

Response ID ANON-URZ4-5F18-S

Submitted to Fast-track approval applications
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Submitter details

Is this application for section 2a or 2b?

2B

1 Submitter name

Individual or organisation name:
Waikato District Council

2 Contact person

Contact person name:
Nick Johnston

3 What is your job title

Job title:
Advocacy and Investment Advisor

4 What is your contact email address?

Email:
s 9(2)(a)

5 What is your phone number?

Phone number:
s 9(2)(a)

6 What is your postal address?

Postal address:

Waikato District Council, Private Bag 544, Ngaaruawaahia 3742

7 Is your address for service different from your postal address?

Yes

Organisation:
Waikato District Council

Contact person:
Nick Johnston

Phone number:
s 9(2)(a)

Email address:
s 9(2)(a)

Job title:
Advocacy and Investment Advisor

Please enter your service address:

Waikato District Council, 15 Galileo Street, Ngaaruawaahia 3742

Section 1: Project location

Site address or location

Add the address or describe the location:

Raglan, Waikato District

Location and aerial imagery to be supplied in application supplementary material document, to be provided through listedprojects@mfe.govt.nz

File upload:

No file uploaded

Upload file here:

No file uploaded

Do you have a current copy of the relevant Record(s) of Title?

Yes

upload file:

No file uploaded

Who are the registered legal land owner(s)?

Please write your answer here:

Waikato District Council (WWTP site)

Detail the nature of the applicant's legal interest (if any) in the land on which the project will occur

Please write your answer here:

Project site is located on Council-owned land (for increased capacity and improved treatment upgrades)

Exploring options beyond the Council-owned site for a discharge to land solution - arrangement yet to be finalised.

Section 2: Project details

What is the project name?

Please write your answer here:

Raglan Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade

What is the project summary?

Please write your answer here:

Upgrade of the Raglan Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) to increase capacity to accommodate growth, improve effluent quality, and to deliver a new discharge solution that is supported by the community and mana whenua.

What are the project details?

Please write your answer here:

The purpose of the project is to increase capacity at the Raglan WWTP to accommodate growth, improve effluent quality, and to deliver a new discharge solution that is supported by the community and mana whenua. The proposed Membrane Bioreactor plant includes membranes that have been sized to treat the peak dry weather flow, with the existing ponds retained to buffer and assist with treatment during a storm.

Discharge to land is the preferred solution for mana whenua and the local community, due to the significance of Whāingaroa Harbour. This solution would replace the current discharge into Whāingaroa Harbour with the outgoing tide. A site has been identified that meets all necessary requirements for land discharge, and detailed concept designs have been prepared as well as pricing for the conveyance and discharge. An MOU is currently in place with the landowner who supports the continued consideration of the site for the purposes of sub-surface treated wastewater discharge.

The treatment and capacity aspects of the WWTP upgrade are currently funded by Council. The discharge solution is currently unfunded at the time of application, however this is not a barrier to delivery of the capital works to increase capacity and treatment quality.

Objectives:

- Support growth in Raglan that will be constrained without capacity increase,
- Support tourism sector by catering for high seasonal flows in peak seasons due to high domestic and international visitor numbers,
- Support mana whenua and local community preference for a new discharge solution that does not discharge into Whāingaroa Harbour,
- Improve environmental outcomes,
- Improve infrastructure resilience – designed to better withstand extreme weather events as well as earthquakes,

Describe the staging of the project, including the nature and timing of the staging

Please write your answer here:

Work is underway to increase capacity and improve effluent quality at the Raglan WWTP, alongside the development of discharge solutions.

Bulk earthworks - 6 weeks
Civil works - 22 weeks
Plant construction - 40 weeks (alongside civil works)
Commissioning - 6 weeks

This work is scheduled for 2024/25. As the design work is completed, completion of the construction and commissioning phase is scheduled for June 2025.

