

OKOTAHI MĀHERE-A-TAU

DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN

2026/2027



Consultation Document

30 March - 30 April 2026

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Key Dates



March - April

Consultation on AP opens 30 March and closes on 30 April 2026



May

Submissions to AP are heard 12-13 May 2026



May

AP Deliberations 26 May 2026



June

AP adopted 30 June 2026

Share your views

Now is your chance to share your views on what we are proposing for the coming financial year. If we don't hear from you, we won't know what you think.

The Consultation Document (CD) and the supporting information can be accessed online on our website:

waitomo.govt.nz/council/haveyoursay

You can also pick up a physical copy of the CD and view the supporting information at any of the following locations:

- PGG Wrightson, 58 Moa Street, Piopio
- Whitebait Inn, 55 North Street, Mōkau
- Waitomo Caves Discovery Museum, 15 Waitomo Village Road, Waitomo
- Benneydale Service Station, Ellis Road, Maniaiti/Benneydale
- Marokopa Transfer Station, Marokopa Road (approx. 400m east of village)
- Waitomo District Council Main Office, 15 Queen Street, Te Kūiti
- Waitomo District Library, 28 Taupiri Street, Te Kūiti
- Customer Services and Visitor Hub, 160 Rora Street, Te Kūiti

You can also attend our public meeting

Mōkau – Public Meeting:

Mōkau Hall

Wednesday 8 April, 2.30pm–4.30pm

If you are unable to make this meeting, please feel free to contact our Elected Members. Details are at the back of this document.

Sharing your opinion is easy

- Submit online on our website: waitomo.govt.nz/council/haveyoursay
- Email your submission to: haveyoursay@waitomo.govt.nz
- Drop off your submission form to the Customer Services and Visitor Hub at 160 Rora Street, Te Kūiti or at Council's main office at 15 Queen Street, Te Kūiti
- Mail to FREEPOST 112498, Waitomo District Council, PO Box 404, Te Kūiti 3941



Contact us:

0800 932 4357



waitomo.govt.nz

haveyoursay@waitomo.govt.nz



Customer Services and Visitor Hub

160 Rora Street, Te Kūiti

From the Mayor and Chief Executive

Tēnā Koutou katoa, greetings

Council has developed this draft Annual Plan for 2026/27 and is now seeking feedback from the community.

Waitomo District Council will undertake one of its most significant changes this year. In this plan you will see the impact of transitioning the water and wastewater activities to our water Council Controlled Organisation - Waikato Waters Ltd. From 1 July 2026 Waikato Waters will take on the responsibility for supplying drinking water and treatment of wastewater for connected properties in our District.

This transition impacts our Council with staff movements and role changes as part of this move. The debt associated with waters assets will also shift to Waikato Waters which is expected to bring Waitomo District Council's debt under \$10 million.

We will continue to collect the rates and charges for water and wastewater for at least this coming year. We will then pass this revenue on to Waikato Waters to fund the activities. Your rates invoice will change to show that.

The dollar figures used in this document will not include water and wastewater costs and revenues as they will be part of Waikato Waters. Rates examples will still show both.

Currently the whole district pays a small portion of rates for the water and wastewater costs through a district-wide benefit rate. We reduced some of these rates in the current year and are proposing to remove all the remaining district-wide benefit rates for water and wastewater activities in the coming year. This means water and wastewater users will pay slightly more rates for water and wastewater services and non-users won't pay for these services.

The current waste cell of the Waitomo District Landfill is nearly full. As a result of rising costs, increasing risks and falling waste volumes it was decided last year not to expand the current landfill. We will cap the landfill and ship waste to Hampton Downs from July 2026.

Te Kūiti Transfer station will still operate in the same way as it does now. Nothing changes for users – you still drive in and drop off your rubbish and recycling as normal.

Improvements to the Te Kūiti stormwater network is underway



John Robertson, QSO
Mayor



Ben Smit
Chief Executive

on the western side of Te Kūiti in March this month. Other priority sites are being assessed to ensure any money spent is giving maximum benefit to households and businesses. We are committed to delivering these improvements over the next few years.

