

PALMYA
PALMYRA
NORTH
CITY

Environmental Sustainability Report 2026



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We take sustainability seriously

Kia ora,

Every two years, our sustainability report gives us a clear snapshot of how far we've come, and this latest report shows real, measurable progress. Through smart investment in our Low Carbon Fund and everyday improvements across council services, we're steadily changing the way we work to reduce emissions and use energy more efficiently.

Over the past two years, the Low Carbon Fund has supported a range of practical projects that are already making a difference. We've upgraded heating systems at our aquatic centres, installed solar panels at the Awapuni Recycling Centre, and continued to replace older vehicles and equipment with hybrid and electric alternatives. These are straightforward changes, but together they add up to meaningful reductions in our emissions.

And the benefits go beyond lower emissions. Many of these projects are also saving money. Some of the electric vehicles and tools purchased several years ago have now paid for themselves through fuel savings alone. They continue to deliver the same level of service but at a much lower ongoing cost, a win for both the environment and ratepayers.

This progress hasn't happened by accident. We've taken a step-by-step approach, starting with smaller, easier wins and now moving into larger, more complex projects. These bigger investments take more time and funding, but they're designed to last. Their value will be measured over decades, with long-term reductions in emissions that support a healthier environment.

At the same time, we've begun work on a citywide emissions plan. This is about more than council operations - it's about working with our community to reduce greenhouse gases across Palmerston North.

The stories in this report highlight the work happening across the city, through Council-led actions, the many hardworking community groups we support and partner with, and other local organisations.

Together all of this work is making a positive difference for Palmerston North's sustainability and resilience. From Supergrans to tech-savvy teens, community gardening groups to the reuse of the airport's construction waste, this report highlights an inspiring mix of real-world actions making a difference across Palmy and the wider region. But just as important, these stories reflect the heart of the place we call home: a community of people who care deeply about Palmy and who help make it such a great place to live.

Together, these efforts show that steady action, shared responsibility and long-term thinking really do make a difference. We're committed to keep building on this progress, and supporting citywide efforts to reduce emissions, use resources more efficiently and care for our precious environment, today and for future generations.



Ngā mihi nui,
Mayor Grant Smith ^{JP}

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Smith', written in a cursive style.

We work in partnership with Mana Whenua

Rangitāne o Manawatū are mana whenua of this rohe and hold enduring responsibilities as kaitiaki for the protection and wellbeing of te taiao, including waterways, land, and associated cultural values.

Palmerston North City Council and Rangitāne o Manawatū have a strong, long-standing partnership grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and in recognition of Rangitāne o Manawatū tino rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga responsibilities.

Mana whenua values, mātauranga Māori, and cultural priorities are actively integrated into planning and decision-making processes. Council has worked with Rangitāne o Manawatū, on the city's proposed Stormwater Strategy, recognising that poorly managed stormwater can adversely affect waterways, ecological health, and the mauri of water bodies. Rangitāne o Manawatū mātauranga Māori and knowledge of local waterways plays a critical role in informing this work.

This approach aligns with the Rangitāne o Manawatū Iwi Environmental Management Plan, which provides a key framework guiding Council planning and supporting the protection and recognition of Rangitāne values, interests, and responsibilities as mana whenua.

Council remains committed to ongoing engagement with Rangitāne o Manawatū to protect and enhance the mauri of waterways and to support sustainable and resilient environmental outcomes for current and future generations.





Building resilience with Environment Network Manawātū

Environment Network Manawātū (ENM) is the region's leading environmental organisation, with more than 20 years of experience supporting and connecting local communities. They provide vital leadership, capability and capacity building opportunities for Palmerston North's environmental community and the public, with a particular focus on collective community action. They also provide advice, information, advocacy and human resources for the environmental sector within the wider region.

Environment Network Manawātū is recognised by Council as a strategic leader in the for-purpose sector, helping deliver environmental outcomes for the city. It is one of eight Sector Lead organisations in the community sector, we work in partnership with to support positive, community-led outcomes.

Council provides a range of funding and support to organisations, groups, and initiatives that align with Goal 4: A sustainable and resilient city. This includes funding for ENM to deliver environmental initiatives such as the Manawātū Food Action Network, Manawātū River Source to Sea, and the Circular Economy initiative.

We also contribute to ENM's Environmental Initiatives Fund, which supports community groups to deliver grassroots environmental projects. Current funding is \$75,000 per year, with \$30,000 specifically allocated to kai resilience initiatives. In addition, we provide in-kind support to help community groups establish environmental, community-led projects such as community gardens and berm gardens.

The ENM office at 145 Cuba Street offers resources, advice and a recycling collection point for bottle tops. Get involved, stay informed or support their mahi at www.enm.org.nz, follow [@environmentManawatū](https://www.facebook.com/environmentManawatū) on Facebook, or contact comms@enm.org.nz or **06 355 0126**.



Building a sustainable future: what we've achieved and what's next

What we've done:

Over the two years since our last Sustainability Report we've been busy making changes to keep lowering our carbon emissions. So far, we've:

- Installed LED lighting at our field work operations depot, Freyberg Pool and the Turitea Treatment Plant
- Switched to more efficient pumps and UV filters along with LED outdoor lighting at the Lido Pool
- Upgraded to electric parks equipment when it needs replacing
- Upgraded our ride on mowers and All-Terrain Vehicles with electric versions when they need replacing
- Put in heat pumps at our field work operations base and Milson Community Centre
- Begun the installation of solar panels at the Lido (a 2/3 year project)
- Introduced polystyrene, Tetra Pak and tyre recycling
- Increased stormwater resiliency with the development of an attenuation pond at Whakarongo
- Installed solar panels on our Materials Recovery Facility in Awapuni.