The WWTP upgrade (covering increased capacity and improved treatment) is funded by Council, but the discharge solution work is unfunded. At present, the cost for the full upgrade including the new discharge solution is beyond reasonable means to impose on the community. The complete project cost is **s 9(2)(b)(ii)** (with a med-high degree of confidence in current cost projections).

This application seeks to explore fast-track approval as a potential way of provide potential cost-saving and project delivery timeframe efficiencies with the work that is currently fully funded by Council to increase capacity and improve effluent quality, which may enable a reallocation of any savings towards the discharge solution. While Council would like to explore fast-track approval consideration for the discharge aspect of the application, we acknowledge that this part of the project is still subject to full funding. From the point of the discharge aspect receiving the necessary funding (made easier as a result of fast-track approval support towards the capacity increase), the discharge solution delivery timeframes are estimated at two years. The main variable for the discharge solution timeframes will be the consenting timeframes.

What are the details of the regime under which approval is being sought?

Please write your answer here:

RMA resource consent and notice of requirement.

If you seeking approval under the Resource Management Act, who are the relevant local authorities?

Please write your answer here:

Waikato District Council
Waikato Regional Council

What applications have you already made for approvals on the same or a similar project?

Please write your answer here:

Application supplementary material document to be provided through listedprojects@mfe.govt.nz.

Is approval required for the project by someone other than the applicant?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

No for the capacity upgrade and effluent treatment upgrade in the Raglan WWTP do not require further approval from someone other than the applicant.

Yes for the discharge aspect of the project requires a finalised landowner agreement.

If the approval(s) are granted, when do you anticipate construction activities will begin, and be completed?

Please write your answer here:

Initial works for the Raglan WWTP upgrade is underway to begin addressing the capacity upgrade and effluent treatment upgrade aspects of the project. As it is fully funded and in Council and Watercare Waikato's work programme – this aspect of the project is shovel-ready.

Timeframes for the discharge aspect of the project will be determined by funding. Any timeframes and cost-efficiency savings from the capacity upgrade and effluent treatment upgrade will be of benefit to the discharge solution, if the savings allow for a reallocation of currently committed funds. This may provide a minor reduction in the project cost for the discharge solution. With the current cost of the WWTP upgrade for local residents and ratepayers, any fast-track approval that can provide faster delivery and potential cost-efficiencies (albeit even minor savings) is essential.

Section 3: Consultation

Who are the persons affected by the project?

Please write your answer here:

- Waikato-Tainui
- Tainui-aa-Whiro
- Ngaati Maahanga

- Poihaakena Marae
- Waters Governance Board (overseeing Council's contract with Watercare Waikato)
- Waikato Regional Council
- Waikato District Council and Raglan Community Board (representatives bodies with Raglan representatives)
- Residents and property owners in Raglan, and ratepayers of Waikato District

Detail all consultation undertaken with the persons referred to above. Include a statement explaining how engagement has informed the project.

Please write your answer here:

Note: names of iwi, hapū and marae uses double vowel spelling to indicate a long vowel sound instead of macrons, as this is the preferred standard of Waikato-Tainui for Te Reo Māori.

Waikato-Tainui, hapū and marae

Waikato District's area of responsibility sits across the majority of the traditional rohe of Waikato iwi (also referred to as Waikato-Tainui). Waikato is a tribal confederation that takes its name from Te Awa o Waikato. The Waikato iwi is one of the major groups descended from the voyagers of the Tainui waka, with 68 marae associated with 33 hapū. 39 of the 68 marae are located within Waikato District's boundaries. The unifying korowai for Waikato-Tainui is the Kingitanga – the movement established in 1858 to unite tribes to cease the sale of land to Pākehā, to stop inter-tribal warfare, and to provide a springboard for the preservation of Māori culture in the face of Pākehā colonisation. The seventh and current monarch is Kingi Tuheitia.

The governance body for the collective interests and assets of Waikato-Tainui is Te Whakakitenga o Waikato, the tribal parliament comprising two elected representatives from each of the 68 marae. The executive committee Te Arataura (comprising 10 representatives of the parliament and one appointee of Kingi Tuheitia) directly oversees the tribe's operational activities.

