



## Ministry for the Environment: Updates and approvals of funding for projects and transfer

### Purpose

1. This paper seeks your approval as Minister with oversight of the Jobs for Nature (J4N) Programme, and with approval delegation relating to those projects within the Vote Environment portion of funding. The approvals include the increase in funding for an existing project, approval of funding towards two projects, <sup>Out of scope</sup>

### Recommendations

2. The Ministry recommends that you:
  - a) **note** you have oversight of the Jobs for Nature Programme as delegated by Hon Penny Simmonds, Minister for the Environment
  - b) **note** you have delegated financial authority over Jobs for Nature projects within Vote Environment, which includes the At-Risk Catchment Fund, Freshwater Improvement Fund and Essential Freshwater Fund

Out of scope


- d) **approve** funding for the following two projects:
  - i. **approve** \$1,974,227 from At-Risk Catchment Fund towards the Manuherekia Catchment Action Plan priority projects
  - ii. **note** that the Manuherekia catchment was previously approved as an Exemplar Catchment as part of the At-Risk Catchment Fund, with the quantum of funding unspecified until a detailed set of priority projects were developed
  - iii. **approve** \$5,653,669.50 from the Essential Freshwater Fund towards the Pukekohe Action Plan priority projects
  - iv. **note** that an investment of \$10 million from the Essential Freshwater Fund was previously approved for the Pukekohe vegetable growing area

Out of scope



*Ministry for the*  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*


Out of scope

A large, solid grey rectangular area that covers the majority of the page below the 'Out of scope' text.



## Background and Analysis

Out of scope

A large, solid grey rectangular box covers the majority of the page, indicating that the content has been redacted or is out of scope.



### **Investment into Pukekohe and Manuherekia catchments**

16. Investment into Manuherekia and Pukekohe catchments has been previously approved by the previous Government's SLU Ministers within the J4N Programme. The scope of these projects, which we are asking you to confirm approvals for, is consistent with the original approvals.
17. Both these investments would represent direct support to rural communities and their catchment groups to enhance land management practices and improve water quality on their own terms. These investments would also build upon recent catchment group investments, such as that announced in March 2024 by Hon Todd McClay, Minister for Agriculture<sup>5</sup> and would increase the regional spread of this investment to two additional regions (Auckland and Otago).

#### *Manuherekia Catchment Action Plan priority projects*

18. Funding for the Manuherekia Exemplar Catchment was announced by Minister Parker and Minister O'Connor in September 2020 as part of the Minister for the Environment's \$12 million At-Risk Catchment (ARC) Programme. The Manuherekia catchment was chosen because of the freshwater challenges in the catchment and the opportunity to partner with

---

<sup>5</sup> [Government backs rural led catchment projects | Beehive.govt.nz](https://www.beehive.govt.nz/news/government-backs-rural-led-catchment-projects)



Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu to enhance and protect the significant cultural values in the catchment.

19. The ARC programme of work was subsequently integrated into the wider J4N Programme with the establishment of the Budget 2020 COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund.
20. The total quantum of funding for the Manuherehia Exemplar Catchment Programme was unspecified at the time of the announcement as a detailed Integrated Catchment Enhancement Plan was to be undertaken to direct investment. In September 2021 (BRF-620 refers), SLU Ministers approved a community-led process to identify priorities for this investment.
21. The decision to fund the Manuherehia Exemplar Catchment specifically included the approval of the Thomsons Catchment Project within the wider Manuherehia catchment. The Thomsons Catchment Project was granted \$2.9 million from the ARC fund. The project is currently in Year 2 out of 3 and on-track.
22. SLU Ministers also agreed that further initiatives for the Manuherehia Exemplar Catchment Programme will be escalated to SLU Ministers for approval as they are endorsed by the Manuherehia Exemplar Catchment Governance Group (MECGG).
23. The Manuherehia Exemplar Catchment project has taken a holistic community approach, adopted by the Ministry's Exemplar Catchment programme, to identify the issues and strategic management options for activities in the catchment. This approach follows a positive enquiry process with communities, focusing on aspirations and opportunities, rather than just problems and issues. It has taken time to shift the discussion from blame towards shared values and future positive outcomes. It has therefore taken longer than in other catchments to build cohesion in the community and develop this Action Plan.
24. Experience to date in the Ministry's Exemplar Catchment programme, for example in the Te Hoiere/Pelorus Integrated Catchment Enhancement Plan, shows the approach improves engagement, commitment, ownership, and long-term outcomes.
25. The MECGG was set up to provide oversight functions to the wider Manuherehia programme and prioritise actions identified by an extensive community engagement process. This governance group membership comprised Otago Regional Council, Central Otago District Council, Manuherehia Catchment Group, Central Otago Environment Society, Fish and Game, Department of Conservation, and Ngāi Tahu.
26. In August 2023, the MECGG prioritised the Manuherehia Catchment Action Plan (MCAP), a set of actions for implementation under the approved investment as presented in Attachment A.
27. MECGG is now seeking funding of \$1,974,227 to deliver the Action Plan. This is the amount we are recommending you approve for the final ARC investment in Manuherehia.
28. The MCAP priority projects would be funded through the creation of a new funding deed, with the Manuherehia Catchment Group Incorporated being the fund recipient responsible for the project delivery.