What we're doing:

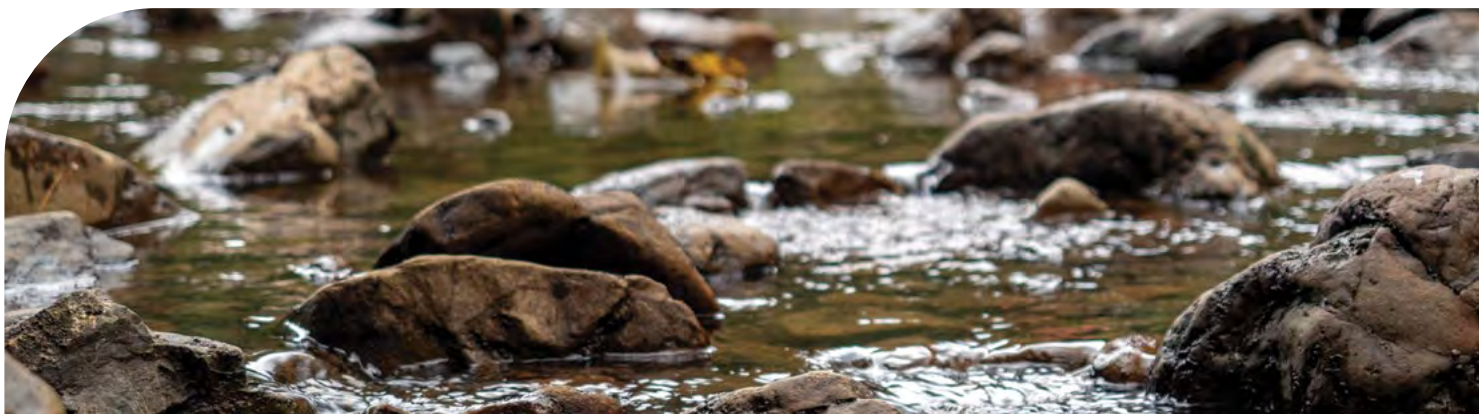
Over the next two years we'll be carrying out a range of initiatives to continue lowering our emissions with funding from the Low Carbon Fund. These include:

- Installing modern heat pumps at The Arena
- Swapping the pool heating from gas to electric at Freyberg Community Pool
- Installing solar power at Highbury Whanau Centre & Library, Ashhurst Village Valley Centre, Bunnythorpe Community Centre, Kelvin Grove Community Centre and The Arena
- Continue partial conversion to solar power at The Lido

Our Climate Change and Sustainability team will continue to identify opportunities to reduce emissions and embed sustainability and efficiency into our projects and everyday operations.

As technology improves it may open up new avenues for investment through the Low Carbon fund, and as equipment and parts of our vehicle fleet age out and come up for renewal there will likely be further investment in electric versions that don't require the use of fossil fuels.

Progress on major projects such as the City Centre Transformation may also create opportunities for wider use of solar panels, passive design features, and more modern, energy-efficient appliances and operating systems.



Carbon emissions





Carbon emissions

As of 2025, Council's organisational emissions were around 46% lower than they were during the baseline year of 2016. A significant portion of this reduction is due to naturally declining methane emissions following the closure of the Awapuni Landfill in 2007, though when landfill methane is excluded, emissions have still dropped by 25.7%, showing meaningful progress across Council's operations.

Our organisational emissions decreased from 16,701 tCO₂e in 2022/23 to 14,399 tCO₂e in 2024/25. This steady progress means Council remains on track to meet its long-term target of reducing emissions by 60% by 2034.

Looking at non-landfill emissions will give us a clearer picture of the difference we've made due to efforts such as installing more efficient equipment and switching to cleaner fuel sources, much of which has been made possible through investment from the Low Carbon Fund.

Since 2021 we have allocated \$2,990,200 from the Low Carbon Fund into improving sustainability and lowering emissions. This has generated an overall saving of \$3,906,554 in costs such as fuel, and an estimated emissions reduction of 5757.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide. This equates to a \$1.31 return for every dollar spent.

Electricity and gas remain the biggest sources of non-landfill emissions, although their share has fallen over time, from about 64% of our emissions in 2015, dropping to 38% by 2024. Changes in national electricity generation also play a role. For example, increased coal use at Huntly Power Station in 2024 lifted emissions related to the generation of our electricity, even though council's own energy use did not significantly increase.

Our reductions so far are closely linked to Council activities like energy use, vehicle travel and wastewater volumes. Because we focused first on the easiest, lowest-cost and highest-impact changes over the past decade, future reductions are expected to be somewhat smaller, or take longer to deliver.

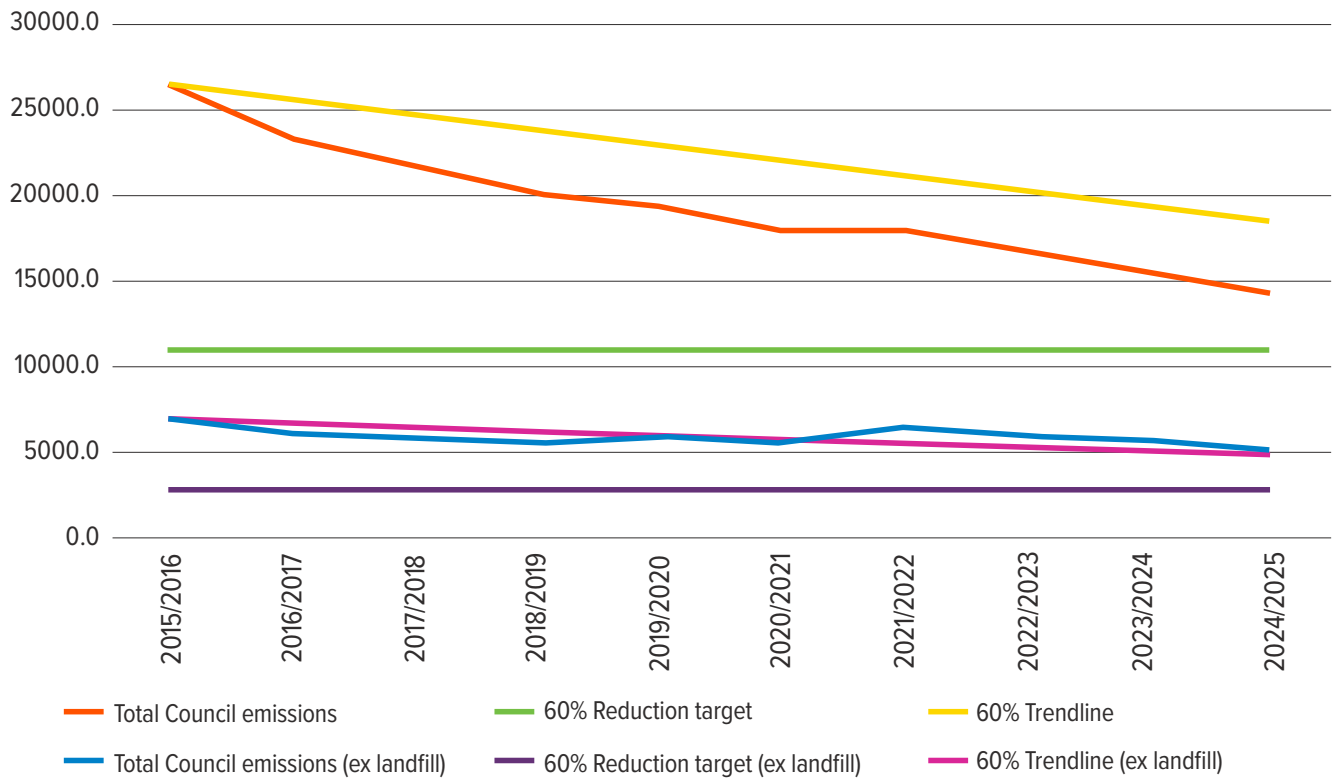
As we solve these issues and improve our processes our ability to make further reductions becomes harder with some processes, notably in wastewater treatment, very hard or very expensive to decarbonise without a major overhaul of the treatment. Our Nature Calls project will be considering this.

