

Message from the Mayor

On 29 June, Waitomo District Council adopted its 10 Year Plan 2021-31. The plan outlines the direction for the Council for the next ten years and sets a pathway for it to achieve its community outcomes through various strategies and actions.

We carefully considered Council's infrastructure challenges alongside matters relating to community aspirations, debt levels, and affordability of rates.

Rates affordability is a serious consideration for Council. Over the life of the 10 Year Plan the average annual rates increase is 2.2%. The average annual rate change in year 1 is a reduction of 0.54%.

We have formed the 10 Year Plan in a climate of uncertainty; a time when the COVID-19 pandemic continues to hurt the economic fabric of parts of our community, the housing market is under stress, and Central Government is considering significant reform of Council operations.

A year ago Council's external debt sat at \$37.3 million. This 10 Year Plan forecasts debt dropping to \$30.7 million by 2027 and dropping further to \$15.1 million by 2031. Debt reduction is important to mitigate the impacts of future interest rate increases.

We will continue to invest in our core infrastructure. A well-maintained road network is especially important to our rural economy. Looking after all community assets and ensuring that they are well maintained and fit-for-purpose is a priority under this 10 Year Plan.

I would like to thank all of you who provided feedback on our consultation document. Your views are always welcome and help in our decision making. Ultimately our collective views will shape the journey ahead for our District.

John Robertson, QSO

Mayor of Waitomo District



In this issue:

- > Read about the Local Government (Rating of Whenua Māori) Amendment Act 2021, and what it means for Maori land owners in our district.
- > We have adopted the 10 Year Plan for 2021-31. Read about some highlights of the plan.
- > Properties in the Waitomo District will be revalued in September for rating purposes, as per Rating Valuations Act 1998. We explain the process and what it means for you as a ratepayer.
- > Remission is now available for properties affected by the Māori Affairs Amendment Act 1967.
- > Check out the due dates for Rates and Metered Water Rates for 2021/22
- > Applications are now open for rates rebates for the 2021/2022 rating year. If you have a low income and pay the rates on your home, you could receive \$665 through the rates rebate scheme.

HIGHLIGHTS OF COUNCIL'S 10 YEAR PLAN 2021-31

Every three years all councils must provide a detailed plan setting out their direction for the next ten years.

On 29 June, Waitomo District Council adopted its 10 Year Plan 2021-31 (10YP) after many months of planning and consultation.

The 10YP outlines Council's community outcomes, priorities, plans and budgets for the Waitomo District for the next ten years, with a specific focus on the next three years.

Council decided to defer harmonisation of water supply rates to Year 4 of the new 10YP.

We are still recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our District.

We operate within a heavily regulated environment with constant changes and the imposition of new requirements.

We have pending legislative changes coming through such as the local government reform, three waters reform, and reform of the resource management legislation.

This 10YP does not shy away from these challenges. However, we have kept affordability at the forefront of our planning.

Included in the 10YP is:

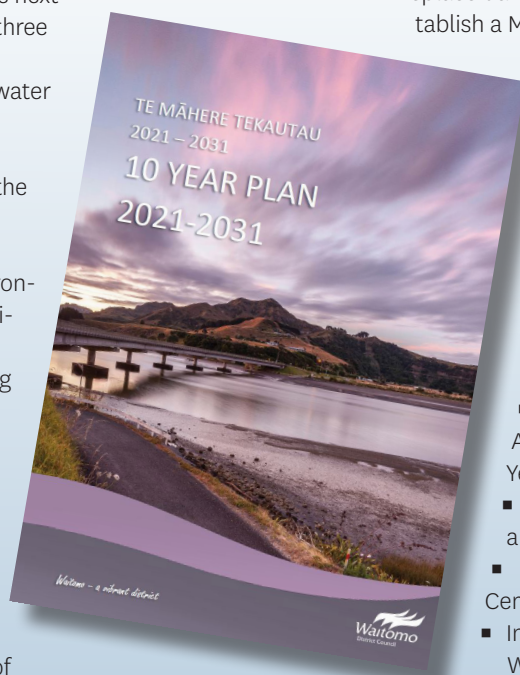
- Minimal Rates Increase - Over the life of the 10 Year Plan the average annual rates increase is 2.2%.
- The average annual rate change in year 1 is a reduction of 0.54% then an increase of 2.06% in year 2.
- A renewals and maintenance programme to look after and replace existing assets when needed.
- Supporting our community through grant funding.

