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Te ao Māori

Unlike the domains held by the atua, modern infrastructure, such as the roads over Papatūānuku and pipes within Rūaumoko, belongs to ngā tāngata, the people. Infrastructure is a modern construct that intersects multiple atua spaces.

As humans, we depend on infrastructure to provide clean drinking water and manage waste. Sometimes these challenge the values we hold regarding our atua and their specific realms. It comes down to finding a balance to nurture and enable the natural environment to continue to support itself and provide services to support people.

Marlborough's Infrastructure

Infrastructure is Council's core service. It's intrinsically linked to resource management, from where these assets are placed to the use of natural resources and the ongoing impact of infrastructure on the environment.

In Marlborough, key infrastructure includes land transport, rail, a commercial airport and airbase, the port, water infrastructure, waste management and energy infrastructure. Council owns and is responsible for managing roading, water supply, stormwater, wastewater, waste management, rural drainage and flood protection infrastructure. The Marlborough Airport and Port Marlborough are Council Controlled Trading Organisations (CCTOs) that operate as commercial organisations and are not covered in this report.

As Marlborough's population grows, Council continuously finds efficiencies and plans for the future. For example, Council uses pressure management for existing water supplies and leak-detection programmes to reduce water loss, while developing new water sources to ensure long-term security.

As with many resource management issues in New Zealand, national infrastructure policy has undergone changes, with more uncertainty ahead. A first National Policy Statement for Infrastructure was published by the Government in 2025 under the Resource Management Act (RMA), which is being replaced by the Planning Act and the National Built Environment Act. Ownership of infrastructure assets is also changing. A new Marlborough Water Services Organisation, owned by Council but independently managed, will take over water supply, stormwater and wastewater services under new Local Water Done Well reforms in 2027.

Perhaps one of the biggest changes underway since the last State of the Environment report has been the Water Services Act 2021, which requires Councils to meet stricter national drinking water standards. Blenheim began chlorinating its water in 2025, and new treatment plants have been established in Renwick, Seddon and Wairau Valley to ensure safer, more reliable supplies.

Ageing remains a major challenge for some of Marlborough's infrastructure, such as wastewater. Many of these pipes are over 50 years old, especially in established areas of Blenheim and Picton. Replacing aging infrastructure or making upgrades can sometimes come at a high cost for smaller communities as there are fewer ratepayers to bear the load than in urban areas.

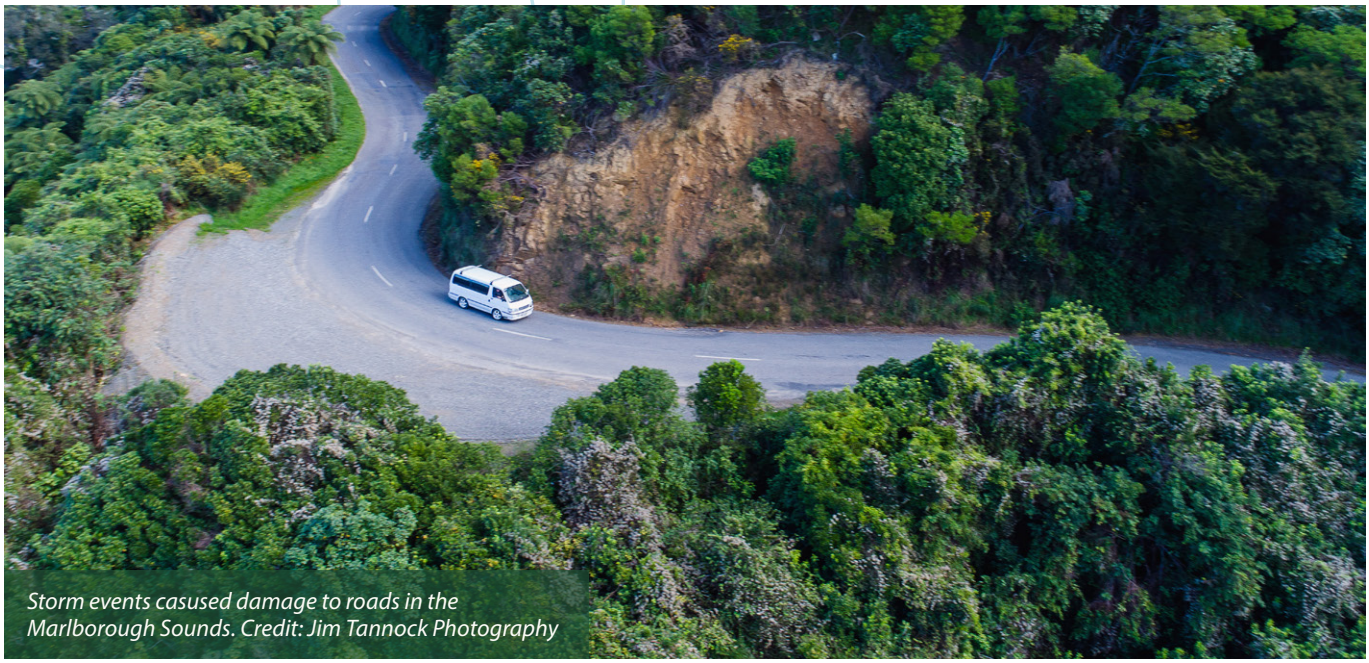
Meeting community expectations is increasingly difficult under resource constraints. Council supplies drinking water to approximately 82% of Marlborough's homes and businesses through eight town supply schemes. In 2024, the average household water use was around 300 L per person per day, down significantly from 2015 but still higher than the national average of 229 L. Over the next decade, universal metering is scheduled for Blenheim and Picton to enhance sustainable water use and meet the requirements of the Water Services Act.

As Council's core business, infrastructure is the largest capital expenditure by far. In the 2025-26 Annual Plan, roading was the top expenditure, followed by water supply and community facilities. Council continues to seek ways to deliver infrastructure efficiently and meet community needs now and into the future.



Te ikiiki whenua
Land transport

Marlborough's land transport network, including roads, footpaths, cycleways and bridges, plays a vital role in connecting our community. It provides access across the district to employment, education, recreation and services, and enables the movement of freight for business and industry. The transport network is essential for both residents and visitors, offering connections to water transport in the Marlborough Sounds.



Storm events casused damage to roads in the Marlborough Sounds. Credit: Jim Tannock Photography

Council's local roading network includes 1,564 km of local roads and 393 bridges. It also caters for cyclists and pedestrians with 32 km of cycleways (5 km on road, the rest off-road such as the Riverlands Trail) and 240 km of footpaths.

There are approximately 260 km of State Highways in Marlborough, managed and funded by the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA). NZTA's Marlborough Roads office oversees both Council's local road network as well as the state highways through a Local Roads Asset Management Agreement between Council and NZTA. Recreational cycle and walking pathways such as the Marlborough Vineyard Trail, which opened in 2025, Ben Morven Trail, Wither Hills mountain biking and walking trails, Victoria Domain and the Taylor River shared-use cycle path are managed internally by Council.

Pressures

Weather Events

The rising frequency and severity of natural events are affecting our vulnerable local road network, resulting in greater damage, deterioration and disruptions.

Multiple high-intensity rainfall events over the last four years in Marlborough have caused significant damage to the transport network. The largest event, in August 2022, caused over 2,750 faults and affected more than 500 km of road district-wide. A large proportion of the damage occurred in the Marlborough Sounds Area (refer to the case study about the Marlborough Sounds Future Access Study on page 33).

Together with significant rises in construction and maintenance costs, upgrades and improvements to the transport network, including safer roads, better walking and cycling infrastructure, and more inclusive transport options, must be balanced against efforts to respond to the increasing frequency and intensity of adverse natural events.

