

Urban Whangārei Rivers Working Group Record of Actions

Meeting held in the Council Chambers
36 Water Street, Whangārei
on Thursday 2 April 2026, commencing at 10:30 am - 12:00 pm

Tuhinga/Present:

Chairperson, NRC Councillor Jack Craw
Iwi representative, Mira Norris
WDC Project lead - Whangarei Urban Flood Strategy, Matt de Boer
NRC Alternate, Councillor - Amy Macdonald
Cook Costello, Director and Senior Engineer, Phil Cook (online)

I Tae Mai/In Attendance:

Full Meeting

WDC Councillor, Nicholas Connop
NRC Rivers Manager, Joseph Camuso
NRC Rivers Asset Management Officer, Dale Roberts
NRC Natural Hazards Specialist, Sarah Gauden-Ing (online)
NRC Secretariat, Haylee Labelle

Part Meeting

NRC Councillor, Arama Morunga (online)

The meeting commenced at 10.30am with karakia by the chair.

Ngā Mahi Whakapai/Housekeeping (Item 1.0)

Ngā Whakapahā/Apologies (Item 2.0)

Barney Brotherhood, Matt Jolly, Leah McKerrow, Hamish Sykes, Simon Charles, Simon Weston, Jim Sephton, Bernadette Aperahama, Andrew Carvell, Ken Couper (moved – Craw/Connop)

Record of Actions – 12 September 2025 (Item 3.1)

Presented by: Cr Craw (Moved - Roberts/Camuso)

Secretarial notes: Cr Craw has spoken with Mayor Couper about representation on this working group by a elected member of WDC

Agreed action points:

- Cr Craw to elevate the membership of the Urban Whangarei River Working Group to Council

Receipt of Action Sheet (Item 3.2)

Presented by: Cr Craw (Moved - Craw/Connop)

Discussed the current structure of the working group, the need for greater political visibility and alignment between NRC and WDC, and options for reconfiguring the committee to better address flood protection strategy and governance challenges.

Outlined two options for the committee's future: subsuming it into the NRC Infrastructure Committee or reconfiguring it as a joint committee of both councils, with the latter preferred due to the implications of the flood protection strategy.

Expressed concerns about the lack of political visibility and alignment, noting that while staff collaboration is strong, councillors from both councils need better oversight and understanding of the challenges, costs, and actions related to flood protection.

Mira emphasised the importance of including Tangata Whenua in discussions, highlighting their role in managing waterways and the need for a logical, inclusive structure that allows for clear responsibilities and compliance across all stakeholders.

Phil and Mira discussed the historical and current management of catchment groups, suggesting the creation of an overarching drainage or catchment management plan to address unique features and ensure effective repairs, maintenance, and budget control.

The group agreed that Cr Crow would take action to elevate the issue at a political level, aiming for a joint approach to WDC and improved integration with their long-term planning processes.

Agreed action points:

- **Cr Crow will take the proposal to elevate the working group to a joint committee or otherwise improve political alignment to Councillors and initiate a joint approach with WDC regarding the appropriate way forward.**

Presentation Slides (Item 3.3)

Presented by: Dale Roberts and Joseph Camsuo

Financial Management and Budget Review: Reviewed the financial reports, discussing operating expenses, capital expenditure, debt reduction, and the impact of insurance cost changes due to local government reform, with Joe providing clarifications.

Financial reports showed year-to-date spending and budget allocations for river works, with explanations provided for underspends and commitments to future works, particularly the Woods Road revetment job.

Council is ahead of schedule in debt repayment, reducing the dam-related debt by about half a million dollars annually, aided by rental income from properties.

Concerns were raised about rising insurance costs due to changes in asset grouping from local government reform, with potential mitigation strategies including joining larger national insurance groups.

Deferred projects, such as the Caltex floodwall, have resulted in carry-forward balances, with funds locked to the catchment and future works prioritised based on the urban flood strategy and programme business case.

Urban River Works and Maintenance Updates: presented updates on completed and ongoing works in Whangarei, including dam outlet flow measurement innovations, vegetation and sediment management, floodgate maintenance, and future repair proposals.