#### *Pukekohe Action Plan priority projects*

29. In November 2021, the Government approved a total investment of \$10 million for the Pukekohe vegetable growing area from the Essential Freshwater Fund (EFF). This was to support a community-led catchment planning process and the implementation of priority projects to be identified and scoped through this catchment planning process.
30. Key to this investment decision was the understanding that Pukekohe is a vegetable growing area of strategic importance to New Zealand's food system, and that the highly



degraded water quality in some catchments in the growing area requires community-led action based on a long-term strategic plan.

31. Pukekohe partners collaborated in the creation of a long-term action plan to improve the health of the freshwater environment in the growing area, and to transform Pukekohe into a national centre of excellence for fresh vegetables production while nurturing a healthy natural environment.
32. Pukekohe partners in the Pukekohe Action Plan are the Pukekohe Vegetable Growers Association (PVGGA), Horticulture New Zealand (HortNZ), three iwi partners (Ngaati Te Ata, Ngaati Tamaoho, and Ngaati Tiipa), Auckland Council, Waikato Regional Council, the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) and the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI).
33. From the approved investment, \$746,330.50 has been contracted on the community-led catchment planning process, on the set up and facilitation of governance and working groups for this investment, on the identification and planning of priority projects, and on the implementation of a few key preparatory actions such as sourcing local seeds for future planting.
34. On 24 January 2024, the Pukekohe investment governance group recommended priority projects in Attachment B. We are recommending you approve \$5,653,669.50 for the EFF investment in Pukekohe, to support the implementation these actions. This would bring the total investment in Pukekohe to \$6.4 million, a reduction of \$3.6 million from the previous amount approved. The specific actions funded will be agreed through negotiations to develop the deed of funding.
35. The recommended priority projects would complement an existing EFF project led by HortNZ – Growing Change. This is a nation-wide project to deliver training and build capability and capacity on freshwater farm planning and on good agricultural practices in the industry’s GAP assurance system.
36. The priority projects in the Pukekohe Action Plan (PAP) would complement the existing HortNZ project because, under the PAP priority projects, local growers would be:
  - a) trialling and sharing knowledge about novel growing practices that have not yet been integrated into the industry’s GAP assurance system.
  - b) building edge of field mitigation structures on the ground such as sediment bunds.