Waikato District Council and Waikato-Tainui have a joint management agreement (JMA) to co-manage the Waikato River, to restore and protect the health and wellbeing of the river, and to provide an enhanced relationship between the parties on areas of common interest. A Joint Committee of the Waikato Raupatu River Trust (representing Waikato-Tainui) and Waikato District Council is responsible for implementing the schedules of the JMA and provides a framework for Waikato-Tainui and Council working in partnership. The Joint Committee receives updates on the Waters Capital Works Programme, Three Waters Reform, and oversees the Joint Strategic Work Programme between Waikato-Tainui and Council. Consultation regarding capital works are standard recurring agenda items for all Joint Committee meetings. Agendas and minutes for the Joint Committee meetings are available on the Waikato District Council website.

Since 2019, Watercare Waikato has been contracted to deliver all drinking water, wastewater and stormwater services within Waikato District, with Council retaining ownership of the assets. An independent body, the Waters Governance Board, is responsible for managing the performance of Waikato District's water services. Led by independent chairperson David Wright, board membership includes Rukumoana Schaafhausen (former chairperson of Waikato-Tainui's executive board Te Arataura), Jackie Collier (current deputy chairperson of Waikato-Tainui's executive board Te Arataura), Garth Dibley (Chief Executive of WEL Networks) and Gavin Ion (Chief Executive of Waikato District Council). The contract with Watercare Waikato ends on 30 June 2026, with the next two financial years being a transitional period allowing time for a smooth transition for the delivery of all capital works and operational services.

The Tainui hapū ki Whāingaroa is a hapū of the Waikato-Tainui tribal confederation, and have been identified by several names including Tainui, Ngai Tainui, Tainui-aa-Whiro and Tainui o Tainui. Poihaakena Marae is located in Raglan, in close proximity to the Raglan WWTP. Council encourages officials to seek comment from Tainui o Tainui as part of the assessment and referral process.

Ngaati Maahanga is a hapū of the Waikato-Tainui tribal confederation. The principal rohe of Ngaati Maahanga largely corresponds with the area from the west side of Hamilton to the west coast (covering part of Whāingaroa Harbour and part of Aotea Harbour). A detailed map of the principal rohe is available on the Waikato District Council website. While the project location itself is not within the rohe of Ngaati Maahanga, the current WWTP discharges in Whāingaroa Harbour. Council also encourages official to seek comment from Ngaati Maahanga as part of the assessment and referral process.

Waikato Regional Council

Waikato Regional Council's rohe covers the entirety of Waikato District. In relation to the Raglan WWTP project, Waikato Regional Council is a key stakeholder in its role of managing the use of natural resources, as well as protecting and restoring natural biodiversity. Waikato Regional Council will continue to be involved throughout all stages of project delivery.

Waikato District local governance

Residents and ratepayers in Raglan are represented at a district-level in two Council wards – the Whaaingaroa General Ward and Tai Runga Takiwaa Maaori Ward. In the current triennium, Huntly General Ward is represented by Councillor Lisa Thomson and Tai Runga Takiwaa Maaori Ward is represented by Councillor Tilly Turner.

Raglan Community Board is an elected representative group within Council's governance structure with six community representatives along with the councillors for the Whaaingaroa General Ward and Te Runga Takiwaa Maaori Ward. The Community Board membership in the current triennium is

Dennis Amooore (chairperson), Chris Raynor (deputy chairperson), Kiri Binnersley, Ross Wallis, Satnam Bains, Tony Oosten, Councillor Lisa Thomson, and Councillor Tilly Turner. The staff representative at Raglan Community Board meetings is Council's Chief Financial Officer Alison Diaz.