As technology improves and new opportunities like electric trucks or low-cost batteries become available we will also look at using these to further reduce our operational costs and greenhouse gas emissions.

While Council is making strong progress within its own operations, reducing emissions across the wider city remains a bigger challenge. Although total citywide emissions have dropped 7.5% since the 2016 baseline reductions will need to accelerate to meet the 44% per person reduction target in the city's current Long-Term Plan. The trend is improving though, with total emissions declining for the second year in a row and down 14% since their peak in 2021. On a per-person basis, emissions have fallen from 7.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2016 to 6.9 tonnes today.

Population growth has played a role in slowing overall citywide progress, but the downward trend shows Palmerston North is heading in the right direction. Continued action by households, businesses and organisations will be essential to build on this momentum.

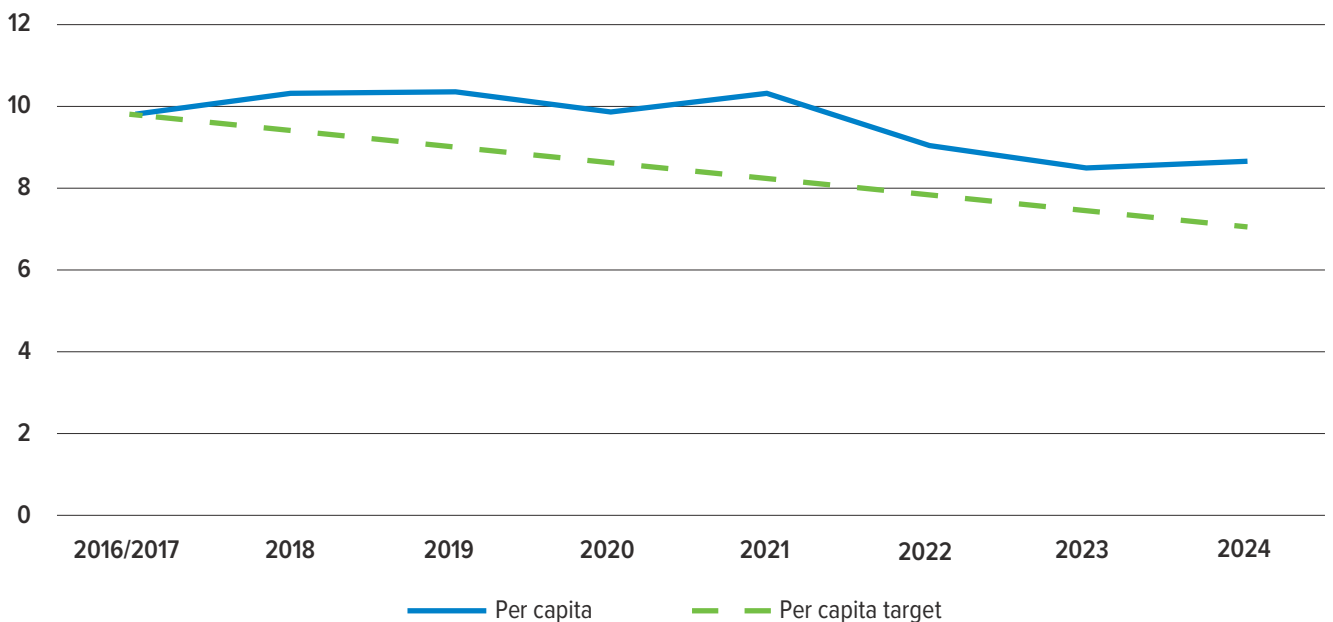
Palmerston North City Council Organisational Emissions (TCO2e)



Palmerston North City Council’s organisational emissions trendlines

The graph above shows the total Council emissions in orange. This line can be compared against the yellow trendline that shows where emissions should be if we are ‘on target’ to meet our goal of a 60% reduction in organisational emissions by 2034 (shown by the horizontal tan line). We are currently well ahead of our target with a c.46% reduction in emissions compared to a trendline target of c.28%. This is largely due to the estimated reduction in landfill methane emissions. The graph also shows the emissions reductions from non-landfill sources in blue. This reduction is much closer to the target line.

Palmerston North Emissions



Citywide emissions trend per capita vs target



Citywide climate action plan

Palmerston North has taken an important step toward creating a citywide climate action plan, with strong input from the community now helping to shape the next stage of the work.

In June 2025, Council asked residents, businesses, schools, community groups, and organisations across the city to share their ideas on climate action. The response was encouraging. People shared thoughtful, practical ideas on how Palmerston North can reduce emissions and better prepare for the impacts of climate change. The community feedback was summarised and reported to Council in March 2026.

The feedback received reflected a strong community understanding of the challenges that climate change is expected to bring to the city, including more extreme weather with heavier rainfall and flooding, hotter days, and more frequent droughts that could affect our environment and water supply.

Over the past decade, Council has reduced its own emissions through initiatives such as LED streetlights, solar panels, electric vehicles, and more energy-efficient buildings. However, community feedback reinforced that achieving meaningful change across the whole city will require action beyond Council operations alone.