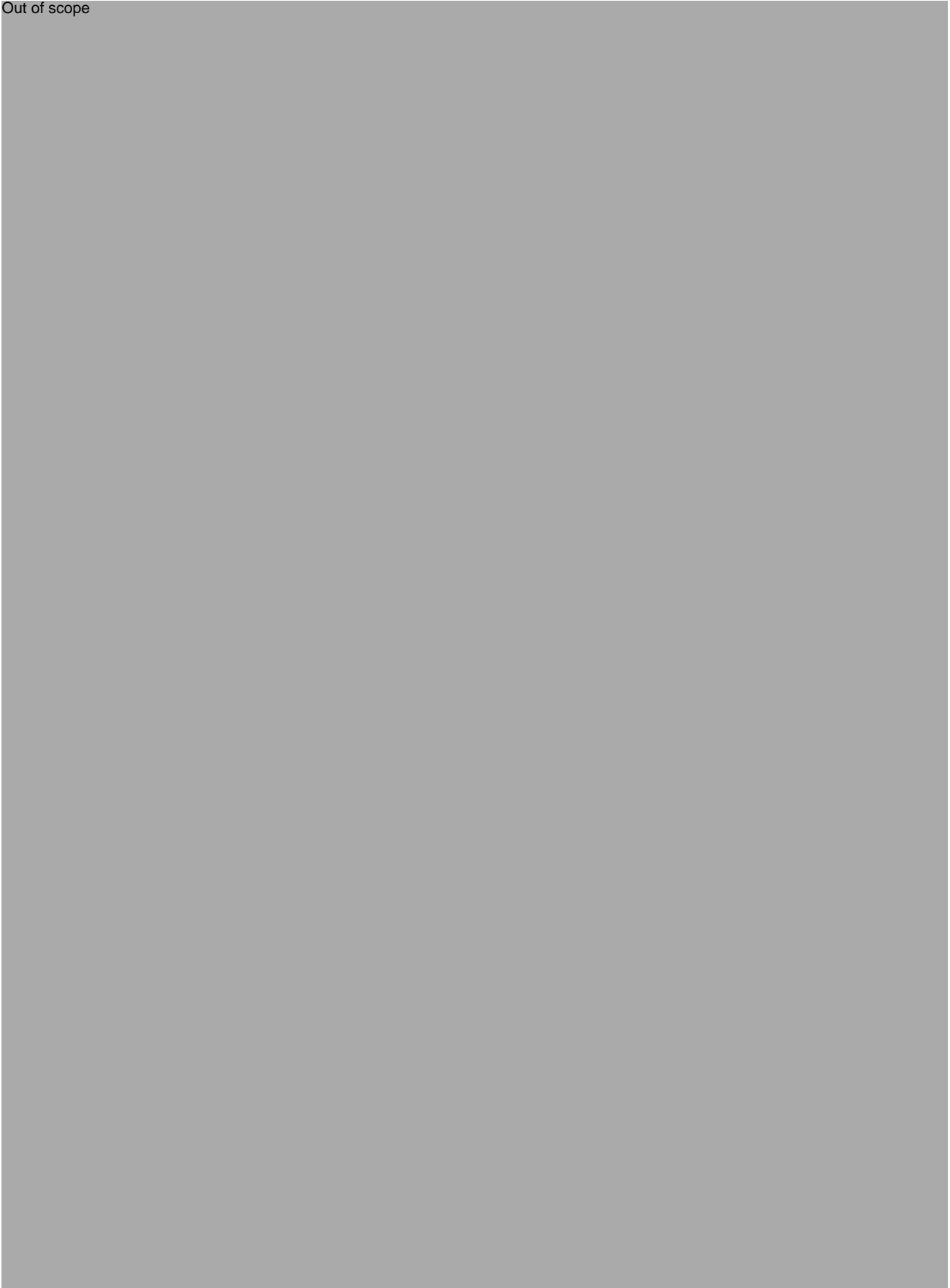
#### *Next steps with Pukekohe and Manuherekia*

37. On approval of the funding for Manuherekia and Pukekohe projects, we will work with the Manuherekia Catchment Group Incorporated and Te Tautara o Pukekohe Trust to finalise deeds of funding agreement and work programmes.
38. The current timeframe of delivery for these projects is currently 18-months, and would mean that the project extends beyond the current appropriation end, being 30 June 2025. Due to the ongoing commitments demonstrated by landowners, partners, and stakeholders, there is a potential for quick project delivery, alternatively, some of the projects can be rescoped to fit into a 12-month implementation timeline.