Investment in resilience and emergency recovery can draw resources away from long-term upgrades and improvements. In 2015, severe weather events cost the Council an average of $2.5m per year. The storms in 2021 and 2022 caused $282m of damage across the network, resulting in a recovery program that will cost an average of $40m per year, completing in December 2028.

The costs and resources needed to reduce transport's environmental impact are also rising, leading to greater complexity and expenses in transport activities.

Growth

Population growth and the expansion of the primary sector over the last decade have led to more vehicles on our roads and increased demand for cycleways and pedestrian infrastructure. This issue is becoming particularly challenging in the urban areas of Blenheim and Picton.

Traffic volumes on State Highway 1 (SH1) within urban Blenheim are reaching 1,800 vehicles per hour and the single-lane roundabouts are at capacity, which can cause significant delays to freight.

Hourly traffic flows at key intersections on SH1 in Blenheim (both directions), October 2025

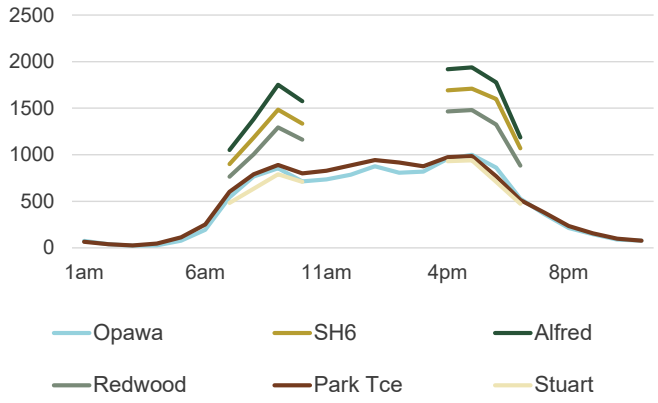


Figure 1: Hourly traffic flows in the Blenheim urban area on State Highway 1, showing peak hour numbers at single lane roundabouts (Opawa and Park Terrace have permanent count stations the other results are from surveys at related intersections)

Transport options

Marlborough's walking and cycling commuter network has notable gaps that, if filled, would enhance connectivity and safety. Rising traffic in both urban and rural zones creates barriers to walking and cycling, particularly affecting the youngest and oldest community members and increasing safety concerns.

A lack of alternative transport options limits opportunities for all to experience and contribute to the region. It also poses a challenge in encouraging more active transport options to reduce carbon emissions.

Response

Planning Framework

Marlborough's land transport network is the largest infrastructure asset in the district, with a 2025 value estimate of $1.434m (excluding land). Planning for the network is guided by the Land Transport Activity Management Plan (AMP) Condition of roading assets Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) 2024-2034 (currently being reviewed), which sets long-term strategic goals and investment priorities.

The strategic objectives of the current RLTP are:

- Supporting economic growth by providing efficient intra- and inter-regional routes while minimising environmental impacts
- A well-planned network that supports urban growth for all travel modes
- A network that remains operational through unplanned events and can recover quickly
- A safe transport system for all users

Severe Weather Events

The Marlborough Roads Recovery Team (MRRT) was formed in August 2021 to repair the road network across the region following frequent severe weather events that caused extensive damage to the infrastructure.

Following a major storm event in August 2022 Council led the Marlborough Sounds Future Access Study which is guiding significant investment in storm recovery and long-term resilience across five study areas in the Marlborough Sounds. As part of the study, Government required Council to identify 'hazard adaptation pathways' that recognise the future risks of major events such as storms, earthquakes and sea-level rise. These pathways outline the minimum level of service Council is willing to provide, while still delivering safe transport solutions and access in and out of the Sounds.

Growth

Council has invested in maintaining its road network to the service standards outlined in the Long-Term Plan (LTP) and AMP. Investment in intersection improvements to respond to increased growth has been low due to the previous Government's priorities and the cost of weather-event recovery.

Transport Options

The Marlborough Walking and Cycling Strategy was adopted in 2019. Efforts have focused on three objectives:

1. Encourage and support residents in urban Marlborough to switch their travel modes by walking and cycling.
2. Create a safe, accessible, connected and sustainable urban travel network for walking and cycling.
3. Ensure all relevant strategies, policies, plans and practices for urban Marlborough promote walking and cycling.

Since 2015, several additions and improvements have been made to the region's walking and cycle network to improve alternative transport options, connectivity and safety, including:

- Taylor River Shared pathway extension
- Eltham Road on-road separated path
- Grovetown / Spring Creek and Riverlands trails (which also now form part of the Whale Trail)
- Facilities and storage at the end of journeys are being provided to reduce reliance on private motor vehicles within the urban environment.

Council oversees public transport in our region, including services between Picton and Blenheim and within the Blenheim urban area. It also offers the Total Mobility program, a subsidised service for residents with mobility impairments or those who cannot use public or other transport options.

Current state

Commuting patterns

Based on 2023 census data, Figure 2 shows where most people commute to and from in Marlborough for work, regardless of mode of transport (excluding work from home). Other than commuting from Blenheim to Riverlands or rural areas, and from rural to Blenheim, the majority of journeys for commuting purposes occur within the urban areas.

Network health

Approximately 60% (935 km) of the local roading network is sealed. The vast majority (87%) of Marlborough's roading network is classified as rural. 37% of journeys (in kilometres travelled, or VKT) are on urban roads, and 63% on rural roads.

Approximately 50% of the road network is in Excellent or Good condition, with just under 40% in Average condition. Ongoing planned improvement works should result in a further reduction in roads which are in Poor or Very Poor condition.

Safety

There has been an overall decline in the number of fatal and severe injury crashes over the last 24 years, reflecting ongoing improvement works.

Data for crashes in Marlborough (in the RLTP) show that low volumes of crashes occur overnight when traffic volumes are low. Wednesday afternoon has the highest number of crashes by time of day, while Fridays have the largest number of crashes by day of the week. A disproportionate amount of fatal and serious injury crashes (Figure 6) occur in the afternoon, and high-severity crashes occur proportionally across all crashes.

When considering the deaths and serious injuries on a per capita basis, Marlborough is similar to other parts of the Top of the South.

Marlborough and Blenheim have a higher rate of cycle travel to work than the national average, but this has decreased since 2013 and numbers could be higher considering the compact and flat nature of Blenheim's urban area. For example, 2018 census data showed that nearly 1,200 employees in central Blenheim live within 2 km of their workplace, yet only 330 walk and 180 cycle to work.

In Marlborough, 2023 census data showed 70% of people commute to work by car, which is higher than the national average of 66%. This figure has risen from 63% in 2001.

