

# Kōrero Wai

## Setting the direction for water services in our region

Work on our first Water Services Strategy is now underway. This long-term plan will set out who we are, what services we provide, and how we intend to invest in and manage water infrastructure for our communities over the coming decades.

At the heart of the strategy will be our commitment to safe, reliable drinking water. Our top priority is achieving drinking water compliance because we believe everyone should have water that is safe to drink, straight from the tap, every day.

The strategy will help guide the investments and decisions needed to achieve this, while also supporting the long-term sustainability of water services across the region.

The strategy will look across three time horizons – the next three years, 10 years, and out to 30 years. It will outline the levels of service we aim to provide, our approach to funding and pricing, and the infrastructure needed to support growth and meet future needs.

Importantly, the strategy will

give our communities a clear picture of where we're heading and help hold us accountable for delivering on our commitments. It will also show how our plans align with the expectations of our shareholding councils and support reliable water services for the Waikato.

As we develop the strategy, we'll engage with our shareholding councils and iwi. A draft will be released for public consultation around April 2027, giving communities a chance to have their say before the final strategy is adopted on 1 July 2027.

## Planning ahead for a dry spring and summer

**With El Niño conditions expected to bring dry weather through spring and summer, we're taking a close look at our water sources and treatment plants to understand the likely impact on supply.**

Earth Sciences New Zealand signals El Niño could mean less rainfall and stronger winds across the Waikato, leading to dry soils and lower river flows.

We're developing a Water Resource Management Plan which sets out how we will respond in the event of a drought. This will include a set of mandatory water restriction levels, with clear

triggers for each stage. Water restrictions are already in place in Waipā, and with the dry outlook, they may be needed in other areas too.

To prepare for dry weather, we will be talking to our largest commercial water users to encourage reductions in water use. We'll also run a public awareness campaign to help all customers use water wisely.



# Working to boost Waipā's water supply ahead of summer

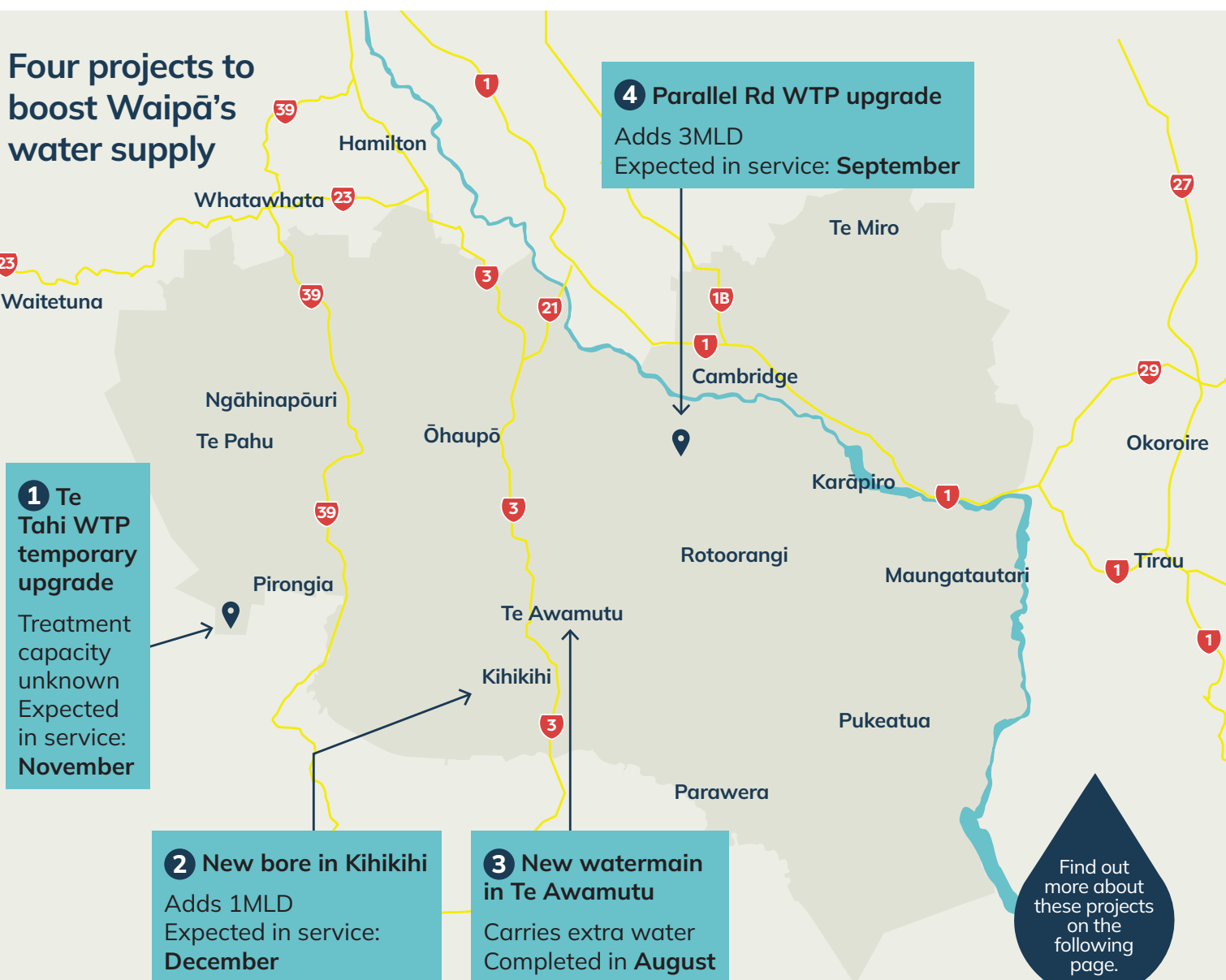
With Waipā's water supply still under pressure as a result of last summer's storm damage, we are taking a multi-pronged approach to boost the area's water supply ahead of this summer.

