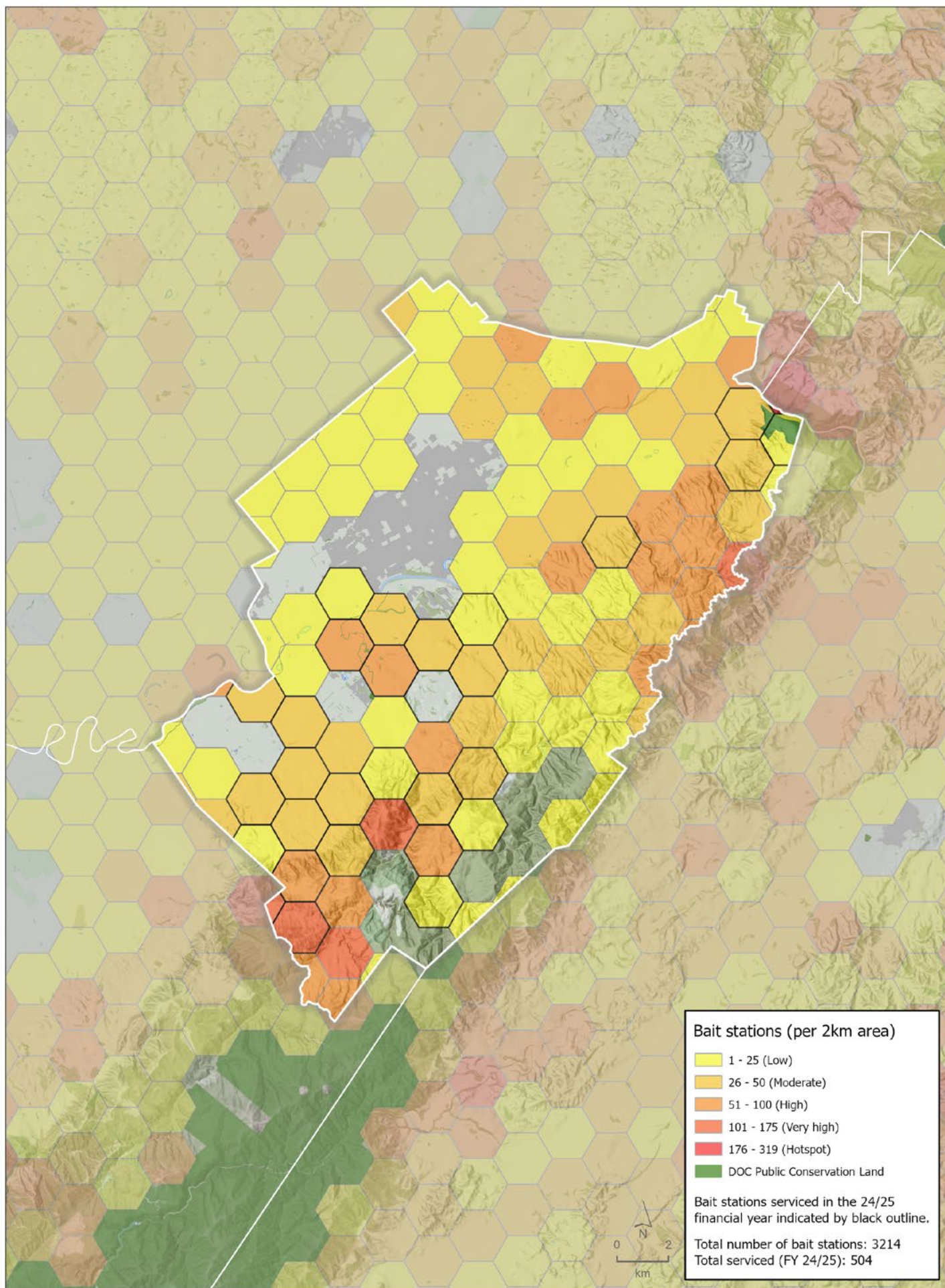


Biosecurity Pest Plants - Managed Sites

Palmerston North City District

Prepared by:
C Tregurtha-Nairn
Date: 3/06/2026





Possum Control Programme - Bait Station Coverage

Palmerston North City District

Prepared by:
C Tregurtha-Nairn
Date: 4/06/2026

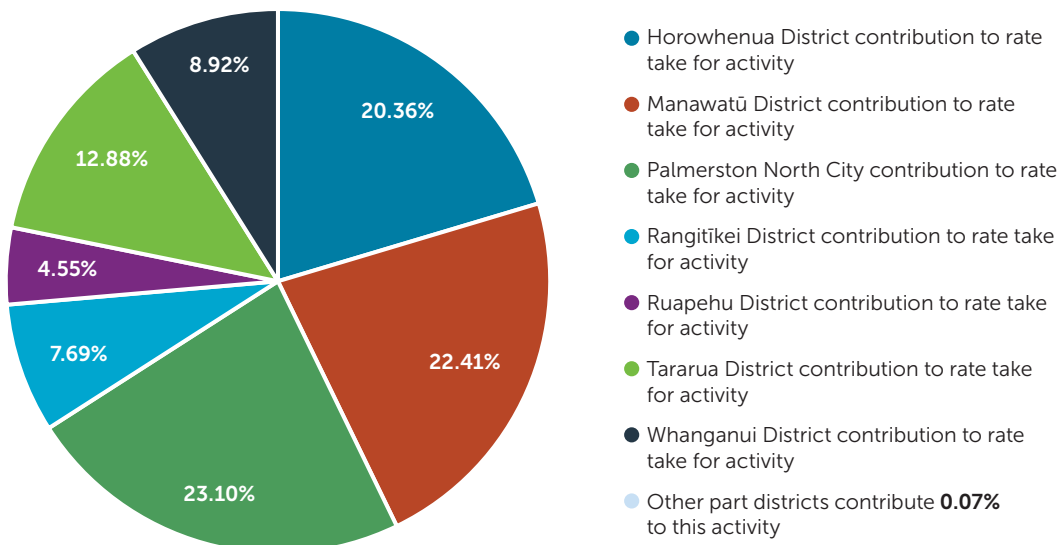


River Management and Flood Protection Activity

River Management and Flood Protection at a glance

- The aim of this activity is to protect people and property from **weather events**, enabling the regional economy to continue.
- Flood risk in Palmerston North is shaped by what happens across the **entire catchment** as it is a downstream recipient of water that has travelled through multiple territorial authority areas.
- **34** river and drainage schemes across the region, including **3** in Palmerston North City; **2** of which cross district boundaries into neighbouring districts Manawatū and Horowhenua.
- **3,844** assets across all schemes are valued about **\$1.2 billion**, the **3** schemes for Palmerston North City having about **\$755 million** of assets.
- Budget for the region: **\$20.89 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$4.12 million**, which is a **23.1%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- River Management and Flood Protection activity undertaken in the city in 2024-25: **\$4.63 million**.
- River and drainage schemes are generally funded on an 80/20 split, with **80%** of funding via targeted rates and **20%** via a general rate contribution to recognise the regional benefit of supported economy.
- Research shows every **\$1** of investment in flood protection provides **\$5 to \$8** of benefit in avoided costs (Source: Before the Deluge 2.0 report).
- Horizons advocated for **\$26.9 million** in 2020 for Infrastructure Climate Resilience Projects – an area near Te Matai Rd, the Hoko-whitu suburb and properties near Mangaone Stream benefitted from this
- An **integrated catchment approach** to river management and flood protection is critical to consistent decisions about infrastructure investment, gravel management, and flood response.
- Horizons' **30-year Infrastructure Strategy** guides the long-term programme for this activity.

River Management and Flood Protection



Protecting people, property and the regional economy

Horizons' River Management and Flood Protection activity provides a range of services to protect people and property from weather events and to support the regional economy. The activity is primarily delivered through the 34 River and Drainage Schemes, which have developed over time since the 1940's. The levels of service and activities vary between and within the schemes. The main work types include flood protection of city, towns, houses, infrastructure and rural land; erosion control; channel maintenance and gravel management; vegetation planting and management; drainage activity; and amenity and environmental enhancement works.

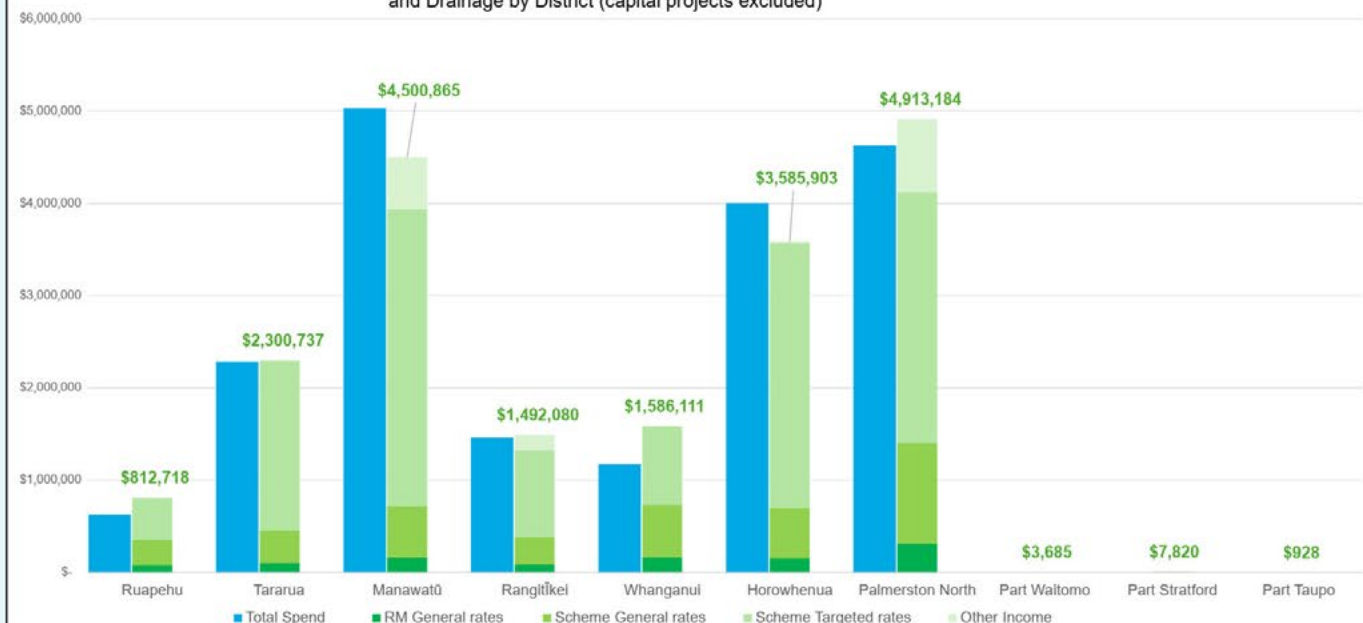
Across the schemes there were 3,844 assets with a total estimated value in the order of \$1.2 billion in June 2025. These assets include approximately 500 km of stop banks, more than 509 floodgates, more than 800 km of river channel and more than 1,070 km of drains. A large component of the work programme is focused on maintaining and repairing these assets. The programme also includes a capital upgrade programme to increase levels of service and activity to respond to and recover from storm events. The investigation and design aspect of the activity provides technical design and advice, produces gravel resources studies and support works outside of schemes via environmental grants.

River Management is one of Horizons' statutory functions, with relevant legislation including the Soil Conservation and River Control Act 1941, the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002, and Orders in Council relating to performance of Catchment Board and Drainage functions.

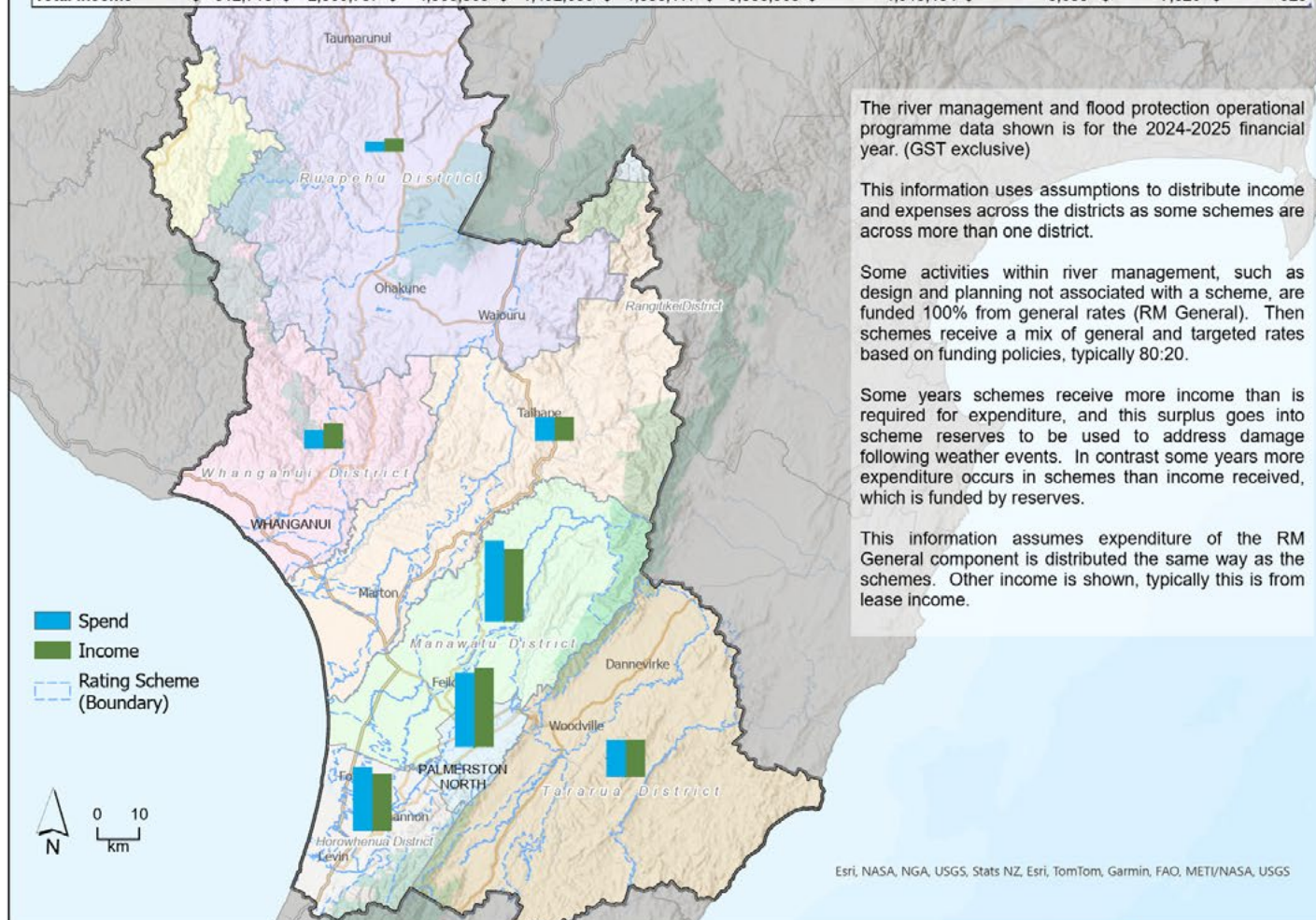
Horizons' 30-year Infrastructure Strategy (2024 to 2054) that forms part of Horizons' Long-term Plan (LTP) 2024-2034 provides the strategy for Horizons' River Management Activity. The Infrastructure Strategy overviews Horizons' river management schemes, asset management, the key issues for infrastructure management and includes the capital works programme for the 30 years. The Strategy is supported by Horizons' River Flood and Drainage Asset Management Plan 2025.

Palmerston North Cit has 3 river and drainage schemes, two of which cross district boundaries into neighbouring districts Manawātū and Horowhenua, containing about \$755 million in assets (as of June 2025), which is 63% of Horizons' river and drainage assets. These schemes protect a large area known to contain state highways, Crown assets, productive land, lifelines utilities, population centres and wildlife habitats. Research done by Te Uru Kahika, the collective of regional and unitary councils, presented in the Beyond the Deluge 2.0 report shows every \$1 invested into this activity saves \$5 to \$8 in avoided damage.

Spend and Income for River Management Operational Flood Protection and Drainage by District (capital projects excluded)



Type	Ruapehu	Tararua	Manawatu	Rangitikei	Whanganui	Horowhenua	Palmerston North	Part Waitomo	Part Stratford	Part Taupo
Total Spend	\$ 625,206	\$ 2,284,881	\$ 5,032,433	\$ 1,460,402	\$ 1,169,786	\$ 4,001,553	\$ 4,628,637	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,134
RM General rates	\$ 77,791	\$ 99,263	\$ 157,676	\$ 83,274	\$ 161,003	\$ 152,262	\$ 309,396	\$ 812	\$ 1,724	\$ 22
Scheme General rates	\$ 275,058	\$ 350,982	\$ 557,522	\$ 294,445	\$ 569,286	\$ 538,381	\$ 1,093,984	\$ 2,873	\$ 6,096	\$ 77
Scheme Targeted rates	\$ 450,681	\$ 1,839,170	\$ 3,216,688	\$ 943,342	\$ 855,821	\$ 2,875,938	\$ 2,716,070	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 829
Other Income	\$ 9,189	\$ 11,321	\$ 568,979	\$ 171,020	\$ -	\$ 19,323	\$ 793,734	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Income	\$ 812,718	\$ 2,300,737	\$ 4,500,865	\$ 1,492,080	\$ 1,586,111	\$ 3,585,903	\$ 4,913,184	\$ 3,685	\$ 7,820	\$ 928



River Management, Flood Protection and Drainage Spend and Income 2024 - 2025 Financial Year

Map prepared by:
P Hodge,
Inf Mgt team
Date:
4/02/2026



Note: Minor differences with rate take figures in map compared to 2024-25 financials relate to assumptions used to distribute income across schemes that cross more than one district.

Horizons recently completed a range of projects in and around Palmerston North thanks to \$26.9 million of co-investment provided by central government through Budget 2020. This work included rock armouring to protect Hokowhitu and a main water line, the replacement of a retaining wall along the Mangaone Stream near Tremaine Ave, and enhancements to various other stopbanks in Palmerston North City. This work provides upgraded protection to homes, businesses, key infrastructure and important assets worth millions of dollars.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$20.89 million

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$4.12 million

River and drainage schemes are generally funded on an 80/20 split, with 80% of funding via targeted rates and 20% via a general rate contribution. Targeted rate contributions for all river and drainage schemes are recovered through 361 different rates across the 34 schemes. One example is the Lower Manawātū Scheme, which is funded via 26 different rating differentials for the 80% targeted rate contribution. Schemes may also have loans, emergency reserves and renewal reserves. Non-scheme activities, such as grants and subsidies, and funded 100% by general rates.

People and relationships

Palmerston North City schemes sit within Horizons' Central operational area, which also cover schemes in neighbouring Districts. Within this team there are 6 river management operations engineering staff and 10 works team staff responsible for managing and maintaining assets across these areas. Support is provided on an as-needed basis through regionally organised support services: a River Management Asset Management Information team (6 FTE), Investigations and Design team (5 FTE), Projects team (3 FTE), Environmental and Regulatory team (3 FTE), administrative support (1 FTE), and management support (3 FTE). Other support for this activity is provided by corporate staff (e.g. finance, communications).

Some schemes have scheme committees, which provide governance input into the activity and funding arrangements for their scheme. These committees meet at least annually. Key relationships for this activity include landowners and rural communities within scheme areas, scheme committee members, territorial authorities, iwi and hapū, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, KiwiRail, and central government agencies involved in infrastructure funding and emergency management. This includes politicians from across the aisle, who have made decisions in previous terms to specifically dedicate funding to Flood Protection and River Management projects. A prime example of this was the Budget 2020 decision to invest \$26.9m into Horizons' Infrastructure Climate Resilience Projects. This resulted in significant amounts of work being undertaken which benefits Palmerston North City. The activity also has strong internal relationships with Horizons' Environmental Data and Emergency Management teams, both of which are essential to the effective delivery of flood protection work and coordination during flood responses.

Key considerations for delivery models

Flood protection infrastructure is long-lived, capital-intensive, and critical to the safety and economic productivity of the communities it serves. Managing an asset base valued at approximately \$1.2 billion across the region requires sustained investment, specialist engineering expertise, and a long-term planning horizon. Horizons' 30-year Infrastructure Strategy reflects this reality, but delivering on it depends on organisational continuity, stable funding, and prioritising spending across the region to ensure the best results along river catchments.

Palmerston North City's position at the lower end of the Manawatū River catchment means it is a downstream recipient of water that has travelled through multiple territorial authority areas. Flood risk in Palmerston North is therefore shaped by what happens across the entire catchment, not just within the city's boundaries. Furthermore, schemes do not neatly align with territorial authority boundaries. This reinforces the positive aspects of a regionally coordinated approach to river management and flood protection to make consistent decisions about infrastructure investment, gravel management, and flood response across catchment boundaries regardless of how many territorial authorities those boundaries cross. Having an integrated approach to catchment management could become complex in a post-amalgamation environment. Scheme boundaries should consider river flood and drainage fluvial dynamics, for example including the source of the water for addressing flooding or drainage needs within the area being treated by the scheme.