Commuting patterns in Marlborough

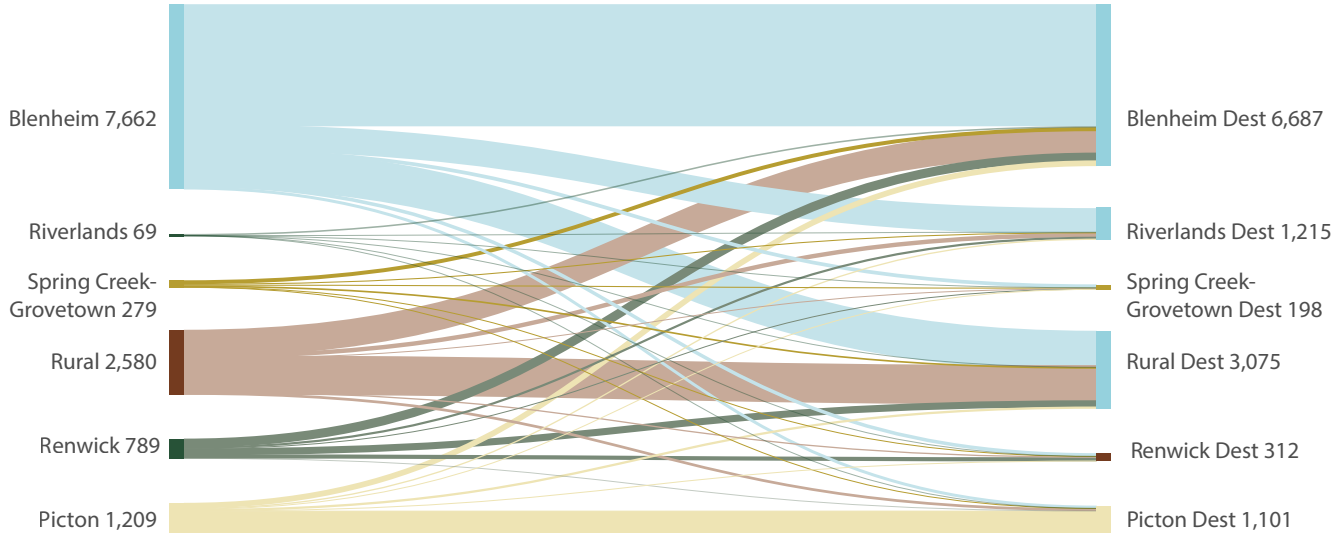


Figure 2: Journey to work data across Marlborough. Source: Stats NZ 2023 Census

Condition of roading assets

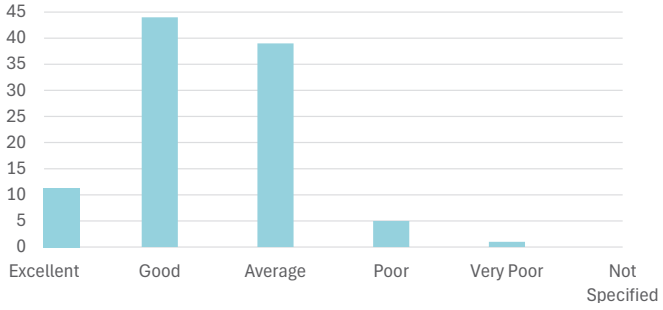


Figure 3: Condition of all roading assets at 2024/2025

Marlborough crashes 2000 - 2024

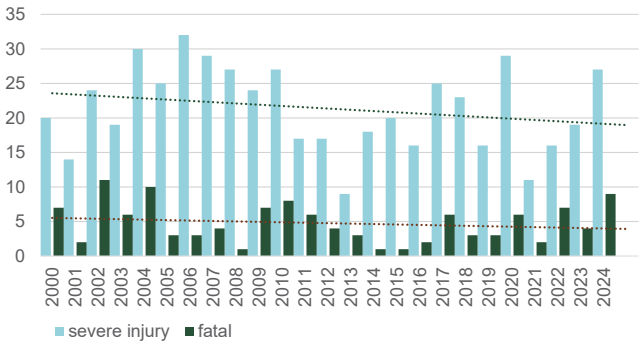


Figure 4: Number of fatal and serious injury crashes in Marlborough 2000 – 2024

	0:00	3:00	6:00	9:00	12:00	15:00	18:00	21:00	All Times
Monday	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	2.4%	3.2%	2.4%	0.0%	10.5%
Tuesday	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%	3.2%	1.6%	2.4%	0.0%	0.8%	11.3%
Wednesday	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	3.2%	3.2%	4.8%	0.8%	0.8%	16.9%
Thursday	0.8%	0.8%	1.6%	3.2%	2.4%	2.4%	1.6%	0.8%	13.7%
Friday	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%	2.4%	4.0%	4.0%	3.2%	2.4%	17.7%
Saturday	1.6%	0.0%	1.6%	0.8%	3.2%	4.0%	3.2%	2.4%	16.9%
Sunday	1.6%	1.6%	0.8%	0.8%	3.2%	3.2%	0.8%	0.8%	12.9%
All Days	4.8%	3.2%	12.1%	15.3%	20.2%	24.2%	12.1%	8.1%	100.0%

Figure 5: Fatal and serious injury crashes in Marlborough on all roads 2021 – 2025, by time of day and day of week

Mode of Travel to Work in Marlborough	2013 %	2018 %	2023 %
Drive private car/ truck/van	62	61.4	55.9
Drive company car/ truck/van	16	12.8	14.4
Work at home	16	8.6	16.7
Walk or jog	8	6	5.1
Passenger in car/ truck/van/bus	6	4.4	3.8
Bicycle	5	3.3	2.9
Public bus	0.1	0.2	0.1
Train	0	0	0
Other	2	3.2	1

Figure 6: Comparison of Mode of Travel to Work in Marlborough, 2013 – 2023. Notes: 2013 data is based on census-day travel; 2018 and 2023 reflect the usual travel method. Motorcycle category in 2013 was included in 'Other'. Source: Stats NZ Census 2013, 2018 and 2023.

Future response

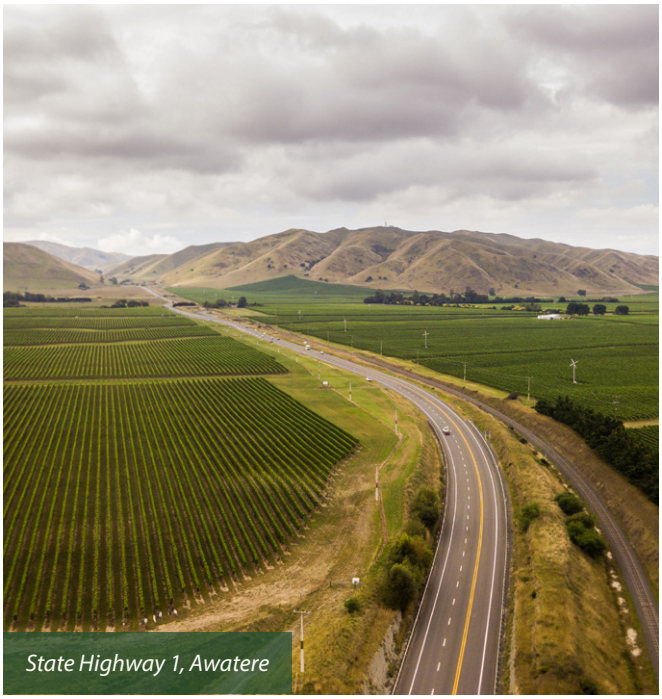
The short-term priority (to 2027) is to recover from storm events, strengthen resilience of the local road network, and maintain the network to the current levels of service. Work is underway to inform a 2027 review of the Marlborough Walking and Cycling Strategy.

The medium-term priority (2027-2030) will be to adopt best practice asset management principles and invest in transport infrastructure, including:

- Reviewing the regional Land Transport Plan, including identifying the need to progressively update understanding of hazard impact and risk associated with the network
- Working with NZTA and KiwiRail to complete intersection upgrades and the relocation of SH1 in Picton related to the ferry replacement project
- NZTA state highway network improvements
- Reviewing speed limits
- Extending the cycling network and reviewing Walking and Cycling Strategy

CHANGES SINCE 2015

- The 2013 Seddon Earthquake and 2016 Kaikōura Earthquake caused major disruption and damage to the roading network, which has taken many years to recover.
- Significant flood events in 2021, 2022 and 2025 severely impacted the roading network, particularly in the Marlborough Sounds.
- The Marlborough Sounds Future Access Study and programme of recovery work (page 33) were developed in response to the storm events.
- Construction costs have increased significantly.
- Population growth and urban growth have resulted in a number of private plan changes and a trend towards intensification, which has an impact on transport infrastructure requirements.
- New subdivisions have increased the total kilometres of roads in the district (funded by developers).
- Additions and improvements have been made to the Taylor River Reserve shared path and Riverlands Trail, and the Whale Trail cycle route, which began development with a 33 km section between Blenheim and Seddon opening in 2023.