*Ministry for the*  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*

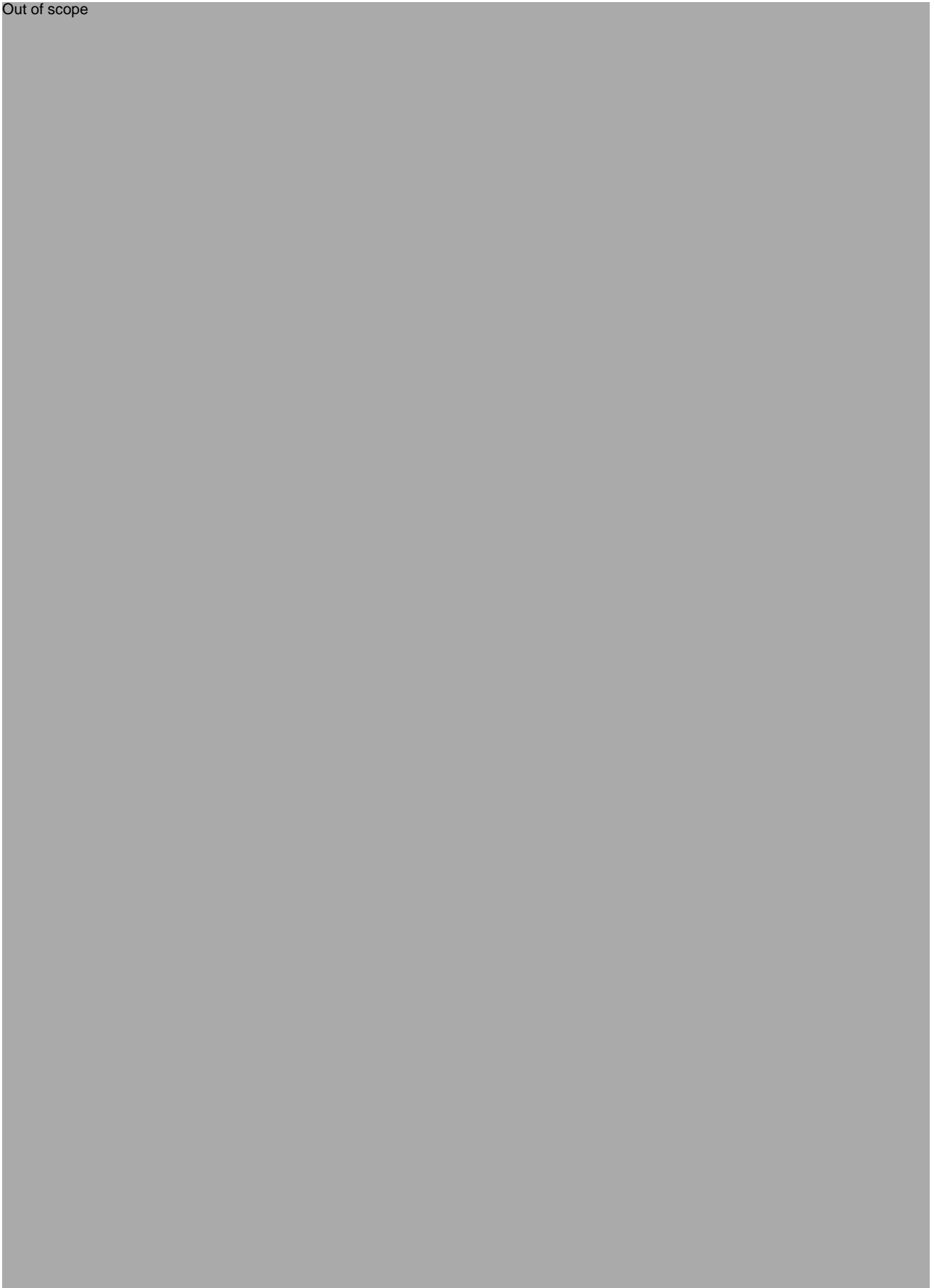
Out of scope





*Ministry for the*  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*

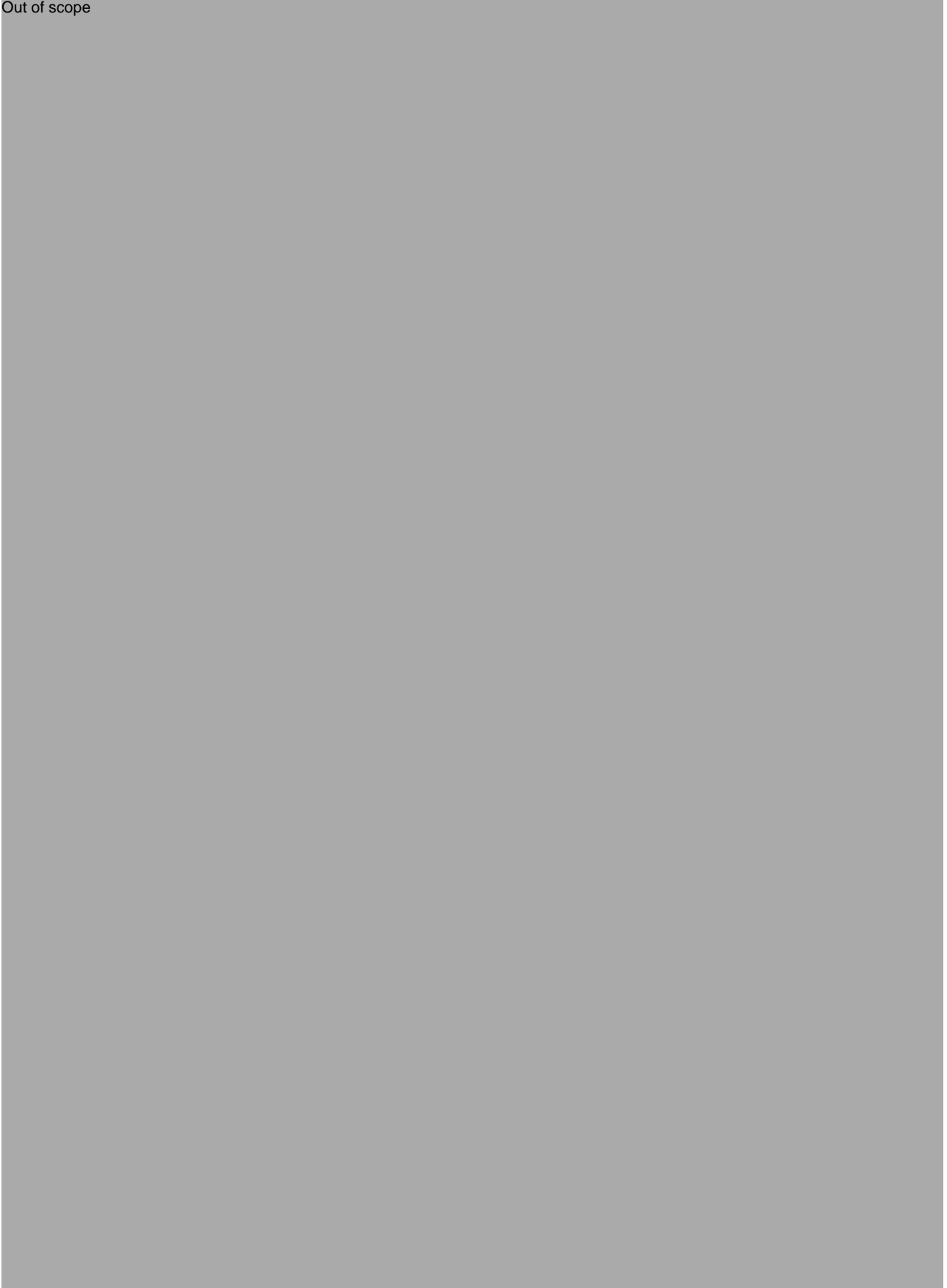
Out of scope





*Ministry for the*  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*

Out of scope





## Attachment a: Manuherekia Catchment Action Plan

The following table presents the projects endorsed for At-Risk Catchment Fund investment under the Manuherekia Catchment Action Plan.

s 9(2)(b)(ii)

[Redacted table content]