Waikato District residents and ratepayers have been consulted on three waters infrastructure as part of the 2021-31 Long Term Plan, and consultation has recently closed on the 2024/2025 Draft Enhanced Annual Plan. The Draft Enhanced Annual Plan 2024 highlights the Raglan WWTP upgrade in the capital project listing for 2024/25. Hearings on the Draft Annual Plan are being held in May, with the Annual Plan 2024 being finalised in June 2024.

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Describe any processes already undertaken under the Public Works Act 1981 in relation to the land or any part of the land on which the project will occur:

Please write your answer here:

Waikato District Council as a territorial authority was established in 1989, and since the transfer of council land and assets from the previous Raglan County Council, there have been no processes have been undertaken under the Public Works Act 1981 in relation to the land on which the project will occur.

While there have not been recent works undertaken recently under the Public Works Act 1981, Council wants to ensure that this isn't seen without the wider context of prior land acquisition under earlier public works legislation. Council encourages officials to seek comment from Poihaakena Marae and Tainui o Tainui as the project is in close proximity of the project site to the Marae.

Section 4: Iwi authorities and Treaty settlements

What treaty settlements apply to the geographical location of the project?

Please write your answer here:

No treaty settlements apply to the geographic location of the project site. Please see Section 3 for recommended parties to contact as part of the assessment and referral process.

Are there any Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019 principles or provisions that are relevant to the project?

No

If yes, what are they?:

Are there any identified parcels of Māori land within the project area, marae, and identified wāhi tapu?

No

If yes, what are they?:

Please refer to Page 132 for the oral and traditional historical report, regarding the Raglan WWTP, received by the Waitangi Tribunal.
https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_42317979/Wai%20898,%20A099.pdf

Regarding the discharge solution, this question will not be able to be answered definitively until that solution is developed further.

Is the project proposed on any land returned under a Treaty settlement or any identified Māori land described in the ineligibility criteria?

No

Has the applicant has secured the relevant landowners' consent?

Yes

Is the project proposed in any customary marine title area, protected customary rights area, or aquaculture settlement area declared under s 12 of the Māori Commercial Aquaculture Claims Settlement Act 2004 or identified within an individual iwi settlement?

No

If yes, what are they?:

Please see Section 3 for recommended parties to contact as part of the assessment and referral process.

Has there been an assessment of any effects of the activity on the exercise of a protected customary right?

No

If yes, please explain:

Please see Section 3 for recommended parties to contact as part of the assessment and referral process.

Upload your assessment if necessary:

No file uploaded

Section 5: Adverse effects

What are the anticipated and known adverse effects of the project on the environment?

Please describe:

The project seeks to improve environmental outcomes, and there are no anticipated or known adverse effects of the project on the environment. However, this would need to continue being assessed through the detailed design and development of the new discharge solution.

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Section 6: National policy statements and national environmental standards

What is the general assessment of the project in relation to any relevant national policy statement (including the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement) and national environmental standard?

Please write your answer here:

There is a high degree of alignment with the Raglan WWTP project outcomes and the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management and the Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020, as meeting higher compliance standards remains one of the primary objectives of the project.

As highlighted in Section 3 and 4, Council's approach to working in partnership with iwi and hapū will continue with updates and consultation on capital works and operational management of three waters infrastructure is well aligned with the Freshwater NPS's requirements for freshwater management in a way that gives effect to 'Te Mana o te Wai' through the involvement of tangata whenua, and its stated hierarchy that prioritises the health and wellbeing of water bodies, then the essential needs of people (including access to healthy drinking water), followed by other uses that provides for people and communities social, economic and cultural well-being). Council recognises and supports the concept of Te Mana o te Wai, the six principles that it encompasses: mana whakahaere, kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga, governance, stewardship, and care and respect.

File upload:

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Section 7: Eligibility

Will access to the fast-track process enable the project to be processed in a more timely and cost-efficient way than under normal processes?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

Yes – given the importance of the project and the high cost of the capital works required **s 9(2)(b)(ii)**, with a medium-high degree of confidence in cost estimate), Council is requesting fast-track status that will not only reduce timeframes for project completion but also potentially provides some cost-efficiency savings.

