



Draft Significance and Engagement Policy

Location of controlled copies:	Electronic version is the only Controlled copy (ECM 9879961)
Approved by:	
Current version revision date:	V2.0, 21_08_2026
Review frequency:	Triennially

Table of Contents

1. Purpose	3
2. Scope	3
3. Decision-making Process	4
4. Contribution to Decision-making Processes by Mana Whenua, Hapū and Iwi	5
5. Determining Significance	6
5.5. Water Services Strategy.....	6
5.6. Significant Contracts.....	7
5.7. Joint Water Services Provider Arrangements	8
6. Consideration of Engagement and Consultation	11
6.4. Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025	11
6.5. Statement of Shareholder Expectations	11
6.6. Community Expectations	11
7. Strategic Water Services Assets.....	12
8. Approval and Review	13
9. Appendix 1: Community Engagement Guide	14
9.4. When Engagement May Not Occur.....	14
9.5. Expectations for Submissions.....	15
10. Appendix 2: Type of engagement.....	16

1. Purpose

- 1.1. Wai Hononga Water Services Limited (Wai Hononga) is responsible for delivering drinking water and wastewater services across the New Plymouth District. Many Wai Hononga decisions affect the community. The more significant a decision is, the more important it is for Wai Hononga to understand community views and preferences before making that decision. This Significance and Engagement Policy sets out:
- How Wai Hononga determines the significance of matters and related decisions.
 - When and how the community can expect to be involved in Wai Hononga decision-making processes.
 - The form and extent of the engagement likely to take place before a particular decision is made.
 - The strategic water services assets owned by Wai Hononga, noting that Wai Hononga must consult on any transfer of ownership or control of a strategic water services asset to or from Wai Hononga.
- 1.2. The Significance and Engagement Policy has been developed in response to the requirements set out in the Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025 (LGWSA). The purpose of this policy is to make sure Wai Hononga takes a consistent and transparent approach in determining the significance of a decision and the appropriate level of engagement for that decision.