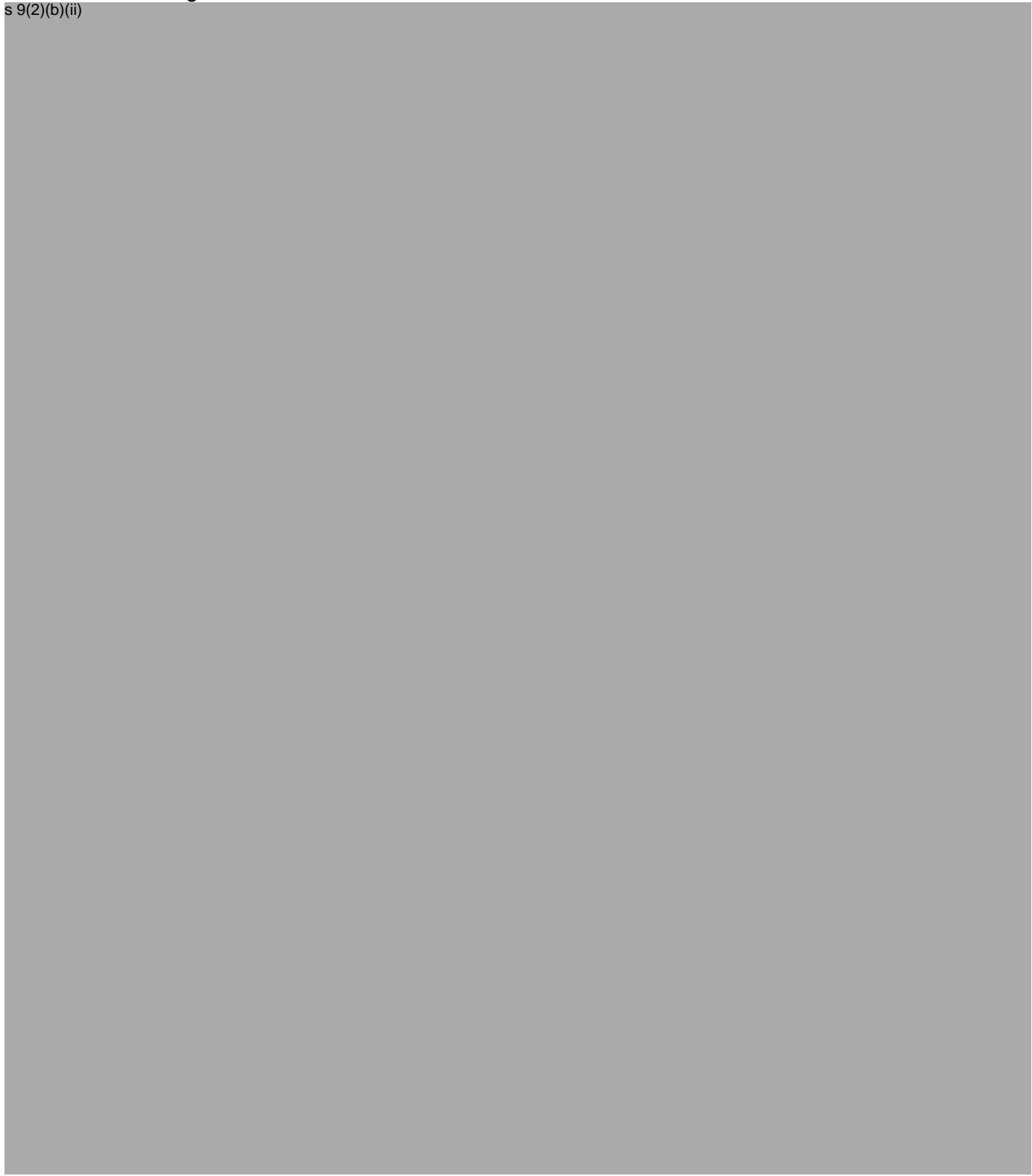
	<b>Total</b>	\$1,974,227
--	--------------	-------------