The ideas gathered are now being used to help develop a climate action plan focused on both reducing emissions and building resilience across the city. The next phase will turn community feedback into clear actions that support smarter energy use, sustainable transport, local food systems, and the protection of natural spaces, helping Palmerston North prepare for a changing climate together.

Cutting emissions and costs

Reducing our carbon footprint has been a key focus of the day-to-day work that keeps Palmerston North's parks, venues and public spaces looking their best.

One practical way Council is doing this is by steadily switching from petrol and diesel equipment to electric alternatives. It started in 2021 with our very first electric mower, purchased for the team caring for Te Marae o Hine, The Square. Since then, Council's fleet of electric tools and vehicles has continued to grow – and the benefits are stacking up.

That original "Green Machine" mower has now fully paid for itself and continues to save Council money in fuel costs. Today, there are six electric mowers in use across the city, including at Kelvin Grove Cemetery and the Esplanade Rose Garden.

Electric vehicles are also becoming a familiar sight. Four electric all-terrain vehicles are now operating at

The Esplanade, The Arena and Awapuni Resource Recovery Park, while a mix of electric and hybrid vehicles has replaced older models in the Council pool car fleet.

Fleet Manager Allan Nagy says every upgrade delivers a double win.

"Replacing older petrol or diesel machines lowers our emissions and reduces fuel costs at the same time," he says. "That's good for the environment and good for ratepayers."

Allan adds that electric technology is improving quickly, with more robust options now available.

"We're always looking for equipment that offers the best value for money and can handle the heavy use and tough conditions our teams work in."

As technology continues to advance, Council will keep transitioning to electric options where they make sense, helping phase out fossil fuels across operations.





Energy efficiency



Energy efficiency

Our investment in using energy more efficiently has made a positive difference across Council operations. While our electricity use has increased from 13.8 GWh in 2020/21 to 14.5 GWh in 2024/25, our fossil gas use has dropped from 5.2 GWh to 4.3 GWh reflecting our ongoing shift away from gas and toward electricity, especially for heating and hot water. Gas contributes more than twice as much pollution, in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, than the same amount of electricity so moving away from gas is a key part of achieving our emissions reduction targets. Gas appliances are also less efficient, so moving to electricity helps reduce operational costs.

Changes in fuel use across our vehicle fleet over the last two years is for the most part showing excellent results, though improved technology in heavy machinery will be even more of a game-changer. Petrol use has fallen sharply by almost 59%. This is thanks to more electric and hybrid vehicles being added to the fleet. On the other hand, diesel use has increased by 27%. This highlights how challenging it is to decarbonise heavier vehicles. The good news is that new low-emissions options are starting to enter the market.

In October 2024, new solar panels were installed at the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). In their first year, they generated 41% of the MRF's energy needs and avoided 16.7 tonnes of carbon emissions.

Energy costs have risen significantly in recent years. Electricity prices increased by 44% since 2022. Gas prices rose even more, increasing by 103%. These rising costs make it ever more important to use energy efficiently.

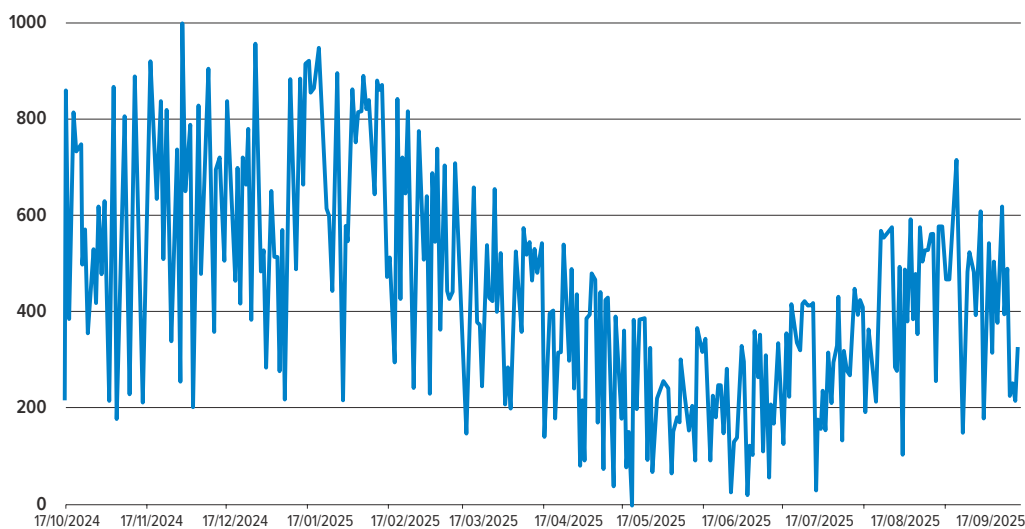
To support this, new energy monitoring devices have been installed at the Arena and the Central Administration Building. These help us better understand where energy is being used and identify opportunities to reduce consumption.

Across the city, electricity use has increased slightly while diesel use has dropped. This is mainly due to the electrification of the city bus fleet, which is helping reduce transport emissions at a wider scale.

The Turitea, Tararua, Te Āpiti, and Te Rere Hau wind farms near Palmerston North have a combined maximum generation capacity of 520MW and produce around 1,800GWh of electricity each year. That's enough to power approximately 230,000 New Zealand households.

Revenue to Council from the Turitea Wind Farm totalled \$3.4 million over the 2024 and 2025 financial years. This money is received as royalties for the use of council-owned land.

Materials Recovery Facility Generation (kWh)



Electricity generated from the Materials Recovery Facility solar panels from October 2024 to October 2025



City's recycling now powered by clean energy

Solar power is now playing a key role in reducing emissions from Council services, with new solar panels now up and running at the Awapuni Resource Recycling Park where all of Palmy's kerbside recycling goes.

The project is a significant investment from Council's Low Carbon Fund, focusing on practical upgrades that deliver long-term environmental and financial benefits. The panels are expected to generate most of the electricity needed to run the site, and cut more than 400 tonnes of carbon emissions, over the next 20 years.

Solar panels were added to the roof of the park's Materials Recovery Facility in October 2024. Over the following year, they generated just over 41% of the site's electricity demand and cutting carbon emissions by more than 16 tonnes.

The installation of solar panels on more of our buildings is now being explored with a range of projects likely over the next three years.

Solar panels are considered a great choice for generating sustainable energy, especially since increasing pressure on the national power grid means electricity prices are likely to increase by quite a bit over the next decade.