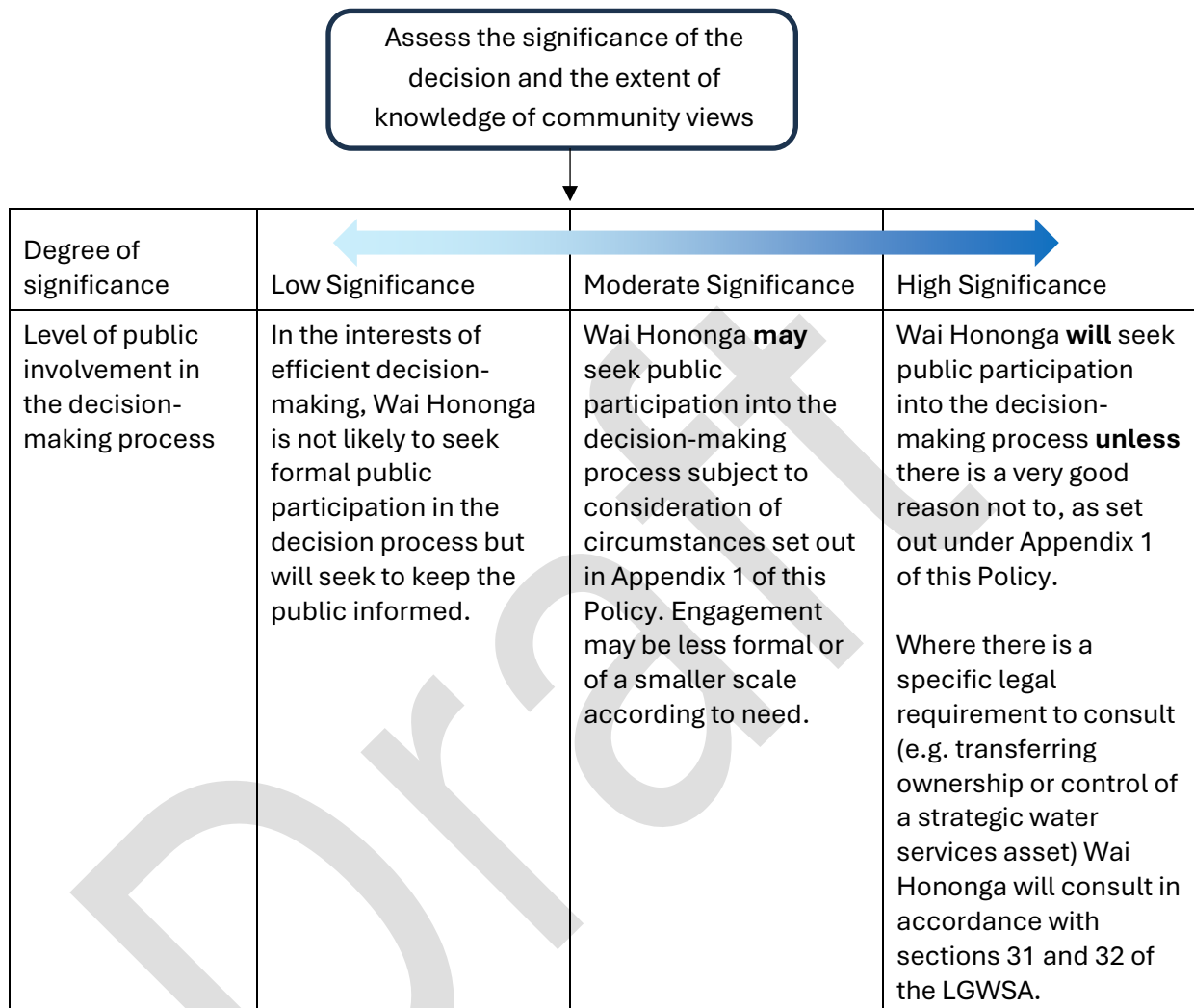
2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to decisions made by Wai Hononga that relate to the delivery of drinking water and wastewater network services within the service area of Wai Hononga. It applies to strategic and operational decisions where there is, or is likely to be, an impact on consumers and communities.
- 2.2. This policy does not replace engagement requirements in other legislation. Where other statutory requirements apply (for example the Resource Management Act 1991 or Public Works Act 1981), Wai Hononga will comply with those requirements in addition to this policy.

3. Decision-making Process

- 3.1. When making a decision, Wai Hononga will identify all reasonably practicable options and assess those options in a manner that is proportionate to the significance of the matter. Wai Hononga will also consider the views and preferences of people likely to be affected by, or interested in, the decision.
- 3.2. Understanding community views is an important part of good decision-making. Wai Hononga will gather information about community views and preferences through a range of channels including utilising information gathered by New Plymouth District Council (Council) as Wai Hononga's shareholder.
- 3.3. The Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025 (LGWSA) does not require Wai Hononga to undertake formal consultation on every decision. Where Wai Hononga already has a sufficient understanding of community views and preferences, additional consultation may not be necessary. In these circumstances, Wai Hononga may rely on existing information and community feedback, provided it is satisfied that it has enough information to make a well-informed decision. This helps avoid consultation fatigue, makes efficient use of resources, and enables decisions to be made in a timely manner.
- 3.4. The decision on whether to engage or consult will depend on:
 - the significance of the matter;
 - the extent to which Wai Hononga already understands community views and preferences;
 - any statutory consultation requirements; and
 - the circumstances of the decision, including timing and available resources.
- 3.5. Wai Hononga will therefore take a proportionate approach to engagement and consultation. Generally, the more significant a matter is and the less Wai Hononga knows about community views, the greater the level of engagement that is likely to occur.