State Highway 1, Awatere

Marlborough Sounds Future Access Study

Building resilience into roading repairs

Severe storms in 2021 and 2022 caused significant damage to Marlborough Sounds' steep, fragile road network. In response, the Marlborough District Council commissioned the Marlborough Sounds Future Access Study (MSFAS) to identify safe, resilient and environmentally responsible long-term access solutions.

Geology and natural hazards

The Sounds' terrain is dominated by weak greywacke and semi-schist rock prone to slips, erosion and failure during heavy rain or earthquakes. The study mapped slope instability and identified seven key natural hazards, including landslides and coastal erosion. Recognising the area's high geological risk, the MSFAS developed 'hazard-adaptation pathways' for each sub-region, guiding which roads should be repaired, re-aligned or potentially replaced with alternative access options such as jetties or ferries.

Climate change and resilience

The study incorporated Earth Sciences NZ (formerly NIWA) climate projections showing increased rainfall intensity, storm frequency, and sea-level rise. August 2022 rainfall, for example, exceeded previous records, triggering widespread closures. Future designs therefore emphasise slope stabilisation, larger culverts and drains, and corridor realignments that anticipate heavier rainfall and coastal impacts. Repairs were framed not simply as replacements, but as upgrades to withstand future conditions.

Environmental considerations

The Sounds' catchments and marine ecosystems are highly sensitive to sedimentation. The MSFAS required all roadworks to reduce earth disturbance, stabilise cut slopes and manage runoff to protect water quality. In steep or remote areas, revegetation and careful design were recommended to maintain natural character and reduce erosion risk.

Outcomes and Lessons

Completed in 2023 and endorsed by NZTA, the study has guided ongoing repair and resilience work across five zones. Its integrated approach, linking geology, climate science and environmental protection, offers a model for climate-ready infrastructure in complex coastal environments.



Roading repair and resilience works in the Marlborough Sounds

Te ratonga wai
Water supply

Marlborough's water supply is a vital resource supporting residential, industrial, agricultural and viticultural activities across the region.



Watermain repairs at Waikura | Taylor River

About 82% of the district's homes and businesses are connected to Council-operated schemes, which provide safe drinking water to the main townships of Blenheim, Picton, Havelock, Renwick, Riverlands, Wairau Valley and the Awatere, including Seddon.

Council also manages a piped irrigation scheme for the Southern Valleys area of the Wairau Plains and provides a small irrigation supply to the Riverlands area.

Across the district, the water supply network comprises approximately 479 km of mains pipeline, 13 sources, one dam, 87 reservoirs, 14 pump stations, nine treatment plants, and nearly 17,000 water connections. The region's water infrastructure is designed to meet the demands of a diverse economy, particularly the wine industry, while adhering to increasingly stringent drinking water standards.

Pressure

Marlborough's water supply faces ongoing challenges, including ageing infrastructure, water quality challenges and financial sustainability.

Climate change presents one of the greatest challenges. Hotter, drier summers lead to increased water use for gardens and pools, straining local resources. Extended dry periods make meeting demand more difficult. Rising sea levels are beginning to impact groundwater sources, with saltwater already detected in Havelock's wells.

Consumption and demand

High water consumption poses a challenge, as Marlborough residents typically use more water per person than most areas in New Zealand. The local aquifers supplying towns such as Renwick, Havelock, Riverlands and Picton are already strained.

Population and economic growth are adding extra demand. Marlborough's population has now passed 50,000, with most people living in Blenheim and Picton. More homes, smaller sections, and the wine industry all increase the water demand of households and local businesses.

Cost of provision

The cost of providing water presents a challenge. Marlborough has an extensive water network but only around 17,000 properties are connected. As a result, each household bears a higher cost compared to larger cities where expenses are shared among more people. Water charges also differ between towns: in 2024/25, households in Blenheim will pay approximately $406 annually, while those in Renwick and Havelock will pay about $486, and in Picton, nearly $700. Servicing smaller towns is more expensive because fewer residents share the costs. For instance, the Awatere Rural water scheme has nearly the same length of pipe as Blenheim but serves only about 7% of the population, making it more costly per household to operate and upgrade. To reduce these disparities, different schemes have been combined to distribute capital costs across all Council water supplies.

Water quality standards

Finally, the Water Services Act 2021 requires councils to meet much stricter standards, which means upgrading treatment plants and improving how supplies are managed. These upgrades are essential for safe drinking water, but they add high costs, especially for smaller communities.

Response

Council is working to ensure safe and reliable drinking water is available for our communities now and in the future.

Treatment plants across the district have been modernised to comply with national drinking water standards. The Blenheim and Picton plants are already upgraded, and Blenheim's water is now chlorinated. New treatment plants have also been established in Renwick, Seddon, and Wairau Valley, ensuring safer and more reliable supplies.

New reservoirs have been built in Blenheim, Picton and Renwick, and older ones like Weld Street have been strengthened to improve earthquake resilience. These projects provide greater storage and improve resilience in the event of earthquakes or high demand.

Since 2015, about 33 kms of mains have been replaced across the district, including over 9 km of asbestos cement pipes in Renwick alone. Pipe upgrades in Blenheim, Picton, Awatere, and Seddon have also strengthened supply and reduced leaks.

Water metering

To help with managing demand, Council has introduced water metering in Renwick and Havelock. Metering was already in place in Wairau Valley and Awatere/Seddon. In Renwick and Havelock, every property is now metered, which helps reduce water use, detect leaks, and ensure fairer charging. Households are metered with an allowance of 200 m^3 per year, with extra charges applying if that limit is exceeded. Council also uses pressure management and leak detection programmes to reduce water loss. Over the next decade, universal metering is scheduled for Blenheim and Picton to enhance sustainable water use and meet the requirements of the Water Services Act.

New water sources

Council is also developing new water sources to ensure long-term security. New wells at Readers Road, Havelock and St Andrew's, Blenheim will improve supply. New wells north of Blenheim and Picton will improve resilience. The additional wells and treatment capacity planned at Speeds Road for Picton have a budget of over $23 m. Rural Awatere communities remain on permanent boil water notices, but options for treated supply are being developed.

Ngā meka matua
Key facts

Water Services Organisation

A new Marlborough Water Services Organisation (WSO), owned by the council but independently managed, will take over water supply, stormwater and wastewater services under the Local Water Done Well reforms. This change will improve funding, ensure compliance and support long-term investment in stormwater, wastewater and water supply, keeping assets locally owned while enhancing operations.

In July 2025, Council approved the establishment of the new WSO to deliver three water infrastructure services to the people of Marlborough. The WSO will be incorporated from 1 July 2026 with a one-year transition to full operations from 1 July 2027. Council will be its sole shareholder, appoint its independent board of directors and set its direction via a Statement of Expectations, holding it accountable to the people of Marlborough.

Current state

Council supplies drinking water to Marlborough's homes and businesses through eight town supply schemes.

In 2023/24, the average household water use was around 300 L per person per day, down from about 400 L in 2015. This remains above the national average of roughly 229 L.

Following metering and replacement of water pipes across Renwick, there was a 52% reduction in annual water use in the area including:

- 36% decrease in residential use
- 13% decrease in business use
- 70% decrease in reticulation leakage and losses

Metering in Havelock resulted in a 37% overall reduction in water use including:

- 42% decrease in residential use
- 27% decrease in business use
- 45% decrease in reticulation leakage and losses

The value of Council's water supply assets has increased alongside Marlborough's growing population and economy. As demand for water rises and new national standards call for higher service levels, investments have been made in new treatment plants, extra storage reservoirs and replacing aging pipelines. By 2025, the total value of the water supply network reached $455.56 m, up from approximately $224 m in 2014 (including valuation adjustments).