While solar panels are a great choice for some of our buildings and operations, not all of our buildings are suitable for installation meaning some of our power will still need to come from the national grid for now.

Solar panels on the central administration building installed 10 years ago now generate about 10 percent of the building's power needs, and a plan to update some of the wiring and connecting infrastructure to the panels could lead to even greater savings.

Transport





Transport

Transport plays a central role in how Palmerston North functions and grows, supporting access, safety, resilience, and economic activity across the city. Work has continued across a range of priority transport projects, balancing day-to-day network needs with longer-term planning in a challenging funding environment.

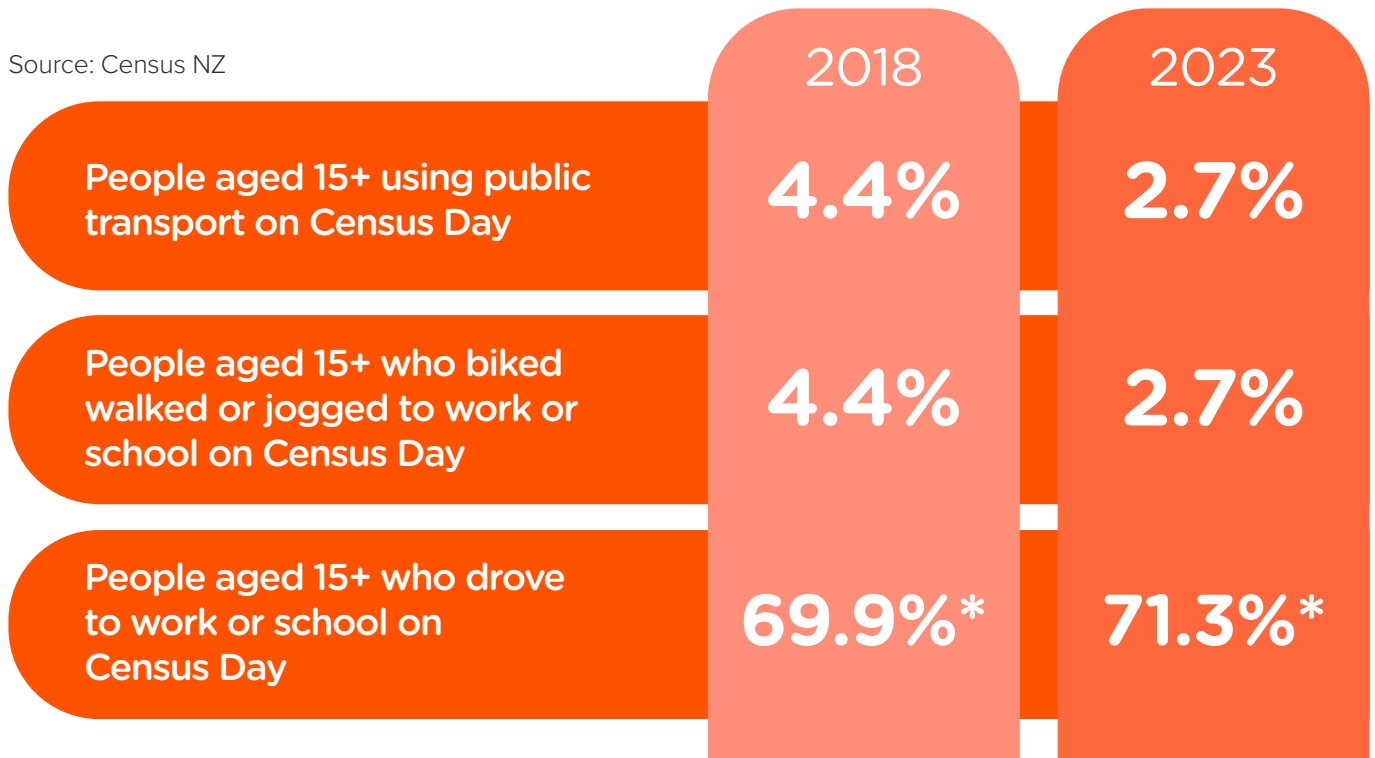
Government transport funding received through New Zealand Transport Agency was significantly lower than anticipated over recent years. While this reduced the scope and timing of some planned activities, elected members made the decision to continue investing in some core network priorities. This included council funding the gap in footpath work and storm damage repairs to maintain safety, access, and network resilience.

Key projects have included: the Amberley Avenue bridge replacement, major upgrade works on the Mihaere Drive bridge, repairs to Kahuterawa Road following severe weather, Main St shared path and crossing and rebuilding Railway Rd to name a few. A substantial programme of road reseals and routine maintenance was also completed across the city.

Planning continued under the long-term Palmerston North Integrated Transport Initiative partnership with the transport agency. The City Centre business case is nearing completion to support future investment in the central bus hub, and work on the Regional Freight Ring Road business case is underway. Further detail on Ring Road engagement and progress is provided in this section.

