

23 September 2024

Nature Calls update for Horizons Regional Council

Kia ora Sara,

In our last update, we explained that a result of our Long-Term Plan consultation, Council decided to take another look at options for our Nature Calls wastewater project to ensure it was affordable for our community.

In that letter, we explained that we would provide updates with you every three months about how we are progressing. We're pleased to be able to give you that first update.

Methodology, governance structure and timeline now in place for next steps.

On 4 September, our Nature Calls project team updated Council's Elected Members on the progress made since the council decision at the end of June. That update included setting up a new governance structure for the project, which is similar to what we had in place before the BPO was selected. This structure ensures that Council continue to have key decision-making abilities, but also has layers of other project governance and support to ensure we can proceed effectively and efficiently with these next steps of the project. The structure continues to provide spaces for iwi and stakeholder groups to be heavily involved in the process.

At that same Council meeting, the project team also outlined a proposed methodology and programme. This methodology outlined the following steps:

Step 1: Long List Review (Revisiting the long list for existing and new options.)

Step 2: Short List (Narrowing down the long list to a more manageable set of options.)

Step 3: Process Optimisation (Ensuring we are not repeating work that has already been conducted.)

Step 4: Technical Review of Options (Conducting a technical review of the shortlisted options.)

Step 5: Multi-Criteria Assessment Tool (Applying multi-criteria assessment tools to evaluate the options. This would include any public feedback.)

Step 6: BPO Assessment (Conducting a final assessment to determine the Best Practicable Option recommendations for Council decision.)

Step 7: Council Decision (Deciding on the BPO option that will be delivered.)

This methodology is the same as what we've done for our BPO process so far. Elected members have also asked staff if there are any other options for the methodology that could also be looked at. We'll be looking into that.

Timeline vague due to Taumata Arowai proposed wastewater standards

We had been working on getting a BPO selected by early 2025. However, in late August we received an update from the Minister for Local Government, Simeon Brown, announcing that the government is proposing a single national standard that Regional Councils will implement through resource consents for wastewater discharge. We've since met with Taumata Arowai and had further clarification that it is working on a range of standards for each different receiving environment and that the likely timeframe for the new standards is August 2025.

We believe this substantially impacts our proposed programme, due to the uncertainty of what the final treatment standard will be for the different receiving environments. As you can appreciate, it is difficult to assess and cost potential options without first understanding the regulatory requirements we will be required to meet. This also impacts our ability to seek public feedback on which option to proceed with or go through the final steps of the methodology before selecting a BPO. Due to the expected timeframe for the new treatment standards, we expect any decision on a BPO will need to be completed by the next elected Council following the October 2025 elections.

In the meantime, we will keep working on the project in the first six steps of our methodology outlined above, as this work will still need to occur regardless of the wastewater treatment standards.

We'll provide another update in December

Every three months we provide our Council with an update on this project, and we will coincide our updates to you at the same time. We also intend on making these updates publicly available on our Nature Calls page on our website. You can expect our next update on or before December 20, 2024.

If you have any questions on the matters outlined above, please contact the Nature Calls Project Manager - Anna Lewis (anna.lewis@pncc.govt.nz) in the first instance.

Nga mihi nui



Anna Lewis

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