Information on the condition and performance of the water supply network is detailed in the Combined Waters Asset Management Plan 2024. This plan is reviewed every three years at present, in line with Council's LTP. Currently, the three waters networks are being operated and maintained by Council, but will be transferred to a WSO, overseen by an independent Board.

Future response

Looking ahead, Council will continue investing in water supply to meet the needs of a growing population, comply with national standards and build resilience to climate change.

Treatment plants will remain a priority, with further upgrades planned and new plants for Havelock, Riverlands and rural Awatere. These projects will improve drinking water safety, increase resilience and ensure all communities meet national standards.

New water sources will also be developed to provide long-term security of supply. These include new wells in Blenheim, Havelock, Riverlands and Picton, alongside additional treatment capacity where it is most needed.

Reservoirs and pipelines will continue to be strengthened, renewed and expanded. Planned works include new or replacement reservoirs in rural areas like Awatere, as well as upgrades to pipelines across several schemes to increase storage, improve reliability and ensure continuity of supply during peak demand.

Demand management will expand through the broader rollout of universal water metering in larger towns such as Blenheim and Picton. This will build on the success of metering in Renwick and Havelock, helping reduce overall use, detect leaks and make water charging fairer.

CHANGES SINCE 2015

There have been major improvements to Marlborough's water supplies over the past decade:

- New treatment plants have been built in Renwick, Seddon and Wairau Valley, while the Blenheim and Picton plants have been upgraded. Blenheim supply is now chlorinated.
- Reservoir capacity and resilience have been expanded, with new modern concrete reservoirs in Blenheim, Picton and Renwick, and seismic strengthening completed at the Weld Street reservoir.
- Approximately 33 km of mains have been replaced or upgraded since 2015 across the district, including over 9 km in Renwick alone.
- Water metering has been introduced in Renwick and Havelock.
- New water sources have been developed, including a new well drilled at Readers Road (Havelock) and Riverlands. Wells north of Blenheim and Picton will improve resilience and treatment capacity.
- The value of the water supply network has more than doubled, from about $224 m in 2014 to $455.56 m in 2025, reflecting significant investment in treatment plants, reservoirs and network upgrades and valuation adjustments.
- Water use per person has dropped from around 400 L per day in 2015 to 300 L in 2023/24, although this remains above the national average.
- The 2025 decision to establish a Water Services Organisation (WSO) marks a major shift for water supply services.



Renwick Water Treatment Plant

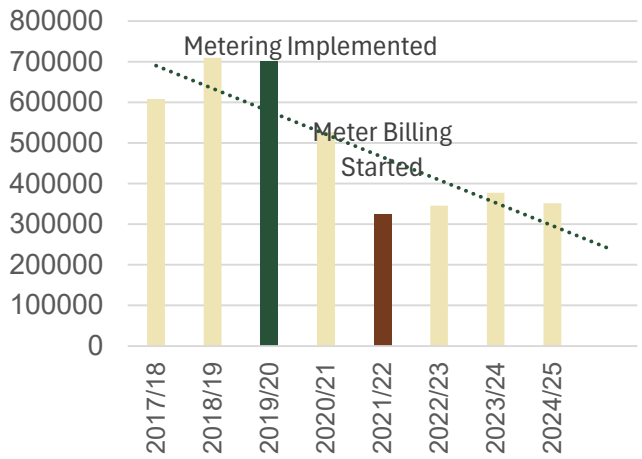
Metering in Renwick

Renwick has been a focus of Council's recent water infrastructure investments. In the past, the town relied on ageing asbestos cement pipes and limited treatment facilities, resulting in regular water restrictions in summer and challenges in meeting national drinking water standards.

Since 2015, major improvements have been made:

- A new water treatment plant was built, providing safe and reliable drinking water that meets national standards.
- Water meters were installed across the town, helping reduce overall use, encourage conservation and quickly identify leaks.
- An ongoing pipe replacement programme has already replaced approximately 9 km of old asbestos cement mains, improving water pressure and reducing losses.
- These upgrades mean Renwick now has a much more resilient and efficient supply, with safer water, fewer leaks, and better resource awareness and use. It also demonstrates how investment in infrastructure and community behaviour change can work together to improve outcomes.

Annual Total Water Usage in Renwick (Cubic Meters)





Te waipara Wastewater

Marlborough's wastewater system collects, treats and disposes of sewage from homes, businesses and industries to keep our communities healthy and protect the environment.



Blenheim Sewage Treatment Plant

Pressure

Population growth, particularly in Blenheim and Picton, is putting increasing pressure on wastewater networks and treatment plants.

As more homes and businesses are built, especially with urban intensification in town centres, the volume of wastewater needing treatment is rising.

The wine industry is also a significant factor. Each year, the vintage season creates prominent peaks in winery wastewater flows from grape processing at reticulated industrial locations (other wineries discharge winery wastewater to land). These seasonal surges can put stress on the Blenheim and Riverlands systems, which manage much of the district's industrial wastewater.

Ageing infrastructure remains a major challenge. Many of Marlborough's wastewater pipes are over 50 years old, especially in established settlements such as Blenheim and Picton. While newer plastic pipes are more durable, older concrete and earthenware pipes are vulnerable to cracks, leaks and damage from ground movement. Earthquakes and floods pose ongoing risks, particularly for treatment plants on low-lying coastal plains, where liquefaction or tsunami inundation could cause significant damage.

Climate change adds further stress. Rising sea levels and groundwater levels threaten the ability to continue irrigating land with treated effluent, particularly at the Blenheim Sewage Treatment Plant. More frequent and intense storm events also increase the chance of stormwater entering the sewer network, which raises the risk of overflows into rivers and urban areas.

Finally, higher national standards and greater recognition of cultural values regarding wastewater discharges add additional pressure. Iwi and local communities seek stronger environmental protections, including reducing or eliminating discharges into sensitive waterways like the Wairau and Starborough Creek. Achieving these aims will demand substantial investment in treatment upgrades and new disposal methods.

Response

Council is responding to these pressures with a mix of significant capital projects, ongoing renewals, and new approaches to treatment and management.

Since 2015, Marlborough has invested heavily in strengthening its wastewater system, particularly in response to vulnerabilities revealed by the 2016 Kaikōura earthquake. This includes:

Sewer main relining

A district-wide programme has relined 20 km of earthquake-damaged earthenware sewer mains (2018–2024).

Trunk main renewal

The critical trunk main between Waikawa and the Dublin Street Pump Station was renewed in 2018.

Pump station upgrades

Blenheim's McLauchlan and Budge Street pump stations were upgraded in 2022 as part of the Blenheim sewer upgrade project. In Picton and Waikawa the Dublin Street, Fishermans Reserve, Surrey Street and Beach Road pumpstations were upgraded in 2018 and Waikawa Bay Wharf pump station in 2022.

Treatment plant works

Desludging and sandbar removal at the Blenheim treatment plant has been completed, and the treatment plant aeration basin in Picton was desludged and sludge drying beds repaired.

New sewer screens and flow meters were installed at the Spring Creek Transfer Ponds to improve monitoring.

Over the next decade, more than $75 m will be invested in wastewater infrastructure to upgrade treatment plants, replace ageing pipes and strengthen pump stations.

Key projects include significant upgrades to the Blenheim Sewage Treatment Plant and its main pump stations to meet new consent requirements and reduce the risk of overflows.

In Seddon, a new treatment plant is being constructed to divert discharges away from Starborough Creek, in line with iwi aspirations and environmental standards. Havelock's existing plant will be replaced on a new site due to geotechnical risks, with land-based irrigation planned to improve long-term resilience. Picton's wastewater system is being gradually upgraded with pipeline renewals, a second aeration basin and a reclaimed water scheme to reduce pressure on the town's potable supply.