The growing complexity of regulatory requirements adds further pressure to this activity. Any structural change arising from the Head Start process will need to carefully consider how specialist river engineering capacity and long-term infrastructure planning responsibilities would be maintained and funded in a reorganised environment. Furthermore, changes would be required to consenting arrangements for this activity due to the regulatory permissions required.

The rating mechanisms for schemes have evolved over time and been reviewed at various stages. The complexity of these mechanisms, increasing costs and other facts have contributed to calls from the community for a review of scheme rating systems. Horizons' integrated catchment management planning work, which is funded via the Long-term Plan, aimed to include a review of scheme rating systems. In a post-amalgamation environment, new unitary authorities would have to consider how to address this complexity.

All River and Drainage Scheme Boundaries

NORTHERN

- Forest Road (D)
- Haunui (D)
- Lower Whanganui (Direct) (R)
- Lower Whanganui (Indirect) (R)
- Makirikiri (R)
- Matarawa
- Ohakune
- Pakihi Valley (R)
- Pohangina Ōroua (R)
- Porewa Valley (R)
- Rangitikei (R)
- Ruapehu
- Turakina (R)
- Tutaenui (R)
- Upper Whanganui (R)
- Whangaehu Mangawhero (R)

CENTRAL

- Ashhurst (R)
- Kahuterawa (R)
- Lower Kiwitea (R)
- Lower Manawātū (Direct) (R)
- Lower Manawātū (Indirect) (R)

SOUTHERN

- Foxtan East (D)
- Himatangi (D)
- Hokio (D)
- Koputaroa (D)
- Makerua (D)
- Manawātū (D)
- Moutoa (D)
- Ōhau Manakau (R)
- Te Kawau (D)
- Whirokino (D)

EASTERN

- Tararua
- Mangatainoka (R)
- South East Ruahine (R)
- Tawataia Mangaone (D)
- Upper Manawātū (R)

(D) Drainage | (R) River

± 0 15km

Looking after our future, today – Strategy, Regulation and Science Group

This group is made up of the following activities:

- Regulatory Management
- Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience
- Science and Environmental Reporting

The Strategy, Regulation and Science Group delivers our statutory resource management planning, compliance, monitoring and reporting functions, as well as corporate plans (e.g. Long-term Plan, Climate Action Strategy). In addition, this group provides sound science, policy, and regulatory advice, support and information to

our communities and the wider organisation. This group monitors changes in the region's resources and environment, develops and informs regulatory and non-regulatory responses to environmental issues, and measures the effectiveness of these responses. The Palmerston North District's position in the middle of the Manawatū catchment makes it an important location for understanding cumulative effects across the catchment, as well as contributing to activities that have downstream impacts.

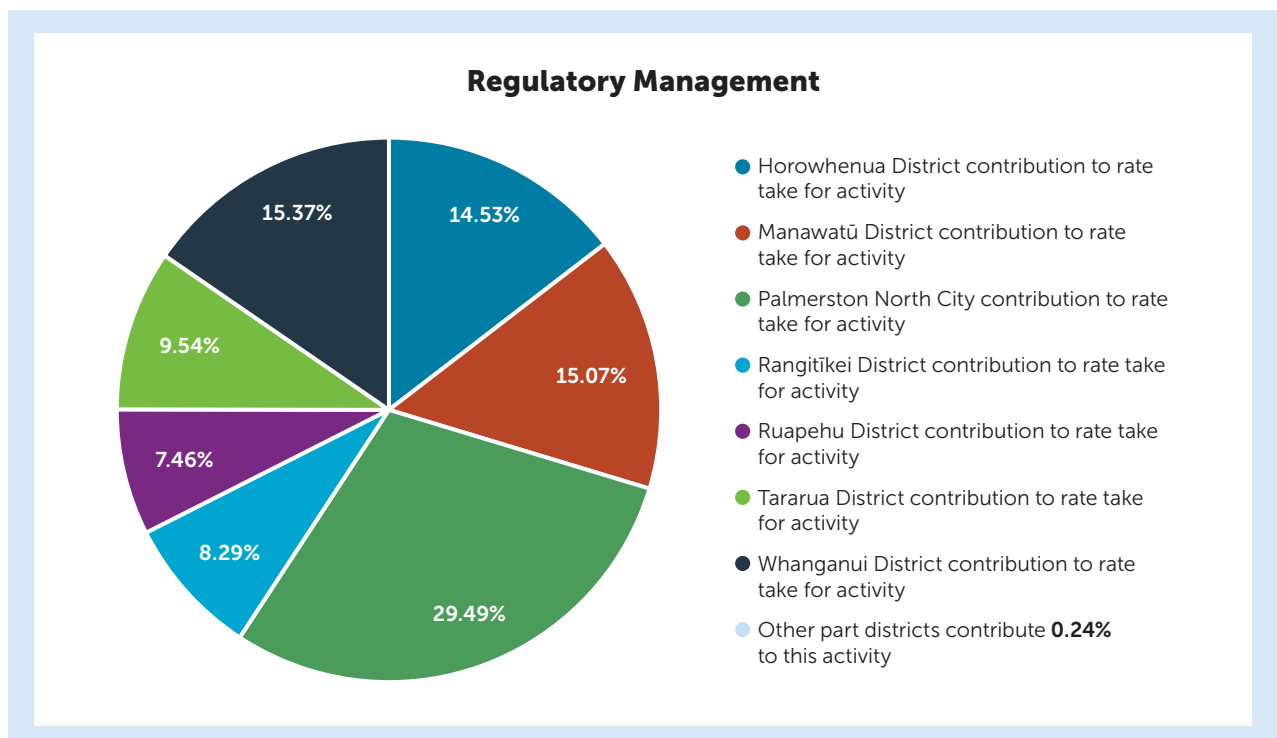
The Strategy, Regulation and Science Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year

	Regulatory Management	Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience	Science and Environmental Reporting
Regional rates	3,605,571.97	4,669,015.16	4,992,501.62
Grants and subsidies	-	-	-
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	4,142,295.55	-	1,947,405.18
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	389,980.00	752,101.13	-
Funding surplus/shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	6,425.36	-1,152,723.73	8,950.52
Total Operational Expenditure	8,131,422.16	6,573,840.02	6,930,956.27
Palmerston North City rates	1,063,242.39	1,376,839.76	1,472,297.29
Palmerston North City contribution of rate take to activity	29.49%	29.49%	29.49%

Regulatory Management Activity

Regulatory Management at a glance

- Aim of the activity is to ensure activities affecting the region's **land, air, and water resources** are managed in a way that is consistent with Horizons' One Plan and national environmental regulations.
- Funded by **user fees and charges**, and **general rates** which recognise the regional benefit of the public receiving general permitted activities/consents advice.
- Budget for the region: **\$8.13 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$1.06 million** which is a **29.49%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- **5,609** consents administered across the region.
- **2,573** resource consents were monitored for compliance (including repeat assessments) across the region in 2024-25.
- **904** environmental incidents reported and responded to across the region in 2024-25.
- **16** formal warnings, **115** abatement notices, **80** infringement notices, **1** enforcement order, **4** prosecutions completed and **7** prosecutions before the courts across the region in 2024-25.
- **1,008** authorised consents and permitted activities administered by Horizons in the city – which is **6.9%** of the total in the region in 2024-25.
- Key projects in the Palmerston North District include **Te Ahu a Turanga, Te Rere Hau windfarm**, Palmerston North City Council's **wastewater treatment plant** and providing input to proposed developments.
- Many of the consented activities Horizons regulates are connected to **wider catchment dynamics** that extend well beyond the district's boundaries.
- Regulatory decisions can have **downstream consequences**, especially for Palmerston North City given its location midway along the Manawatū River catchment.



Keeping development and the environment in balance

The Regulatory Management activity is Horizons' consenting and compliance function under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). It covers the processing of resource consent applications, monitoring consent holders to ensure they comply with consent conditions, and taking enforcement action where rules are not being followed. This work ensures that activities affecting the region's land, air, and water resources are managed in a way that is consistent with Horizons' One Plan and national environmental regulations. Horizons also has a role in providing technical input into district plan processes and nationally directed planning instruments, and in responding to resource consent applications lodged with other agencies where Horizons has an interest. This activity is responsible for Horizons' Pollution Hotline service, with a duty officer on call every day of the year to respond to reports of environmental pollution. Staff also provide RMA advice as and where appropriate.

Consents managed by Horizons in the Horowhenua District are varied, reflecting the diverse mix of land uses, which include horticulture, agriculture, processing, water takes for towns and villages, and activities affecting the district's significant coastal and wetland environments. Compliance monitoring is conducted on a risk-based programme, as doing in-person monitoring every consent annually would require significantly more resources.

Key projects for Horizons in Palmerston North City include enabling Te Ahu a Turanga and Te Rere Hau windfarm, overseeing the operation of Palmerston North City Council's wastewater treatment plant to ensure it is complying with its resource consent, and providing input to proposed developments to enable urban growth.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$8.13 million

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$1.06 million

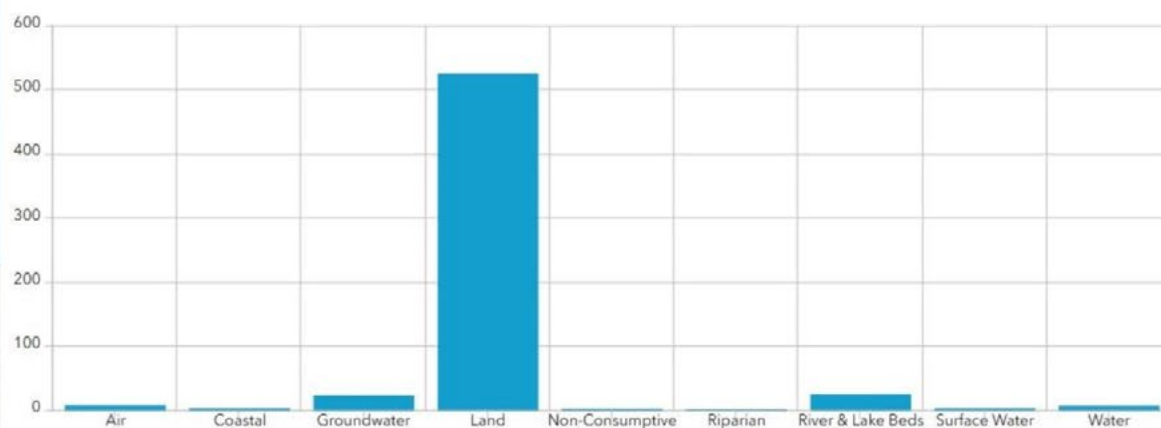
This activity's funding is divided into two sub-activities: RMA advice, and regulatory management. RMA advice is entirely funded by general rates, as the public's need for general advice around permitted activities and consents has an ongoing regional benefits. Regulatory management is funded by fees and charges on an actual and reasonable basis, with general rates topping up the rest of the cost. This is based on the rationale that users of resources create the need for regulatory management and derive private benefit from the use of natural resources. However, there is at times a wider public good which comes from issuing and monitoring consents.

People and relationships

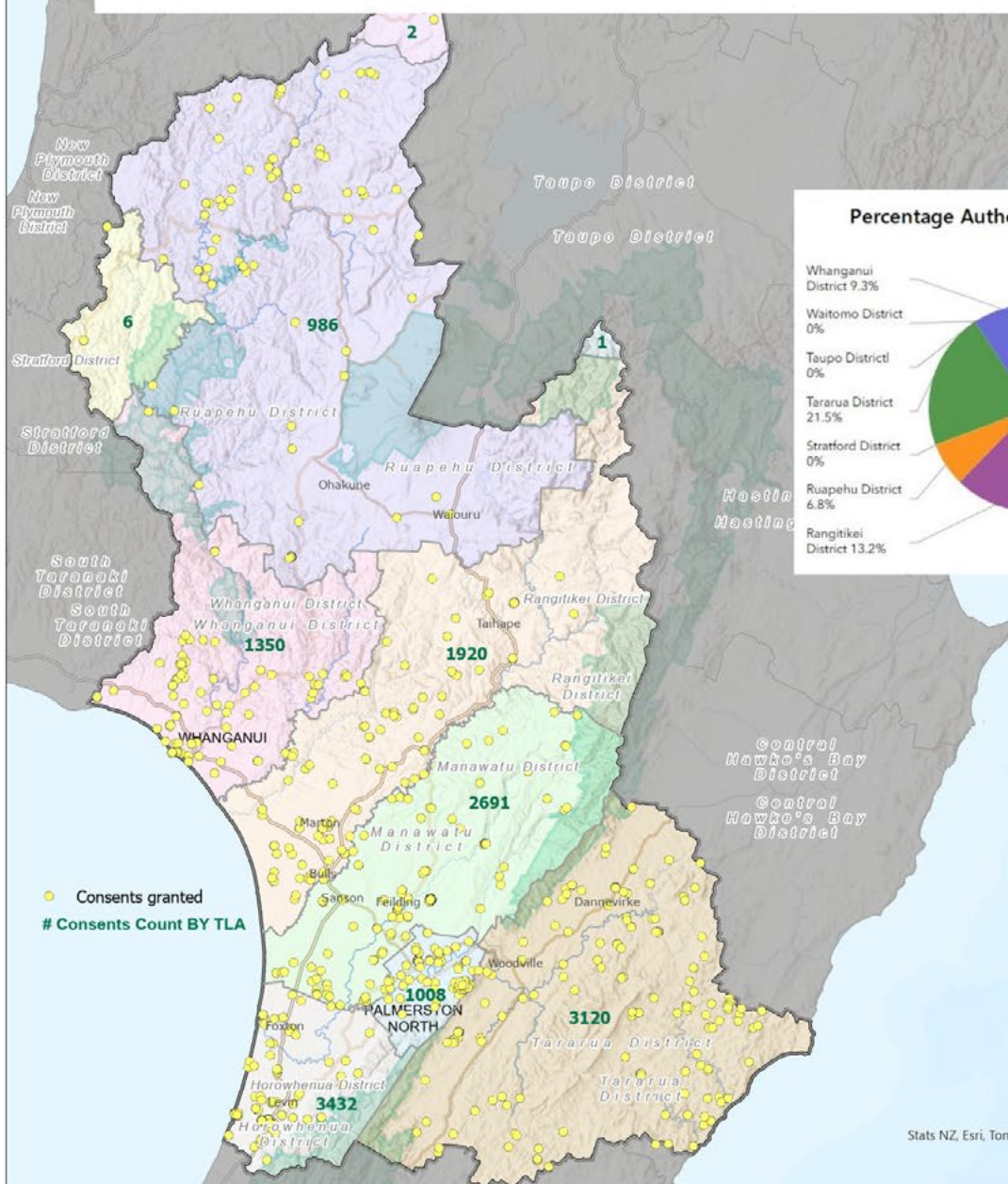
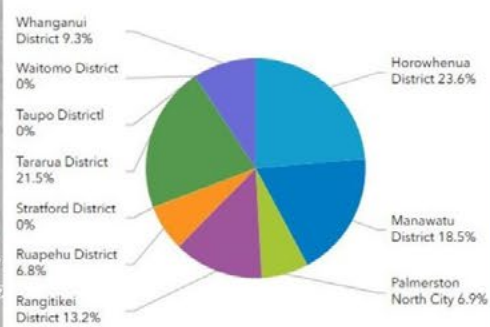
About 45 FTEs directly contribute to the Regulatory Management activity across the region. This activity does not allocate FTE roles to specific districts. Rather, staff work across activities to ensure their specialist knowledge on different areas (e.g. dairy sheds, industry, earthworks) is maximised. Other support for the Regulatory Management activity is provided by corporate staff (e.g. finance, communications, HR).

Regulatory Management staff work closely with a range of external parties. This includes consent applicants and holders, Palmerston North City Council (particularly where activities touch on both regional and district planning matters), iwi and hapū, the Ministry for the Environment, and other agencies. Enforcement work may also involve coordination with the New Zealand Police and other regulatory bodies. Iwi relationships are especially important in this activity, given the cultural and spiritual significance of water, land, and coastal environments to mana whenua.

Consent Authorizations by Type



Percentage Authorizations by TLA



Stats NZ, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR

Authorized Consents and Permitted Activity

RESOURCE CONSENTS 30/6/24 - 1/7/25

Prepared by:
Information Mgt
team,
Date:
26/01/2026.

horizons
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Key considerations for delivery models

Many of the consented activities Horizons regulates are connected to wider catchment dynamics that extend well beyond the district's boundaries. Regulatory decisions made about activities can have downstream consequences. This is especially pertinent for Palmerston North City, given its location in the middle of the long Manawātū River catchment. Maintaining a coherent, regionally consistent approach to consenting and compliance will be a critical consideration in any structural change arising from the simplification process.

As part of wider resource management system reforms, central government has signalled it was reviewing whether regulatory functions should be taken from councils and put into a national body. No decision has yet been made on this by central government, but a decision either way would impact resourcing requirements for post-amalgamation entities. If regional council Regulatory Management functions are moved to post-amalgamation entities, this will create larger workloads for consents monitoring and enforcement teams due to the greater number and variety of consents. Ensuring these teams are correctly resourced and structured if this scenario eventuates will be key to ensuring natural resources are managed properly for current and future generations.



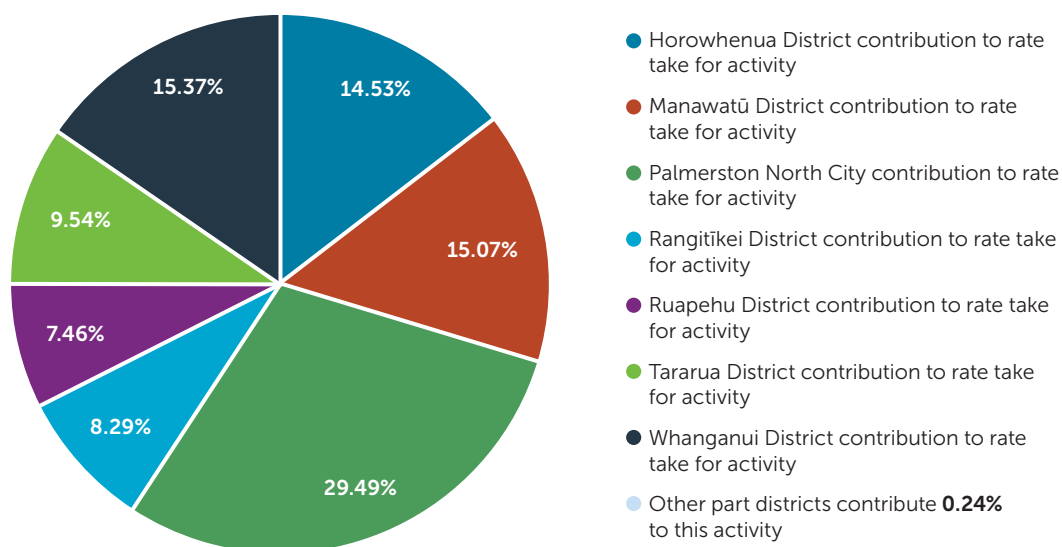
Regulatory staff inspecting a site

Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience Activity

Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience at a glance

- Aim is to provide regional **policy direction**, statutory **resource management** planning, **climate change** coordination, and **rural advice** to benefit the region now and into the future.
- Budget for the region: **\$6.6 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City is **\$1.38 million**, which is a **29.49%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- **26** rural advice engagements occurred in the district in 2024-25, including industry meetings, farm visits and central government meetings, on freshwater regulation.
- This activity is funded through **general rates** and the **Universal Annual General Charge** given it benefits the entire region equally both now and into the future.
- **60** submissions on central government policies and bills in the past five years.
- Involved in **13** plan changes across the region, including **3** in Palmerston North City.
- **1** Pūtea Hapori Urupare Āhuarangi – Community Climate Response Fund project in Palmerston North.
- Policy, strategy, and planning functions are foundational to the proper management of **natural resources**.
- Catchment scale delivery of policy and plan development for natural resources is key as they typically occur across **multiple territorial boundaries**.

Policy, Strategy and Climate Resilience



Planning for our region's future

Palmerston North City sits within a complex planning environment, with a number of freshwater, natural hazard, urban and rural land use pressures that are directly guided by Horizons' policy and planning framework. This framework is itself shaped by central government policy and legislation. Horizons' Policy, Strategy, and Climate Change coordination activity is responsible for regional policy direction, statutory resource management planning, coordination of climate change work, and provision of rural advice across the region. There is also broader policy and planning work that guides many of the regulatory systems Horizons is responsible for. This includes developing, reviewing and maintaining Horizons' One Plan, responding to national direction and legislative changes, supporting regional planning processes, and system reform developments that may affect Horizons' functions and responsibilities. The activity also coordinates climate mitigation and adaptation work across the organisation and region.

A rural advice function, providing technical advice and practical solutions to all farmers in our region, is embedded in this activity. Rural advice staff specialise in helping farmers improve effluent and nutrient efficiency, including effluent discharge consenting and compliance requirements, as well as advice on waterway management and nutrient management planning. This function also provides significant support to the rural professional and industry groups by preparing documents and advice that support the understanding and advice given on Horizons regulatory framework for all agricultural practices. Although the team have traditionally worked largely in the dairy sector, they also work closely with other agricultural or horticultural sectors to help improve efficiency, productivity and profitability in our region. This includes the development of best practice guidelines and assistance at various field and training days.