Census Day travel to work and education

Source: Census NZ

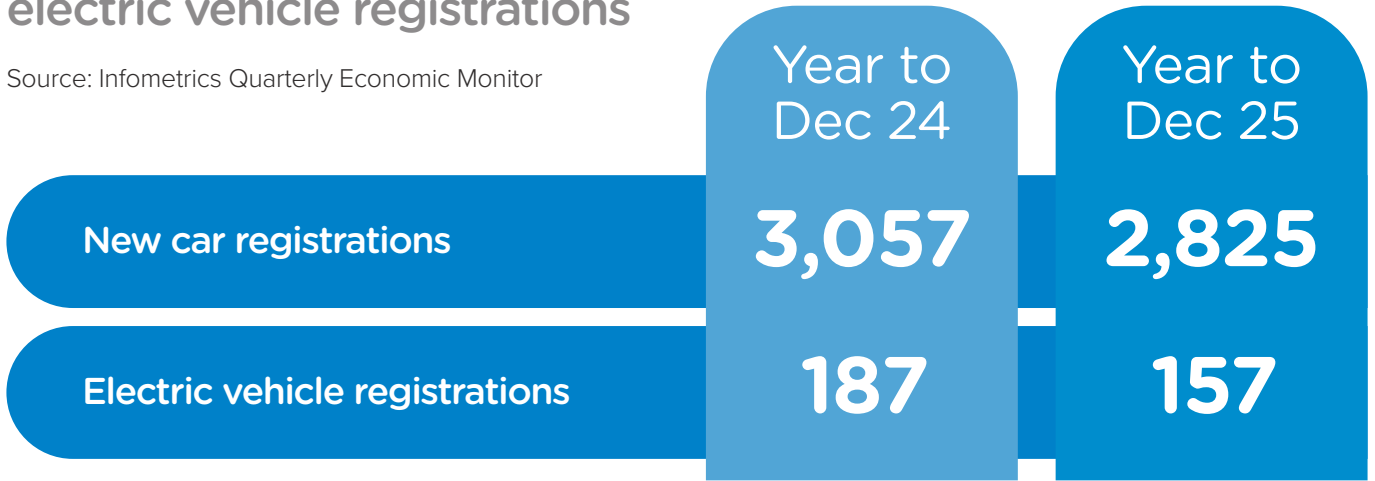


* This includes all those who drove to work or education in a private car, truck or van and a company car, truck or van or travelled as a passenger in a vehicle.

Notes: Census day was March 7 2023, and the temperature at 6am was 5 degrees, that's a fair bit colder than Census Day on March 6 2018 when it was 16 degrees.

New car and electric vehicle registrations

Source: Infometrics Quarterly Economic Monitor



Notes: The 7.6 % decline in new car registrations in Palmerston North compares to a 1.1% national decline. New vehicle registrations are predominantly influenced by economic conditions affecting households such as confidence in labour market conditions and sustainability of incomes i.e., sufficient income and wealth to support confidence in investing in big ticket household items such as a new car.

Bus patronage data

Source: Horizons Regional Council



Palmerston North's new electric bus network saw a **41.3%** increase in bus patronage in its first year of use.

Annual change in traffic flows

Source: Infometrics Quarterly Economic Monitor

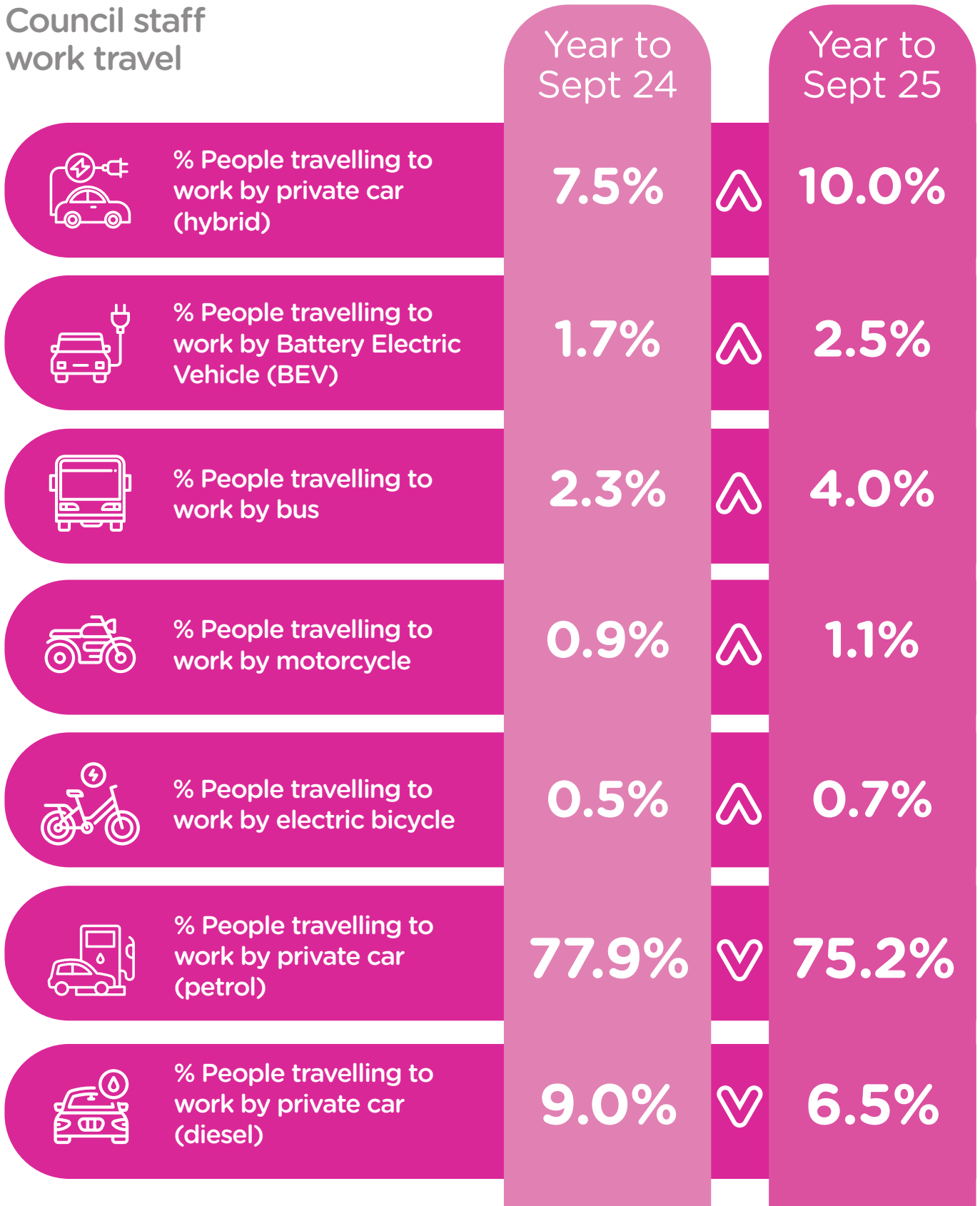


Traffic flow growth rates are calculated from the number of vehicles passing approximately 110 sites monitored by New Zealand Transport Agency. Each territorial authority has been mapped to one or more sites. Traffic flow is presented as an index, with a base of 100 in September 2012 for each area.

In the year to September 2025, traffic in the city fell by 0.7%, while traffic across New Zealand rose by 1.6%. The year before, to September 2024, the opposite happened — city traffic increased by 0.7%, while national traffic dropped by 1.6%.

Traffic levels often reflect what's happening in the economy, including how many people are working or studying.

Council staff work travel



These results are collated from the last 4 years of survey results.