In February, severe weather in Waipā caused significant damage to the Te Tahi Water Treatment Plant intake structure, as well as the pipe carrying treated water from the plant. This damage forced the treatment plant out of service, and meant the water services team had to reconfigure the water network to supply Pirongia, Kihikihi and Te Awamutu with water mostly sourced from the Waikato River. The Te Tahi plant in Pirongia normally produces up to 10 million litres of water a day, so having it out of service puts a strain on the wider Waipā network.

As a result, level two water restrictions have been in place since the storm. Waipā District Council also took measures to manage growth by putting conditions on future developments and resource applications that state water connections can't go ahead until a long-term solution is in place to restore treatment capacity. As an interim measure, the council introduced the option for developers to proceed using an onsite rainwater tank as a temporary water supply.

We've worked closely with Waipā District Council and, since water and wastewater services transferred to us in July, we've progressed a programme of work to boost the area's water supply before summer, when water use increases.

## Four projects to boost Waipā's water supply



Find out more about these projects on the following page.



## ① Temporary repairs to Te Tahi Water Treatment Plant

Under emergency works, we will be installing a temporary intake to pump water out of the Mangauika Stream. We will also replace the 230-metre stretch of broken treated water pipe. As the storm changed the contours of the stream, the new pipe will follow a different route underground through open paddocks. We will need to get permission from the landowners as well as input from mana whenua on the new alignment.

We're in the process of engaging contractors for this work, and hope to have it completed and the plant back in service in November. We expect this solution to be in place for up to two years, while we design, consent and build a permanent intake structure.

We won't know exactly how much water we'll be able to treat at Te Tahi with the temporary intake, but it is unlikely to be the same volume as we could treat previously. This is why we have a multi-pronged approach to increasing water treatment capacity in Waipā.



*Flooding caused multiple slips in the Mangauika Stream and destroyed the water treatment plant's intake structure.*

## ② New bore for Kihikihi

We've drilled a new bore next to our Rolleston reservoirs in Kihikihi and are pleased to say it can produce up to a million litres of water a day. In recent years, Kihikihi has relied heavily on water coming from Te Awamutu, as the existing Church and Hall bores are nearing the end of their operational lives.

The new bore treats water from the same groundwater source as the other two. We're now preparing to amend our water take consent to use all three bore sites, which would make Kihikihi's water supply self-sufficient from Te Awamutu.

We're also installing a new UV disinfection container to provide an additional layer of protection before the water enters the network.

## ③ Major watermain replacement in Te Awamutu

With Pirongia and western Te Awamutu receiving water treated at our Parallel Road Water Treatment Plant since the February storm, we urgently needed a bigger watermain along Racecourse Rd in Te Awamutu to carry the extra water to the Taylors Hill Reservoir.

Work began in early June to install the new 300mm-diameter polyethylene pipe along an 860-metre section of Racecourse Rd, replacing an old 200mm cement pipe that was built in 1963. Final connections of the pipe were completed last month. This new pipe will help us transport extra water to Te Awamutu and Pirongia over the summer months.

## ④ Capacity upgrade at Parallel Road Water Treatment Plant

Our Parallel Road Water Treatment Plant in Leamington is a key plant that supplies water to Cambridge, Pukerimu, Ōhaupō, the airport, and Te Awamutu, with water sourced from the Waikato River. Currently it can treat up to 12 million litres of water each day. Work is underway to install an additional membrane filtration unit that will lift treatment capacity to 15 million litres a day.

We expect to have this available by mid September.

This project had been planned for completion in 2030 but we've fast-tracked it in response to the storm damage at Te Tahi.



*The new membrane unit is lowered into place.*

## Restrictions will still be in place this summer

While we're doing everything we can to increase water treatment capacity in Waipā, we may still have less water available to meet peak demand than we did last summer. This means outdoor water restrictions are likely to continue, and depending on the weather conditions, they may need to be increased. We will launch a water efficiency campaign ahead of summer that encourages customers to be mindful of their water use. We'll also be talking to our large commercial water users to urge them to find ways to reduce their own water usage wherever possible.