In Palmerston North, the policy team has been heavily engaged in in multiple proposed and private plan changes, including submitting and presenting evidence. Most recently, policy officers have been involved in Plan Change E (currently in mediation), Plan Change I, the Manderson Block private plan change and Bunnythorpe Business Park proposed plan change. In addition, Horizons Policy team are supporting the Future Development Strategy review and Housing and Business Development Capacity Assessment (both joint processes as required through the NPS on Urban Development), and have provided ongoing support and advice on the draft Stormwater Strategy which was recently open for public consultation. Across the region, the policy team engaged in 13 proposed and/or private plan changes and provided feedback on five growth strategies in 2024-25. Over the same period, the rural advice team attended or ran 60 engagements, including 15 industry meetings and workshops across dairy, sheep and beef, deer, horticulture, and Zespri; 19 individual farmer regulatory advice meetings or farm visits; and eight meetings with the Ministry for the Environment and other councils to discuss freshwater regulation. Of these, 26 involved Palmerston North City.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$6.57 million

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$1.38 million

The policy, rural advice and climate resilience functions are funded through the general rate, while meeting Te Tiriti o Waitangi settlement legislation and RMA obligations to iwi and hapū is funded through the Universal Annual General Charge. This funding model is appropriate given the activity benefits the entire region equally both now and into the future. Central government grants and subsidies are utilised when available.

People and relationships

There are 19 FTEs across this activity – 14 across policy, rural advice and climate resilience; four across iwi and hapū planning support, and one manager. The number of staff allocated to this activity is small by comparison to other regions. Therefore, these staff typically operate across the region rather than by district.

Relationships for this activity are broad. Farmers, vegetable growers, primary industry companies such as Horticulture NZ, Fonterra and Dairy NZ, iwi and hapū, community groups interested in climate adaptation, territorial authorities, other regional councils, and central government ministries all feature in the network. In Palmerston North City, key relationships include iwi authorities and hapū collectives, farmers and rural industry representatives, and Horowhenua District Council. There are also strong internal relationships, with the policy team aiding other parts of Horizons in their work. A prime example is policy providing advice and support to the Biodiversity and Biosecurity activity as part of the Regional Pest Management Plan review process, and the climate resilience function providing Horizons with advice on how to reduce its own carbon emissions.

Key considerations for delivery models

Policy, strategy, and planning functions are foundational to almost everything else a regional council does, and to the proper management of the region's resources. Policy and plan development for matters such as water quality and quantity, coastal land use and quality, natural hazard management, air quality and soil management typically occurs across multiple territorial boundaries to account for geographic diversity and the way catchments flow across boundaries – so doing these activities at a catchment scale at least is key. The matters managed through regional council functions are also more rural in nature, which is different to the more urban focus of district/city councils. The policy team are also instrumental in the development of the Long-term Plan, which is a significant task for this small team. As well as being legislatively driven, the policy, rural advice and climate coordination functions provide significant support to the region's rural sector, community groups and industry in the form of advice, funding opportunities, and information development.

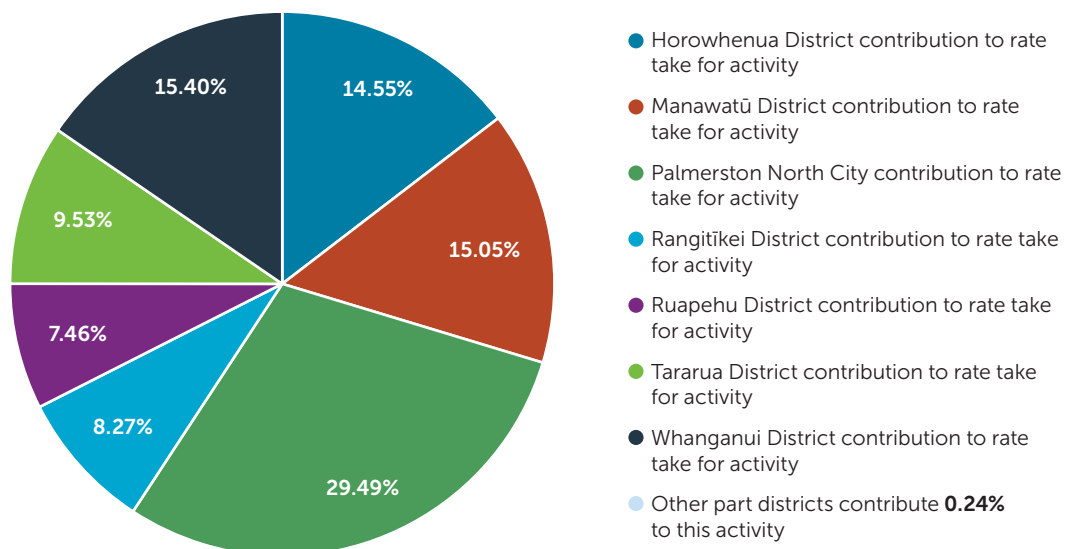
To deliver this activity at a district scale, Palmerston North City would need to either resource their planning, rural support and climate resilience teams with in-house expertise able to prepare rural and environmental policy, and engage in the rural sector space, or they would need to contract this resource. Sub-regional delivery of the planning, climate resilience and rural advice activities could mean reduced specialist support, increased contractor and consultant spending, and less service delivery for the same rates take.

Science and Environmental Reporting Activity

Science and Environmental Reporting at a glance

- Aim is to provide robust **scientific support** to direct monitoring of **natural resources**; support **development of policy** to sustain those natural resources; and **assess those policies** to ensure they are working as intended.
- Budget for the region: **\$6.93 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$1.47 million** which is a **29.49%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through a **general rates** due to regional benefit of the information, as well as **targeted charges applied under section 36** of the Resource Management Act for consent holders.
- Funding from resource consent holders in Palmerston North City: approximately **\$245,000**.
- Monitoring activities in Palmerston North City costs about **\$175,000**.
- **4** swim spot sites in the city are tested weekly from November to April for water quality, with results available on LAWA.org.nz.
- The city's position in the middle of the Manawatū River catchment makes it an important location for understanding **cumulative effects** across the catchment.
- Data collected in Palmerston North feeds into **regional-scale analysis** that informs resource management decisions benefiting not only Palmerston North, but the whole region.
- This activity generates **strong economies of scale**: by delivering science and monitoring collectively across the region, the cost to any one district is substantially lower than it would be if each district were to fund its own equivalent capability.
- Horizons employs **single specialists** in key roles such as land science, groundwater and water allocation.
- Sub-regional delivery would likely increase costs through **duplication** of software, databases, equipment and processes.

Science and Environmental Reporting



Understanding our environment today to protect it for tomorrow

The Science and Environmental Reporting activity provides the scientific foundation that underpins almost everything Horizons does. It is responsible for monitoring the state and trend of natural resources, supporting the development of policy to sustain those resources, and assessing whether policies are working as intended. This can include diverse work such as monitoring the effects of water abstraction, modelling the impact of land use controls on nutrient concentrations, or assessing the effectiveness of erosion mitigations on instream sediment levels. The activity also plays a key role in reporting on the state of natural resources over time.

Horizons maintains a core monitoring network, primarily focused on water quantity such as rainfall, river level and groundwater levels; as well as continuous monitoring of a range of environmental variables such as temperature, soil moisture and atmospheric pressure. These programmes have direct benefit to the monitoring of state and trend of natural resources, which this activity delivers. These programmes also have significant benefit to other activities such as Emergency Management and Catchment Operations. The core monitoring network is therefore funded in part by multiple activities to ensure cost effectiveness. Across the region, the total Science and Environmental Reporting funding contribution for the core monitoring network is approximately \$1.98 million. Further information on the breakdown of this network is addressed in the Environmental Data activity.

Additional monitoring is undertaken beyond the core network, covering water quality in rivers and streams, lakes, groundwater, coastal environments and estuaries, contact recreation swim spots, fluvial systems, and air quality. These various forms of monitoring in Palmerston North City cost approximately \$175,000. An example of a Science and Environmental Reporting monitoring programme is shown in the map below. This is the surface water (rivers and streams) water quality monitoring network which is funded through both general rates, and targeted Section 36 charges to consent holders. The network is used to inform policy decisions at a regional scale. The information within any one district would likely be insufficient to inform

robust scientific analysis on its own. Therefore, whilst more money is spent in some districts than others, all districts benefit from the information.

The city's position at the middle of the Manawatū River catchment also makes it an important location for understanding cumulative effects across an entire catchment. Water quality that Palmerston north city residents encounter on their doorstep is a result of activities in the Tararua and Manawatu Districts. As the largest urban centre in the region, the impacts of wastewater, stormwater, and water abstraction for municipal supply are some of the largest in the region. Data collected in Palmerston North feeds into regional-scale analysis that informs resource management decisions benefiting the whole region, not just the district itself.

This activity is also responsible for the contact recreation programme, more commonly known as the swim spot monitoring programme. In Palmerston North City, four sites are tested weekly by staff during the warmer months for bacterial contamination (freshwater sites are also tested for potentially toxic algae). Those tests are then taken to an independent lab, with results categorised on a traffic light system and published online on the Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website to help people to make informed decisions about where to swim.

Finally, the Science and Environmental Reporting activity undertakes policy development, policy effectiveness monitoring, data analysis, resource management research and reporting functions across the region. During this period, this included significant work on the development of science and policy for the Oranga Wai (freshwater future) plan change process. These costs are broadly spread across the region, with information from the entire region being drawn upon equally. In all cases, these benefit from economies of scale. The cost to the city was approximately \$328,000 for these functions.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$6.9 million

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$1.47 million

Funding from resource consent holders in Palmerston North City: approximately \$245,000

This activity is funded through a general rates, as well as targeted charges applied under Section 36 of the Resource Management Act. The Section 36 charges relate to consented activities such as water abstraction and nutrient discharge. These charges allows for the targeted monitoring, policy development, and policy assessment related to those activities. This reflects the principle that those who use natural resources, and hold consents to do so, should contribute to the cost of understanding and managing those resources.

Many of the costs associated with this activity – including data management systems, databases, analytical tools, and monitoring infrastructure – are largely fixed. The upfront cost of establishing these systems is significant, but adding additional monitoring sites or datasets adds relatively little marginal cost. This means the activity generates strong economies of scale: by delivering science and monitoring collectively across the region, the cost to any one district is substantially lower than it would be if each district were to fund its own equivalent capability.



Science team collecting water samples

People and relationships

There are 19 FTEs across this activity during 2024-25, though the activity draws on specialist staff from multiple teams across the organisation as appropriate, including Environmental Data, Freshwater and Partnerships, and Biodiversity and Biosecurity. This reflects the interdisciplinary nature of environmental science and the value of integrating specialist knowledge from across Horizons rather than siloing it within a single team. This activity's science communicator shares a strong relationship with Horizons' general communications employees, ensuring the science Horizons collects is communicated well to communities.

Horizons operates with a lean science team. In several key specialist roles – such as land science, groundwater science, and water allocation science – there is one Horizons-employed specialist for the entire region. This means relationships with those specialists are shared across the organisation and across the region. Externally, key relationships include central government agencies such as the Ministry for the Environment and Earth Sciences New Zealand, other regional councils, iwi and hapū, territorial authorities, industry and consent holders, and community groups with an interest in environmental reporting and natural resource management.

Key considerations for delivery models

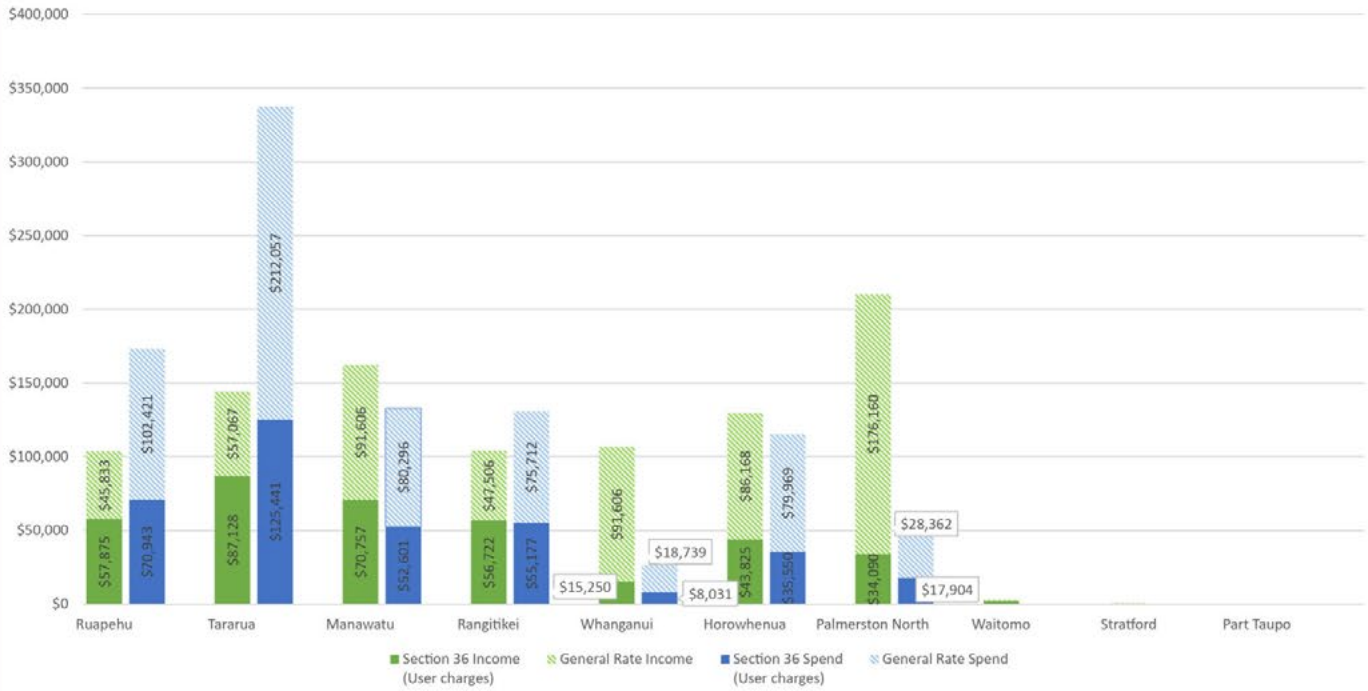
Science and environmental monitoring are the bedrock of good resource management. Without robust, long-term data on the state of natural resources, it is not possible to develop defensible policy, make sound regulatory decisions, or demonstrate whether management interventions are working. This activity underpins the credibility and effectiveness of almost every other activity Horizons delivers.

Many elements of this activity are structured at a land type or river catchment scale to ensure the robustness of datasets and maximise cost efficiencies. Monitoring programmes regularly cross territorial authority boundaries. The surface water quality monitoring network, for example, is designed to inform policy decisions at a regional scale. The data from any single district would likely be insufficient to support robust scientific analysis on its own. All districts benefit from the full regional network, even when more monitoring expenditure occurs in some districts than others.

The lean nature of Horizons' science team is both a strength and a vulnerability in the context of structural change. Delivering this activity at a sub-regional scale could reduce the ability to maintain these specialists in-house. The result would be far greater reliance on contractors and consultants, who are generally more expensive for equivalent output, or an inability to provide the specific scientific advice needed to make robust and defensible resource management decisions.

The economics of data management, analysis, and reporting reinforce this point. The significant upfront costs of purchasing databases, developing analytical processes, procuring monitoring equipment and infrastructure are largely fixed. Fragmenting delivery across multiple post-amalgamation entities would require duplication of these systems, substantially increasing the overall cost to ratepayers across the region for no gain in service quality. Sub-regional delivery would mean reduced specialist support, increased contractor and consultant spending, and less service for the same rates take.

Surface Water State of Environment Monitoring and Discharge Network - Income and Expenditure by District



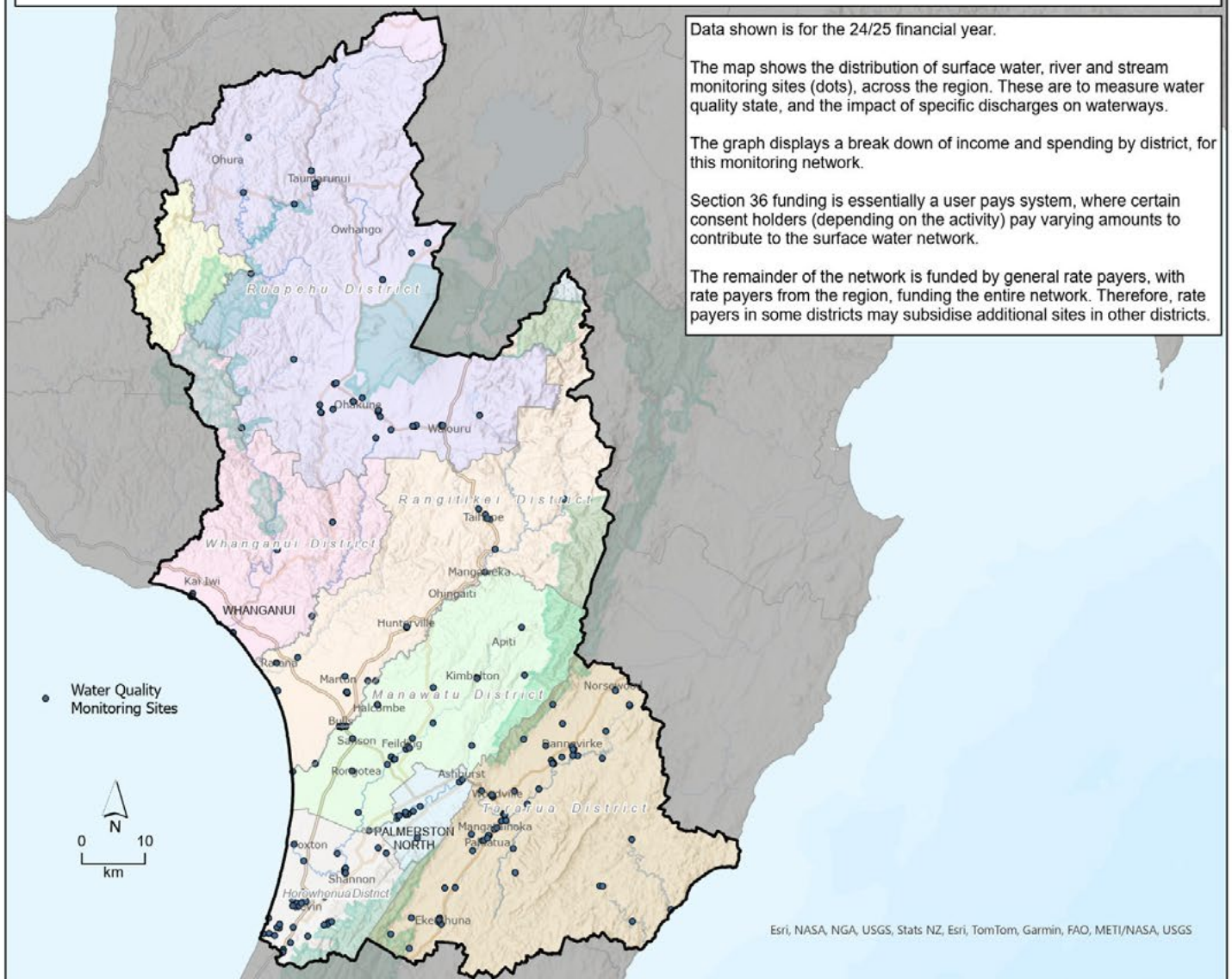
Data shown is for the 24/25 financial year.

The map shows the distribution of surface water, river and stream monitoring sites (dots), across the region. These are to measure water quality state, and the impact of specific discharges on waterways.

The graph displays a break down of income and spending by district, for this monitoring network.

Section 36 funding is essentially a user pays system, where certain consent holders (depending on the activity) pay varying amounts to contribute to the surface water network.

The remainder of the network is funded by general rate payers, with rate payers from the region, funding the entire network. Therefore, rate payers in some districts may subsidise additional sites in other districts.



Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Stats NZ, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS

Surface Water Quality Monitoring

Income and Expenditure by TLA

Prepared by:
S Chawla, Science;
PHodge, Information Mgt,
WQMonitoringCost.aprx.
Date: 30/01/2026



Providing connections and information – Transport and Regional Services

This group is made up of the following activities:

- District Advice
- Emergency Management
- Environmental Data
- Information Management
- Road Safety
- Transport Planning
- Passenger Services

This group is a combination of distinct activities, but all have a common thread: gathering and providing information and/or services across the region to ensure alignment beyond territorial authority boundaries. The Palmerston North District benefits from public transport and regional scale delivery of the district advice, emergency management and environmental data services in particular.