*Council does not fund staff travel to or from work

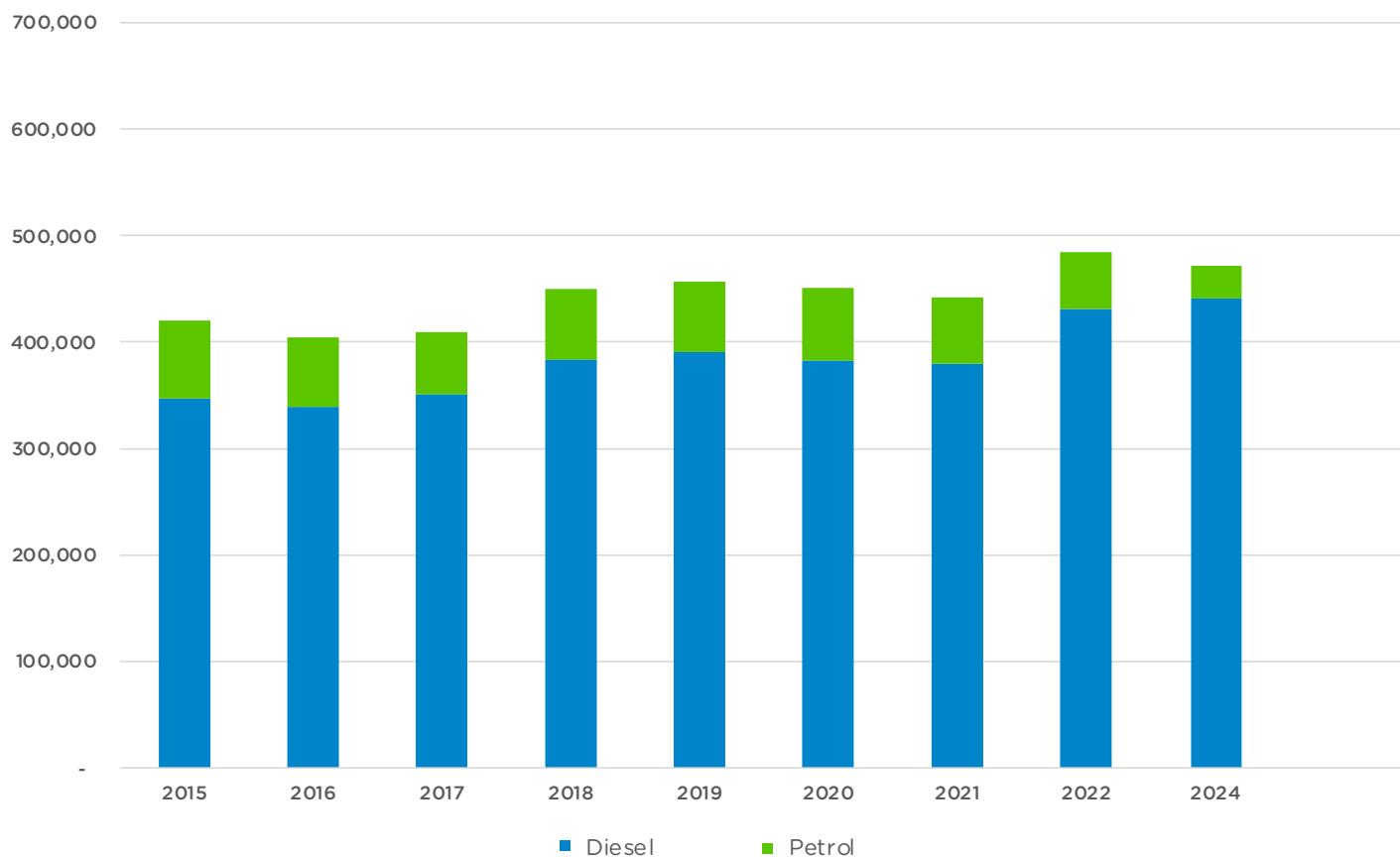
Last year 377 people completed the work commute survey and:

8 biked every day, 15 biked at least once a week

20 walk or jog every day, 21 walk or jog at least once a week

These results are not added into the four year emission calculations as they do not produce emissions.

Litres for fuel used by Council vehicles (as shown by fuel cards)



* Data for 2023 unavailable due to systems changeover



Ring Road business case moves into next gear

Residents in the outskirts of the city were recently invited to give their feedback on their preferred route for on the city's proposed Manawatū Regional Freight Ring Road, with many turning up to find out more and have their say at community drop-in sessions held in locations most likely to be impacted by the road.

The proposed Ring Road is a key strategic transport project intended to improve future network resilience, support freight and regional connectivity, and reduce pressure on existing urban routes as the district grows. It is being investigated to provide safer and more reliable and sustainable transport options over the long term.

The road is a key part in the growth planning for Te Utanganui, the Central New Zealand Distribution Hub and is envisioned to directly contribute toward New Zealand's 2050 emission reduction targets by boosting efficiency and reducing emissions within our national network of supply chains.

Work on the Ring Road business case has increased significantly, with a focus on developing and assessing a shortlist of route options for each section of the corridor. This stage of work is a key pillar of the business case, enabling informed discussion and comparison of potential alignments before any route decisions are made.

To support this assessment, Council undertook a series of public and stakeholder engagement sessions in December 2025. These sessions were structured to explain the purpose of the Ring Road, outline the business case process, and present the shortlisted route options for each section. Project staff were available at each session to talk through the options, explain technical and environmental considerations, and answer questions. Feedback was actively sought to capture local knowledge, concerns, and preferences that could inform the next stage of work.

Attendance across the sessions was strong, with 94 people attending the Ashhurst session, 75 at Linton, 240 at Bunnythorpe, and 150 at Longburn. In addition, just over 50 people attended dedicated stakeholder sessions with affected landowners, agencies, and interest groups. The sessions demonstrated a high level of community interest and provided valuable opportunities for two-way discussion.

Feedback gathered through the engagement process will be used to inform the next phase of the business case, which will focus on confirming a preferred route for each section of the proposed Ring Road. Once routes are confirmed, the project is expected to progress to a subsequent business case stage that will consider detailed design, costs, and delivery planning.





Shared pathway improvements make walkways shine

Our city loves its walkways, something that consistently comes through in both our park user surveys and our residents surveys. Ongoing work across the network continues to make these spaces easier and more enjoyable for people to use.