Figure 1: Determining the level of public participation in decision-making



4. Contribution to Decision-making Processes by Mana Whenua, Hapū and Iwi

4.1. Recognising the whakapapa and mauri of wai as a taonga, Wai Hononga is committed to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and working in partnership with mana whenua, hapū and iwi. Consistent with the Statement of Shareholder Expectations, Wai Hononga will engage in a respectful, inclusive manner, consistent with the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This includes:

- Identifying and establishing meaningful and enduring relationships with mana whenua, hapū and iwi partners that have a significant interest in the activities of Wai Hononga.

- Ensuring timely and transparent sharing of information that impact on mana whenua, hapū, iwi and Māori community interests in the New Plymouth district and seek their advice and input on strategic initiatives, projects, and decisions that affect them.
- Supporting mana whenua, hapū and iwi to uphold their tikanga, rangatiratanga, kaitiakitanga, mana motuhake and mana whakahaere aspirations through collaboration, co-design, resourcing and shared decision-making in matters relating to te taiao, with their kaitiaki responsibilities.

5. Determining Significance

- 5.1. Wai Hononga will assess the significance for all decisions and for those decisions that require Board endorsement, a Significance and Engagement Assessment will be completed to further determine the degree of significance using this policy. The significance of a matter will fall somewhere on a continuum from low significance to high significance.
- 5.2. The Significance and Engagement Assessment will include:
 - An assessment of the degree of significance as 'low', 'moderate' or 'significant' – as determined by the criteria set out in Table 1, and the following points;
 - For any matters of 'moderate' or 'high' an indication of the particularly relevant significance criteria that have elevated the assessment; and
 - A summary of the method(s) and extent of engagement to be undertaken in relation to the matter including any specific legislative requirements for engagement or where public engagement will not be undertaken, a statement of the relevant observance under the criteria; and
 - For any matters of high significance – a statement of any further decision-making requirements.
- 5.3. The final decision about the significance of any matter rests with the Wai Hononga Board. It is the Wai Hononga Board that decides whether or not a decision or activity is significant.
- 5.4. To determine the degree of significance of a decision to proceed, we apply the six criteria set out in Table 1.
- 5.5. **Water Services Strategy**
 - 5.5.1. The Water Services Strategy is the key planning document developed by Wai Hononga, it sets out the short, medium and long term direction for Wai Hononga. It includes infrastructure investment plans, proposed levels of service, performance measures proposed water charges and financial forecasting. Wai Hononga will generally consult with the community in relation to its proposed Water Services Strategy and will specifically seek feedback on any proposal to

transfer ownership or control of a strategic water services asset (to or from Wai Hononga) and any proposal to significantly change levels of service.

5.6. Significant Contracts

- 5.6.1. Wai Hononga is required to determine whether any proposed contracts are significant, based on this policy. If a contract is assessed as significant, then Wai Hononga must undertake community consultation, including with Council. Following that consultation, Wai Hononga must also obtain Council's approval to enter the proposed contract, as required by section 23 of the Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025.
- 5.6.2. For proposed contracts to be considered significant, the following additional criteria apply in addition to the criteria in Table 1:
- Contracts that would create a public-private partnership as defined by the Crown (National Infrastructure Funding and Financing).
 - Contracts that could risk the ability of Wai Hononga to meet its statutory obligations.
 - Whether the proposed contract is of high value relative to the revenue that Wai Hononga receives from providing the water service to which the contract relates.
- 5.6.3. Where one or more of the above criteria are met, the contract will likely be considered significant, with some form of community consultation required.
- 5.6.4. However, Wai Hononga will not usually consult on significant contracts when:
- the matter, proposal or project that the proposed contract relates to has already been consulted on and approved by Wai Hononga, i.e. through the Water Services Strategy, and
 - the scale or outcome of the matter, proposal or project that the proposed contract will cover has not substantively changed from what has previously been consulted on.
- 5.6.5. In those instances, Wai Hononga will instead inform the community that the contract has been awarded, and the key terms of that contract.
- 5.6.6. Where a proposed significant contract relates to a matter, proposal or project that has not already been consulted on, then Wai Hononga will consult on the proposed contract in accordance with sections 31 and 32 of the LGWSA.