Installing environmental data monitoring equipment

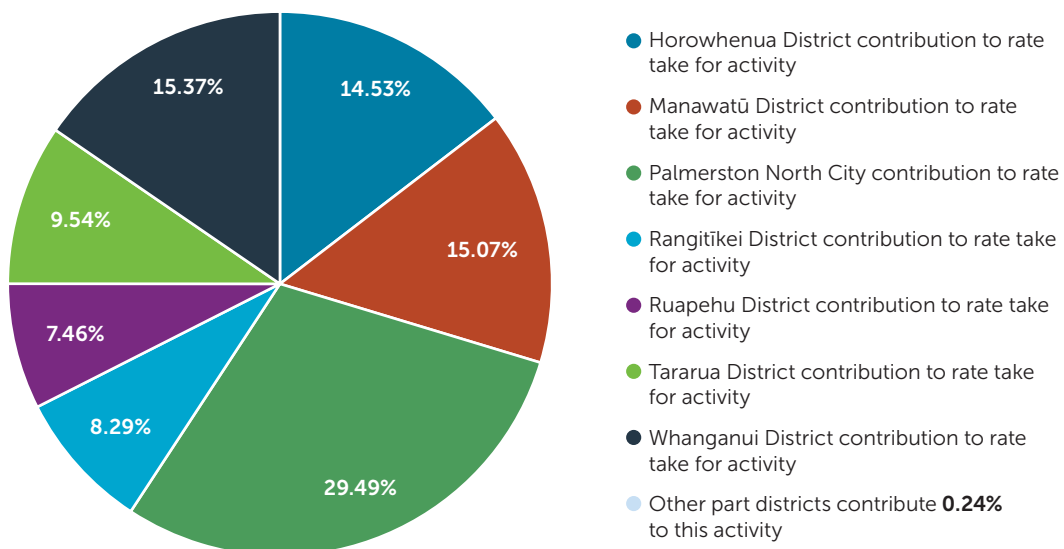
Transport and Regional Services Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year							
	District Advice	Emergency Management	Environmental Data	Information Management	Road Safety	Transport Planning	Passenger Services
Regional rates	425,179.58	2,304,614.26	-	1,797,786.28	220,959.77	172,360.90	8,234,416.17
Grants and subsidies	-	-	-	-	576,178.93	160,341.61	10,513,999.61
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	-	-	420,435.05	-	-	-	-
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	-	54,330.95	405,196.29	-	163,333.00	-	1,774,666.00
Funding surplus/shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	757.68	4,106.98	-3,012,882.03	-510,981.60	173.43	307.16	-174,337.38
Total Operational Expenditure	424,421.90	2,354,838.22	3,838,513.37	2,308,767.88	960,298.27	332,395.34	20,697,419.17
Palmerston North City District rates	125,380.65	679,604.68	-	530,146.84	65,158.54	50,827.28	6,023,364.88
Palmerston North City contribution of rate take to activity	29.49%	29.49%	0.00%	29.49%	29.49%	29.49%	73.15%

District Advice Activity

District Advice at a glance

- Aim is to provide **property information**, **natural hazard guidance** and **land development advice** to support informed decision-making by landowners and territorial authorities.
- Budget for the region: **\$424,421**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$125,380**, which is a **29.49%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded mostly through **general rates**, with a small amount of revenue collected from dam owners for **dam safety regulation requirements**.
- **1,076** requests for land development or property information and advice across the Horizons Region in 2024-25, with **163** property requests in Palmerston North.
- **2** classifiable dams in Palmerston North City are subject to the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022.
- Horizons coordinates natural hazard information for inclusion in **LIMs** issued by Palmerston North City Council.
- Dam safety regulation presents a **specific structural consideration** in any post-amalgamation environment as any entity would need to become a Building Consent Authority for dams.

District Advice



Helping communities make informed decisions about land and properties

The District Advice activity provides property information and guidance on natural hazards, land development, and initial considerations in relation to Horizons' One Plan and national direction. The activity assists the public, landowners, consultants, and developers with property-related enquiries, and supports territorial authorities in assessing land use and building consents. This activity is also responsible for dam safety regulation across the region under the Building Act 2004 and the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022.

The District Advice team responded to 1,076 requests for land development or property information and advice across the Horizons Region in 2024-25. The activity coordinates Horizons' initial feedback on potential growth areas, draft proposed plan changes, private plan changes, and fast-track applications, working closely with territorial authorities and developers. It also ensures there is accurate and publicly accessible information available online, including through the [Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer](#) and the [District Advice Public Viewer Property Enquiry map](#), supporting transparency and enabling the public and councils to gather information for themselves.

In Palmerston North City, this activity responded to 163 property requests in 2024-25. Recent work has included providing support to Palmerston North City Council and stakeholders on the proposed draft Kākatangiata Plan Change, Te Utanganui, Ashhurst, Draft Plan Change E - Roxburgh Crescent Residential Area, Napier Road and proposed private plan changes. This activity has also worked with the city council and others on Palmerston North's Stormwater Strategy which is a requirement of the Future Development Strategy. District Advice coordinates and facilitates the Regional LIM Work Group, which includes relevant staff from Palmerston North City Council, to ensure both organisations are meeting their LGOIMA requirements. This includes preparing and providing Palmerston North City Council with plain language summaries for inclusion in LIM reports, as well as spatial and technical natural hazard information. On the dam safety side, there are three classifiable dams in Palmerston North City subject to the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2022.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$425,179

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$125,380

This activity is funded mostly through general rates, with a small amount of revenue collected from dam owners for dam safety regulation requirements. There are no significant contractual obligations, with the exception of a collective agreement with other North Island regional authorities for Waikato Regional Council to act as the building consent authority for assessing building consents for large dams.

People and relationships

There are 3.25 FTEs supporting this activity across the region. Other support is provided by corporate staff (e.g. communications).

Key relationships in the city include Palmerston North City Council staff working in planning, policy, building, infrastructure, GIS, and LIM teams. Other key relationships are with members of the public, landowners, consultants, and developers; and dam owners and their consultants.

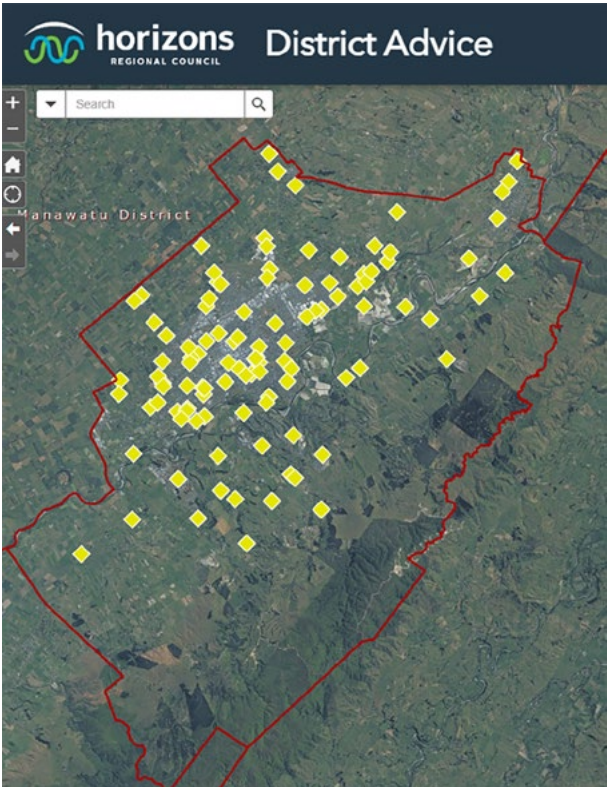
Key considerations for delivery models

Although District Advice is one of Horizons' smaller activities by budget, it plays an important connecting role between regional council functions and the day-to-day decisions that communities and territorial authorities make about land and property. Natural hazard information, LIM inputs, and land development guidance all flow from this activity into decisions about where people build, how land is developed, and how risk is understood and managed at the property level.

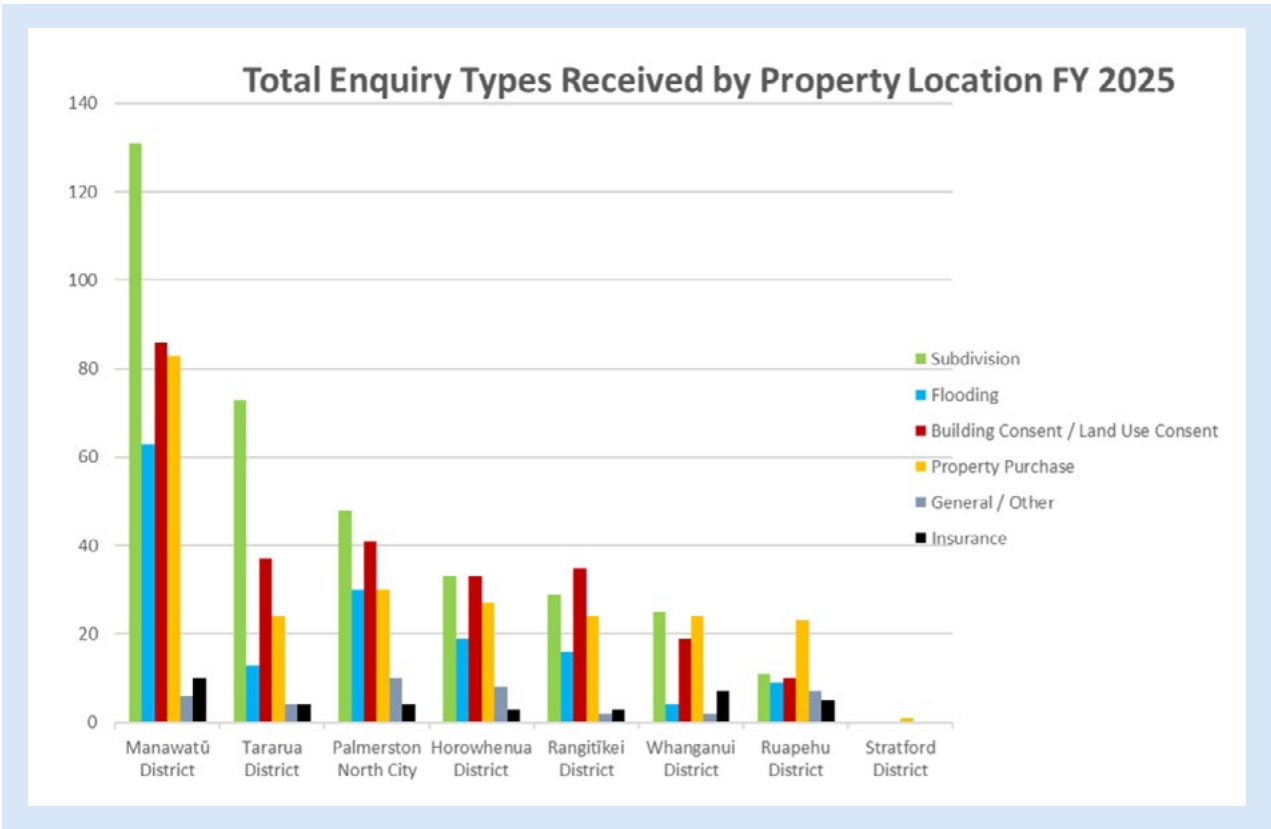
More broadly, the natural hazard and land development advice functions of this activity benefit from being delivered at a regional scale, where data, expertise, and systems can be shared efficiently. The [Regional Natural Hazard Online Viewer](#) is a good example - a tool that took investment to build and that now serves the public and multiple councils across the region. Replicating equivalent capability at a district scale would cost significantly more for the same or lesser result.

Dam safety regulation presents a specific structural consideration in any post-amalgamation environment. Horizons currently holds regulatory responsibilities for large and classifiable dams under the Building Act 2004,

including maintaining a regional dam register, managing safety requirements, monitoring compliance, and implementing policy on dangerous, earthquake-prone, and flood-prone dams. If these responsibilities were to transfer to a district-level entity, that entity would need to become a Building Consent Authority for dams. This process would require accreditation by International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ) and formal registration with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). Achieving and maintaining that accreditation would carry cost, and the relatively small number of classifiable dams in any single district makes it difficult to justify the investment or maintain the specialist expertise required at a smaller scale.



District Advice Land Development Enquiries in the Palmerston North District.



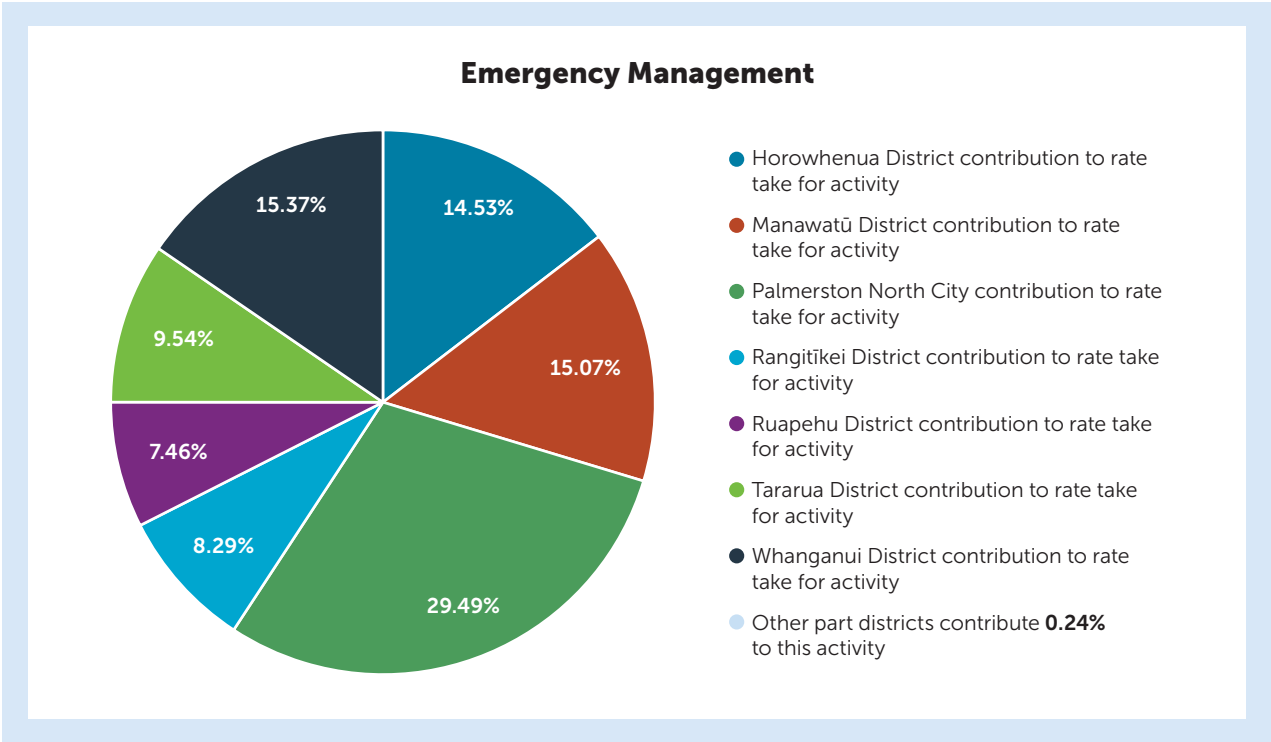
Emergency Management Activity

Emergency Management at a glance

- Aim is to take a regional approach to **reducing the risk of emergencies** and disasters, and **preparing for, responding to, and recovering** from those that do occur.
- Budget for the region: **\$2.35 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North District: **\$679,604** which is a **29.49%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- Emergency Management is funded primarily through **general rates** to recognise the regional benefit of protecting people, homes and livelihoods before, during and after an emergency.
- Palmerston North District is at risk from **flooding** from a range of river systems.
- Rainfall in the Manawatū River catchment creates downstream flooding risk, requiring **coordinated response** across multiple councils simultaneously.
- Palmerston North City Council is a member of the **Manawatū-Whanganui Emergency Management Group**.
- The Group office has **fulltime Emergency Management staff** and draws on Horizons staff before, during and after emergencies, including to deploy to support other Councils.
- Also covers **maritime safety and harbourmaster functions** on the on the Manawatū River, as well as oil spill response capability.
- **Oil spills** are low-frequency but high-consequence events requiring specialist capability.
- **River flooding**, our most likely and most frequent form of emergency, often crosses multiple district boundaries, and is often combined with other weather impacts such as high winds and thunderstorms.
- Emergency management outcomes in the region rely on a coordinated regional system, including access to an **IL4-rated Group Emergency Coordination Centre** and shared specialist capability.
- Fragmentation of this model through reform would likely **reduce response effectiveness** and require **significant additional investment** to replicate existing capability at a local level.
- Palmerston North District's integration into a regional system gives its communities **efficient access** to surge workforce capacity, specialist expertise, and coordination infrastructure. Funding this independently as a sub-unitary could come at a large cost.
- Emergency Management is **deeply dependent** on other Horizons activities which must be carefully considered in any structural change.
- It relies on **integrated functions** across Environmental Data, Catchment Operations, River Management, and Science to operate effectively, and separating these in a post amalgamation structure risks undermining this coordination.
- Any amalgamation process would need to carefully consider how the Emergency Management Group model would be maintained in a restructured environment, and what the **implications would be for community safety** if regional coordination capability was fragmented.



Staff in the Group Emergency Coordination Centre



Ready for whatever comes

Horizons’ Emergency Management activity works to reduce the risk of emergencies and disasters, and to prepare for, respond to, and recover from those that do occur. It is delivered under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002, which establishes a group-based model of emergency management across Aotearoa New Zealand. Horizons is the administering authority for the Manawātū-Whanganui Emergency Management Group, which brings the region’s eight councils together to create a coordinated regional system.

The activity provides a Group Emergency Coordination Centre (GECC) capability housed in Te Ao Nui, an IL4-rated building. It ensures staff across the region — especially council staff — can support response and recovery functions, delivers community preparedness and resilience engagement across rural communities, undertakes hazard-specific planning, and coordinates response and local coordination during local and regional events.

While some of this work is visible locally, much of its value lies in the regional coordination capability. Access to a shared regional workforce, common operating picture systems, intelligence functions, and specialist planning support means ratepayers get far

more capability than could be maintained at a district level alone without significant investment.

Palmerston North City faces flood risk at multiple scales. The city are is split in two by the Manawātū River, while the Mangaone Stream and Whisky Creek also carry significant amounts of water through populated areas. These three waterways and subsequent flood behaviour is shaped by rainfall across multiple territorial authority areas upstream. The Mangaone Stream responds rapidly to rainfall, and its urban setting increases exposure to property and infrastructure damage. A spillway and mitigation works help manage flows, but flooding can still occur quickly and locally – sometimes ahead of responses to larger river systems – resulting in property flooding, road closures, and disruption to urban services. While the Mangaone risk is localised, it typically occurs during wider weather events, meaning response is supported through the regional Emergency Management system. The intersection between riverine flooding and stormwater-related flooding is also important, especially when the Manawātū River is so high it cannot take stormwater discharges.

Flood protection infrastructure in Palmerston North is designed to a high standard and provides protection against most flood events; however, there remains a risk from

extreme events that exceed design capacity. If flood protection systems are overtopped or fail, the situation escalates beyond local infrastructure management into a civil defence emergency requiring coordinated response across multiple councils and agencies. Due to the catchment-wide nature of the Manawatū River, such events would likely affect multiple districts simultaneously, meaning the response would be managed through the regional CDEM system rather than by Palmerston North alone, reinforcing that while the city benefits from strong flood protection, events at this scale would exceed local response capacity and require coordinated regional support. In a breach scenario of this scale, Palmerston North's capability is sufficient to initiate response, but the speed and breadth of consequences would likely exceed local capacity, requiring early transition to a regionally coordinated, consequence-focused response model.

A breach or overtopping event at this scale would likely result in significant and prolonged disruption to daily life, including displacement of residents, loss of access to essential services, and damage to homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure. Transport networks may be severed, isolating communities and complicating response and recovery efforts, while lifeline utilities such as power, water supply, wastewater, and telecommunications could be compromised across multiple areas simultaneously. The cumulative effect would place sustained pressure on welfare systems, emergency accommodation, and recovery resources, with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations. Recovery would likely be complex and extended, requiring coordinated regional support not only to restore infrastructure and services but also to address the social, economic, and psychosocial consequences for affected communities.

In addition to civil defence functions, another key role Horizons' Emergency Management activity covers is maritime safety and oil spill response. The harbourmaster function provides navigation safety oversight across the Manawatū River and coastal areas, especially around the river mouth and bar crossing environment due to the significant volume of recreational and commercial water use. Oil spill response capability covers preparedness planning for marine spills, trained responders, coordinated response arrangements, and equipment deployment at regional scale, integrated with Maritime New Zealand at a national level. Oil spills are low-frequency but high-consequence risks which require specialist capability and equipment.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$2.35 million

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$679,604

Emergency Management is funded primarily through general rates to recognise the regional benefit of protecting people, homes, and livelihoods before, during, and after an emergency. Minor additional funding sources include event-based central government funding and cost recovery following emergencies. Some dedicated ongoing national funding supports local readiness capability for oil spill response.

Contractual obligations for this activity include IT systems and platforms (e.g. the D4H common operating platform), training and exercise providers, specialist planning support, and communications and coordination systems. Maritime functions include harbourmaster contractor support arrangements and oil spill response capability aligned to national frameworks, including equipment, training, and response readiness obligations.