This 10 Year Plan 2021-2031 also includes an update to our Financial Strategy. Council remains committed to reducing debt over the duration of this plan.

The changes we made to our Financial Strategy will allow us to reduce the debt servicing burden on ratepayers and give us the option of using future debt to further invest in our District.

Here are some projects we plan to deliver in the next 10 years:

- Replace damaged bollards at Centennial Park in Year 1 and establish a Motakiora/Brook Park Development Plan in Year 3.
 - Investigate options for the Marokopa Holiday Park.
 - Improve our playgrounds including Mokau Playground in Year 4.
 - Ongoing minor renewals at the Waitomo District Library building, Waitomo District Aquatic Centre and Te Kuiti Aerodrome.
 - Improve accessibility for the Surfer's track at Mokau.
 - Replace the Les Munro Centre air conditioning unit in Year 1.
 - Replace the boiler at the Waitomo District Aquatic Centre and undertake pool resurfacing in Year 3.
 - Ongoing minor renewals for public toilets and CCTV cameras.
 - Construct the accessway for the Te Kuiti Cemetery extension in 2021/22.
 - Investigate public access to toilet facilities at Waitomo Village.
 - Investigate the development of a Walking and Cycling Strategy.
- Provision for the Lawrence Street land subdivision in Te Kuiti in 2021/22.
- Review of Council-owned land and leases.
- Integrate customer services with local i-SITE services.
- Review our Waste Minimisation Management Plan and deliver a Waste Minimisation education awareness programme.
- Continue development at the Waitomo District Landfill.
- Develop a Marketing Strategy for the District.



Changes to the rating of Māori Land

In April 2021, the Government passed significant changes to reduce rating barriers for Māori landowners. Most of the changes outlined in the Local Government (Rating of Whenua Māori) Amendment Act 2021 came into force on 1 July 2021.

The changes are part of the Government's wider commitment to supporting whānau and regional development by:

- reducing the barriers for owners of Māori freehold land who want to use, occupy, build houses on, and develop their whenua, particularly for those who have rates arrears.
- providing greater consistency, equity and clarity around the rating of Māori land for the benefit of Māori landowners and local authorities.

Wholly unused land to be non-rateable

Māori land that is wholly unused is now non-rateable. Previous to the Amendment Act, owners of wholly unused Māori land blocks were legally obliged to pay rates, but now historic rates arrears on unused Māori Land will be removed and no further rates will be charged. This clears the way for Māori landowners to develop unused Māori land and pay rates once the land comes into productive use. It also ensures unused Māori land does not accumulate rates arrears in the future.

*** If your whole property is unused Maori Freehold Land, please let us know. An application form is available from our Customer Services Team or website.**

Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata land to be made non-rateable

All land protected by Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata is non-rateable and outstanding rate arrears will be written off. This recognises the conservation value of the land and will make it more attractive for Māori landowners to set aside land blocks or part of their blocks for conservation purposes.

*** If your property is subject to a Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata, please let us know. Please contact our Customer Services Team or email rates@waitomo.govt.nz**

Treating multiple blocks as one

Māori landowners may make an application to have multiple Māori land blocks, that are used jointly and are from the same parent block, to be treated as one rating unit.

This will encourage the development of unused land by reducing the overall rating liability for the blocks. Instead of paying several uniform charges on individual blocks originating from one parent block there will only be one set of uniform charges to pay.

Ability to write-off arrears

Local authorities must now write-off outstanding rates on any land that they consider unrecoverable. Councils may also write-off rates debt inherited from deceased owners. This change alleviates one of the major barriers to Māori landowners engaging, using and developing land which currently has rates owing.

It also reduces the administrative costs for local authorities who may be trying to collect unrecoverable rates.