5.7. Joint Water Services Provider Arrangements

- 5.7.1. Wai Hononga may enter into a joint water service provider arrangement (as defined by the LGWSA) with one or more other water service providers. Any joint water service provider arrangement would be deemed to be significant and therefore require consultation in accordance with sections 31 and 32 of the LGWSA.

Table 1: Determining the degree of significance

Indicative Level of Consultation	Unlikely to consult, but may include low level pre-engagement.	Optional consultation	Most likely to require consultation
Examples of how we may engage (refer also to Appendix 1).	Localised promotion.	Targeted promotion.	Comprehensive publicity and promotion.
Criteria	Measure		
	Low Significance	Moderate Significance	High Significance
1. Impact on the direction of Wai Hononga	The decision applies for a short-term or is reversible. If reversible, the impact on future generations would be low.	The decision applies for the medium term or is difficult to reverse, and/or, there is a moderate impact on future generations.	The decision applies for a longer term or is irreversible and would impact on future generations to a high degree.
2. Change in the current level of service or the way in which the services are delivered by Wai Hononga.	There is a low level of change to services but limited change to the levels of service stated in the WSS and limited change to the way in which services are delivered.	There is a medium level of change to services but moderate change to the levels of service stated in the WSS and moderate change to the way in which services are delivered.	There is a major and/or long-term change to levels of service for a significant activity or there is a large change in the way in which a significant activity is delivered. This may also involve a WSS amendment to change the WSS Levels of Service.
3. Level of public impact and/or interest now or in the past.	Low impact on sections or all the community. There is no history of the matter generating wide or intense interest, or there is no reasonable expectation of	Medium impact on sections or all the community. There is some history of the matter generating public interest in general or within particular sectors, or there is a low to moderate likelihood of the	Major and district-wide; or Major for an identified community of interest with wide reach. There is a history of the matter generating wide and intense public interest or there is a reasonable

	the matter generating wide or intense interest.	matter generating wide and intense public interest.	likelihood of the matter generating wide and intense public interest.
4. Level of impact on mana whenua, hapū and iwi values and interests.	There is low limited or no impact on mana whenua, hapū and iwi values and interests.	There are moderate impacts on mana whenua, hapū and iwi values and interests.	There are significant impacts on mana whenua, hapū and iwi values and interests.
5. Net financial cost/revenue of implementation, excluding any financial impact already included in a Water Services Strategy or Annual Budget.	The impact is of a medium to low level. There is a relatively low impact on capital or operational expenditure. The financial transaction has a minor value compared to revenue and come within budgeted expenditure.	The impact is of a high to medium level in the short or long term. There is a moderate impact on capital or operational expenditure. The financial transaction has a moderate value compared to revenue and may not come within budgeted expenditure	The impact is considerable and at a high level in the short or long term but comes within budgeted expenditure. There is a high impact on capital or operational expenditure and is likely to have a notable impact on overall budgets and does not come within budgeted expenditure.
6. Whether the asset is a strategic water services asset, and whether it involves the transfer of ownership or control of the strategic water services assets.	The decision does not impact on Wai Hononga ownership or control of the asset.	The asset being considered is a component of a network of strategic water services assets.	The decision involves transferring ownership or control of a strategic water services asset.

6. Consideration of Engagement and Consultation

- 6.1. Wai Hononga will consider on a case-by-case basis whether engagement or consultation is appropriate. Generally, the more significant a decision, the greater the level of engagement likely to occur. However, engagement may not be appropriate in all circumstances, refer to Appendix 1.
- 6.2. When determining the nature and extent of engagement, Wai Hononga will consider the significance of the decision, the circumstances involved, and available resources.
- 6.3. Wai Hononga is guided in its community engagement by its legislative requirements under the LGWSA, the Statement of Shareholder Expectations prepared by New Plymouth District Council (Council) as the shareholder of Wai Hononga and community expectations.

