

A photograph of two young children swimming in a river. The child on the left is a boy with dark hair, and the child on the right is a girl with reddish-brown hair. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The water is clear and reflects the sunlight. The background shows a lush green forest along the riverbank.

Manawatū River Plan

Palmerston North

SMALL CITY BENEFITS, BIG CITY AMBITION

2018/21

Te Kaunihera o Papaioea
Palmerston North City Council



To fulfil the vision of small city benefits, big city ambition the Council has adopted five goals. The Manawatū River Action Plan was developed to achieve **Goal 2: A creative and exciting city**. This plan shows how the Council will contribute to achieving this goal.

For many decades the city turned its back on the Manawatū River. Over the past 10 years, the city has begun to embrace the Manawatū River as a significant recreational asset that allows people to connect with the natural environment and extend their physical activity. Locals increasingly regard the river as a great place or series of great places. The change has also provided opportunities for Rangitāne o Manawatū to express their unique relationship with the Manawatū River. The shared path network was the catalyst for this change. Plans are in place to extend the network to Ashhurst and Linton and to better connect Massey University, FoodHQ and Linton via a new pedestrian/cycle bridge due to be completed in late 2018. The Manawatū River Park attracts people from across the city and Council will consider classifying it as the next city reserve.

The Manawatū River Park has potential to attract a significant number of visitors seeking active recreation-based travel and events. The Manawatū River Framework provides strategic direction for new investment at the river and recognises the river's importance for the city and Rangitāne o Manawatū.

Opportunities include using the river as an off-road connection to the significant recreational and biodiversity hub at the Manawatū Gorge and Ashhurst Domain. The prospect of being able

to travel off-road from Linton to the upstream extent of the Manawatū Gorge, with stop-offs at places such as the Esplanade, is exciting and achievable. While the river is easily accessed from suburbs south of the city, and west of the city via the Mangaone Stream, the river is more difficult to access from the city's north and north-east. It is possible to form and complete an off-road city loop, using the key north-south roads as connectors to the river, with facilities prioritised for walking and cycling.

The Manawatū Gorge, sites of significance to Rangitāne o Manawatū, Ashhurst Domain, the Esplanade, Massey University, FoodHQ and Linton, are significant destinations along the Manawatū River Park. Smaller or temporary places of interest could be provided along the riverside to help build a sense of place, such as mobile traders, markets, recreational events, artwork, water access, informal play activities, and pump tracks.

If more people spend more time doing more things at the river each year, the community will develop a greater appreciation of the natural values of the river, particularly its water quality. This is likely to increase people's willingness to pay for water quality improvements in the future.



The purpose of the Manawatū River Plan is to create a city that has great places for all people, and particularly families (Priority 1, Creative and Liveable Strategy).



Where we are now

- The Manawatū River occupies a length of 42km of which there are 17km of shared path available for public use, 9km is in limestone, and 8km is 'hotmix' or tarseal surface.
- The river is predominately managed by Horizons Regional Council, however Council is actively involved as the main adjoining landowner, particularly in the city, where the Victoria Esplanade, Dittmer Reserve, Ahimate Park, and the Waste and Recycling Centre share long frontages on the northern side.
- The river plays a central part in Rangitāne o Manawatū tikanga – it is the mauri that has sustained iwi over hundreds of years. To some extent they have been excluded in expressing their relationship with the river and there is no better time with the recent Treaty settlement to address this situation.
- The primary issue with the river environment is its changeable and often volatile nature. The river floods regularly and any form of development including biodiversity enhancement needs to be carefully considered in this context.
- There is significant potential to encourage better appreciation of the Manawatū River environment, and in turn higher usage by the public, but this needs to be balanced against retaining its open space character and avoiding inappropriate built development in the flood zone.
- There is a good level of access to and along the river within the city reach, however it remains a disconnected system as there is a significant gap in the rural area where the shared path link to Ashhurst between Te Mātai Road and Raukawa Road is not complete.
- There are conflict issues between users of the shared path network, especially in the popular sections around the bridge, and most notably between cyclists and dog walkers. Council has sought to address this conflict via a passive approach with signage, and general other communications, to promote a 'courtesy and respect others' approach instead of more costly physical measures such as separated paths.
- At Te Āpiti there is already a large usage of the walking tracks (70,000+ visitors per annum), however with the establishment of a masterplan, including a comprehensive marketing and communication plan, the area has huge potential for more people to enjoy the space.



Where we want to be

- Increased knowledge and understanding of the contribution the Manawatū River makes to the city and its place in Rangitāne o Manawatū tikanga.
- Increased use of the river environment by the public for active and passive recreation.
- The biodiversity corridor extends along the river, where this does not compromise the integrity of the flood protection system.
- Targeted native planting contributes to water quality improvements in the river.
- Access to and along the river is as easy as possible for the public, with wayfinding signage and physical works that provide for all abilities.
- Legal access agreements along the true right bank (northern side) of the river are secured that extend the shared path from the city to Ashhurst, and thereby complete a connected system.
- Increased vibrancy within the Manawatū River Park reinforces its role as core city destination.
- Significantly boosted visitor numbers to the area result in increased recognition of the special character of Te Āpiti.
- Te Āpiti is the gateway to the Manawatū River Park and is the leading area for the appreciation of biodiversity and provision of an outstanding recreation and cultural experience.
- Transport related matters, such as car parking, are managed in an effective and efficient way to avoid conflicts as user demand continues to increase.