Rating individual homeowners on Māori land separately

Upon request, local authorities can rate individual houses on Māori land as a separate rating unit. Where houses are rated individually, the occupant of the house becomes responsible for the rates on the house, and this enables each homeowner to access the Rates Rebate Scheme.

Rates remission for Māori freehold land under development

Council's existing remission policy already provides remission for Māori landowners while their land is under development and this provides some rates relief for Māori landowners while they bring their land into use. This is now a requirement for all councils under the new legislation.

For more information on the changes to the rating of Māori Land, and how this may affect your property, please contact our Customer Services Team or email: rates@waitomo.govt.nz

Remission now available for Land changed under the Māori Affairs Amendment Act 1967

The Māori Affairs Amendment Act 1967 introduced compulsory conversion of Māori freehold land with four or fewer owners into general land. There was strong opposition to this Act, which resulted in the legislation being repealed in 1974. Since that time many of the properties have remained general land on the title, however the substance of the land is Māori freehold land and in every practical sense the land changed under the repealed Act should be treated as such.

From 1 July 2021 Council has resolved that all land that was changed to general land as part of the Māori Affairs Amendment Act 1967 will be considered to be Māori freehold land for the purposes of Council's Rates Remission policy.

For a copy of the Rates Remission Policy, application forms and due dates for applications visit our website or contact our Customer Services Team.

Waitomo District Property Revaluations

The Rating Valuations Act 1998 requires that every property in New Zealand is revalued for rating purposes at least once every three years. The last revaluation for the Waitomo District occurred in September 2018 and therefore the revaluation is due to be undertaken again in September 2021. The new values will be first used for rating purposes from 1 July 2022.

Rating values are assessed on behalf of Council by Quotable Value using a 'mass-appraisal' process. This method is used all over the world and takes into consideration your property's attributes and the value of local sales.

The Capital Value reflects the probable price that would be paid for the property if it had been for sale at the date of the general revaluation. This valuation does not include chattels, dairy company shares, stock, crops, machinery or trees. The valuation is deemed to include GST (if any) for residential property, and exclude GST for other property types.

Highest and Best Use

The valuation is made on a "highest and best use" basis, rather than the existing use. For example, a smaller pastoral block may have a higher value as a lifestyle residential property, and a smaller farming property on the outskirts of a larger urban township may have a higher value as a residential subdivision.

Will the new valuations affect my rates?

All owners and ratepayers will receive notice of their revised values

in December this year. These notices detail the new Capital Value of your property as at 1 September 2021. Your property's capital value is just one of the components used to calculate your rates. A change in a property's capital value does not automatically mean that your rates will increase or decrease by a similar percentage.

For most urban properties, only a small portion of the annual rates is based on property value. Uniform Annual General Charges (UAGC) and uniform charges for water supply, wastewater, solid waste collection and recycling make up a larger part of the annual rates and these charges are not based on property values.

However, the revaluation can result in a change to the rates charged to individual properties with some increasing and some decreasing because the rates charged on the basis of capital value are split among properties proportionally.

If you think of Council's rate income as a pie, the size of the pie does not increase because of the revaluation. However, an individual ratepayer's slice of the pie might get bigger or smaller depending on how their property value has changed in relation to the average change for the district.

Objections

Once you receive your valuation notice in December, you will have the opportunity to object if you disagree with your property's new valuation.

Are you eligible for a Rates Rebate?

If you have a low income and pay the rates on your home, you could receive \$665 through the rates rebate scheme.

Applications are now open for rates rebates for the 2021/2022 rating year. Your rebate is based on:

- Your income
- Your annual rates
- Number of dependants you have.

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.



METERED WATER RATES DUE DATES

Where a property is fitted with a water meter and/or is deemed as having an extraordinary supply, water rates are invoiced separately twice a year.

Reading Period

July to December 2021
January to June 2022

Due Date

15 January 2022
15 July 2022

RATES DUE DATES

Rates are due four times a year:

Instalment 1

31 August 2021
(Tuesday)

Instalment 2

30 November 2021
(Tuesday)

Instalment 3

28 February 2022
(Monday)

Instalment 4

31 May 2022
(Tuesday)