

# Whakarāpopototanga o te Mahere-ātau

## Annual Plan summary



Horizons' planned work for 2025-26 will continue to focus on what we set out to do in Year 2 of our 2024-34 Long-term Plan.

This programme of work included a proposed total rate increase of 12 percent across the region. In consulting on this Annual Plan, Council have refined their budgeted based on how we are actually tracking, setting our 2025-26 rates slightly lower than forecast at a total of 11.2 percent increase.

Expanding our monitoring of lakes, estuaries and coasts, as well as implementing wetland mapping and monitoring, are key pieces of science work to be undertaken this coming year. Both will give us a greater understanding of the region's natural environment. Resource is required for each monitoring programme, including new staff, to ensure we can deliver them and the other science work we already undertake.

Public transport across the Horizons Region continues to be a priority. We continue to fund existing services, such as the enhanced network in Palmerston North and Ashhurst which brought up its first year in service in March 2024. Patronage on that network – the first fully electric network in Australasia – increased 41.3 percent in its first year compared to the last year of the old network. We will also be increasing the amount of funding we provide the Capital Connection rail service, as well as improving bus services in Whanganui and Feilding.

Some mahi taking place will help Horizons staff help you. One major piece of work is the implementation of a new document management system. Having a modern system for managing files is crucial for all councils, ensuring staff can rapidly find key records as and when required. This not only makes it easier for staff to do their work, but also enables better compliance with legislation such as the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act. Easier access to records makes it easier to provide information to the public, helping us to remain transparent about what we are doing.

Our ability to provide the information you want will be enhanced with the creation of a new Horizons website. The current website is nearly a decade old, has limited functionality and is unable to be updated for today's information and technology requirements. This work, which began in 2024, has a forecast cost of \$500,000, with much of the project to be delivered this coming year. The website project will also result in standalone websites for our public transport brand Connect – Horizons Regional Transport and the Manawatū-Whanganui Civil Defence Emergency Management Group, making it easier to access this important information.

We will continue to provide many other services. One is the Manawatū River Water Quality Enhancement programme, which supports the delivery of projects to meet the goals of the Manawatū River Leaders' Accord. Established in 2010, the accord is a collaboration between multiple parties – tangata whenua, catchment groups, councils and more – to enhance the quality of the Manawatū River. Delivery of this work is forecast to cost about \$450,000 via the Manawatū Accord targeted rate. There will also be another \$200,000 added to the Ruapehu district-wide river and drainage scheme budget for additional maintenance. There is also a \$150,000 boost to possum control operations, assisting a programme which covers more than 1.568 million hectares – nearly 70 percent of the region.

**Our financial strategy summary below reflects some budgetary highlights for 2025-26.**

**TOTAL RATE INCREASE**

**11.39%**

**TOTAL FUNDING**

**\$111.0M**

**OPERATING SPEND**

**\$107.8M**

**CAPITAL SPEND**

**\$10.7M**

**BORROWINGS**

**\$88.3M\***

**TOTAL ASSETS**

**\$1.5B**

\*This includes \$17.0M of borrowings which have been on-loaned to MWRC Holdings.

The chart below provides a high-level summary of what contributes to the total rates increase of 11.39 percent, as well as our key activity areas for 2025-26. We strongly encourage everyone to read our 2024-34 Long-term Plan to understand the full spectrum of work Horizons Regional Council undertakes to make our place a healthy environment where people thrive.