Council is conscious of the need for public involvement and consultation on all major capital works infrastructure investment in Waikato District. With fast-tracked applications potentially bypassing consultative aspects of consenting process, Council is comfortable with this 'trade-off' given the ongoing engagement over the past four years with residents and ratepayers (through the 2021-31 Long Term Plan and 2024 Enhanced Annual Plan) and with our key stakeholders and iwi partners (through the Treaty settlement framework for co-management of the Waikato River and Joint Committee between Waikato-Tainui and Council). Council is confident that there is a high degree of understanding about the current constraints and compliance risks with the current wastewater treatment plant, necessitating the Raglan WWTP project to be fast-tracked in the most timely and cost-efficient way. However, Council does want to ensure that fast-track approval does not come at the detriment of iwi and hapū involvement, and Council encourages officials to seek comment from iwi and hapū on this matter in the assessment and referral process.

Like most territorial authorities across New Zealand, Waikato District is considering a significant rates increase in the 2024 Draft Annual Plan (to be finalised in June 2024) of the Huntly WWTP project. With a resident population of 88,900 but a geographic area like the size of the Auckland Council area, Waikato District does not have the same economies of scale as some of the other high-growth cities/districts. It is for this reason that it is important for Council to seek fast-tracking opportunities that can provide cost-efficiency outcomes, especially if we are confident that our ongoing community and stakeholder engagement mitigates some of the risks regarding consultation in a fast-tracked process.

What is the impact referring this project will have on the efficient operation of the fast-track process?

Please write your answer here:

This project is put forward for consideration as a listed project in Schedule 2 Part A, and is ready to support officials or the independent Fast-Track Projects Advisory Group as required. Contact information can be requested by officials for any of the people or organisations mentioned in this application, to seek comment or to independently verify any information. While we note that Step 3 of the Listed Projects process is not a substantive assessment, Council is able to support with any further information or questions in a timely manner.

If the application was referred, Council is ready to work with the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Regional Development, as well as ministerial advisor and officials, to work through the steps of the referral stage in a swift manner. Regarding Step 2 of the referral stage, in which Ministers may seek comments from certain groups (including others Ministers, Māori groups, local government), Council will promptly assist in providing contact information to any of the people or organisations mentioned in this application, or any other requests that support the Ministers (and their ministerial staff) to seek comment on the application and to independently verify the information provided (especially in relation to Section 3 and 4).

Has the project been identified as a priority project in a:

Local government plan or strategy

Please explain your answer here:

Yes – it is identified as a priority project in Waikato District Council's 2021-31 Long Term Plan. At the start of 2024, Council accepted the Government's offer to delay the upcoming LTP by one year to allow more time for certainty on the Government's plans for Local Water Done Well. Therefore, Council is undertaking an annual plan for 2024/25, and an LTP next financial year.

In Council's Draft Enhanced Annual Plan for 2024/25, one of the major changes that is the investment in three waters infrastructure. The consultation process for the Draft Annual Plan 2024/25 closed on 26 April, with hearings held in May and a final plan to be adopted in June 2024.

The project is also mentioned in Raglan Naturally Community Plan. Regarding the current WWTP, the Community Plan states that "our community is actively involved in the consent progress and is working closely with council on options for improvements, particularly exploring a land-based treatment system that diverts discharge from the harbour".

Treatment of wastewater is referenced in several different sections of the Community Plan - both the issues with the current WWTP and the aspirations for the future state. In the vision-setting section on the ideal future state, it is described as "we are managing our waste ecologically - an innovative land-based wastewater system that is part of a circular economy" .

Community feedback in the Raglan Naturally Community Plan indicates a strong preference to stop discharge into Whāingaroa Harbour, and a strong preference for a land-based solution.

Will the project deliver regionally or nationally significant infrastructure?