People and relationships

There are 6.5 FTEs directly employed to support this activity at Horizons through the Group Office. During peacetime, this is supplemented by the expertise of a range of Horizons staff, including those in Environmental Data, River Management and Flood Protection, and the Communications team. When a response is taking place, a range of Horizons staff fill the roles required under the Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) framework. There are also strong inter-council and inter-agency relationships with this function, with all councils and dozens of agencies inside and beyond the Horizons Region working together. In recent times, this has extended to Horizons deploying either Emergency Management staff or general Horizons staff with significant emergency management experience to district council Emergency Coordination Centres as liaison officers, ensuring issues and needs are quickly escalated to the Group level.

The harbourmaster function is delivered through a shared resource with regional navigational safety, while the oil spill response function is supported by Emergency Management staff and regional trained responders.

Key relationships for this activity in Palmerston North City include Fire and Emergency New Zealand, New Zealand Police and ambulance services, lifeline utilities across transport, power, communications, and water, Palmerston North City Council's EOC team, iwi and Māori partners, health and welfare organisations, neighbouring councils, other Emergency Management groups, and the National Emergency Management Agency. For maritime (including harbourmaster and navigation) and oil spill functions, key relationships include Maritime New Zealand, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, local contractors and response providers, and iwi and hapū with interests in coastal and waterway environments.

Key considerations for delivery models

Emergencies do not respect territorial boundaries. Palmerston North City sits at the confluence of influences from multiple large catchment systems. The Manawatū River and Mangaone Stream both carry water from well beyond the district's boundaries, and upstream rainfall can rapidly translate into flooding risk for Manawatū communities. Managing both scales of risk simultaneously requires a system with the flexibility, staffing depth, and coordination infrastructure that only regional delivery can provide.

Rural isolation and access challenges in neighbouring districts or if state highways were closed add a further dimension as the city would become a haven for displaced persons. Road and bridge outages during storm events can isolate communities across the district's dispersed rural areas, requiring prioritised, coordinated response effort that draws on regional resources. Infrastructure and lifelines disruptions cascade across district boundaries, requiring shared prioritisation and coordination a standalone district model would struggle to deliver.

Emergency Management is deeply dependent on other Horizons activities in ways that must be carefully considered in any structural change. River flow and rainfall data from the Environmental Data activity feeds directly into flood monitoring and early warning systems. Catchment Operations staff play an active role during flood responses. River Management assets are the physical first line of defence which Emergency Management plans around. Science and Environmental Reporting provides the hazard modelling required for emergency planning. Separating these functions across different post-amalgamation entities could risk breaking the operational integration that makes the current system effective.

Maritime safety and oil spill response are another example of issues where a regional response could be seen as more efficient. Oil spills and navigation safety incidents can spread rapidly across district boundaries and into sensitive estuarine and ecological environments. Maintaining a regional response capability, with equipment able to be quickly deployed to and operated by trained staff from a central location, would likely be more cost-effective than duplicating this across districts or sub-unitary councils.

Many elements of the current system, including GECC capability housed in an IL4-rated facility, trained surge personnel, common operating picture systems, and specialist planning functions are only cost-effective at a regional scale. Replicating these independently would require duplication of both capability and cost. Any amalgamation process would need to carefully consider how the Emergency Management Group model would be maintained in a restructured environment, and what the implications would be for community safety if regional coordination capability was fragmented. Fragmentation also risks undermining the outcomes national civil defence reform is seeking to achieve, including improved coordination, stronger capability, and better support for communities during emergencies.



Staff training for oil spill response

Environmental Data Activity

Environmental Data at a glance

- Aim is to deliver and maintain the **hydrological and environmental monitoring networks** and data systems that underpin Horizons' core functions — from flood protection and emergency management to water allocation, regulatory compliance, and state of the environment reporting.
- Budget for the region: **\$3.8 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City Council: approximately **\$918,000** from general and targeted rates.
- The estimated cost to deliver this activity at a Palmerston North City Council-only scale is **\$164,000** but does not include establishment, specialist systems, equipment, and technical input costs.
- Environmental Data is internally funded through **general rates** recovered from the activities it supports, reflecting its role as an enabling function for service delivery.
- Palmerston North City Council is a very **small component** of Horizons Environmental Monitoring Network. However, it spatially has one of the largest population at risk from flooding.
- More than **600** monitoring points from the Palmerston North City area are in Horizons' environmental archive.
- Rainfall gradient ranges from **900mm** to **3,500mm**.
- The Manawatū at Teachers College **Hydrometric station** is classified as New Zealand's longest continuous hydrological datasets.
- **Mangaone catchment** can impact Palmerston North, as well as the lower catchment.
- Flood forecasting models draws on data from more than **100** sites across the entire Manawatū River catchment, including data from neighbouring regional councils.
- The systems, infrastructure, and specialist capability that make this activity function at a **regional scale** to allow for the cross-boundary nature of data cannot be easily replicated at a smaller one.
- The costs of establishing and maintaining the systems required are **largely fixed** and must be incurred whether the system serves one district or eight.
- Fragmenting delivery across post-amalgamation entities would require **duplication of these systems and costs**, likely increasing the overall expense to ratepayers for equivalent or lesser capability.
- Any structural change would need to carefully consider how **capability would be maintained**, who would hold responsibility for **cross-boundary data sharing**, and what the **implications would be for flood forecasting** and emergency response if that capability were fragmented.

The data behind the decisions

The Environmental Data activity delivers and maintains the hydrological and environmental monitoring networks and data systems underpinning almost everything Horizons does. It operates as an internal, service-driven function, funded by internal stakeholders including Science, Emergency Management, Freshwater, and Catchment Operations. This arrangement reflects the fact that this activity's outputs are essential inputs for all of those other activities. Without [reliable, real-time environmental data](#), flood warnings cannot be issued, water allocation decisions cannot be made, consent compliance cannot be assessed, and state of the environment reporting cannot be produced.

The activity manages the full lifecycle of hydrological data systems, from the design, installation, and calibration of monitoring stations through to data capture, telemetry, verification, quality assurance, analysis, and delivery to end users. This includes river, rainfall, groundwater, and climate monitoring stations across the region; real-time telemetry and communications networks; flood forecasting and river modelling systems; spatial data services supporting catchment analysis and floodplain mapping; and regional hydrological data platforms enabling access and reporting across the organisation. Horizons' Environmental Data staff are also active leads in the development of New Zealand's National Environmental Monitoring Standards (NEMS) and contribute to ISO and OGC global standards. This activity's work shapes practice well beyond the Horizons Region.

The district also has three primary and four secondary rainfall stations, one continuous piezo-metric groundwater monitoring site, five continuous flow stations, Lagoon lake monitoring sites, 4 webcams. Horizons Environmental Data department also operate monitoring stations for Palmerston North City Council – Turitea at Ngahere Park, Ngahere Park Climate – and has regularly offered services for urban stormwater quantity and quality.

Palmerston North City also benefits from the best regional coverage of weather radar in the Horizons Region, which Horizons' next-generation flood forecasting system is expected to incorporate. The rainfall gradient across the district is extreme, ranging from 900mm on the coastal plain to 3,500mm within the Tararua Range. This makes accurate monitoring and forecasting particularly challenging, but also particularly important. The Ōhau catchment is a complex flood forecasting environment with limited high-country data, requiring real-time data from neighbouring councils including Greater Wellington, Kāpiti, and Wairarapa. The Manawatū at Teachers College station, one of the oldest monitoring sites in Aotearoa New Zealand with river information and surveys dating back to the early 1890s, is part of a complex catchment requiring data from more than 100 sites across the entire Manawatū catchment, including data from Horizons, Greater Wellington, and Hawke's Bay regional councils, to provide an accurate flood forecast.

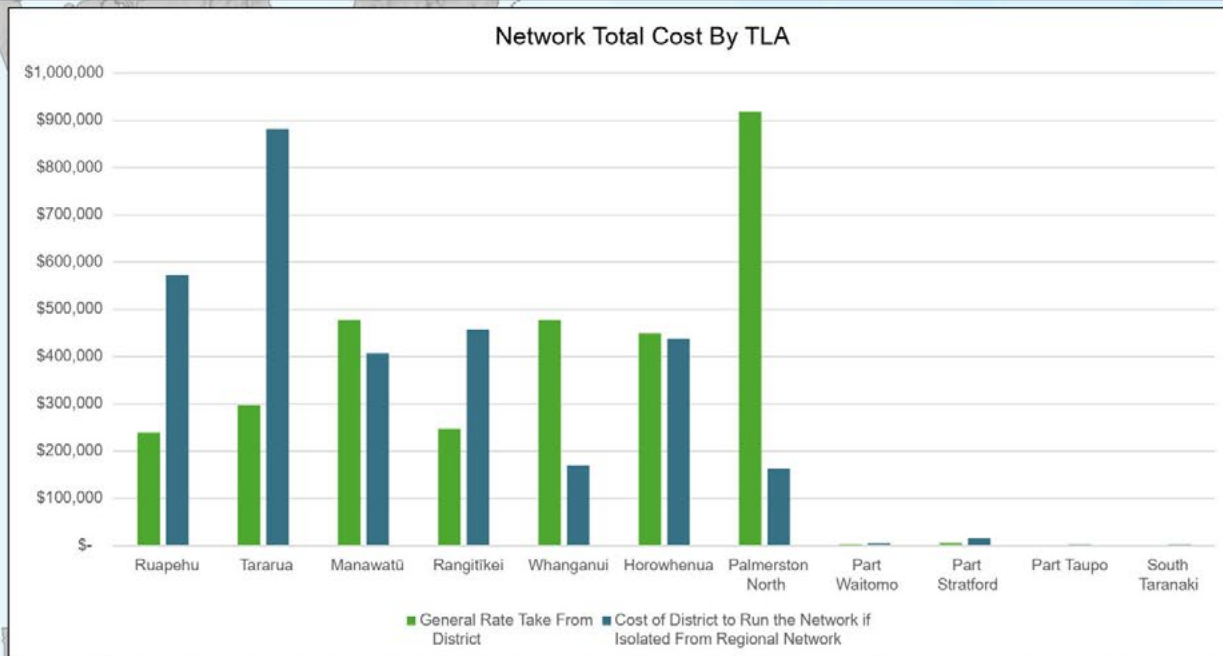
Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$3.8 million

Rates collected from his activity from Palmerston North City Council: approximately \$918,000 from general and targeted rates.

The Environmental Data activity is funded internally, with costs recovered from the activities it services (e.g. Science, Emergency Management, and Catchment Operations) via general rates. This internal funding model reflects the fact Environmental Data is an enabling function whose outputs directly support the delivery of other activities, rather than a standalone service delivered directly to the public.

Contractual obligations include data supply agreements with the Ministry for the Environment and MetService, as well as obligations related to telemetry and SCADA system integration, specialist hydrological and environmental software licences, flood forecasting systems, and shared field equipment including acoustic Doppler current profilers (ADCPs), drones, profilers, and Maritime New Zealand-certified boats and skippers.

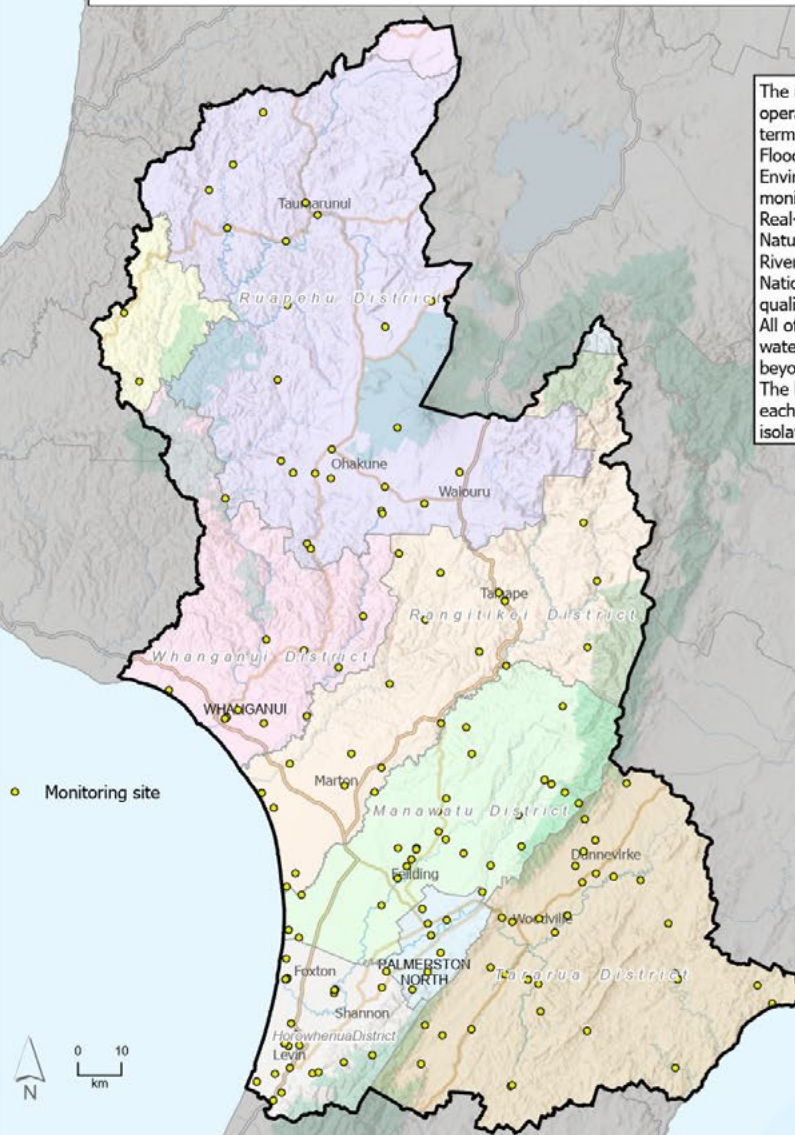


The information displayed is based on current financial year 2025-2026 operational budget for the Environmental Data Activity, relating to the long-term monitoring network (including web-cameras) which is the foundation for: Flood Modelling, Prediction, Alarming, Engineering and Design. Environmental Science supported policy development and effectiveness monitoring.

Real-time information for:
 Natural Resource Management.
 River users.
 National and International environmental science based on long-term high quality data.

All of the above the entire region benefits from, due to factors such as waterways crossing district boundaries and environmental impacts occurring beyond the immediate testing location.

The bar chart displays the Horizons RC core monitoring network costs totals by each TLA, as well as what it would cost the district to operate the network in isolation.



Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Stats NZ, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS

Horizons Environmental Data Long-term Monitoring Network 2025-2026

Prepared by: Phil H,
 Information Mngt
 team,
 Date: 30/01/2026.
 Contains Crown
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 Data



People and relationships

There are 28 FTEs supporting this activity, including two contract roles, covering a wide range of technical capabilities from construction and engineering to environmental science and postgraduate research. Staff experience ranges from five to 35 years, with an average of 17 years. Each staff member carries a core set of general operational skills alongside single specialist capabilities, enabling them to service regional requirements while maintaining depth in their area of expertise.

The Environmental Data activity is the largest user of IT infrastructure within Horizons, operating 10 dedicated servers and more than 50 unique specialist software systems, with custom data verification processes ensuring real-time data is delivered to Horizons' website, Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website, the Ministry for the Environment, MetService, and Environment Southland.

Key external relationships in the Palmerston North City District is Rangitāne. Broader relationships include the Massey University, Ministry for the Environment (soon to be part of Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport), MetService, neighbouring regional councils whose data is essential to cross-boundary flood forecasting, and national and international standards bodies.

Key considerations for delivery models

The Environmental Data activity benefits from regional-scale implementation and deep integration across Horizons. Downscaling is not a straightforward exercise, as it is not simply a matter of pro-rating FTEs to a district's population. The systems, infrastructure, and specialist capability that make this activity function at a regional scale cannot be easily replicated at a smaller one.

The costs of establishing and maintaining the systems required – telemetry and SCADA integration, specialist hydrological and environmental software licences, flood forecasting platforms, MetService data access, automatic flood alerting systems, shared field equipment, and Maritime New Zealand-certified vessels – are largely fixed. They must be incurred whether the system serves one district or eight. Fragmenting delivery across post-amalgamation entities would require duplication of these systems and costs, likely increasing the overall expense to ratepayers for equivalent or lesser capability.

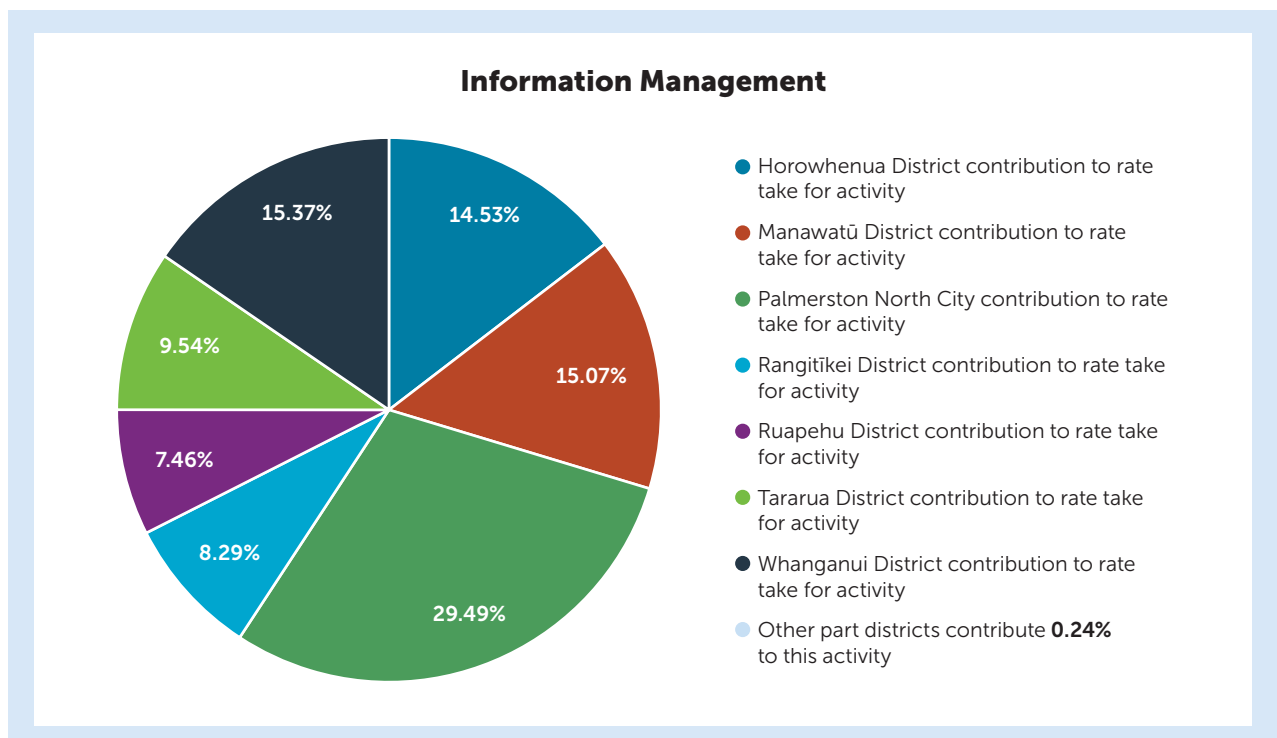
The cross-boundary nature of the data itself reinforces this point. Flood forecasting for the Manawatū at Teachers college requires real-time data from over 100 sites spanning multiple regional council jurisdictions. The Mangaone catchment is reliant on data from a neighbouring council to accurately forecast, while providing flood warning and modelling services for the wider Palmerston North requires local data from Manawatu, Tararua and our neighbouring regional councils districts within Greater Wellington and Hawkes Bay. This activity does not operate in an isolated environment. It requires sustained, formalised data-sharing relationships with neighbouring councils and a credible entity to maintain them.

The estimated cost to deliver this activity at a Palmerston North-only scale is \$163,000. That figure does not include the additional costs for specialist systems, equipment, and technical input (these costs have not been quantified at the time of writing). Crucially, it does not account for the monitoring infrastructure upstream in the Manawatū and Tararua districts. Much of the data that makes reliable and timely flood forecasting possible for Palmerston North comes from stations well outside the city's boundary. A city-only model would either need to fund that upstream monitoring itself, negotiate data-sharing arrangements with whatever entities held those functions, or accept significantly degraded flood forecasting capability. The current contribution to a regional system buys access to an integrated network extending far beyond the district's boundaries. Any structural change arising from amalgamations would need to carefully consider how this capability would be maintained, who would hold responsibility for cross-boundary data sharing, and what the implications would be for flood forecasting and emergency response if the current integrated network was fragmented.

Information Management Activity

Information Management at a glance

- Aim is to provide the **digital systems, data, GIS, cybersecurity, information management, and digital infrastructure** needed to deliver Horizons' services across the district and wider region.
- Budget for the region: **\$2.31 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$530,146** which is a **29.49%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through **general rates** to recognise the support it provides for other functions that benefit the region as a whole.
- **River height alerts** are available to the public through a system maintained by Information Services and the Environmental Data team.
- **Regional geospatial products** — including aerial imagery, and digital terrain and surface models — support flood modelling, hazard mapping, and emergency management across the district boundaries.
- Collaborating with regional councils across the motu to stand up **IRIS NextGen**, a modern cloud-based regional regulatory platform, delivered with other councils through Regional Software Holdings Ltd.
- Rangitikei District Council will already have **digital infrastructure and capability** to meet their own statutory and operational obligations, the question is how the regional council-specific layer would be maintained, separated, integrated, or transitioned under any future model.
- The regional council-specific layer of information includes systems and services that simply **do not map neatly onto district boundaries**.