To fund our activities the Draft Annual Plan 2026 – 2027 we will require \$19.7 million of rates (excluding water and wastewater rates), an increase in total rates revenue of 2.88%. The total rates revenue to fund water and wastewater is \$7.5 million and is a 6.2% increase. This means a combined total rates revenue increase of 3.79%.

Elected members and WDC staff are available to answer any questions you may have regarding this draft Annual Plan or the waters transition.

We look forward to your feedback on this draft plan.

Key projects

from the current year

2025/2026



Roading Network ›

Our roading network was impacted by two severe weather events in July and October 2025, the initial response involved clearing slips to reopen roads where possible.



Pukerimu Road slip



Pukerimu Road cleared



Walkway and storyboards ›

Nine areas of cultural significance have been documented on to storyboards installed along the walkway from Motakiora – Brook Park in Te Kūiti out to the Mangaokewa Reserve.



◀ Te Kūiti water supply capacity

We are making significant progress with a new watermain to the new larger hospital reservoir being installed. The project once complete will give Te Kūiti 35% more water storage capacity for emergency situations. This helps ensure Te Kūiti residents have enough water in summer.

Te Kūiti sludge removal ›

Last year we filled six large geobags* with approximately 2800 tonnes of wet sludge. Once the sludge has dried enough for transporting the geobags will be emptied. This is a long term project that will repeat this cycle for many years.



The responsibility for sludge disposal will transfer to WWL from 1 July 2026. They are committed to the sludge removal as allowed for in the Water Services Delivery Plan adopted by Council and approved by Department of Internal Affairs in 2025.



*Geobags act like a filter container, trapping solids inside while allowing water to escape back into the wastewater pond.

Key Projects 2026/27

Key projects and work programmes for 2026/27 include:

Roading repairs

We have completed the initial assessments of the October 2025 storm event. Combined with the July 2025 event there are 217 sites that require remediation. The majority will be funded by NZTA, however there is still a significant contribution that will be loan funded. Costings and decisions will need to be made on priority sites.



Improvements to stormwater

Investment in our stormwater network continues with network improvements and renewals on-going. Our stormwater modelling tool is now in use so we can look in more detail at the medium to long-term improvements, more details on page 12.



WDC District Plan Review

This District Plan outlines how we manage the use, development and protection of our land in our district over the next 10 years. This review has been a long running project that is expected to be completed in 2026/27. Much of the Proposed Waitomo District Plan is now operative.

There are currently four outstanding appeals. Staff are working to resolve these appeals as quickly as possible. The resolution of the appeals is subject to case management by the Environment Court.





Waikato Waters

Healthy Water, Healthy People
Te Mana o Te Wai, Te Mana o Te Tangata

Waikato Waters is a council-controlled organisation taking over delivery of your drinking water and wastewater services from 1 July 2026.

Waikato Waters will be one of the Waikato's **largest infrastructure business with assets valued at**



\$1.4 billion

and soon to have over

50,000 customers



Waitomo is one of six shareholding councils who own Waikato Waters.

Waikato Waters focus will be on protecting public health and the long term provision of waters infrastructure and services. It has been established to meet increasingly demanding environmental and regulatory standards - in a way that is more efficient, resilient and affordable than were each shareholding council undertaking this work on their own.

The shift to the new organisation is being carefully staged to ensure customers do not have any sudden shifts in service, and that there is certainty in the costs you will be paying.

For the 2026/27 year, the total waters rates and charges will remain the same for our district as outlined in the Water Services Delivery Plan [\[link here\]](#).

Key dates

1 July 2026 - Day One for Waikato Waters

This is when three of the shareholding councils (Waitomo, Waipā and South Waikato) shift their assets and service delivery into the new entity. On 1 October 2026 Matamata-Piako moves across and, on 1 July 2027, Ōtorohanga and Hauraki assets and services also shift across to Waikato Waters.

Water Services Strategy – by 30 June 2027

Waikato Waters is required to adopt a Water Services Strategy before 1 July 2027.

The Water Services Strategy will set out how services will be delivered, maintained and improved, and will need to align with each council's growth strategies, infrastructure plans and environmental outcomes.

The Water Services Strategy will also outline the charges for water and wastewater users - providing information about costs, levels of service, performance measures and long term financial and investment plans.