Regional significant infrastructure

Please explain your answer here:

Raglan is a key tourism destination for the Waikato Region, and the town has an international reputation as a surfing destination. Raglan's tourism economy is focused on outdoor activities in Whāingaroa Harbour and along the west coast beaches, as well as arts and culture. It is critical to ensure that Raglan WWTP can handle the high international and domestic visitation numbers over the peak tourism seasons, as well as ensuring that local residents are served by reliable wastewater treatment infrastructure year-round. Please note that domestic visitation here refers to both visitors from within the Waikato Region and from outside the Waikato Region, with Auckland less than 2 hours away.

Given the important of Whāingaroa Harbour for cultural, social, environmental and economic reasons - a new discharge solution is also a matter of regional significance.

Will the project:

increase the supply of housing, address housing needs, contribute to a well-functioning urban environment

Please explain your answer here:

The increased capacity of the WWTP design will cater for growth in Raglan, based on the medium population growth described within the Waikato Growth Strategy (Waikato 2070).

Will the project deliver significant economic benefits?

No

Please explain your answer here:

While there are expected economic benefits as a result of the Raglan WWTP upgrade, it is unlikely to meet a threshold of 'significant' economic benefits.

Will the project support primary industries, including aquaculture?

No

Please explain your answer here:

Will the project support development of natural resources, including minerals and petroleum?

No

Please explain your answer here:

Will the project support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

Waikato District's Climate Response and Resilience Strategy 2023-2027 sets a target for Council to support a reduction in district emissions by 25% by 2030, as well as reducing organisational emissions by 50% by 2030. This is a key consideration in all planning work for the project. The project will result in improved energy-efficiency, nutrient removal, reduced sludge production compared with the current plant.

A critical consideration for the 35-year consenting horizon is the increased frequency of weather events and the likelihood of increasingly dry summers. Proposed upgrades will be designed to cater for security as water remains an increasingly precious resource. As an example, pursuant to the liquid stream upgrade, the existing ponds will be retained to assuage wastewater overflows in severe storm events.

Will the project support adaptation, resilience, and recovery from natural hazards?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

Yes - Infrastructure resilience has a focus for Waikato District as Council has worked through the recovery period in the aftermath of the Auckland Anniversary Weekend Severe Weather Event and Cyclone Gabrielle. The Raglan WWTP project has been designed so that the wastewater treatment infrastructure is able to better withstand extreme weather events. Infrastructure resilience is a major area of focus in Council's Climate Response and Resilience Strategy 2023 as well as in the Draft Enhanced Annual Plan 2024/25.

Will the project address significant environmental issues?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

Yes – the upgraded wastewater treatment infrastructure will improve compliance on water quality standards, especially seasonal compliance for high-user summer periods. The project will result in more resilient wastewater treatment infrastructure, which in turn mitigates the risks of non-compliance during or in the aftermath of severe weather events or earthquakes.

Is the project consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

Yes – the project has been planned in accordance with all local planning documents.

Anything else?

Please write your answer here:

Does the project includes an activity which would make it ineligible?

No

If yes, please explain:

Section 8: Climate change and natural hazards

Will the project be affected by climate change and natural hazards?

No

If yes, please explain:

No – however, the Raglan WWTP has higher risks of being affected by severe weather events and natural hazards in its current operational state. A timely fast-tracked process to complete the Raglan WWTP will mitigate and minimise these risks. As aforementioned, the design takes climate change, especially storm events, into account.

Section 9: Track record

Please add a summary of all compliance and/or enforcement actions taken against the applicant by any entity with enforcement powers under the Acts referred to in the Bill, and the outcome of those actions.

Please write your answer here:

Included in application supplementary material document to be provided through listedprojects@mfe.govt.nz

Load your file here:

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Declaration

Do you acknowledge your submission will be published on environment.govt.nz if required

Yes

By typing your name in the field below you are electronically signing this application form and certifying the information given in this application is true and correct.

Please write your name here:

Nick Johnston

Important notes