## Attachment b: Pukekohe Action Plan

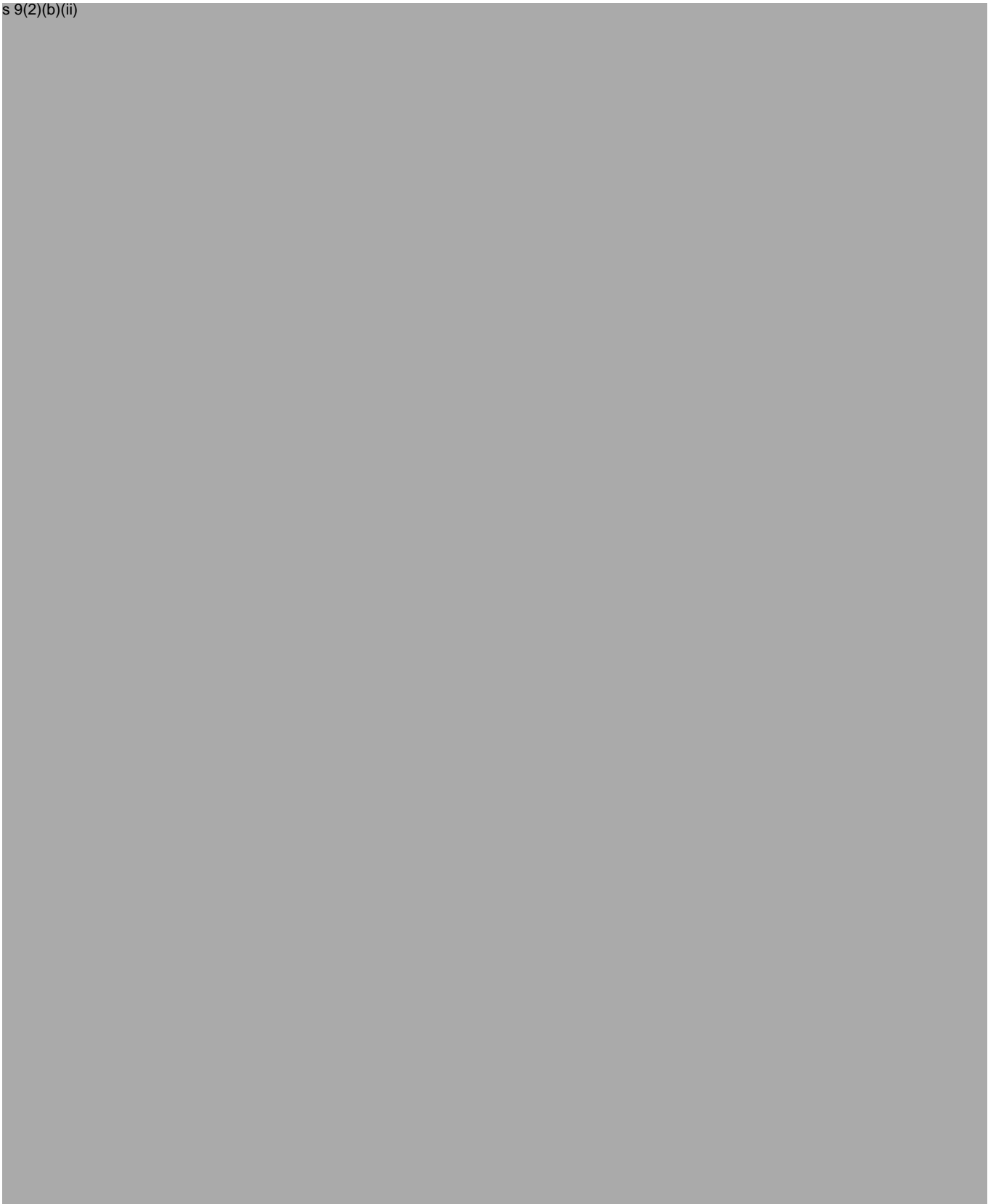
The following table presents the projects prioritised for EFF investment under the Pukekohe Action Plan. The specific actions funded will be agreed through negotiations to develop the deed of funding.

s 9(2)(b)(ii)





s 9(2)(b)(ii)



<b>Total</b>	\$9,253.669.50
--------------	----------------