Customers and the wider community will be invited to have their say on the draft Water Services Strategy in early in 2027.

1 July 2027 – This is when Waikato Waters will be fully operational and able to set its own charges in accordance with the Water Services Strategy.

Your water and wastewater charges this year

From 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027, waters rates and charges have been set in Waitomo District Council's Water Services Delivery Plan [\[link here\]](#).

These charges are being invoiced under the Rating Act. In other words, there will be no change to how customers are to be charged during this period as a result of Waikato Waters Ltd being established.

Waitomo District Council is proposing changes to the District Wide Benefit rates (paid by all ratepayers) for water, wastewater and tradewaste that will impact the amount being charged for these services – for details see pages 10-11.

Please direct any questions relating to your waters charges to Waitomo District Council [\[link here\]](#)

You can find out more about Waikato Waters here: **www.waikatowaters.co.nz**

Decision required:

Should we move

Awakino Transfer Station to Mōkau ?

Currently Mōkau residents and visitors must drive a 17km round trip to dispose of rubbish at the Awakino transfer station. During summer many people are not using the transfer station and dumping rubbish in and around Mōkau.

The recycling station, outside the public toilets, in Mōkau during summer often has large rubbish piles dumped illegally. This is unsightly and costs ratepayers as the rubbish has to be regularly removed.

To make it easier to dispose of rubbish we are proposing to set up a transfer station at the Inframax depot on Oha Street and close the Awakino site. We did ask this question in 2018 however there are some differences in what is being proposed this time.

- Option 1 - Move transfer station to Mōkau (**Preferred option**)

- Option 2 - Keep the transfer station at Awakino.



The site will use large moveable lidded bins for general rubbish and 240 litre wheelie bins for recycling. It will be open on Sundays as Awakino is currently and additional hours over summer. We are upgrading the capacity of the rubbish and recycling bins on the main street. We will also look at visual and noise reduction and improved signage.

As currently occurs, there will be no green waste accepted at this site to avoid problems with odour. It is proposed that no other waste such as white-ware, tyres, scrap metal, timber or concrete will be accepted either.

The lidded bins at the transfer station will be emptied regularly and located on the northern side of the depot.



Option 1

Move transfer station to Mōkau (preferred)

- Less travel for Mōkau residents and visitors
- Likely higher usage
- Illegal rubbish dumping should reduce
- Depot site is currently industrial



- Some additional annual and setup cost
- More urban location
- No green waste



Option 2

Keep the transfer station at Awakino

- No additional costs
 - Rural location
- Continued rubbish dumping
 - Travel distance/location reduces use
 - No green waste



If this was to progress we would aim to have the new site setup by the end of December this year.



Removal of the District Wide Benefit Rates

for water and wastewater and Trade Waste Targeted Fixed Rate

Providing drinking water and disposing of wastewater and trade waste had been considered by Council to benefit everyone, and so some of the cost to deliver these services are covered by all ratepayers.

These are the "District Wide Benefit" and Trade Waste Contribution rates on your rates account. Council has taken the approach to move water and wastewater services to a 'user pays' model as we move to Waikato Waters.

From 1 July 2027 water and wastewater charges will be set by WWL through their Water Services Strategy and then only connected and serviceable (able to connect) properties can be charged.

For more information visit WWL website: www.waikatowaters.co.nz

Council is proposing to remove all the remaining districtwide rates for water and wastewater and trade waste contribution charged to all rating units in the district for 2026/27.

The impact will vary for properties with one or both water and wastewater services. The estimated rates given on the following page are based on the proposed budget for 2026/27.



What these rate changes mean for you

We're changing how we fund water, wastewater and trade waste services so that people pay more directly for the services they receive.

Note: These figures are based on the draft budget for water supply and wastewater treatment in 2026/27, comparing the proposed changes to the existing Revenue and Financing Policy.

Here's what it means for your household:

If you get Council drinking water

- Te Kūiti: Your rates would go up by \$16 a year.
- Piopio, Maniaiti/Benneydale or Mōkau: Your rates would go up by \$34 a year.

If you do NOT get Council drinking water

- You would save \$29 a year.