6.4. Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025

- 6.4.1. The LGWSA recognises that engagement should be proportionate to the significance of the matter being considered. It does not prescribe consultation on every decision.
- 6.4.2. Consultation in accordance with sections 31 and 32 of the LGWSA is required where the LGWSA requires a proposal to be subject to the consultation process set out in those sections. This includes before Wai Hononga:
 - enters into a significant contract;
 - enters into a significant joint water service provider arrangement;
 - transfers ownership or control of a strategic water services asset; and
 - makes a significant change to the level of service provided in relation to any water service.
- 6.4.3. Whether a contract, joint water service provider arrangement, strategic water services asset or change in level of service is significant will be determined in accordance with this Policy.

6.5. Statement of Shareholder Expectations

- 6.5.1. The Statement of Shareholder Expectations prepared by New Plymouth District Council (Council) as the shareholder of Wai Hononga requires that Wai Hononga engage with consumers and the community in a manner proportionate to the nature and significance of the matter including by:
 - maintaining awareness of relevant stakeholders;
 - providing timely accessible information appropriate to the audience; and
 - seeking input on significant matters where appropriate.

6.6. Community Expectations

- 6.6.1. Council has identified the following community expectations through previous engagement and feedback. These insights inform the understanding of community expectations for Wai Hononga. Community expectations include:

- Opportunities for early and meaningful input into significant decisions.
- Visibility of upcoming consultations.
- Involvement of a cross section of the community demographics, e.g. young people, older people, people experiencing disabilities, multi-cultural groups.
- Involving our communities in activities with purpose rather than presenting our opinions.
- Solutions for community engagement that work for the audience with feedback tools that are easy to use, such as:
 - Face-to-face engagement to enable human connection, and interactive discussions, combined with online engagement to give people time to think about their responses.
 - Online content that uses local examples, strong images, and video to create a real-life connection and encourage engagement.
 - Going where the people are by tapping into existing events across the district.
 - For youth, taking the opportunity where there is a potential audience.
 - Working with trusted community voices to reach communities that are harder to engage.
 - Making sure that supporting information is available to the community in easily accessible formats.

7. Strategic Water Services Assets

- 7.1. A Strategic Water Services Asset, for a water services provider,
- means water services infrastructure or another asset or group of assets without which the provider is unable:
 - to meet its regulatory requirements; or
 - to maintain its capacity to achieve the outcomes set out in its water services strategy; and
 - includes an asset or group of assets listed as strategic water services assets in the provider's significance and engagement policy.
- 7.2. For the purposes of this policy, Wai Hononga considers the following assets to be strategic water services assets.
- Drinking water networks including pump stations and reservoirs.
 - Drinking water treatment plants and associated critical sites.
 - Wastewater networks, including pump stations.
 - Wastewater treatment plants and associated critical sites.
 - Land on which critical water and wastewater infrastructure is located.

- Water take and discharge consents
- 7.3. Where assets operate as part of a network, the network as a whole constitutes the strategic water services asset rather than each individual component. Not all decisions about a strategic water services asset will be significant, significance is assessed in context. Individual network assets are unlikely to be significant.

8. Approval and Review

- 8.1. This policy will be reviewed every three years prior to preparing the WSS or if there is a change to the responsibilities for water services that Wai Hononga has.
- 8.2. A proposed policy must be approved by Council prior to being adopted by the Wai Hononga Board.