How we're going to get there

Day to day / ongoing actions to achieve the purpose

- Deliver capital programmes associated with the Manawatū River Framework.
- Curate events along the river to activate the edge and reinforce its role as a core city destination.
- Engage with key stakeholder groups associated with the river to promote events and educational opportunities, and collaborate where necessary on new and renewal capital programmes.
- Actively work with Rangitāne o Manawatū in the delivery of the capital programme and look for opportunities to improve cultural expression in the river environment.
- Collaborate with Massey University on projects that reduce barriers from the city to its campus.

New ongoing actions to achieve the purpose

- Extend the shared path along the true left bank (southern) bank of the river from Fitzherbert Bridge eastward or upstream towards Staces Road (Note: This is only possible if a continuous legal public access route is achieved in the three year period of this Action Plan).

In addition there are many actions that have been identified to give effect to the Manawatū River Framework in the next three years that can be broadly grouped as follows:

- Implement a series of 'planning and design' projects, including reserve management planning for the Victoria Esplanade, Te Motu O Poutoa/ ANZAC Park, Ashhurst Domain, Ahimate Park and Te Āpiti; and design of the primary river entrance points and wayfinding from the city to the river.
- Implement a series of 'activation' projects, including curating small to medium events (eg. food trucks, movie nights, markets, and musical and artistic performances) and placemaking initiatives (e.g. outdoor games space, a 'pop up' eating area) to showcase the use of the river environment and attract more usage of the space.
- Implement a series of 'development' projects, including entrance signage and wayfinding measures, Rangitāne o Manawatū expression initiatives, a series of activities for bike riders along the river, natural play activities, exercise equipment, public toilets, replacing sections of limestone path with 'hotmix' or concrete, shared path flood engineering measures (at Ahimate Park) and introducing lighting underneath Fitzherbert Bridge and at the Esplanade section of the shared path.
- Implement a series of 'acquisition' projects including purchase of land west of the shared path section of Maxwells Line for the western extension of Ahimate Park; purchase of land at the ANZAC Cliffs bend between the river and the stopbank; purchase of land east of Gasworks Drain (to provide legal access for the existing shared path); purchase or acquire an easement (potentially using a RMA designation process) over all privately owned properties along the river extending from Riverside Drive to Raukawa Road (to complete the true right bank link of the shared path from the city to Ashhurst).

Specific programmes to achieve the purpose (with timeframe)

- Complete He Ara Kotahi, the shared path linking the city to Linton and Karaka Bridge, linking the right (northern) and left (southern) banks of the river (by end of 2019/20).
- Implement the capital programmes associated with delivery of the Manawatū River Framework.



Actions contributing to Council's strategic themes

a) Smart city practices

- Collaborate and co-create with key stakeholders and members of the public.
- Use digital technology to support investigation of projects and monitoring of their performance.
- Use a city development dashboard to guide project planning.
- Develop highly agile, mobile and efficient work tools.

b) Sustainable practices

- Locate development, including native planting, in areas which will not compromise the flood protection system.
- Promote native planting in acceptable locations where water quality and amenity enhancements are optimised.
- Investigate opportunities to use water sensitive design principles in project planning.

c) Iwi partnerships

- Collaborate with Rangitāne o Manawatū on all project planning.
- Look for opportunities for Rangitāne iwi members to become involved in project delivery.

d) Strategic partnerships

- Rangitāne o Manawatū.
- Work with Horizons Regional Council in the planning of projects in the river environment.
- Work with Massey University and the NZDF in connection with the He Ara Kotahi project.
- Look for opportunities to assist in the delivery of actions identified by the Manawatū River Leaders Accord.
- Work with the Department of Conservation and NZTA on the Te Āpiti project.



Measures of success



- Actions identified in the Manawatū River Framework are delivered.
- Increase in public use of the river environment.
- Increase in native planting and observed biodiversity improvements in acceptable locations in the river environment.
- Greater connectivity of the Manawatū River Park.

Related policies

- Manawatū River Framework
- Bilingual Design Guidelines
- Dog Control Policy
- Local Area Traffic Management Policy
- Reserve and Walkway Naming Policy
- Smokefree Outdoor Areas Policy



- Sun Protection Policy
- Naming Rights for Council-Owned Recreational Facilities Policy

Long-term Plan levels of service

Council implements the Manawatū River Framework to increase the use of the river environment for active and passive recreation.

Long-term Plan KPIs

- Projects from the Manawatū River Framework are implemented on time and budget.

Actions, and contributing programmes, considered but not funded in this plan

- Purchase of land at the end of Riverside Drive.





Palmerston North City Council

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