[cont...](#)

If you're connected to Council wastewater

- Your rates would go up by \$29 a year.

If you're NOT connected to wastewater

- You would save \$31 a year.

Therefore if you're not connected to water or wastewater services:

- You will save \$60 a year.

Everyone saves on Trade Waste

All ratepayers would save \$42 a year because the Trade Waste Targeted Fixed Rate is being removed.

Removal of Trade Waste Targeted Fixed Rate

Currently all rateable properties contribute towards the trade waste costs through the Trade Waste Targeted Fixed Rate.

This subsidy will be absorbed into the wastewater treatment costs offset by the Trade waste fees and charges revenue.



Your water and wastewater rates will be included as separate line items in your rate bill (on the back page of the rates bill). The 2026/27 rates revenue will be collected by WDC and then transferred to WWL who are delivering water and wastewater services from 1 July 2026.

[Link to rates calculator](#)

The calculator includes water and wastewater rate lines. In your next rates account these will be shown separately, however, you will still pay one rates invoice.

What is trade waste?

Any liquid produced from a trade premises that is discharged into the wastewater network.



Te Kūiti Stormwater investment

We have invested in a stormwater model utilising data collected on pipe sizes, mapping tools and water flow that allows us to see what impact different improvements have during rain and flooding events.

The model is essential in allowing us to compare different approaches under different rain situations. These have been verified with actual events.

For example, the duration and intensity of rainfall, soil saturation and level of river flooding influence the capacity of our stormwater network to cope during a weather event.

Modelling these and using knowledge from prior events allows us to make better decisions on what investments will have the greatest impact to reduce stormwater flooding overall.



We have experienced stormwater flooding during severe weather events at several locations around Te Kūiti. Through the modelling we are evaluating the best solutions for each site.

Currently we are implementing some of these improvements on the western side of Te Kūiti. Other priority sites require more costly remedies, so we must carefully assess the affordability and effectiveness of each one.

We have budgeted to spend \$2 million on these improvements and renewals for 2026/27. Already the investments made so far have improved the stormwater network's ability to cope with storm events.

Annual Plan Update 3

Change to Piopio Retirement Village remission funding



Piopio Retirement Village receives annual rates remission for water, wastewater and solid waste to support the trust to provide accommodation for older people.

Currently ratepayers in the wider Piopio area pay for the reduced rates paid by Piopio retirement village.

We are proposing that all ratepayers contribute to this rates reduction through their general rates like they do now for Hillview Home and Hospital.

There is no change proposed to the amount funded.

Waste volumes into our landfill have continued to drop over the past few years and are likely to keep dropping. Domestic waste is reducing, however much of our waste comes from commercial companies or from out of district. A significant proportion of this waste stream has now stopped coming to our landfill.



Responsibility for sludge disposal from our Wastewater Treatment Plant will transition to Waikato Waters from 1 July 2026 and will be transferred to an external landfill.

Reduced waste volumes and increasing operating costs means that, transporting waste out of the district remains the cheaper option. Future forecast volumes don't support investing in the next waste cell. Council adopted this change in the 2025/26 Annual Plan. So, from July 2026 we will transport waste to Hampton Downs landfill, and our landfill will be capped and mothballed.

This means that if transport and disposal fees get too high, we could still decide to expand and open the new landfill 'cell', under the new resource consent.

What does this mean for the Te Kūiti Transfer Station (recycling and drop off site) ??

Essentially nothing will change, you will still come and drop off your rubbish and recycling as you do now. The waste will be transported to an external landfill at regular intervals.

There will be even more emphasis on minimising waste to reduce our transport and disposal costs. The reduced waste volumes and strict requirements for government part funding of an upgraded transfer station means it is no longer feasible to build an upgraded transfer station.



Policies Update

Council is required by LGA 2002 to have the following policies:

Revenue and Financing Policy. This states the funding sources of activities. Changes have been proposed relating to the Water, Wastewater, and Trade Waste District-wide benefit rates and Piopio Retirement Village rate (see page 10-12).

Additional statements covering water and wastewater activities being the responsibility of Waikato Waters.

