

Waitomo Way

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TOP OF THE TOWN

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Head Start proposals on hold for Councils

Waitomo and Ōtorohanga District Council's "Our King Country Future" Head Start amalgamation proposal has been shelved for future consideration. This means the joint proposal has not been approved or rejected and will not move into detailed design at this stage.

In a statement, Minister of Local Government Hon Simon Watts said after careful consideration Cabinet has decided that it will not be making decisions on any individual Head Start proposals at this time. Cabinet identified some common issues across proposals that require further work and rather than asking councils to commit further time and resources to finalise proposals now, the Government's priority is to ensure those common design issues are resolved first.

Waitomo Mayor John Robertson said that while disappointed the amalgamation of the two Councils did not get a quick tick, he is not surprised that Ministers have effectively kicked for touch.

"All is not lost. A King Country Council makes complete sense. I expect it to eventually get there, but we are going to have to wait now for the general elections to take place and the new government to make the call."

John said it was evident from the amount of community feedback received on the proposal that the formation of a King Country Council is widely supported.

"My sincere thanks goes to all the staff who worked on the proposal, and to our communities who showed us they are passionate about Te Rohe Pōtae."

For more information on the Government's decision and what it means, visit: <https://ourkingcountryfuture.nz/>

Waitomo District Council trumps in comparisons

Waitomo District Council (WDC) has come out on top for a second time following a benchmarking report that compares them with other Local Government organisations throughout the country. The results are based on Council's annual residents survey, and it is the second time WDC has been able to see how it stacks up against similar councils.

WDC engages Key Research to conduct the survey, which took place in May this year. Key Research conducted surveys for 23 councils across New Zealand in 2025/26, including 20 district councils and 3 city councils.

Overall, WDC's results compare positively with the other councils participating in the survey. Out of 60 measures surveyed, WDC achieved the top score in eight measures and significantly above the average for most of the measures. WDC is not the lowest performing Council for any of the measures.

The measures which WDC achieved the highest score out of the 23 benchmarked councils are:

- Leadership (74% where average is 55%)
- Trust (70% where average is 49%)
- Engagement and consultation (83% where average is 50%)
- Enquiry handling (83% where average is 71%)
- Building consents (74% where average is 55%)
- Overall regulatory services (84% where average is 61%)
- Libraries (99% where average is 88%)
- Cemeteries (98% where average is 85%)

For the second year in a row, WDC has come out on top for engagement and consultation with the highest points differential and a satisfaction score of 83%. The average is 50% and the lowest score was 22%.

Measures where WDC scored significantly above the average and close to the top score across the 23 Councils (less than 5% difference to the top score): overall reputation; financial management; open/outdoor places; parks, reserves and green spaces; sports fields and playgrounds; public facilities and open/outdoor places; food safety and alcohol licensing; transfer stations; reliability of water supply; availability of footpaths.



Chief Executive Ben Smit says despite it being a challenging year with the transfer of water services and its impact on the organisation, demands from central government and the uncertainty with the local government reform, the benchmarking results are a great testament to Council staff.

"We've had to work through a lot this past year with Waikato Waters, responding to severe weather events and the additional workloads from central government. It's pleasing to see the hard work of our staff is recognised in this way.

"We are very appreciative and thankful for the time residents took to complete the survey.

"We have a dedicated and resilient team who work hard behind the scenes, often with very little acknowledgement from our community. While there are always improvements to be made, it's nice to know we are not doing too bad by comparison, and we should all be pleased with these results."

Ben encourages everyone who receives the survey to take the time to let us know how we're doing.

"Good and bad, we want to hear from you. It's also essential that our residents involve themselves in other council conversations, whether it be bylaw reviews or ideas to improve our facilities. Your participation goes a long way to making the Waitomo District a great place to live, work and play."

Visit Council's website to read the full media release and view the full benchmark survey report.
www.waitomo.govt.nz/council/news-summary/council-news/



Waikato Waters Ltd consults on Significance & Engagement Policy

As the drinking water and wastewater service provider for several Waikato districts, including Waitomo, Waikato Waters Ltd (WWL) makes decisions that affects the essential services people rely on.

Their Significance and Engagement Policy sets out when and how they will seek input from customers, communities, iwi, hapū, other Māori organisations and stakeholders before making big decisions.

Not every decision requires public consultation. However, where a proposal or decision may have material consequences, WWL will engage in a way that reflects the significance of that proposal or decision. Effective engagement leads to better decisionmaking.

WWL is currently seeking submissions on its Significance and Engagement Policy. Consultation is open from 5 October to 5pm on 30 October 2026.

Visit: waikatowaters.co.nz/en/about-us/have-your-say
Or request a submission form by emailing: ask@waikatowaters.co.nz

Are you having difficulty paying your rates invoice instalments?

There are a variety of payment options available for customers to help them pay their rates and pay off rates arrears.

If you are experiencing financial hardship and are unable to pay your rates in full by the due date, please contact us on 0800 932 4357 to check out possible options available to you. Late payment penalties will not apply if a suitable payment arrangement has been agreed prior.

Creative Communities Scheme

Scan the QR Code below for more information and to apply.
Applications close on 1 November 2026.

www.waitomo.govt.nz/council/funding-and-grants/

Apply Now!!!

Waitomo District Council

SPORT NZ RURAL TRAVEL FUND



Apply today!

Scan to visit our website and apply for this grant.

www.waitomo.govt.nz/council/funding-and-grants/



Waitomo District Council

Up to \$830 available in Rates Rebate

If you have a low income and pay the rates on your home, you could receive up to \$830 through Central Government's Rates Rebate Scheme.

The process and eligibility requirements are managed by the Department of Internal Affairs and we assess and approve rates rebate applications on their behalf.

You must be living at the property at 1 July and be the legal ratepayer. Download an application form from our website or contact our Customer Services team for further assistance.



Waitomo District Council Labour Day service information

Monday 26 October 2026

Customer Services and Visitor Hub - Closed.

Our call centre operates 24/7. Please call 0800 932 4357 or email: info@waitomo.govt.nz

Council Admin Building - Closed.

Waitomo District Library - Closed.

Waitomo District Aquatic Centre - Open 12pm to 6pm.

All Waste Transfer Stations - All waste transfer stations will be closed.



Have Your Say

Public Places Bylaw Review 2026

We're reviewing the Public Places Bylaw 2023 and proposing an updated version for 2026.

Cemeteries Bylaw 2026

We're proposing a new standalone Cemeteries Bylaw 2026.

Submissions Close 31 October 2026

Find out more and have your say: waitomo.govt.nz/haveyoursay