Innovative methods for determining dam outlet flow rates were trialled, including video-based measurement and potentially radar devices in future, aiming to reduce reliance on expensive and vulnerable gauges.

Regular clearing of vegetation and sediment in dam spillways and toe drains is required, with proposals for design solutions such as rock groynes and swale drains to mitigate rapid re-vegetation and sediment buildup.

Floodgates were confirmed to be functioning during rain events, though some designs predate current staff; repairs to undermined headwalls and rock revetments at Woods Road are planned, with contractor engagement ongoing.

The team discussed the importance of proactive willow removal along river tracks to prevent flood risks, advocating for a catchment-wide eradication programme to reduce ongoing maintenance costs.

Budget underspends are being addressed by combining works to attract contractor interest, with commitments tracked to ensure planned works are completed by year-end.

Agreed action points:

- **NRC Asset Manager to combine the Woods Road rock revetment repair with other works to secure contractor interest and progress the repair, and report back on progress.**
- **NRC to develop and present a programme for progressive removal of willows from below the Whangarei falls to Whareora Road to address potential flood risk and report on commitments in the budget.**
- **NRC Asset Manager to ensure the survey from Te Uru Kahika regarding current insurance costs is sent out and results are reported back to the committee.**

Joint NRC/WDC Whangarei Urban Flood Management Strategy Update (Item 3.4)

Presented by: Matt de Boer

Flood Protection Strategy and Urban Flood Management: Matt and the team provided a comprehensive update on the Whangarei Urban Flood Management Strategy, detailing technical assessments, modelling improvements, investment pathways, and the integration of economic, environmental, and community criteria, with input from stakeholders including Mira and Amy.

The team invested in fixing hydrology and stormwater pipe network issues within the region-wide model, spending \$140,000 to date, and are focusing on calibrating the tidal end of town to improve flood prediction accuracy.

Engineers from Beca are developing a list of infrastructure interventions, such as tidal barrages, drainage upgrades, and flood banks, targeting three main city areas: upper catchments, fluvial risk zones, and tidal catchments, each with distinct flooding challenges.

Six alternative investment pathways are being formulated, tested in the model, and assessed through cost-benefit and robust decision-making analyses, considering short-, medium-, and long-term impacts and feasibility.

The strategy incorporates input from Hapu, investment criteria developed by councils, and environmental considerations, with plans to score each pathway against risk, economic development, equity, and ecological impacts, ensuring alignment with community values.

A collective programme business case will be produced, supporting funding requests to central government and guiding actions in long-term plans, with briefing papers and joint workshops planned to ensure councillor visibility and alignment.

Integration of Blue-Green Network Strategy: Raised questions about the integration of the Blue-Green Network Strategy with the urban flood management plan, and Matt clarified that the philosophy and prioritisation work are being maintained and updated to address both ecological and flood resilience objectives.

The Blue-Green Network Strategy's integrated approach to riparian restoration and transport connectivity is being continued, with prioritisation work updating its objectives to address flooding and sea level rise.

Jack noted impediments such as bridge restrictions and infrastructure complications, which have affected progress, but Matt confirmed that the high-level strategy will inform future design and implementation.

Any other business (Item 3.5)

Presented by: Cr Craw

Flood Pump Station and Map Updates: Phil Cook requested updates on the Porowini Ave pump station and the effects on flood levels for existing and new developments, with Council confirming that the pump station model is being integrated into the updated regional model and will eventually inform statutory maps and district plans.

Feedback from business owners indicates the Morningside pump station has significantly reduced flooding, with operational success noted during recent events.

The updated pump station model will feed into NRC's regional maps, which will then be incorporated into district plans, though specific timeframes for completion remain undetermined.

Agreed action points:

- **Terms of Reference Review:** Add the terms of reference review, including membership discussion, to the agenda for the next meeting. (Council)

Whakamutunga (Conclusion)

The meeting concluded at 1200 with karakia by the chair.

unconfirmed