[Link to tracked change RFP document.](#)

Significance and Engagement Policy.

This states the criteria for assessing significance of decisions made by Council. Changes have been proposed relating to the removal of water and wastewater as core activities of Council.

[Link to tracked change S&E Policy document.](#)

Appointment of Directors to CCO Policy.

This states the process by which directors are appointed to CCO's. Changes have been proposed relating to the inclusion of WWL.

[Link to tracked change Appointment of Directors to CCO Policy document.](#)

Rates Affordability

Rates affordability is always front of mind for the Council. There is also clear direction by central government to keep rate increases low. The impact of water and wastewater changes and cost increases have been thoroughly evaluated during the preparation of this Annual Plan and how they impact rates.

To help smooth some of the effects of these increases the UAGC (the set amount of general rates charged to each ratepayer) is proposed to be set at \$100, which is a reduction from the current year rate of \$250.

Visit council's website to see the estimated annual rates for your property in 2026/27.

[LINK](#)

Rates Increase

The total rate requirement (excluding water and wastewater) for 2026/27 is \$19.68M which is an additional \$551,000 of rates revenue to look after the assets we already have and to provide the services necessary for our district.

The increase in rates revenue excluding water and wastewater, is 2.88%. (WDC rates)

The increase in rates revenue including water and wastewater, is 3.79%.

The main drivers for the rate increase are costs associated with solid waste management and collection costs, and Te Kuiti stormwater improvements. Your property value and services you receive impacts the total rates you pay.

Example Property	Valuation	Actual Rates 25/26	Proposed WDC Rates 26/27	Waikato Waters Rates 26/27	Total Rates proposed
Te Kūiti Residential	\$375,000	\$4,864	\$2,485	\$2,633	\$5,118
Maniaiti/Benneydale Residential	\$165,000	\$3,996	\$1,076	\$3,089	\$4,165
Piopio Residential	\$300,000	\$4,627	\$1,797	\$3,089	\$4,886
Mōkau Residential	\$425,000	\$3,759	\$2,256	\$1,583	\$3,839
Te Kūiti Commercial	\$375,000	\$4,214	\$2,485	\$1,880	\$4,365
Dry Stock Farm	\$2,620,000	\$10,009	\$10,379	\$0	\$10,379
Forestry Block	\$1,294,000	\$8,571	\$8,580	\$0	\$8,580

Debt Reduction



Significant water and wastewater debt will transfer to Waikato Waters. WDC debt is estimated to then be under \$10 million.

Council will continue to focus on debt repayment as outlined in the LTP 2024-34. Waikato Waters who will use LGFA as their funding agency as WDC does currently.

Proposed Fees and Charges



For the financial year 2026/2027

As part of the annual planning process, fees and charges are reviewed to ensure the costs of providing these Council services are recovered by those who use them. This annual review provides the opportunity to reflect changes in the costs and services.

Due to the increased operating costs most fees and charges are being increased by 3% in line with current inflation. We need to ensure costs are recovered so that Council services are not subsidised further by rates. The fees and charges to provide services are driven by operating costs which have increased in recent times.

Some fees are proposed to increase or change to actual costs so that costs are fully recovered as much as possible.

The most significant changes are:

Hireage Les Munro Centre

It is proposed to make the Supper Room at Les Munro available at a cheaper rate this may encourage more community use of this facility. The other hire fees are retained at the current price.

Alcohol Licensing

The second stage of fee increases that was adopted by Council with the Alcohol Fees Bylaw in 2025 are being applied this year from 1 July 2026. This will increase the cost recovery of the licensing activity and reduce the ratepayer contribution.



Changes to water and wastewater fees

For water and wastewater location services there is currently a set fee for the whole district. A review of the actual costs shows there is a significance difference depending on location. It is proposed to better recover this cost by adding site specific fees.

Disconnection and reconnection fees are proposed to move to a quote-based charge from an approved Contractor, this is due to the wide range of costs for this service it also aligns the approach to new connection services.

Te Kūiti Transfer Station and rubbish bags

We are looking to increase the gate charges and the cost of the official WDC rubbish bags due to increasing operating costs and waste minimisation levy.