*The new Hospital Reservoir will hold 2.8 million litres of water*

## Strong progress for Te Kūiti water resilience project

The Te Kūiti Water Supply Resilience Project reached a major milestone with the completion of the roof on the new Hospital Reservoir. The \$10 million project, which began under Waitomo District Council earlier this year, is one of 34 active infrastructure projects that transferred to us on 1 July.

The new reservoir will hold 2.8 million litres of treated water – almost triple the capacity of the existing reservoir. Once the project is complete, the township will have enough storage to supply water to Te Kūiti for up to 48 hours in the event of a major incident at the treatment plant.

Construction of the 2.9 kilometre transmission watermain

connecting the treatment plant to both the new and existing reservoirs is largely complete, and work on a new pump station is underway.

Te Kūiti's water network is currently set up to supply properties directly from the treatment plant, with any excess treated water then filling up the reservoirs, which then backfeed into the town.

That's made it difficult to control reservoir levels, and has meant the reservoirs can take days to fill after major watermain bursts.

This project will reverse that configuration and reduce the likelihood of water outages. It remains on track to be in service before Christmas.

## Cambridge CBD to get wastewater upgrade

As part of our Waipā wastewater renewals programme, we'll be starting work to replace the ageing wastewater pipeline from the Bath St Pump Station to Victoria Square in Cambridge.

The original 1960s concrete pipe has reached its end of life, and we are replacing it with a new high-density polyethylene pipe that will improve the performance of the wastewater network and serve the town for

decades to come.

To minimise impacts to residents, businesses and traffic, most of our construction work will take place at night and in sections. We'll be working hard to keep the road, carparks and footpaths open as much as possible, especially during the day.

We expect to start construction early this month and complete the project in November.

## Warm welcome to chief infrastructure officer Sarah Sinclair

Our chief infrastructure officer Sarah Sinclair joined us this week. Sarah has held several executive infrastructure leadership roles in local and central government, including most recently Fire and Emergency New Zealand. A Fellow of Engineering New Zealand, she brings deep experience in asset management, programme delivery and emergency management.

We're fortunate to have Sherryn Paterson staying on to help in an advisory role. Sherryn looked after the asset management and capital delivery workstream in our establishment phase and has since been acting chief infrastructure officer. Sherryn's support is critical to ensure a smooth handover with Sarah and to maintain momentum as we prepare for the transfer of assets and the capital delivery programme from Matamata-Piako District Council next month, and prepare our long-term infrastructure investment programme.

Next month, we'll also welcome our chief executive Dr Marcos Pelenur.





# Meet Christo de Beer, treatment team leader

Christo de Beer laughs about being “married to the job”. But after spending a little time in his company, it’s soon clear that’s just the way he likes it.

As the treatment team leader in Waitomo, he’s proud to lead a small but mighty team responsible for all the maintenance and operations at the district’s water and wastewater treatment plants.

“It’s a really awesome team,” Christo says. “We’re close. I stand back and give them the freedom to use their own initiative and do what they need to do. Anyone in the team could take my role.”

Christo’s career began in South Africa, where he worked for 20 years in the petrochemical industry at Sasol. He started as an apprentice maintenance fitter and turner and quickly moved up the ranks until he was the workshop manager at a plant that produced chlorine gas and turned it into a liquid chlorine. With the dangers of the job came a deep appreciation for top-notch health and safety practices, something that has stuck with him since.

When he felt he’d reached the ceiling of his career in South Africa, he moved to New Zealand to pursue a better future for his family.

Christo first entered the water industry in Auckland, where he was doing maintenance at the Rosedale Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the northern area’s wastewater pump stations.

Working with wastewater, you’re exposed to all sorts of sights and smells – but it was a change that Christo took in his stride.

“I never had a problem with it. I grew up on a farm, so I’d seen that type of thing a lot of times.

“The smell of cleaning a pump station though – that would get into your skin. You needed to sit in a sauna to get rid of it, and fortunately we had one at work.”

Luckily for us, high house prices in Auckland later drove him to Te Kūiti, where he joined Waitomo District Council to look after maintenance at the Te Kūiti, Piopio and Benneydale wastewater treatment plants.

He’s been the treatment team leader for both water and wastewater for the past six years and says his style is to gently guide his team in the right direction.

“I like to guide the team and give them the space to use their own initiative, try something different and grow in confidence. If I can help someone become better than me, that’s the kind of leader I want to be.

“I’m still learning every day. A lot of the team say I’m married to the job,” he says with a chuckle.

“I love my job. It’s challenging and not one day is the same.”

If you can pull Christo away from work, you’ll find him with a camera in hand capturing the stunning landscapes of the Waikato, playing a round of golf or mountain biking.