Council is gradually upgrading older sections of the network to reduce infiltration and improve earthquake resilience. Investment is also being made in modern technologies such as nutrient recovery, smart sewer monitoring and advanced treatment processes, which can lift performance and reduce environmental impacts.

Collaboration with iwi and the community ensures cultural and environmental values are upheld in future decision-making. This involves increased use of land-based irrigation, enhanced environmental monitoring and careful engagement during resource consent renewals. In 2027, wastewater services will transfer to a new Council-owned WSO, expected to deliver improved financial sustainability and professional oversight of wastewater, water supply and stormwater services.

Current state

Council operates four main wastewater schemes in Blenheim (including nearby areas like Renwick, Grovetown, Spring Creek, Riverlands, Cloudy Bay, Marlborough Ridge and Woodbourne), Picton (including Waikawa), Havelock and Seddon.

These schemes serve about 85% of the district's population, or around 30,000 people, with a network of 332 km of pipes, 72 pump stations, and five treatment plants. The remaining 15% of residents, mostly in rural areas, use private on-site systems, such as septic tanks. The system handles everyday household waste as well as peaks from industries like wineries, which can increase flows tenfold during vintage season.

The total value of the wastewater assets is $624 m. The Combined Waters Asset Management Plan 2024, updated every three years, details the system's condition and performance, ensuring it meets community needs. These efforts along with the current state of the network provide a strong foundation for future improvements.

Future response

Council will continue to prioritise investment in resilient and environmentally responsible wastewater services.

Securing new consents, particularly for the Blenheim Sewage Treatment Plant (which expires in August 2028), will be a significant focus, with upgrades planned to meet tighter environmental standards and community expectations. The long-term strategy emphasises shifting away from discharges to waterways, expanding reclaimed water schemes and increasing land-based irrigation where feasible. Renewals will steadily scale up to address the large proportion of ageing pipes and pump stations. At the same time, advanced treatment technologies and smart sewer monitoring will be adopted to improve efficiency and reduce overflows.

The shift to a Council-owned WSO in 2027 will ensure more stable funding and expert oversight, keeping wastewater services financially sustainable. Simultaneously, climate change adaptation will steer design and investment choices, with a focus on preparing for sea-level rise, heavier rainfall and seismic hazards. These combined measures will protect public health, preserve the environment and bolster Marlborough's social and economic well-being.

CHANGES SINCE 2015

- Sewer main relining of 20 km of earthquake-damaged earthenware sewer mains from 2018–2024.
- The trunk main between Waikawa and the Dublin Street Pump Station was renewed in 2018.
- Pump Station Upgrades in Blenheim and Picton / Waikawa.
- Treatment plant works undertaken in Blenheim and Picton.
- Improvements to monitoring equipment in Spring Creek Transfer Ponds.
- The 2025 decision to establish a Water Services Organisation (WSO) marks a significant shift for wastewater services.



Blenheim Sewage Treatment Plant Pipeline Repair

Te wai ua Stormwater

Marlborough's stormwater system safeguards homes, businesses and the environment by efficiently managing rainwater in our towns. It includes underground pipes, open channels, inlets, manholes, soak pits, and a few pump stations and floodgates.



Town Branch upgrades improved resilience

In larger towns like Blenheim and Picton, stormwater flows through underground pipes, roadside gutters and pump stations before draining into rivers or coastal waters.

In smaller townships and rural areas, open drains, streams and natural overland paths manage rainwater, often alongside Marlborough's flood protection network. This system reduces flood risks, keeps roads usable and protects public health.

Pressure

Marlborough's stormwater system faces growing pressures that challenge its ability to service and protect our communities and environment.

Climate change brings more frequent and intense rainfall, increasing flood risks. Rising sea levels are placing additional stress on low-lying areas such as Blenheim, Picton and coastal settlements.

Population growth and new developments, such as houses and roads, create more paved surfaces that reduce natural drainage, sending more water into the system. Ageing infrastructure, with many pipes built decades ago, needs constant maintenance and upgrades to stay effective.

Because stormwater often flows directly into waterways without treatment, it can carry sediment, litter and pollutants, affecting rivers, aquifers and the Marlborough Sounds. These challenges require ongoing action to keep our communities and environment safe.

Resource consents set strict rules to limit environmental impacts, while new subdivision design standards require systems to handle larger rain events, increasing planning and costs. Finally, upgrading systems to meet these challenges is expensive, especially for smaller towns where fewer ratepayers share the costs.

Response

To tackle these pressures, the Council is investing in stormwater systems to reduce flooding, improve resilience, and protect water quality in our rivers and the Marlborough Sounds.

The Blenheim Stormwater Strategy (BSS) guides improvements to address growth, climate change and stricter water-quality rules. It's regularly updated through the Council's long-term planning.

The BSS identifies 11 'stormwater catchments' in Blenheim, referred to as Stormwater Management Areas (SMAs). Each SMA will have its own Stormwater Management Area Plan (SMAP) to guide how stormwater is managed. SMAPs are not legally binding, but they act like standard operating procedures that help drive positive change and support better environmental outcomes. Springlands is the first SMA to have a completed SMAP. It was finalised in early 2020 and supports the resource consents for stormwater discharges from the Springlands area.

One requirement of the SMAP is that all new greenfield developments in the Springlands SMA achieve stormwater neutrality. This means that stormwater runoff from new developments must not exceed the amount that would have occurred before the development (6 L per second, per hectare).

One way of achieving this is to provide detention ponds on site that slow the flow of water into receiving streams and urban pipe networks. It also provides some treatment of stormwater, as water first washed off roofs, driveways, pavements and roads during a rainfall event, filtrates through the soil in the base of detention ponds. In the Murphys Creek catchment, this is estimated to reduce overall stormwater runoff from the catchment by up to 27%.

In Blenheim, activities like the Muller Road network upgrade (part of the Town Branch project) have increased capacity while reducing urban flood risk. In Picton, new pipelines and drainage improvements help manage heavy rain. New subdivisions, such as Omaka Landing and Rose Manor, now include modern stormwater systems to better manage runoff. The urban stormwater network works alongside Marlborough's flood protection system, including drains, rivers and stop banks, to reduce the impact from rainfall events.

Regular maintenance, like clearing drains and inspecting pipes, prevents blockages and protects homes and businesses. To improve water quality, Council monitors discharges, promotes best practices with businesses and communities, and is developing wetlands and stormwater ponds to filter pollutants before they reach waterways.

The stormwater network works alongside Marlborough's flood protection system, including drains, rivers, and stopbanks, to reduce stormwater impacts. Regular maintenance, like clearing drains and inspecting pipes, prevents blockages and protects homes and businesses. To improve water quality, the Council monitors discharges, promotes best practices with businesses and communities, and is developing wetlands and stormwater ponds to filter pollutants before they reach waterways.

Current state

Marlborough's stormwater network serves about 35% of the region's population, with reticulated systems in Blenheim, Picton, Renwick, Riverlands, Spring Creek, Seddon, Grovetown, Anakiwa, Ōkiwi Bay and Havelock.

As of 2025, the system has about 200 km of mains, 45 km of service lines, 10 km of channels, 4,318 inlets, 2,952 manholes and three pump stations. Over 90% of this infrastructure is in Blenheim and Picton. The Combined Waters Asset Management Plan 2024, updated every three years, details the system's condition and performance, ensuring it meets community needs. These efforts, along with the current state of the network, provide a strong foundation for future improvements.



Vortechs 360 Stormwater Treatment Device Installation 2024

Future response

Significant investment is planned over the next 10 years to manage growth, boost resilience and improve water quality.

Key projects include the Town Branch upgrade ($10.1 m) and the Murphys Creek pipeline ($3.5 m) in Blenheim, which will increase capacity and reduce flooding. Other works include the Stephenson to Stuart Street upgrade and pipeline renewals in Picton and Blenheim.