The tonnage charges for general waste would increase by \$14 to \$365 per tonne, and for green waste by \$13 to \$245 per tonne.

The official WDC rubbish bags would increase from \$5.30 to \$5.50.

Kerbside collection and using blue bags are the most cost-effective way to dispose of small waste volumes.

We are proposing to increase the minimum waste limit from 10kgs to 30kgs (two maximum weight WDC bags) and the minimum charge by \$2 to \$14.50. (Blue WDC bags are free to dispose of at any of our transfer stations)

For waste over 30kgs the tonnage charge will be applied with no minimum charge added. Green and timber waste the minimum charge for up to 40kg is proposed to be \$11.50. Over that weight the charge will be at the tonnage rate.

We have clarified our pricing so that we will charge differently for general waste, green waste, all timber waste and scrap metal.

Contaminated waste cannot be safely transported so will no longer be accepted.

We are no longer able to accept some items at rural transfer stations such as whiteware and appliances, so these have been removed from the schedule.



Consenting

Changes to the consents process through legislative reform requires some adjustment to consenting fees and charges.

It is proposed to add a fee for 'granny flats' PIMs to recover the administrative costs of these reports. A PIM (Project Information Memorandum) must be applied for before constructing these buildings, the proposed fee is \$900 which is aligned with neighbouring councils.

We have also incurred cost increases from external sources for our building consenting so we have had to increase costs for the relevant processing fees. A 5% increase has been proposed across a number of consent and inspection fees.

In General

Some of our fees and charges have required more significant increases often due to increased staff time to complete the service or higher contractor costs.

There are some fees and charges that we have been able to maintain at the 2025/26 level as the cost recovery is being met. Slight wording changes have also been made throughout to better describe fees and charges.

Council have adopted the Dog Fees and Charges on 24 March 2026 and some fees are set by legislation such a parking and litter infringements so are not part of the consultation. (greyed out)

[Link to Fees and Charges Schedule](#)

Your Council



John Robertson

Mayor

John.Robertson@waitomo.govt.nz



Eady Manawaiti

Deputy Mayor / Councillor: Urban

Eady.Manawaiti@waitomo.govt.nz



Olivia Buckley

Councillor: Rural

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ANNUAL PLAN 2026/27

SUBMISSION FORM



SUB NO: _____

Submissions close at 5pm on Thursday 30 April 2026

You can share your views on our proposed ANNUAL PLAN 2026/27 by:

- Completing this submission form and returning it to us by:
 - o Visiting our Customer Services and Visitor Hub at 160 Rora Street, Te Kūiti
 - o Emailing it to: haveyoursay@waitomo.govt.nz (scan and pdf or take a photo)
 - o Posting to: FREEPOST 112498, Waitomo District Council, PO Box 404, Te Kūiti 3941
- Visiting our website: www.waitomo.govt.nz/council/haveyoursay/annual-plan-2026-2027/ and fill in an online submission form

FULL NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

ORGANISATION (if submitting on behalf of): _____

I wish to speak to Council about my submission **Y / N** Hearings are scheduled for 12-13 May 2026. If you indicate 'YES', we will contact you to arrange a time. Attendance can be in person or via Zoom.

Do you agree with our proposal to move the waste transfer station in Awakino to the Inframax Depot in Mōkau?

Yes - move the transfer station to Mōkau No - keep the transfer station in Awakino

Do you have any feedback on the draft Annual Plan 2026/27?

FEES AND CHARGES SUBMISSION FORM



SUB NO: _____

Submissions close at 5pm on Thursday 30 April 2026

You can share your views on our proposed FEES AND CHARGES 2026/27 by:

- Completing this submission form and returning it to us by:
 - o Visiting our Customer Services and Visitor Hub at 160 Rora Street, Te Kūiti
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FULL NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

ORGANISATION (if submitting on behalf of): _____

I wish to speak to Council about my submission Y / N Hearings are scheduled for 12-13 May 2026. If you indicate 'YES', we will contact you to arrange a time. Attendance can be in person or via Zoom.

Do you have any feedback on the overall increase to our fees and charges by 3%?

Do you have feedback on fees and charges that have increased by more than 3%?

Do you have any other feedback on the fees and charges?