9. Appendix 1: Community Engagement Guide

9.1. Wai Hononga will undertake engagement in a way that meets the following principles.

Principle	What this means
Clarity	Wai Hononga will provide clear information about the purpose of consultation, and the scope of the decision Wai Hononga will make after considering the community views.
Accessibility	Wai Hononga will provide access to relevant information, in a form people can understand. This means we need to engage in ways that show we understand the makeup of our communities, respecting cultural and individual differences.
Encouragement	Wai Hononga will encourage people to present their views.
Opportunity	Wai Hononga will provide reasonable opportunity for people to present their views in a way that suits those people's needs and preferences.
Commitment to mana whenua, hapū and iwi	Wai Hononga will make sure processes are in place when engaging with mana whenua, hapū and iwi.
Open mindedness and fairness	Wai Hononga will receive community views with an open mind and give due consideration to those views when making decisions.
Transparency	Wai Hononga will provide access to a clear record of decisions made and available explanatory materials.

9.2. Wai Hononga will engage with the community through a range of methods, including both formal and informal forms of consultation and engagement to inform or seek feedback, as per Appendix 2.

- Most decisions fall within the inform and consult levels.
- Involve and collaborate approaches are generally used for more significant decisions.
- Engagement may occur at different levels and stages of a project or decision.

9.3. Wai Hononga seeks to:

- Respond to community preferences.
- Coordinate engagement activities to avoid overburdening the community (consultation fatigue).

9.4. When Engagement May Not Occur

9.4.1. Wai Hononga will not typically undertake engagement in the following circumstances:

- Emergency management during a declared state of emergency
- Decision requiring urgent action to:
 - Comply with the law.
 - Protect life, health or amenity.
 - Prevent serious property damage.
 - Avoid or mitigate environmental harm.
 - Protect infrastructure or essential services
- Decisions required to be made with the public excluded (e.g. commercially sensitive contracts).
- Decisions made under staff delegations, such as regulatory or enforcement functions.
- Complex financial or commercial arrangements.

9.5. Expectations for Submissions

- 9.5.1. Submitters should provide accurate contact details and information. Wai Hononga may give less weight to, or decline to consider, submissions that are anonymous or contain false or misleading information.
- 9.5.2. Feedback must be submitted within the stated timeframe. Wai Hononga may, at its discretion, accept late submissions where this does not impact decision-making processes and where there are valid reasons for the delay or the information is considered valuable.
- 9.5.3. Submissions must be respectful and free from offensive or defamatory content. Wai Hononga may remove inappropriate content or decline to accept a submission that does not meet these standards. Wai Hononga may notify submitters and allow revisions if content is removed or declined.
- 9.5.4. Submissions may be publicly released, with personal details generally removed and may redact any content that could expose Wai Hononga to legal risk or create safety concerns.

10. Appendix 2: Type of engagement

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public (or stakeholders) throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To collaborate with the public (or stakeholders) in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
Types of issues we might use this for	• Water restrictions. • Emergency works. • Annual Budget.*	• Water Services Strategy. • Annual Budget.* • Major infrastructure projects that impact communities for extended periods. • Significant contracts not otherwise consulted on through the proposed Water Services Strategy.	• Infrastructure projects with localised impacts, where community knowledge can help influence design or delivery	• Infrastructure projects with significant localised impacts, where community knowledge can help shape design or delivery.
Examples of communication and engagement tools	Website Public Notices Newspaper Media releases Social media Radio Face-to-face Face-to-face presentations Community events			
		• Formal submissions. • Focus or advisory groups/panels. • Surveys. • Public meetings. • Inviting feedback through website and social media.	• Focus or advisory groups/panels. • Workshops. • Surveys. • Public meetings. • Inviting feedback through website and social media.	• Focus or advisory groups/panels. • External working groups with expert advice.
When the community can	We would generally advise the community once a decision is	We would generally advise the community once a draft decision is made and aim	We would generally provide the community with a greater lead	We would generally involve the community at the start to scope the issue, again after

expect to be involved	made, or when milestones are achieved.	provide the community at least two weeks to participate and respond.	in time to allow them time to be involved in the process.	information has been collected and again when options are being considered.
-----------------------	--	--	---	---

* Public consultation must be undertaken on a proposal to transfer ownership or control of a strategic water services asset (to or from Wai Hononga) or to make a significant change to a level of service provided in relation to any water service.

Draft