Council is also introducing SMAPs, starting in Blenheim, to replace individual consents with catchment-wide plans. These will guide investment, improve water quality, and promote green infrastructure like wetlands, swales and detention areas. Renewal spending will stay modest in the short term, as most assets are still functional, but a significant wave of renewals is planned for 2035–2065 as older pipes reach their lifespan. Council will phase these upgrades based on asset condition, affordability and growth opportunities.

Area	Reticulation length (m)	Pump station (No.)
Blenheim	144.45	2
Picton	30.92	1
Riverlands	6.88	
Renwick	6.37	
Spring Creek	3.67	
Havelock	2.89	
Seddon	1.29	
Ōkiwi	0.9	
Grovetown	0.84	
Anakiwa	0.83	
Sounds	0.33	
Saint Andrews	0.32	
Wairau Valley	0.07	
Total	199.75	3

CHANGES SINCE 2015

- Stormwater Management Area Plans (SMAPs) began with the Springlands catchment in 2020, improving water-quality and flow management compared with individual site consents.
- New subdivisions must now include treatment features such as swales, wetlands and detention areas, which Council maintains once vested.
- Upgrades like the Town Branch and Murphys Creek pipeline have improved Blenheim's resilience and reduced local flood risk. Picton's pipeline renewals have strengthened its network.
- After the 2016 Kaikōura earthquake, expanded CCTV inspections and asset surveys improved renewal planning through consistent, standardised condition assessments.
- The 2025 decision to establish a Water Services Organisation (WSO) represents a major shift, improving long-term funding and planning for stormwater services.



Stormwater detention ponds at Westwood, Blenheim 2026

Ngā waikari taiwhenua
Rural drainage

Much of the lower Wairau floodplain, covering about 8,000 ha, was once an extensive network of wetlands, flax swamps, shallow depressions and spring-fed waterways.



Drainage channels and pumping stations have enabled development of productive agricultural and viticultural land

Naturally high groundwater levels, combined with the presence of seven major rivers and almost no natural slope across the landscape, meant that water once moved slowly and often remained on the land for long periods.

Over more than a century, the construction of drainage channels and pumping stations has progressively transformed this area into some of Marlborough's most productive agricultural and viticultural land.

These assets have been developed and maintained over time by various public bodies and, at times, by private landowners. The drainage network was taken over and expanded by the Marlborough Catchment Board in 1960 and later transferred to Council in 1992. Today, the Wairau drainage area comprises approximately 200 km of Council-managed waterways, including natural waterways, major drains, and some roadside drains, and 18 pumping stations, many located on private land.

Managed waterways must be kept clear and hydraulically efficient to ensure water flows effectively and habitat for native fish and invertebrates is maintained. Pumping stations are essential during periods when both the Wairau and Ōpaoa rivers are running high, and some operate during high tides to prevent ponding and protect farmland.

Pressure

The rural drainage system on the lower Wairau Plains is under pressure from a combination of natural constraints, land-use change and climate-driven effects.

Increasing land development, particularly vineyard conversion and rural subdivision, has extended the drainage service area and increased the need for network access across private property.

The number of private farm drainage systems connecting directly into Council-managed drains has grown significantly.

Many of these private connections were not anticipated when the network was originally designed, placing increased pressure on the network.

Compacted soils associated with viticulture shed water more quickly than the historic landscape did. As a result, natural infiltration has decreased, meaning more rainfall now becomes surface runoff rather than soaking into the ground.

Nutrient runoff from farming activities promotes rapid plant growth in drains, which clogs channels and restricts water flow. Sediment accumulation further reduces drainage efficiency and can smother aquatic habitats.

Climate change is now a major pressure, with heavier rainfall, more intense storm events and rising sea levels making it harder for water to drain naturally. These changes will affect how well rivers discharge to the sea and how the drainage system performs, particularly in low-lying areas of the Wairau floodplain. Water levels can remain elevated for longer following storms, and water increasingly sits within drainage channels and, at times, on productive land. This puts more pressure on existing pump station infrastructure.

Response

Keeping managed waterways clear is essential for managing water levels on the lower Wairau Plain, where high groundwater and flat land make it difficult for water to move away naturally.

Council manages aquatic vegetation in drains through approved spraying and mechanical removal, usually twice a year. New methods are now used to reduce impacts on native fish and eels. For example, excavator rakes allow fish to escape during clearing, and work is timed to avoid key spawning periods. Aquatic vegetation is lifted away from the channel to protect stream habitat.

Roadside water table drains require regular checks to manage vegetation, sediment and culvert blockages, especially where traffic and property access create additional constraints. Periodic assessments of pump station capacity are conducted to determine the need for operational upgrades and to ensure effective management of high-flow events.

Current state

The drainage network on the lower Wairau Plains is maintained through a scheduled programme of weed control, sediment removal and pump station servicing to keep channels hydraulically efficient and maintain outfall capacity.

While pump stations are essential for keeping the network performing efficiently, most were not designed for current loads and many now require targeted capital investment to meet performance expectations. The operation and maintenance of the drainage channel network is largely similar from year to year. Growing pressures place increasing demands on the extent and capacity of the network. Land-use change, vineyard development and soil compaction moves water into drains more quickly than in the past.

Pumped outflow of water into the floodway has increased over the last five years as the frequency and intensity of storm events have increased and groundwater levels have risen. Pumps run more regularly during high tide, when drainage into the Wairau and Ōpaoa rivers slows, and some pump stations have had to be upgraded to manage groundwater pumping during wetter months.



Keeping managed waterways clear

Future response

Ongoing improvements to maintenance practices, ecological safeguards and pump station performance are essential to maintain reliable drainage and protect the productive land and waterways of the lower Wairau Plains.

The management of land drainage in the future will depend on the effects of climate change and the policy decisions in response to this change. Higher groundwater levels may mean it is not possible to effectively drain some low-lying land, or that the cost to do so may outweigh the resultant productivity gains.

Targeted upgrades to undersized ageing pump infrastructure and critical pinch points will be considered to keep pace with more intense rainfall and higher river levels. Continued aquatic vegetation and sediment management will help maintain hydraulic efficiency while improving habitat protection.

Planting, where possible, to provide increased riparian habitat and shading to reduce aquatic vegetation growth will reduce our reliance on chemical and mechanical intervention.

CHANGES SINCE 2015

- Subdivision, land-use change and intensification, and associated recontouring and realignment of waterways has put increased pressure on the network.
- More private farm drainage systems are connected to Council drains and roadside water tables, increasing inflows and hydraulic complexity.
- Continued spread of exotic aquatic vegetation, in particular Oxygen weed, which causes significant obstruction to drainage channels.
- Climate change impacts (heavier rainfall, more intense storms and rising sea levels) reduce system resilience.
- Increased reliance on pump stations as wetter winters and intense storms raise groundwater and inflow volumes.
- Slower post-storm recovery and longer periods of elevated drain levels.



Te para me te hangarua
Waste and recycling

Everything we throw away has to go somewhere, and the activities we undertake have a lasting impact on the environment. Landfill space is finite, meaning it is important to divert more materials away from landfill and rethink how waste is managed.



New Zealand introduced national kerbside recycling standardisation in February 2024

This means making smarter choices that keep resources in use for as long as possible. The waste hierarchy gives clear direction: reuse first, recycle second and treat landfill as the last resort. Council has a combined approach, educating communities, making and updating a bylaw, and adjusting fees to encourage better practices to conserve resources and move toward a more sustainable, circular economy.

Pressure

Managing waste minimisation and emissions comes with significant environmental pressures.

Population growth increases consumption and waste generation, placing strain on landfill capacity and recycling systems.

As recycling capabilities have expanded, facilities are reaching capacity and will soon struggle to keep up with growing demand.