The technology keeping regional services ticking

Information Management activity (also known as Information Services) supports the digital systems, data, GIS, cybersecurity, information management, digital infrastructure, and transformation capability needed to deliver Horizons' services across the Horowhenua District and the wider region. Some aspects of this activity will be familiar to territorial authorities, including core infrastructure, cloud platforms, cybersecurity, telephony, websites, GIS software, records systems, and end-user support. The distinctive part of Horizons' Information Services activity, however, is the way it enables regional council-specific services that operate across district boundaries.

A key example is IRIS and IRIS NextGen. IRIS is the digital system Horizons uses to support regional council activities including consenting, compliance monitoring, contacts management, enforcement, state of the environment monitoring, land management, biosecurity, and biodiversity. IRIS NextGen is a significant regional council sector programme to move to a modern cloud-based regional regulatory platform, delivered with other councils through Regional Software Holdings Ltd. It includes an online customer portal, mobile field application, consistent good-practice processes, and integrated change management — and will shape how regional council services are delivered digitally for years to come. Despite the uncertainty in if Regulatory Management will continue to be delivered by councils or a national body, central government wants regional and unitary councils to continue working on the IRIS NextGen project.

Information Services also supports the digital infrastructure, systems, integrations, data flows, and security controls that underpin telemetry, river monitoring, survey data, and related environmental information services. Working alongside the Environmental Data team, it ensures environmental data captured in the field can be transmitted, stored, accessed, integrated with mapping or reporting tools, and used for operational decision-making, public information, emergency management, and longer-term environmental reporting.

Information Services maintains the technology layer enabling the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and river height alerting processes, giving the public access to river height alerts and enabling Horizons to manage alert triggers when river height thresholds are met. The activity also supports regional remote sensing and geospatial products including aerial imagery, point clouds, Digital Terrain Models, Digital Surface Models, and related spatial datasets, which support flood modelling, hazard mapping, catchment management, environmental monitoring, planning, emergency management, and collaboration with territorial authorities.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$2.31 million

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$530,146

This activity is funded through general rates to recognise the support it provides for other functions that benefit the region as a whole.

Information Services manages or supports a range of contracts, supplier arrangements, shared-service commitments, and sector partnerships. Some are similar to those held by territorial authorities, including Microsoft 365, cybersecurity tools, cloud services, websites, telephony, and GIS software. The arrangements more distinctive to Horizons are those supporting regional council functions, regional-scale data, sector collaboration, and operational services across district boundaries — most significantly, the IRIS and IRIS NextGen programmes, delivered through Regional Software Holdings Ltd with other regional councils.

People and relationships

There are approximately 20.5 FTEs supporting this activity, spanning operational delivery and transformation, IT operations and digital infrastructure, data and GIS, enterprise architecture, and cybersecurity and risk. This includes 9.5 FTE in digital delivery and transformation, 5 FTE in IT operations and digital infrastructure (including cybersecurity and risk), 5 FTE in data and GIS, and 2 FTE in enterprise and solution architecture.

It is important to note that data, GIS, and analytical capability also exists in other parts of Horizons, including data scientists and GIS specialists who directly support specific business activities. Information Services does not replace that business-specific expertise. Instead, it provides the enterprise-wide platforms, governance, systems, integration, cybersecurity, architecture, and specialist support to enable those teams to use data and spatial information effectively.

Key sector relationships include Regional Software Holdings Ltd, the Association of Local Government Information Management (ALGIM), Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), the Manawatū-Whanganui Local Authority Shared Services (MWLASS), special interest groups, professional communities of practice, central government agencies, and vendor partnerships across the local government sector.

Key considerations for delivery models

Palmerston North City Council will already have digital infrastructure and capability to meet their own statutory and operational obligations, including systems and support for customer services, websites, GIS, records, cybersecurity, telephony, property, rates, assets, building control, and district planning. The key consideration is not whether that technology capability exists. The question is how the regional council-specific layer would be maintained, separated, integrated, or transitioned under any future model.

GIS provides a useful illustration of the complexity involved, but the lesson applies across the broader Information Services environment. Combining GIS platforms involves far more than merging maps. It requires data analysis, harmonisation, metadata and lineage management, integration rebuilding, public service continuity,

cybersecurity, identity and access controls, testing, dual-running, and decommissioning. Those same issues apply across regulatory systems, customer channels, records, telemetry, public alerting, cloud platforms, and cybersecurity.

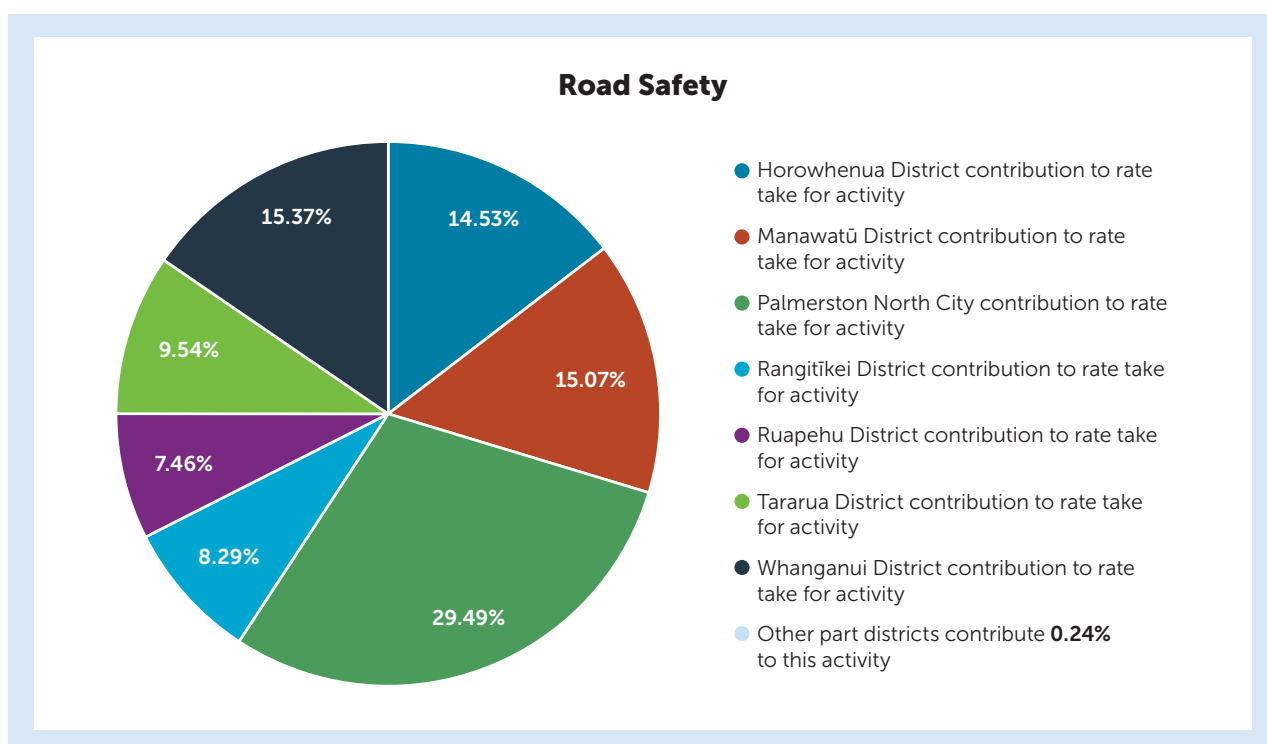
The regional council-specific layer that Information Services supports includes systems and services that simply do not map neatly onto district boundaries. These include IRIS and IRIS NextGen for regional regulatory functions, telemetry and river monitoring infrastructure, the public river height alerting system, regional remote sensing and geospatial products, information governance, and cross-boundary environmental data. These are supported by shared systems, contracts, integrations, cybersecurity controls, specialist capability, and sector relationships currently operating at regional scale.

Amalgamations may create opportunities for efficiency or shared investment (either between new entities or in a shared services/ council-controlled organisation arrangement). However, this would need to be weighed carefully against transition costs, dual-running periods, data separation or harmonisation requirements, integration changes, contract implications, cyber risk, and the need to retain or recruit specialist capability. Any assessment would need to consider not only future operating costs, but also the cost, time, and operational risk involved in moving from the current regional model to a new arrangement.

Road Safety Activity

Road Safety at a glance

- Aim is to **reduce deaths and serious injuries on the region's roads** through targeted education, engagement, and behaviour change programmes.
- NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi co-fundings **58%** of this activity with the rest funded by general rates.
- Budget for the region: **\$960,298**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$65,158** which is a **29.49%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- **Drivers do not stay within district boundaries**, with this activity bringing benefits across the region and beyond.
- Drivers do not stay within their home district, and road safety risk **does not concentrate neatly within territorial boundaries**.
- Fragmenting this into smaller programmes could **reduce coordination and could jeopardise access to NZTA co-funding** if the scale of individual programmes fell below what is required to attract subsidy.



Safer roads for everyone

Horizons' Road Safety activity works to reduce deaths and serious injuries on the region's roads through targeted education, community engagement, and behaviour change programmes. The programme is delivered at a regional level, with initiatives tailored to local communities, events, and vulnerable road user groups. While individual activities are delivered within specific districts, the benefits extend across the region and beyond.

In Palmerston North City, road safety staff deliver targeted engagement with local communities and at local events. Host responsibility visits have been undertaken at licensed premises across Palmerston North and neighbouring areas to promote sober driving and support safer environments. Road safety campaigns and messaging are delivered at community events and through local partnerships, with a focus on key risk areas including alcohol, distraction, and fatigue. Horowhenua residents also benefit from regional campaigns and large-scale interventions that reach audiences travelling across district boundaries.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$960,298

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$65,158

Road safety is funded through a combination of general rates and a NZTA subsidy at a funding rate of 58%. This co-funding arrangement reflects the national interest in reducing road trauma and makes the programme significantly more cost-effective for ratepayers than it would otherwise be. There are no ongoing contractual obligations associated with this activity.

People and relationships

Two FTEs deliver the Horizons road safety programme across the entire region, supported by communications staff and the wider Transport team. Road safety coordinators work closely with territorial authorities, Waka Kotahi, New Zealand Police and other road safety agencies both within the Horizons Region and with neighbouring regions through inter-regional activities.

Key considerations for delivery models

Road safety is one of Horizons' smaller activities by budget, but it delivers meaningful community benefit relative to its rating impact due to the NZTA co-funding arrangement, which effectively doubles the value of ratepayer investment. Maintaining eligibility for that co-funding depends on having a credible, organised programme that meets NZTA's requirements.

Drivers do not stay within their home district, and road safety risk does not concentrate neatly within territorial boundaries. This is why the programme is structured and funded at a regional level, and why inter-regional coordination with neighbouring regions is a feature of its delivery. Fragmenting this into smaller programmes could reduce coordination and could jeopardise access to NZTA co-funding if the scale of individual programmes fell below what is required to attract subsidy. Delivery at a smaller scale could see additional costs and/or additional responsibilities placed on other existing staff.



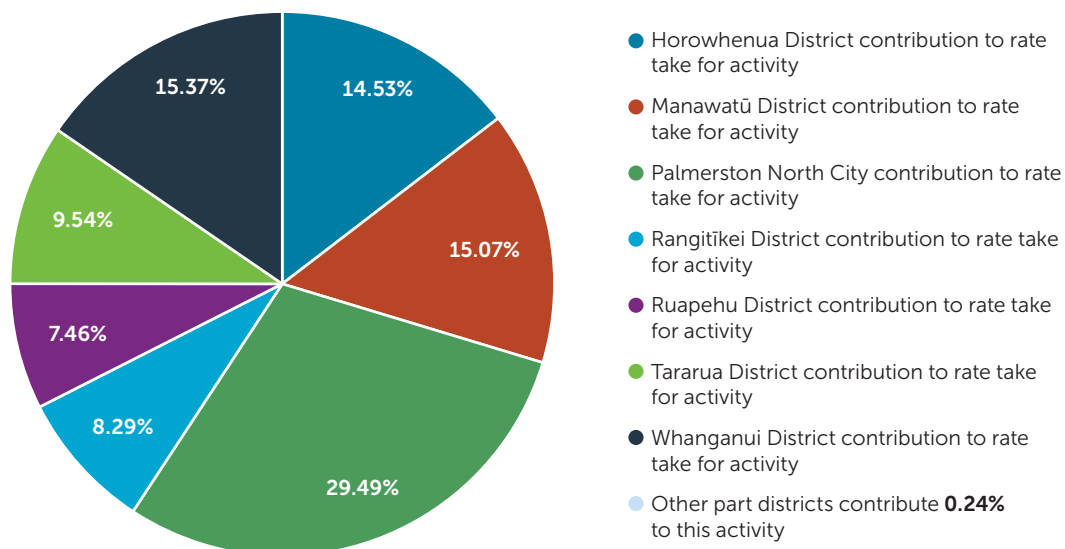
Road safety team engaging with members of the public

Transport Planning Activity

Transport Planning at a glance

- Aims to set the **strategic direction for land transport** across the region, identifying **priorities, investment needs, and long-term outcomes** for a connected, efficient, and resilient transport system.
- Budget for the region: **\$332,395**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$50,827**, which is a **29.49%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi co-fundings **51%** of this activity with the rest funded by general rates.
- The Regional Land Transport Plan is the primary gateway for **central government funding** for transport coming into the region.
- The **Regional Public Transport Plan** sets the framework for public transport services and infrastructure.
- Most transport investment relies on **co-funding** from the National Land Transport Fund.
- The transport system crosses district boundaries, meaning investment decisions in one area affect travel times, freight efficiency, and safety elsewhere, so planning is **structured and funded regionally and overseen by regional committees**.
- Sub-regional scale of transport planning would **duplicate effort and increase costs** while reducing coordination and weakening influence with NZTA.

Transport Planning



Working on the ways we'll move

The Transport Planning activity helps to set the strategic direction for land transport across the region, identifying priorities, investment needs, and long-term outcomes for the transport system. This direction is delivered primarily through two statutory documents: the Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP), which prioritises transport investment and identifies projects for central government funding; and the Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP), which sets the framework for public transport services and infrastructure. Both are required under the Land Transport Management Act 2003.

The RLTP is the guide central government uses when allocating transport funding for the region. Most transport investment relies on central government co-funding via the National Land Transport Fund. Including a project in the RLTP signals its importance to those who hold the purse strings and ultimately enable investment which benefits local contractors and the wider community.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$332,395

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$50,827

Transport Planning is funded by general rates and a NZTA subsidy at a funding rate of 51%. As with Road Safety, this central government co-funding significantly enhances the value of ratepayer investment in this activity.

People and relationships

One FTE delivers this activity, with support from the wider Transport team, governance and communications staff. Given the breadth of this function relative to staffing, this activity relies heavily on strong internal relationships to be successful.

Key relationships include the Regional Transport Committee, territorial authorities across the region, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, the Department of Conservation, New Zealand Police, KiwiRail, active transport advocates, road user groups, and transport planners in other regions.

Key considerations for delivery models

Transport planning is a statutory function under the Land Transport Management Act 2003, and the RLTP is the mechanism through which the region accesses central government transport funding. The RLTP must reflect the transport system as a whole, across all districts, and be developed in a way that satisfies NZTA requirements for co-funding eligibility.

The transport system does not follow district boundaries. State highways, rail corridors, freight routes, and public transport networks cross multiple territorial authority areas. Investment decisions made in one district affect travel times, freight efficiency, and safety outcomes in others. This is why transport planning is structured and funded at a regional level, and why the Regional Transport Committee – and for the RPTP, the Passenger Transport Committee – brings together representatives from across the region to oversee it.

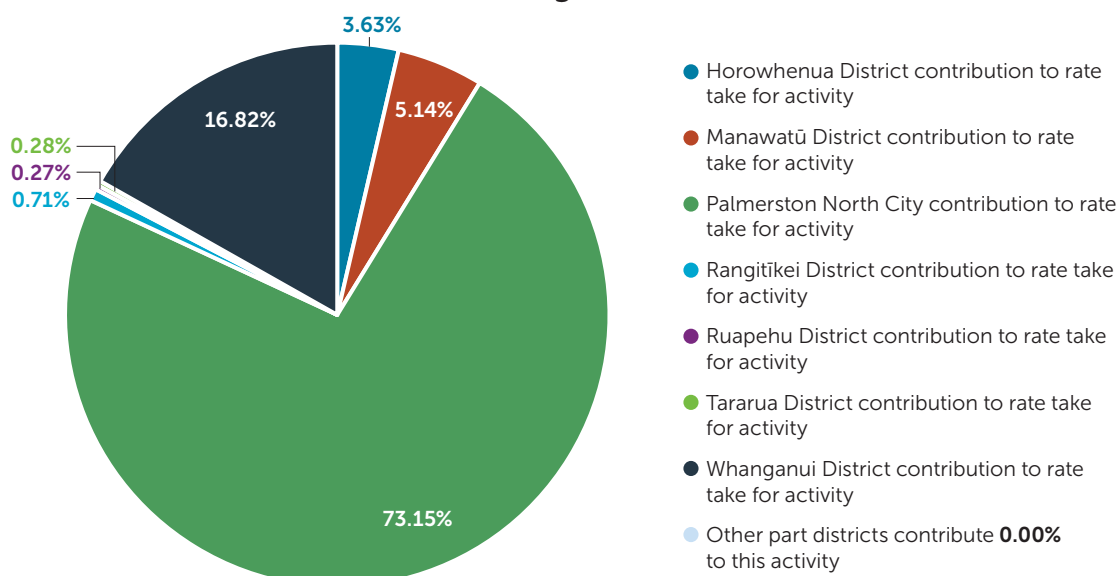
Delivery transport planning at a sub-regional scale could create significant uncertainty and duplication. If each post-amalgamation entity were required to produce its own equivalent of the RLTP or RPTP, the same quantum of planning work would need to be replicated multiple times, at greater overall cost, with reduced coordination, and with a weaker collective voice in negotiations with NZTA over funding priorities.

Passenger Services Activity

Passenger Services at a glance

- Aims to deliver **public transport services** that enable access to employment, education, healthcare, and social activities.
- Public transport services are not just buses – **Total Mobility and community transport services** are also a part of this activity.
- Budget for the region: **\$20.7 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$6 million**, which is a **73.15%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through a **targeted passenger services rate** and **subsidies** from NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi.
- Palmerston North City is home to Aoteaora New Zealand's first fully electric bus network, carrying more than **1 million** passengers each year.
- New **Ashhurst school bus services** launch July 2026, filling gap left by withdrawal of Ministry of Education services.
- Palmerston North City has **3,001** Total Mobility registered users, with **113,742** trips delivered annually including **16,238** hoist trips for mobility-impaired passengers.
- Horizons also holds a 35-year agreement with Greater Wellington Regional Council for the new **Lower North Island Rail Improvements (LNIRIM) passenger rail services**.
- This **significant contractual agreement** requires careful consideration in any amalgamation to ensure clear management, accountability for obligations, and fair distribution of benefits across future entities.
- The new rail services coming online from 2030 will **quadruple** weekday train trips from Horowhenua to Palmerston North and Wellington, and introduce weekend services.
- Public transport **does not stop at district boundaries**, and cross-boundary services require coordination that benefits from a regional outlook.
- Delivering passenger services at a district level would **duplicate key functions, reduce efficiencies, and likely increase costs** for the same or lower level of service compared to the current regional model.

Passenger Services



Creating community connections

Passenger Services delivers public transport services across the Horizons Region. This includes urban and regional bus networks, Total Mobility services, passenger rail contributions, and community transport initiatives. These services enable access to employment, education, healthcare, and social activities, supporting an accessible, connected, and inclusive transport system. The activity covers procurement and contract management of bus operators, delivery of services in line with the Regional Public Transport Plan, contributions to passenger rail services including the Capital Connection, management of the Total Mobility scheme, and support for community transport initiatives.

Palmerston North City has the most extensive urban bus network in the Horizons Region, hence the significant portion of rates take contribution to the operational budget. Launched in 2024, the Palmerston North and Ashhurst urban bus network is Aotearoa New Zealand's first fully electric network. Routes run across the city, linking suburbs and key locations while enabling smooth transfers. The new network has seen public transport use grow 69% in the space of two years, carrying 1.19 million passengers annually. The city is also connected to many population areas nearby, including Whanganui, Taihape, Feilding, Marton and Levin, by regional services. At the time of writing, Horizons is preparing to launch new services for school students travelling from Ashhurst and surrounding areas to schools in Palmerston North. These services, funded by a targeted rate, replaces the ones previously run by the Ministry of Education.

The Total Mobility scheme provides subsidised transport for people with disabilities and mobility issues, enabling access to essential services and community participation. In Palmerston North City, there are 3,001 Total Mobility registered users, with 113,742 trips delivered annually including 16,238 hoist trips for mobility-impaired passengers. This is a significant level of service, reflecting transport needs across the city which cannot all be resolved with the current level of investment in the urban bus network. The city is also a key point for many community transport services, including health shuttles and Rural Bus Manawatu.

