



Ngāti Hāua Iwi Trust

## Submissions on the Ruapehu District Council Long Term Plan 2024-2034

**From:** Ngāti Hāua Iwi Trust  
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### Introduction

1. This submission is provided by the Ngāti Hāua Iwi Trust (**Trust**) in relation to the Ruapehu District Council (**RDC**) Long Term Plan 2024-34 (**LTP**) and is based entirely off the consultation document provided to the community in April 2024.
2. As an overarching contextual comment, we acknowledge the current financial, socio-economic and environmental state our people find themselves in today. There are a number of historical contributing factors that are at the forefront of our thinking, and from which we assess the practical nature of the options outlined in the consultation document. Some of those are:
  - (a) the need to ensure the rates bill our people receive is proportionate to the services they benefit from;
  - (b) the services they have never seen any benefit from but pay for; and
  - (c) their ability to facilitate their rates bill alongside other costs (like regional rates).
3. These are challenging times for our community, and we generally see positivity in the LTP consultation document to account for that. To that end, the LTP raises various matters of interest to the Trust, and we have outlined those below and look forward to working with RDC to progress these matters towards a solution.
4. From the outset, we have simply provided feedback on areas of required and available avenues of improvement. We say these modifications can be achieved on the basis of community benefits but more importantly from both a compliance with the strategic well-being framework and Tupua te Kawa. This would ensure RDC meet its Local Government, and Tiriti and Treaty Settlement obligations.
5. We request to present these submissions in person at the LTP hearings.

### Tone of the LTP and Need for Leadership

6. The LTP has been pitched as a response to the Governments withdrawal of three waters and not as a reflection of the historical actions/omissions. It's important that, when implementing a well-being framework (addressed below) that RDC are up front and honest about its role in contributing to the issues outlined in the LTP. Honesty is the best policy, and the consultation document is lacking in that sense. There is also a perception problem for the current elected members that we think can be avoided to ensure fairness towards them. We say that, because negative social perception targets the most disenfranchised parts of our community. In an elected councillor context, this would be Māori Wards, and as we move into a reform of the laws pertaining to Māori Wards, care (from a well-being perspective) must be taken at every turn.

### The Well-Being Framework

7. We commend the implementation of a well-being framework. That said, it is important to approach such a framework in a broad way and ensure that any measurement of wellbeing takes into account the many relevant factors. The current consultation document has a lack of appreciation for wellbeing in its fullest form, and particularly in the RDC

context. Again, this is relevant when understanding many of the matters listed in this document, specifically in relation to Te Tiriti and Treaty Settlements (addressed below).

### **Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

8. Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Treaty Settlement obligations are not sufficiently set out in the LTP and need more understanding. This is key to ensuring legal obligations are understood, planned out and met within the projected 10-year strategy timeline, as well as ensuring the well-being framework is robust. I accept that defining RDC's Tiriti and Treaty Settlement obligations is tricky, however, adding a strategic goal that this will be worked through within the next 10 years is a must.

### **Priority Spending if External Funding becomes Available**

9. The three waters better off funding which made available about \$4million was not properly managed and Council ran away on itself in terms of allocating this funding on issues unrelated to water. This comes back to the honesty factor highlighted above, but also raises a query about similar future funding. The LTP should provide the community with an understanding of the priority projects that should be funded if external funding becomes available. We as a Tiriti partner should be involved in that process and in some instances can partner to obtain such funding for essential projects like improved wastewater treatment and stormwater infrastructure.
10. We say this from the perspective, that no such priority list exists, yet the LTP explicitly includes the Go-Kart Track access as a project to fund (at \$35,000.00) in year six. We have expressed our concerns with the access proposals to date (so will not go into that) but we make the more principled point, that there is no reason priority projects should not be identified in this LTP given such a small minute matter like Go-Kart Track access is.

### **Leadership**

11. Given the extensive pull back on delivering services, the LTP or a process arising out of the LTP should look at the RDC hierarchical structure. There needs to be extensive rationale to fund two layers of governance in community boards and elected members. We say this for the following reasons:
  - (a) The community is geographically large but by population, small. It is unclear why elected members aren't able to discharge local board functions.
  - (b) The layers of decision making, create an access issue in terms of understanding local government decision making and engaging in those processes. Removing the overcomplication of layers within the governance structure will assist, or better planned out education services on those layers will bridge that gap.
  - (c) If the rationale to hold on to community boards is to keep the local voice, then more attention needs to be given to hapū and marae being involved in those tiers of governance. This could be achieved through a targeted advisory group or by strategy planning around Māori engagement, which would align with the Local Government obligations to allow better access to opportunities for Māori to be involved in decision making.
12. Currently, none of these matters are addressed in the LTP.

### **Māori Engagement**

13. We acknowledge that some work is being done to address the gap in terms of Māori engagement external to the LTP. In conjunction with that (and to address the core issue which is about trust), we can assist to give operational assistance to this issue and work with RDC (at both a governance and operational level) to ensure outcomes for Māori, which has proven to also provide benefits for the community as a whole.

14. We also say this, in relation to this LTP process. We provided direct input into priorities for the LTP and have not been contacted since but note the swift change in direction that no one has flagged with us in the first instance. We therefore attended the LTP consultation sessions to discuss our issues and ask pātai.
15. It must be recognised that iwi and hapū are not the general public. We are Tiriti partners that represents Māori in that exclusive relationship with the Crown, and by extension local government. Providing feedback in a public forum is inappropriate and sends a message to iwi and hapū that RDC is structurally higher. Opportunities have been missed to give life to a Tiriti partnership, including being a part of the hearing panel to receive submissions. Again, a strategic vision outlined in the LTP in this regard must be included so this issue isn't present in three years-time.

### Māori Freehold Land Policy

16. In terms of the new policies for rating Māori Freehold Land:
  - (a) The new remission policy is appropriate, but it misses the mark in terms of cultural benefits for the majority of the community, tikanga Māori, and wellbeing.
  - (b) The policy does little to address wellbeing and simply aligns itself to a narrow reading of the rating legislation (LGRA).
  - (c) Consultation of the proposed policy should not be opened to comment from the public. This is entirely inappropriate because Council have not briefed itself on the inherent benefit the Māori land rating framework provides, nor provided any material to explain this fact as well as the historic issues that lead to the change in rating policy in the LGRA. The focus of consultation should be with Māori landowners in the district only.
  - (d) The LTP is missing a large gap in the policy analysis around unrateable land and the definitions and understanding of those in the unrateable land list (schedule 1 to LGRA). There is a significant gap because the terminology used in that list goes beyond the surface level definitions adopted by the Council to date. Further, when understanding wellbeing, the cultural undertones some of these lands provide make them appropriate to be unrateable. The remission policy is therefore inappropriate because it focuses on a period that those lands might qualify for remission, rather than an approach of long-standing provision of cultural benefits within a wellbeing framework that flows on to the wider community (civil defence for example).
  - (e) There is an error in the description of Māori Freehold Land. Māori Freehold Land is and can be owned by non-Māori. The definition used in the consultation document is for Māori customary land. Māori Customary Land is unrateable and so this error improperly communicates the Māori Freehold Land remission policy proposals as being one only Māori can access rather than one Māori Freehold Landowners can access.
  - (f) The policy has not been given full life, and a better legal analysis is needed to ensure a proper interpretation of the law.

### Conclusion

17. We will expand on these submissions during the hearings and require more time to present (outside the standard 10 minute time slot).

Start

Te Awa Tupua → LGRA → TTWM.

maori wards. Waitangi tribunal → full review.