Stage 9 of Blue Gums Landfill is currently operational. Opened in 1996 with an original 90-year lifespan, its total lifespan has now been reduced to 50 years. At current input rates, the landfill is projected to reach capacity by 2048 unless diversion efforts increase. The largest landfill contributors that could be diverted with appropriate infrastructure to enhance circularity are construction and demolition waste and organic waste.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from waste decomposition is critical to meeting climate targets. These challenges require balancing infrastructure investment with sustainable practices. Social, cultural and financial factors add further layers of pressure.

Public expectations for low-cost waste services often conflict with the rising costs of the landfill and Emissions Trading Scheme liabilities, the Government's main tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Attitudes toward consumption and disposal can hinder behaviour change, making education and engagement essential.

There is ongoing pressure from the commercial sector due to the significant amount of waste that could be diverted from landfill if the right infrastructure were in place. Council must balance budget and funding constraints while meeting regulatory requirements and ensuring initiatives do not hinder economic growth.

Waste generation is closely tied to economic activity. When the economy slows, consumption drops and so does waste. This volatility makes long-term planning challenging, as predicting accurate waste volumes over a 10-year horizon becomes difficult. Economic cycles, market trends and population behaviour all influence waste streams, meaning infrastructure and investment decisions must remain flexible to adapt to these fluctuations.

Response

Following the 2015 report, a Waste Sorting Centre was established to improve material recovery; however, it was lost to a fire in 2019 and has not been reinstated.

Council now plans to reintroduce this facility as a dedicated construction and demolition sorting hub to further divert these materials from landfill. In 2025, a container shelter was installed at the Salvage Yard, providing significant capacity to store and process diverted construction and demolition materials, ensuring they remain in circulation for longer.

On 1 July 2024, Marlborough switched from rubbish bags to wheelie bins for waste and recycling, plus a crate for glass. This change expanded kerbside collection and kept over 750,000 bags out of landfill. Collections alternate fortnightly, servicing 18,658 properties, and encourage households to rethink consumption and disposal habits, which is an important step toward waste reduction. In addition, Council removed six coin-operated skips from around the region and replaced them with five remote transfer stations. These new compounds allow residents in remote areas to recycle, further supporting diversion and sustainable practices. Council will also establish a further three compounds in the Marlborough Sounds area.

New Zealand introduced a national kerbside recycling standardisation in February 2024 to reduce contamination and simplify recycling. Councils must now accept only glass bottles and jars, paper and cardboard, plastics #1, #2 and #5, plus aluminium and steel cans. Items like lids, aerosols, Tetra Paks and soft plastics are excluded. Council has implemented dedicated recycling initiatives, including a caps and lids scheme where plastic lids are sent to Future Post for vineyard posts and metal lids to local scrap dealers. Collection points for Tetra Pak are also available, with material sent to Hamilton for processing into Saveboard (sustainable building boards). In the last financial year, Council achieved New Zealand's largest battery collection per capita, diverting 3.69 t for recycling.

In 2024, the Hazardous Waste Centre expanded its operations to include the processing of e-waste and whiteware for recycling, successfully diverting an impressive 312.83 t from landfill.

In August 2025 Council passed the new Waste Minimisation and Management Bylaw, which introduced four key requirements:

- Multi-Unit Developments: Owners/managers must provide adequate waste and recycling facilities and may need a Waste Minimisation Plan (WMP) for new builds or problematic sites.
- Construction and Demolition: Projects over $1 m and all Council works must have a WMP, with Council implementation starting 1 July 2026.
- Events: Any event on Council land or with 300+ attendees must prepare a WMP, effective from 1 January 2026.
- Flexibility: Terms and conditions allow Council to adapt requirements as waste management needs evolve.

In September 2025, Council began trialling the diversion of hardfill and cleanfill at the Blenheim Transfer Station. Cleanfill is processed with green waste, while hardfill is repurposed into aggregate by a local contractor. The initiative aims to divert material from landfill while reducing costs for users.

Current state

Council delivers waste management and minimisation services to the community through contracted private companies engaged via a competitive tender process.

These services include kerbside collection, operation of the Recycling Centre, transfer stations (including remote transfer stations), the Hazardous Waste Centre, the Dump Shop, Salvage Yard and green waste facilities.

In 2024/25, the region produced 58,244 t of solid waste. In total, 9,476 t of solid waste (16.26%) was diverted from landfill in the 2024/25 year through recycling, green waste, steel, hazardous waste, whiteware, e-waste, tyres, Dump Shop and unwanted goods projects.

Recycling has increased significantly over the past year, with a 31% rise in serviced properties, including a 124% increase in mixed recycling and 71% in glass recycling. Comparisons with previous years are challenging due to changes in measurement following the new contractor in July 2024.

In November 2025, a fire caused significant damage to the Recycling Centre building, though most of the plant remains intact. To prevent recyclable material from going to landfill, which would undermine years of behaviour change, Council is currently sending product to Eco Central in Christchurch via backload transport to avoid additional emissions.

Work is underway to establish a temporary materials recovery facility locally while planning a rebuild of the recycling centre with expanded capacity to future-proof for population growth.

Council continues to collaborate closely with the commercial sector and research institutions, focusing on construction, demolition and organic waste streams to identify and implement feasible diversion solutions

A management plan is in place for closed sites, outlining monitoring requirements to ensure they do not adversely affect the surrounding environment.

Future response

Since the introduction of wheelie bins, significant behavioural change towards recycling has been achieved, as reflected in the data. However, more progress is needed.

Through targeted education campaigns, Council will encourage the community to prioritise the top of the waste hierarchy: reduce and reuse.

In 2026, Council will review and update the Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (2021–27) with the following key priorities:

- A focus on increasing landfill gas capture to reduce Emissions Trading Scheme liabilities and investigating the most beneficial uses of the gas.
- Continued collaboration with research institutes to reduce organic waste in landfill through initiatives such as anaerobic digestion, insect bioconversion and the winery lees removal project, with the aim of having pilot plants operational by 2026.
- Reinstate the necessary infrastructure to divert construction and demolition waste and work closely with the industry to make diversion practical and cost-effective. Collaboration with Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology will aim to integrate construction and demolition waste minimisation into apprenticeship programs. Education within the sector is critical. Sorting materials on-site and using the Salvage Yard can save builders money. Reusable materials placed in skips will incur the full general waste fee to cover Council's sorting costs.
- Significant planning to accommodate the outcomes of reuse and recycling initiatives alongside population growth, as facilities are nearing capacity. The Recycling Centre rebuild presents an opportunity for expansion, but careful consideration must also be given to other facilities and the constraints of limited land availability.



CHANGES SINCE 2015

- Wheelie bins were introduced, servicing 18,658 properties and eliminating 750,000 rubbish bags from landfill.
- Coin skips were removed and replaced with five remote transfer stations in rural areas to enable recycling, with three more planned for the Marlborough Sounds.
- Work is underway for pilot plants to reduce organic waste to landfill, targeting operational status by 2026.
- The rebuild of fire-damaged Recycling Centre is underway, with planned expansions to future-proof capacity for population growth.
- The new Waste Minimisation and Management Bylaw was introduced in August 2025.
- Nationwide standardised recycling were introduced in February 2024 to reduce contamination and simplify recycling.
- Council developed initiatives to divert materials that cannot be recycled at kerbside, including the caps and lids scheme and Tetra Pak collection.
- Achieved New Zealand's largest battery collection per capita, with 3.69 t diverted.
- A trial is underway for diverting hardfill and cleanfill from landfill at the Blenheim Transfer Station Hazardous Waste Centre expansion.
- 9,476 t of solid waste (16.26%) were diverted from landfill in the 2024/25 year through recycling, green waste, steel, hazardous waste, whiteware, e-waste, tyres, Dump Shop and unwanted goods projects.
- Recycling is up 31% in the year to 2025 in serviced properties.