Palmerston North City is home to one end of the Capital Connection rail service. Running between the city and Wellington, the daily commuter rail service provides a key connection to the nation's capital. Services are set to significantly increase from 2030, when the service is folded into the Metlink rail network. From that point on, there will be four return services daily and two return services each weekend day. This increased level of service is only possible thanks to significant central government co-investment.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$20.7 million.

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North District: \$6 million

Passenger Services is funded through a targeted passenger services rate applied at a district level. This is why territorial authority areas which a great contribution to the operational budget proportionally have greater levels of service. NZTA co-funds a significant portion of this activity through the National Land Transport Fund, with the funding rate varying for the type of services.

Contractual obligations include public transport bus contracts (typically nine-year contracts in Palmerston North), Total Mobility contracts with transport operators (one-year terms), and the Capital Connection passenger rail arrangement.

Horizons also holds a 35-year agreement with Greater Wellington Regional Council for the new Lower North Island Rail Improvements (LNIRIM) passenger rail services. This long-term commitment will shape enhanced rail connectivity for decades for Palmerston North, the Horizons Region and others across the lower North Island. This is a significant multimillion-dollar commitment involving central government.

People and relationships

Nine FTEs deliver this activity across the region, supported by customer services, communications, and governance staff. Key relationships in Palmerston North City include NZTA, transport and planning teams at Palmerston North City Council, bus operators, Total Mobility transport providers, community transport providers, and Greater Wellington Regional Council given the cross-boundary rail connections.

Key considerations for delivery models

Public transport does not stop at district boundaries. Many of the connections which bring people into Palmerston North cross boundaries, such as rail services to Wellington and bus services from across the region. Cross-boundary public transport services require a level of coordination which benefits from a regional outlook.

The 35-year LNIRIM rail agreement with Greater Wellington Regional Council is a significant long-term contractual commitment. Any structural change arising from amalgamations would need to consider carefully how this agreement would be managed, what entity or entities would hold the obligations, and how the benefits would be distributed across what may be multiple post-amalgamation entities within the Horizons Region.

Delivering Passenger Services at a sub-regional scale would create duplication across several areas, including public transport and Total Mobility operations, monitoring and reporting, and real-time bus information infrastructure. These systems and functions generate efficiencies at regional scale and become more expensive per ratepayer when fragmented. A city-level alternative would likely mean higher costs for the same or lesser level of service.

PALMERSTON NORTH PATRONAGE PERFORMANCE

Palmerston North bus patronage trips in last FY 5 Years - Jan 26

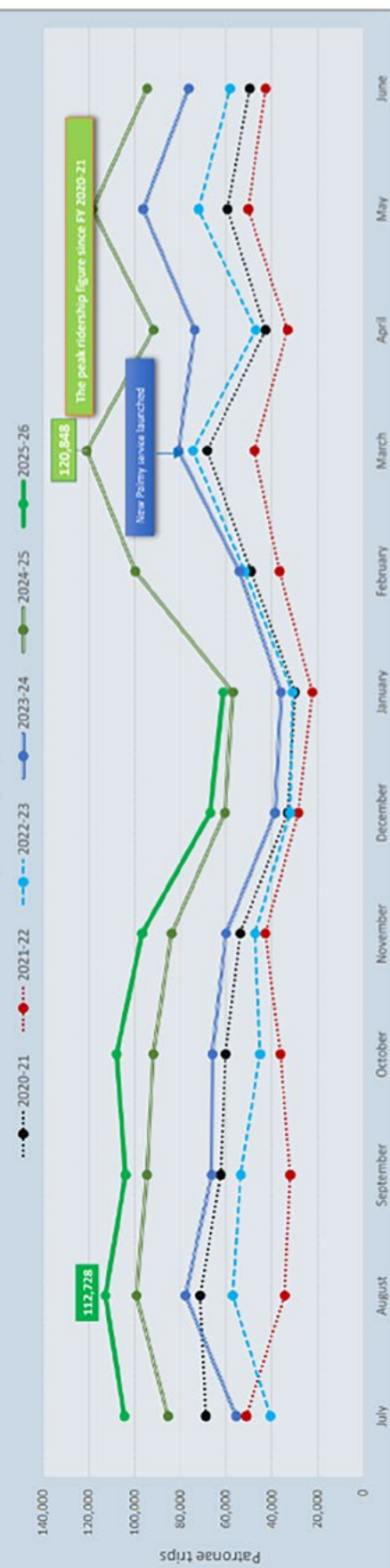


Figure 14: Palmerston North bus services monthly performance from FY 2020-21 to FY 2025-26 (Jan 2026)

Income and Spend for Transportation Per TLA



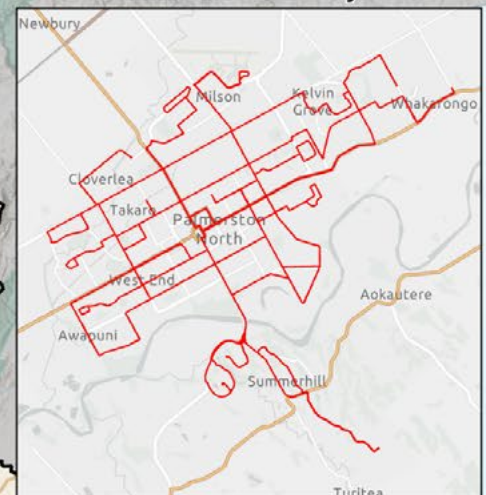
Total Transportation Income and Spend



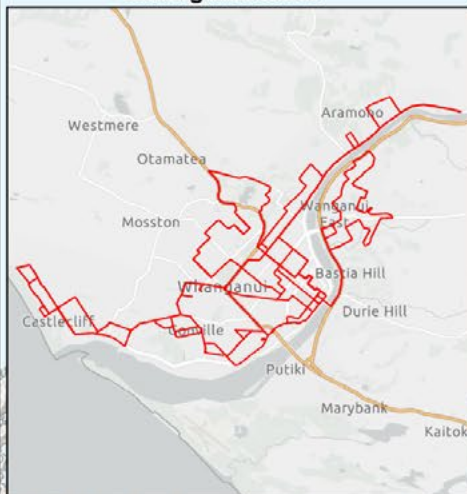
Data shown is for the 2024-2025 financial year.

Horizons Regional Council contracts public transport services across the region. We deliver public transport across Palmerston North, Whanganui and Feilding Urban areas, as well as commuter services from Whanganui, Feilding, Horowhenua, and Marton through to Palmerston North. In addition, we also deliver smaller 'shopper' type services – typically 1-2 times a week – to provide essential connections from small communities to larger centres. The map shows where the services run, many of which cross district boundaries.

Palmerston North City Inset



Whanganui Inset



Transport Revenue and Expenditure

Funding Figures from 2024-2025 financial year

Prepared by: Information Management
Date: 30/01/2026.
Contains Crown Copyright Data

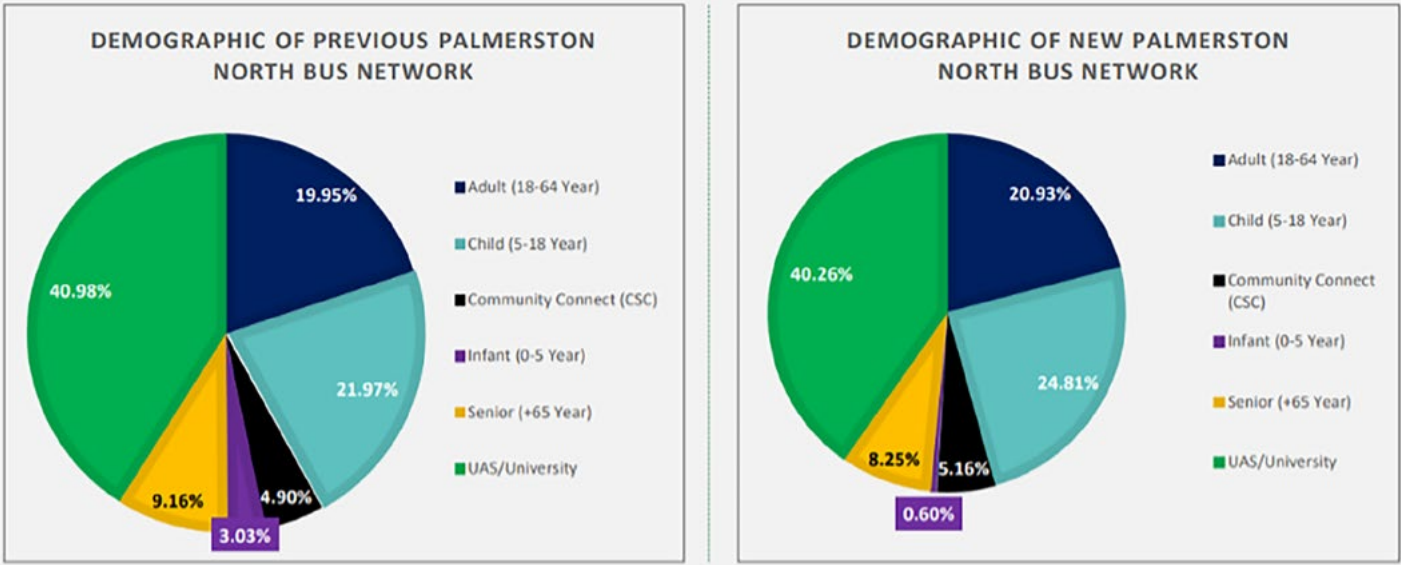


Figure 17a : Palmerston North patronage trips during July-January in FY 2023-24 vs FY 2024-25

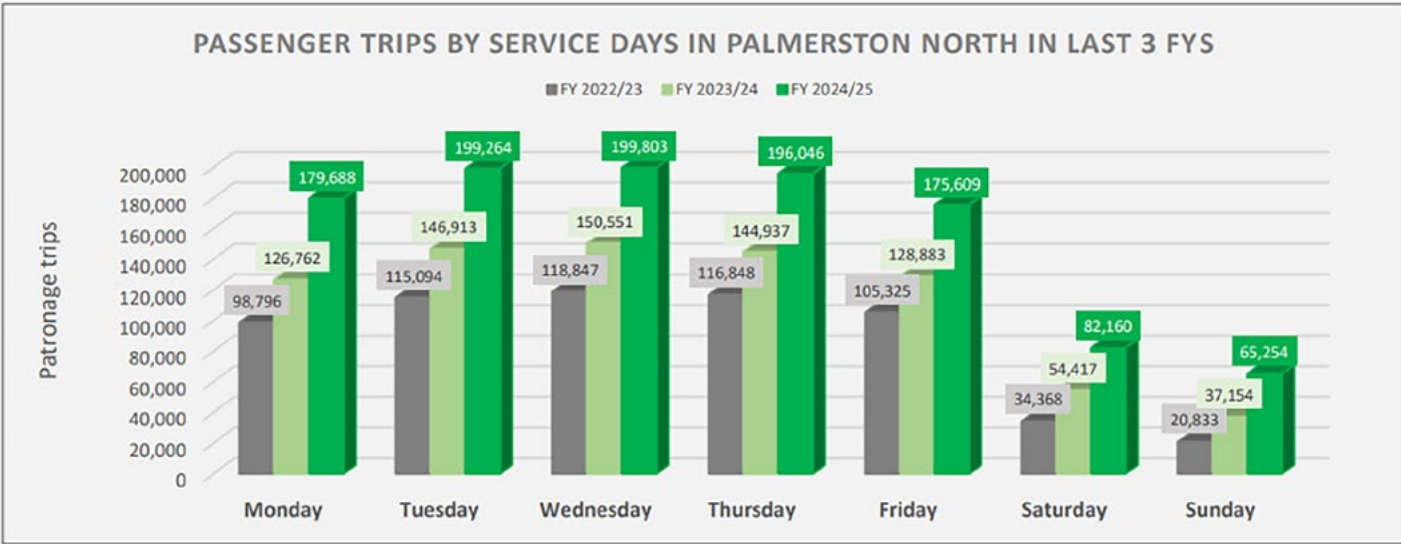


Figure 17b : Palmerston North patronage trips by weekdays and weekends during July-January in FY 2023-24 vs FY 2024-25



Addendum – Accelerate35 Activity

Supporting Regional Growth

Accelerate35 (previously named Accelerate25) is not strictly a Transport and Regional Services activity delivered by Horizons, but is best explained under this banner. Established after the 2015 Regional Growth Study, Accelerate35 (A35) is an implementation programme designed to unlock the region's potential by leveraging key enablers, prioritising initiatives, and collaboration with key agencies. A partnership between iwi, businesses, city, district and regional councils, and central government, A35 has the aim of enabling and accelerating economic growth in the Horizons Region. Funding for A35 is rated by Horizons due to the regional nature and benefit of this activity.

Palmerston North City is a significant beneficiary of A35. A key plank of A35 is enabling the city's position as a key multi-modal transport hub acting as a central point for central New Zealand, including the Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Wairarapa and Wellington regions along with the top of the South Island. This is regularly highlighted at the Accessing Central New Zealand Governance Group – a subgroup of Horizons' Regional

Transport Committee – and wider as part of A35 mahi. Other projects promoted, advocated for and highlighted as part of A35 include Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway, the Regional Freight Ring Road, The Herb Farm and Food HQ.

A35 was born out of the Regional Growth Study, itself a collaboration between all councils in the region and central government. Central government is increasingly wanting to deal with large regional bodies, rather than hearing from individual territorial authority areas (e.g. Regional Deals initiative). The future of this regional economic collaboration will be a key consideration if amalgamations result in sub-unitary models across the Horizons Region, given the cross-boundary benefits of large-scale economic projects and activities (e.g. Te Utanganui).

Accelerate35 is general rate funded to acknowledge the regional benefit of the programme and in the 2024-25 year had a total budget of \$208,000.



Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway

Working together – Partnerships, Governance and Leadership

This group is made up of the following activities:

- Community Wellbeing and Relationships
- Governance
- Iwi and Hapū Relationships

The Partnerships, Governance and Leadership Group provides the leadership and oversight for Council's strategic decision-making and relationships, and community wellbeing in the region. The governance function, made up of the elected members sitting as Council, the six committees of Council and the Joint Committees, represent their constituent communities around the Council table.

This group is also focused on developing and maintaining strong iwi and hapū partnerships, as well as informing, educating, and empowering the diverse range of communities across the rohe, including in the Palmerston North City District.

The Partnerships, Governance and Leadership Group Budget 2024-25 Financial Year

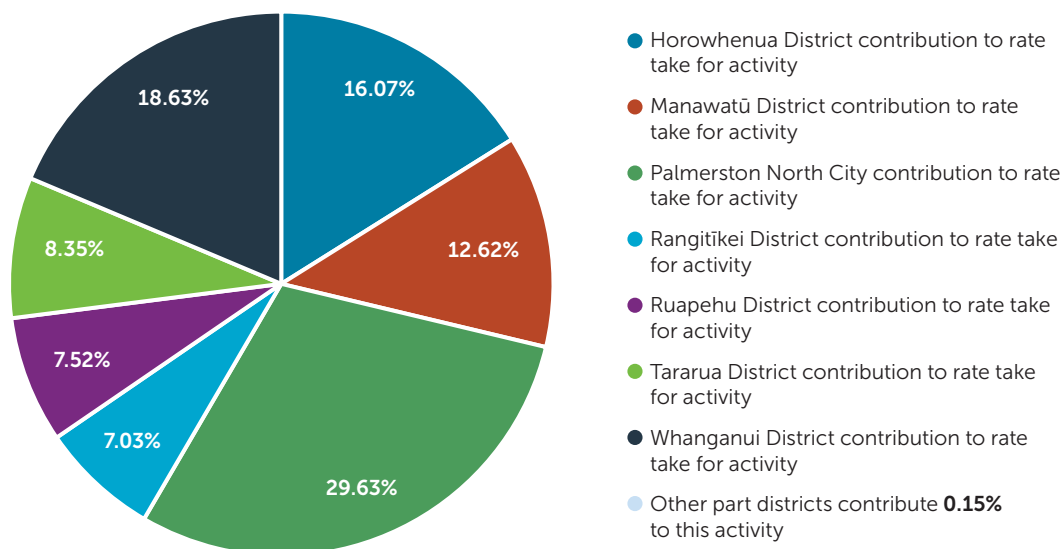
	Community Wellbeing and Relationships	Governance	Iwi and Hapū Relationships
Regional rates	1,977,687.80	3,629,622.15	508,216.82
Grants and subsidies	-	-	-
Resource management (Section 36 charges)	-	-	-
Other revenue (other fees and charges)	80,000.00	5,000.00	220,000.00
Funding surplus/shortfall (Reserves and capital funding)	5,818.44	180,345.00	1,448.49
Total Operational Expenditure	2,051,869.36	3,454,277.15	726,768.33
Palmerston North City rates	585,905.87	1,075,304.66	150,563.31
Palmerston North City contribution of rate take to activity	29.63%	29.63%	29.63%

Community Wellbeing and Relationships Activity

Community Wellbeing and Relationships at a glance

- Aim is to **inform, educate, and empower communities** by being a trusted and credible source of meaningful information.
- Budget for the region: **\$2.05 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$585,905**, which is a **29.63%** contribution to the operational budget.
- Activity is funded **100% through the Universal Annual General Charge** as the benefits of community engagement, public information, and environmental education are shared across the entire region.
- Team well connected with **Palmerston North City Council** peers, particularly during emergencies.
- **25** regional media releases relevant to Palmerston North City in 2024-25.
- **62%** of all Horizons media releases in 2024-25 were relevant to the Palmerston North City.
- **25** Enviroschools in the city, with **679** students and teachers engaged in education and professional development sessions.
- **3** Enviroschools facilitators working in the Palmerston North City.
- **The Enviroschools programme** relies on regional coordination, where shared facilitation, training, and curriculum delivery create efficiencies, smaller scale delivery would be more costly and less consistent.
- **3** community events attended in the district in 2024-25.
- Consistent regional delivery ensures **clear, unified messaging and services across boundaries**, while fragmentation risks confusion for communities using cross-district services such as public transport and Te Āpiti.
- Regional delivery also **allows lessons and messaging from one area to be applied across the region** for services that span multiple districts and spreads staff subject matter knowledge more widely.

Community Wellbeing and Relationships



Telling our stories and keeping our communities informed

The Community Wellbeing and Relationships activity engages with the community and delivers communications campaigns through a variety of channels, including digital and social media, media liaison, publications, consultation documents, reports and summaries, material for field staff, and event management. This activity also assists with the promotion, shortlisting, and reporting of several grants and sponsorships Horizons offers, and delivers customer service functions for the organisation. The emphasis of this work is to inform, educate, and empower communities by serving as a trusted, credible source of meaningful information. This includes internal communications within the organisation, to Horizons councillors, and to relevant stakeholders. The physical size of the Horizons Region is a key consideration for both internal and external communications.

Due to the regional scale at which this activity operates, it also serves as the communications lead for partnership projects, including the Manawatū-Whanganui Emergency Management Group, Te Āpiti-Manawatū Gorge, Manawatū River Leaders' Forum and the Accelerate35 partnership. This includes media releases, website updates, and general administration support as required.

To engage with the region's tamariki and rangatahi, Horizons facilitates the Enviroschools programme throughout the region and delivers programmes such as Waiora stream studies, pest tracking and trapping, native flora and fauna education, and other community engagement activities. Horizons' Senior Environmental Educator works alongside community groups, the Department of Conservation, territorial authorities, and other environmental education providers to deliver environmental education. The Enviroschools programme is part-funded by territorial authorities, who pay according to the number of schools and early childhood education centres that are signed up, with Horizons also part-funding this mahi.

The Communications team, alongside other appropriately trained staff across the organisation, provides support and resourcing to territorial authorities during emergency events, primarily through the Public Information Management function (PIM)

within the CIMS structure at the Emergency Coordination Centre level. The team helps provide consistent messaging across the region through the MWCDEM website, the Manawatū-Whanganui Civil Defence Facebook page, and by providing and receiving advice from territorial authorities and partner organisations. The Group PIM function, which every region across the motu has, is held by Horizons' Media and Communications Manager. This employee ensures all PIMs across the region at a variety of institutions – not just councils – are equipped to respond in emergencies. For example, the communications team regularly host hui for city and district council and partner organisation PIM representatives, focused on sharing knowledge, experiences and running through some exercises, to grow skills and develop PIM capability within the region.

In Palmerston North, Horizons delivers communications campaigns alongside business-as-usual support across all activities. For example, a series of infrastructure climate resilience works were completed in 2025 throughout the region, which included three dedicated in the Palmerston North City. These included a project to remove and replace deteriorating gabion basket walls along the Mangaone Stream with secant pile retaining walls, strengthening the stream bank edge. Communications input was key during these projects as they involved heavily used public areas, including align the Manawatū River shared pathway access point at the end of Albert St and a road closure for several months at Seddon St. Another campaign relevant to the Palmerston North community was aimed at informing residents along particular areas of some routes of upgrades to the already successful Palmerston North urban bus services through the Connect – Horizons Regional Transport channels.

Business-as-usual communications support in Palmerston North covers a wide range: biosecurity and biodiversity awareness, community grant support, Connect public transport service updates, harbourmaster navigation safety communications on the Manawatū River, science education campaigns, and ongoing promotion of Horizons services to the community.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$2.05 million

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$585,905

The Community Wellbeing and Relationships activity is funded 100% through the Universal Annual General Charge, reflecting the fact that the benefits of community engagement, public information, and environmental education are shared across the entire region.

People and relationships

About 7 FTEs support the Communications team and associated activities, based in Palmerston North. Customer Services functions are delivered by 6.5 FTEs based at multiple offices across the region. This increases from August to November during the rates season.

The team works closely with subject matter experts across Horizons to forge relationships. A prime example includes the work with Te Āpiti – Manawatū Gorge which is a collaborative effort between iwi, Department of Conservation Horizons Regional Council, a landowner/stakeholder representative, Central Economic Development Agency, New Zealand Transport Agency – Waka Kotahi (NZTA), Palmerston North City Council, Manawatū District Council and Tararua District Council. This was particularly important while NZTA built the new Te Ahu a Turanga road between Tararua and Palmerston North. With work being done there, requiring the movement of carparks to the always popular Tawa Loop Track. The track is frequented by locals and often needs support especially when work requires the closure of the track. The team manage the social media page, website and manage the signage on behalf of the group.

The environmental education function has key relationships with schools and early childhood education centres participating in Enviroschools. There are also relationships with district council communications staff and media organisations with interests in stories in Palmerston North.

Key considerations for delivery models

Consistency matters across boundaries. The Connect public transport brand, tsunami signage, civil defence messaging, and environmental education programmes all depend on consistent branding, content, and delivery standards across district boundaries. Fragmented post-amalgamation communications structures could risk undermining that consistency. This could create confusion for communities and users who interact with services that cross district lines.

There is also the benefit of applying lessons across boundaries. Public transport is a prime example. Horizons has launched multiple new or improved public transport networks in recent years, alongside public transport planning campaigns such as the Regional Services Review. Lessons learned during a campaign in one territorial authority area are applied to a campaign in another area, then another, and another, and then across the region. This ensures local voices are used where they are most effective, while lessons are efficiently applied across the region without requiring cross-entity debriefs or education.

The Manawatū River is another example of the benefit of regional delivery. Communications regarding river navigation safety through the harbourmaster function, flood events at the Moutoa floodgates, and water quality in the lower catchment all involve a waterway that crosses multiple territorial authority boundaries. Coordinating consistent, timely, and accurate public messaging about the benefits from a single communications function with a regional view.

The Enviroschools programme depends on regional coordination. With seven facilitators working in the region and three dedicated in the Palmerston North City area, the efficiencies of shared facilitation, training, and curriculum development are significant. Delivering an equivalent programme at a district or smaller scale would require each entity to independently resource facilitation and coordination. This would likely come at a greater cost and with less consistency.

Internal communications presents its own challenge at the regional scale. With staff spread across multiple service centres and depots from Ruapehu to Horowhenua, maintaining organisational cohesion and ensuring teams in different districts are aware of what is happening across the region are ongoing tasks. When done poorly, the common voice becomes disjointed, and confusion can abound. This is an issue already being experienced during the Three Waters process. Any structural change that further fragments staff populations would increase this challenge rather than reduce it.



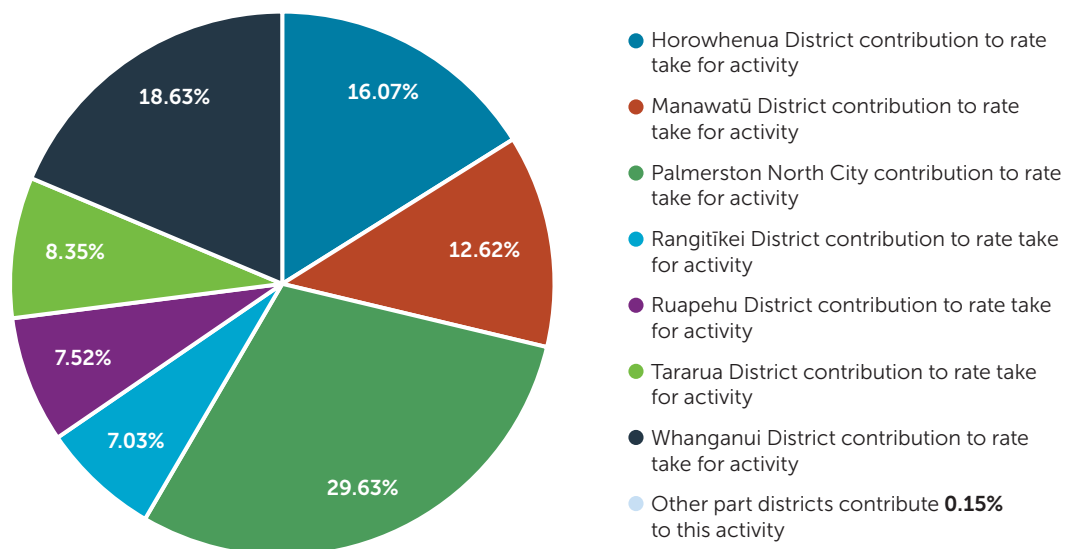
Students participating in the Horizons activity at Rural Games, Clash of the Colleges

Governance Activity

Governance at a glance

- Aims to provide the **structure, process and support required for elected members** to carry out their statutory decision-making and oversight responsibilities.
- Budget for the region: **\$3.45 million**.
- Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: **\$1.1 million**, which is **29.63%** contribution to the operational budget.
- Activity is funded **general rates**, reflecting the fact effective democratic oversight of the organisation benefits the entire region.
- **36** council and committee meetings, **36** workshop days held in 2024-25.
- Council meets with each **territorial authority** across the region at their place to discuss current issues, concerns, and priorities.
- Outside of **Council committees**, the activity supports the **Mayoral Forum and MWCDEM Joint Standing Committee**.
- Regional council governance **differs fundamentally from district and city governance**, as it operates across the entire region with councillors elected on a regional basis to make decisions on cross-boundary issues, reflecting a distinct role and relationship with communities and the environment.
- The amalgamation process raises complex questions about **structuring regional governance, requiring careful design to ensure fair representation across areas**, particularly given the scale and cross-boundary challenges of the Horizons Region.
- Following the October 2025 referendum confirming **Māori wards**, how this democratically supported representation would be maintained under amalgamation remains uncertain and requires careful consideration.

Governance



Democracy at a regional scale

The Governance activity provides the structure, processes, and support required for elected members to carry out their statutory decision-making and oversight responsibilities. This includes facilitating Council and Committee meetings, workshops, and governance processes; providing governance advice; supporting policy and decision-making processes; and ensuring compliance with legislative requirements. The activity enables effective democratic governance by ensuring decisions are made transparently, lawfully, and in a way that reflects community interests and statutory obligations.

Horizons' councillors provide governance oversight and decision-making for the organisation through regular Council and Committee meetings. In addition to setting and monitoring policy, councillors keep abreast of relevant matters so emerging issues for the region can be investigated and planned for. The Governance team supports elected members with administrative support, compiling agenda items, running meetings, and coordinating council meeting livestreams.

In 2024-25, Horizons held 36 council and committee meetings and 36 workshop days. The Governance team also provides secretariat support to the Mayoral Forum which usually meets four times per year alongside any additional workshops and meetings the Forum agrees to hold. Most of these meetings and workshops are held at Regional House in Palmerston North, including regional committees which feature people other than Horizons councillors (e.g. Passenger Transport Committee). On an annual basis, Horizons seeks to meet with each territorial authority across the region at their place to discuss current issues, concerns, and priorities, including with Palmerston North City Council.

Finances and contract

Budget for the region: \$3.45 million

Rates collected for this activity from Palmerston North City: \$1.1 million

The Governance activity is funded through general rates, reflecting the fact effective democratic oversight of the organisation benefits the entire region.

People and relationships

2.5 FTEs support the Governance activity. The team provides administrative and governance support to elected members across all council and committee processes.

Key relationships for this activity include Horizons' elected councillors, the chief executive and senior leadership team, territorial authority mayors and chief executives, and the wider local government sector. The Mayoral Forum relationship is particularly important, providing a regular forum for regional mayors to engage with Horizons on matters of shared interest.

Key considerations for delivery models

Regional council governance is distinct from district and city council governance in both structure and function. Horizons is governed by councillors elected from constituencies spanning the entire region, with decision-making responsibilities for matters which cross all district boundaries. This regional mandate is not simply a scaled-up version of district governance. Rather, it reflects a fundamentally different set of functions and a different relationship with the communities and environments being governed.

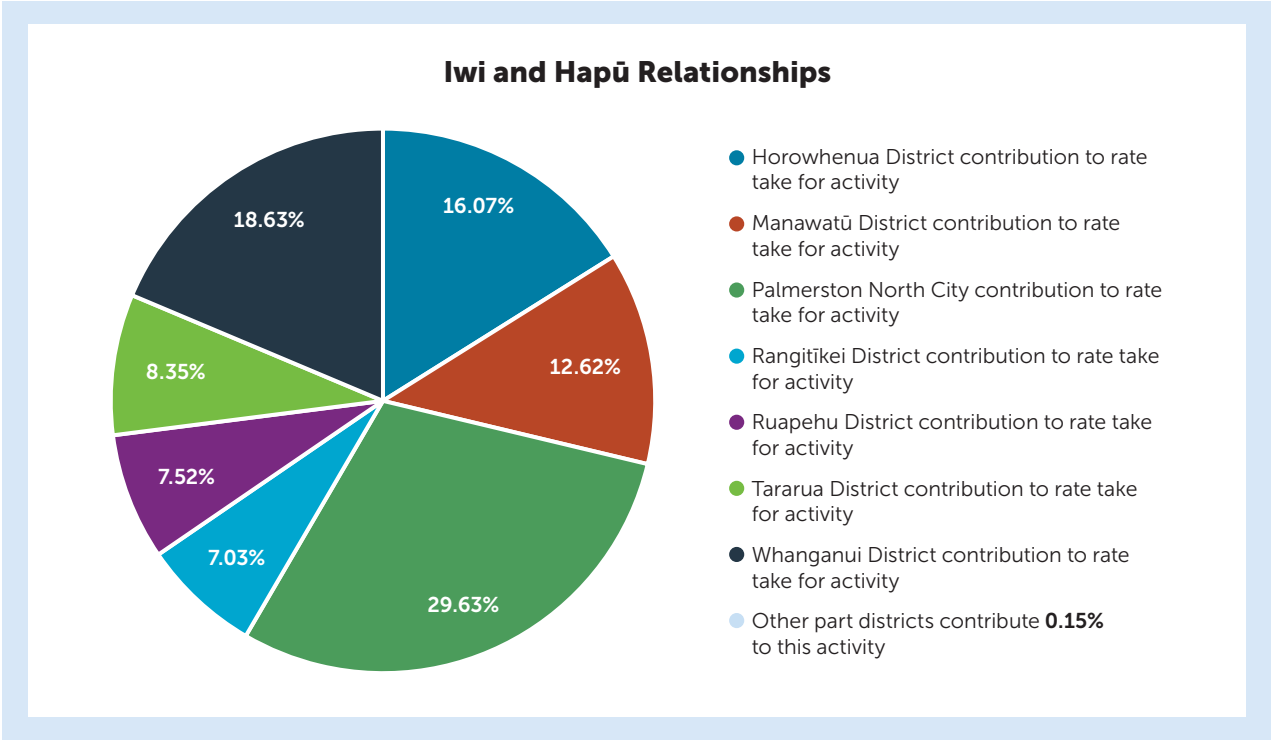
The amalgamation process raises questions about how regional council governance functions would be structured within any post-amalgamation entity. No matter the future governance makeup of regional functions – a large unitary council, community boards, CCOs, sub-unitary councils, governing boards made up of mayors/other district representatives, or other entities – there would need to be careful design and coordination to ensure fairness in decision-making and voice between smaller and larger areas. The experience of unitary authorities elsewhere in Aotearoa New Zealand provides some useful reference points, but the scale and complexity of the Horizons Region – spanning seven districts and one city, with major river systems, significant biodiversity assets, and a large public transport network – presents challenges that would require careful and deliberate governance design to navigate well.

Finally, in the October 2025 referendum to determine if Māori wards should remain, the option to retain these for the region received the most votes. The poll result was binding and would apply for Horizons Regional Council elections to be held in 2028 and 2031. How this representation, that communities democratically indicated they wanted, would be preserved through amalgamation is unclear but important to consider.

Iwi and Hapū Relationships Activity

Iwi and Hapū Relationships at a glance

- Aims to build and **maintain relationships with iwi and hapū across the rohe**, enabling meaningful engagement and participation in regional decision-making to ensure Horizons meets its responsibilities to Māori and legislative obligations.
- The Horizons Region is home to more than **35** iwi and more than **100** hapū.
- Budget for the region: **\$726,768**.
- Rates collected for this activity in Palmerston North City: **\$150,563** which is a **29.63%** rate take contribution to the operational budget.
- This activity is funded through the **Universal Annual General Charge**, reflecting the fact the whole region benefits from Horizons upholding its statutory obligations and maintaining strong relationships with tangata whenua.
- Due to its size, Palmerston North City has a **smaller range** of iwi and hapū than other territorial authorities in the region.
- Horizons has **1** Memoranda of Understanding, one **1** environmental management plan, and **2** Mana Whakahono ā Rohe initiated in Palmerston North.
- **27** iwi and hapū engagements undertaken in Palmerston North in 2024-25.
- Iwi and hapū areas of interest and mandate often **traverse multiple district boundaries**.
- **Treaty settlement obligations and Mana Whakahono ā Rohe are legally binding** arrangements, and any amalgamation must consider how these obligations would be carried forward, which entity or entities would hold them, and how continuity of relationship would be maintained through a period of significant change.
- The main risk is **damaging established iwi and hapū relationships** during a critical period, as organisational disruption could undermine long-standing trust and progress, requiring new partnerships to be rebuilt post amalgamation.



Honouring our obligations, building lasting partnerships

The Iwi and Hapū Relationships activity supports Horizons to build and maintain relationships with iwi and hapū, and to enable meaningful engagement and participation in regional decision-making. It ensures Horizons meets its responsibilities to Māori, fulfils its legislative obligations, and strengthens partnerships by incorporating tangata whenua perspectives into council processes and decision-making. This includes providing technical expertise and supporting engagement in policy development, planning, and governance processes; facilitating co-governance and co-management arrangements; and building organisational capability to meet Treaty and statutory obligations.

The activity also supports policy development and adherence to Te Tiriti settlement obligations through technical and planning advice, as well as supporting other parts of Horizons in meeting their own obligations to iwi and hapū in areas including consenting, biosecurity, freshwater, and emergency management.

Due to the physical size of its area, Palmerston North City could be seen to have a less complex iwi and hapū landscape than other parts of the Horizons Region. However, this does not lower Horizons' requirements or efforts to have strong relationships with iwi at place and this overview of the activity is simply that – an overview. As such Horizons acknowledges this section will not capture all the details and facets of the activity, however wishes to provide insight to this work and things to consider as we look at amalgamation.

Horizons maintains relationships with Rangitāne o Manawatū, Tanenuiarangi Manawatū Charitable Trust, and Ngāti Raukawa. In Palmerston North, Horizons has one Memoranda of Understanding, one iwi environmental management plan, and two Mana Whakahono ā Rohe initiated, alongside the one Treaty settlement. These formal arrangements are the foundation of relationships that go well beyond compliance. These relationships they shape how Horizons approaches resource management, planning, and community engagement across the district.

In 2024-25, the Iwi and Hapū Relationships team (named Te Pae Kōuka) undertook 226 engagements with iwi and hapū across the region, with 27 of these – 12% – in Palmerston North City.

Finances and contracts

Budget for the region: \$726,768

Rates collected for this activity in Palmerston North City: \$150,563

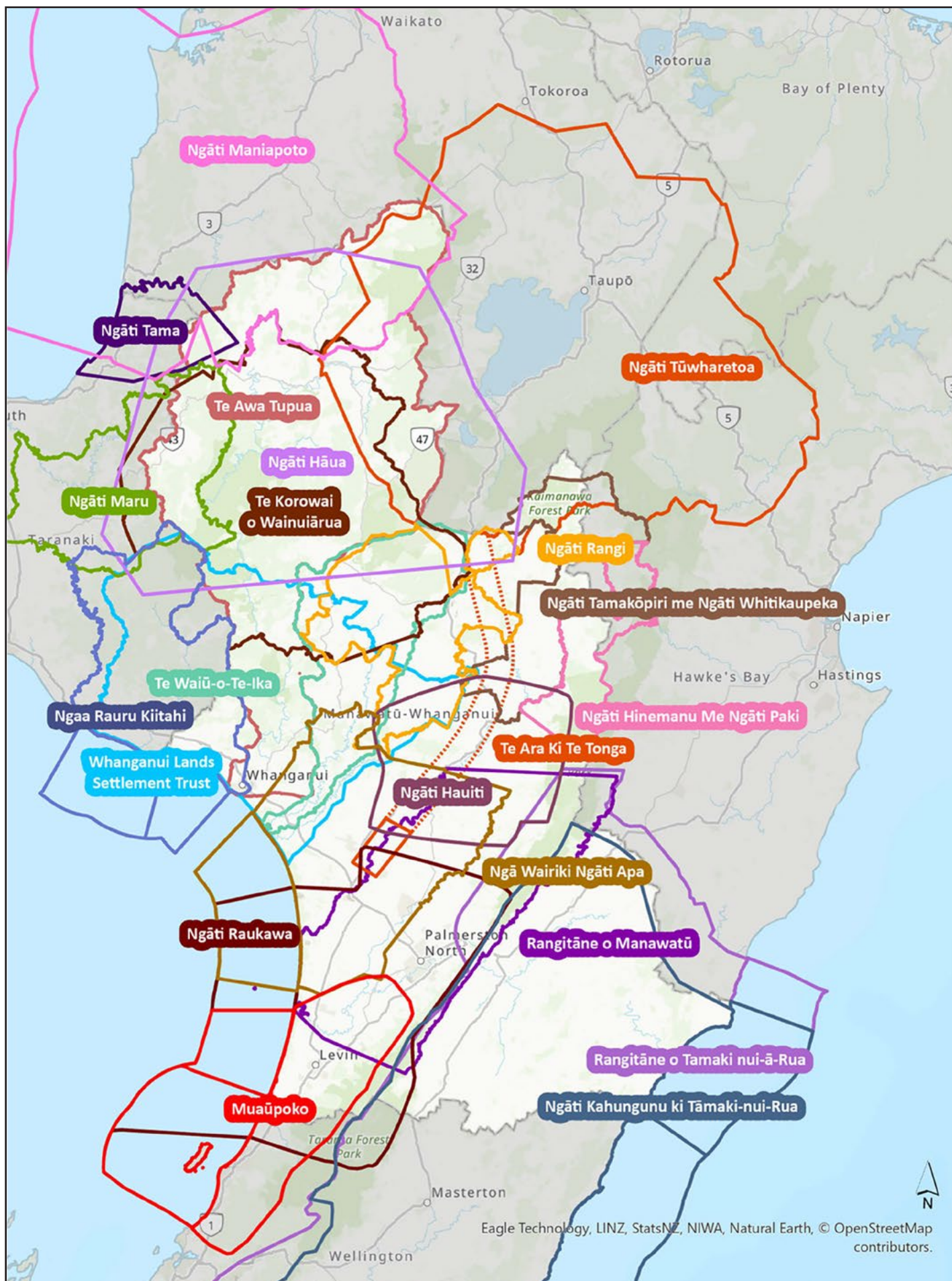
This activity is funded through the Universal Annual General Charge, reflecting the fact the whole region benefits from Horizons upholding its statutory obligations and maintaining strong relationships with tangata whenua. The expenditure relates to relationships with the region's mana whenua and to ensuring the Council meets its obligations with respect to iwi and hapū involvement in policy development and decision-making.

Key considerations for delivery models

Regional-scale iwi and hapū relationships reflect the areas of interest and mandate held by iwi and hapū which frequently traverse multiple district and regional council boundaries. A single iwi may have relationships and interests spanning several territorial authority areas simultaneously. Managing those relationships can benefit from a consistent, regionally coherent approach.

Treaty settlement obligations and Mana Whakahono ā Rohe arrangements – a tool designed to assist tangata whenua and local authorities to discuss, agree and record how they will work together under the Resource Management Act (RMA) – are formal, legally binding commitments. Any structural change arising from amalgamations needs to carefully consider how these obligations would be carried forward, which entity or entities would hold them, and how continuity of relationship would be maintained through a period of significant organisational change.

The broader risk is one of relationship damage at a critical time. Iwi and hapū across Palmerston North City are actively engaged in processes that depend on stable, well-resourced partners. Disrupting organisational structures could set back progress that has taken years to build and undermine the trust that makes meaningful partnership possible. While territorial authorities have their current partnerships with iwi and hapū in place, creating new partnerships post-amalgamation would be an essential process for all involved.



Map of iwi authority boundaries in the Horizons Region (as at December 2025)



For more information visit www.horizons.govt.nz
or freephone Horizons on **0508 800 800**