At Adderstone Reserve, a new loop track now circles the field at the top of the reserve, where previously there was no formed path at all. The gravel route is supported by a levelled grass area, new rocks and a picnic table, and a short realignment following cyclone damage, including steps, which restored safe access through the site.

Clearview Reserve has also benefited from improvements. The lime path has been extended to connect with the footpath, and a completely new accessible route now links directly to the street. A small bridge was built over the drain, and the surrounding area was shaped and levelled, with a few trees removed to form a clear and reliable path.

At Turitea, a new formed pathway through one of our Green Corridors now connects Turitea Rd to the end of Valley Views Rd. Steps were added to connect up the slope, the path now leads through to the road, and a concrete block retaining wall was built to support the stream wall.

Alongside these larger projects, crews have installed smaller retaining walls, carried out storm repairs, improved drainage around boardwalks, and used specialised drilling equipment to stabilise areas affected by slips. Together, these works strengthen the walkway network and help ensure it remains resilient and well used for years to come.

He Ara Kotahi surpasses two million crossings

Since it opened in 2019, He Ara Kotahi has surprised a lot of people—in the best way. It was originally invested in as a practical connection for commuters heading to Massey and Linton, and as a much safer alternative to using the state highway. But it didn't take long for the bridge and pathway to grow into something much bigger than a commuting route.

In its very first year, He Ara Kotahi recorded around 448,933 pedestrian crossings and 94,540 from cyclists. Since then, those numbers have climbed steadily. Over the past 7 years, the pathway has carried an estimated 2,191,427 pedestrians and 735,707 cyclists, showing just how quickly it's become part of everyday life in the city.

These days, the bridge and pathway are used as much for downtime as they are for getting from A to B. People head there for walks, runs, and bike rides, or simply because it's an easy way to spend time outdoors without leaving town. It's also a handy access point for those visiting the Turitea Pā lookout or stopping by the Urban Eels site, which has added to its everyday use.

It's become a familiar evening spot as well. The steady flow of walkers and cyclists after dark shows how naturally it fits into people's routines—whether they're commuting, getting some fresh air, or just taking the long way home.





Ecology protection during road repairs

Following a period of severe weather in 2025, sections of Kahuterawa Road were significantly damaged, with erosion occurring beneath the road which runs adjacent to the Kahuterawa stream. To restore the road's stability and ensure it remained open and safe for public use, repair works were required.

The repair approach involved strengthening the cliff face foundations with a rock wall beneath the road and as the works required direct access to the stream, careful environmental protection measures were put in place prior to construction.

Council staff worked closely with iwi representatives to carefully identify, collect, and temporarily relocate freshwater species from the affected section of the stream. Fish and aquatic invertebrates were safely transferred to suitable habitat downstream, while a purpose-built stream diversion allowed freshwater life to continue moving freely during construction. These well-established practices helped protect the stream's ecology and minimise impacts throughout the project.

With the stream safeguarded, roading repairs were completed to rebuild and strengthen the foundations beneath the road, boosting resilience against future weather events. Once work was finished, the stream was fully restored to its original course and freshwater species were returned, ensuring the waterway can continue to thrive.





Water



City's water to be managed by jointly owned council organisation from July 2027

Water reform has been evolving for many years. The 2016 Havelock North contamination event highlighted the significant investment needed across New Zealand to ensure safe drinking water. Since then, councils have faced rising costs driven by stricter drinking water and wastewater standards, new legislation, climate change impacts, population growth, ageing infrastructure, and increasing health and environmental requirements. These factors mean water services will cost communities more in the future regardless of how they are delivered.

Successive governments have taken different approaches to water reform, ranging from large national entities to region-based models. The coalition government introduced the Local Water Done Well legislation, which keeps water assets in council ownership and requires each council to select a delivery model that is fit for purpose, financially sustainable, and subject to greater regulatory oversight.

Each council in our region assessed the full range of options independently, including the status quo, various council-controlled organisation models, and an independent consumer trust. We consulted with our communities on these options and used that feedback to help shape our direction. After this process, we agreed to work with Horowhenua District Council and Rangitikei District Council to establish a jointly owned council-controlled organisation.

Working together offers long term efficiencies that individual councils cannot achieve alone. These include reduced duplication, shared specialist expertise, coordinated regional planning, and improved borrowing capacity for major upgrades. Over time, these efficiencies are expected to deliver water services at a lower cost than if each council continued to manage them in-house.

A detailed proposal outlining this preferred model was submitted to the government in line with Local Water Done Well requirements and has since been approved. A transition team is now in place to support the move to the new structure, maintain service continuity, and ensure strong local governance remains central throughout the change. The new organisation has been formally named Central Districts Water, and its constitutional documents have been confirmed, with a board expected to be in place before mid-2026.

In July 2027 Central Districts Water will be fully responsible for the management of water services, following a Statement of Expectations agreed to by the owner councils.

For now we continue to look after our city's water. The information that follows highlights that ongoing work.

An aerial photograph of a large concrete dam and its reservoir. The dam is a curved structure with a spillway on the right side. The water in the reservoir is dark blue. The surrounding area is lush with green trees. A semi-transparent white text box is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

Drinking water

Our drinking water comes from a combination of the Turitea dams and a number of bores across Ashhurst, Bunnythorpe, Palmerston North and Longburn.

Over the past couple of years we've strengthened a number of key water assets, including our treatment plant, to improve their performance in earthquakes, reducing the risk of failures, limiting service disruptions, and helping services be restored more quickly.

To support population growth, we are making good progress on introducing two new bores at Milson Line and Stoney Creek Road. The Milson bore is under construction at the time this report has been released.

We have also added new filtration to Ashhurst's water supply to help prevent discolouration and are assessing the needs for our supply as a result of changes to Drinking Water Quality Assurance rules.

Our city's water consumption is a calculated value, as we do not have domestic metering in place, total consumption is influenced by a number of external factors such as weather conditions. For the final quarter of 2025 we calculated water consumption as 244 litres per person per day, which is lower than for the same quarter in 2024 which was 285 litres per person per day. Council has not enforced water restrictions for more than 5 years now. This is due to a multifaceted approach of good water management, water saving awareness campaigns and weather conditions.

We continue to develop programmes to reduce water use and increase storage, and encourage summer water use when demand is higher. Work to maintain and upgrade drinking water pipes across the city continues to occur as part of our day to day service for our community.

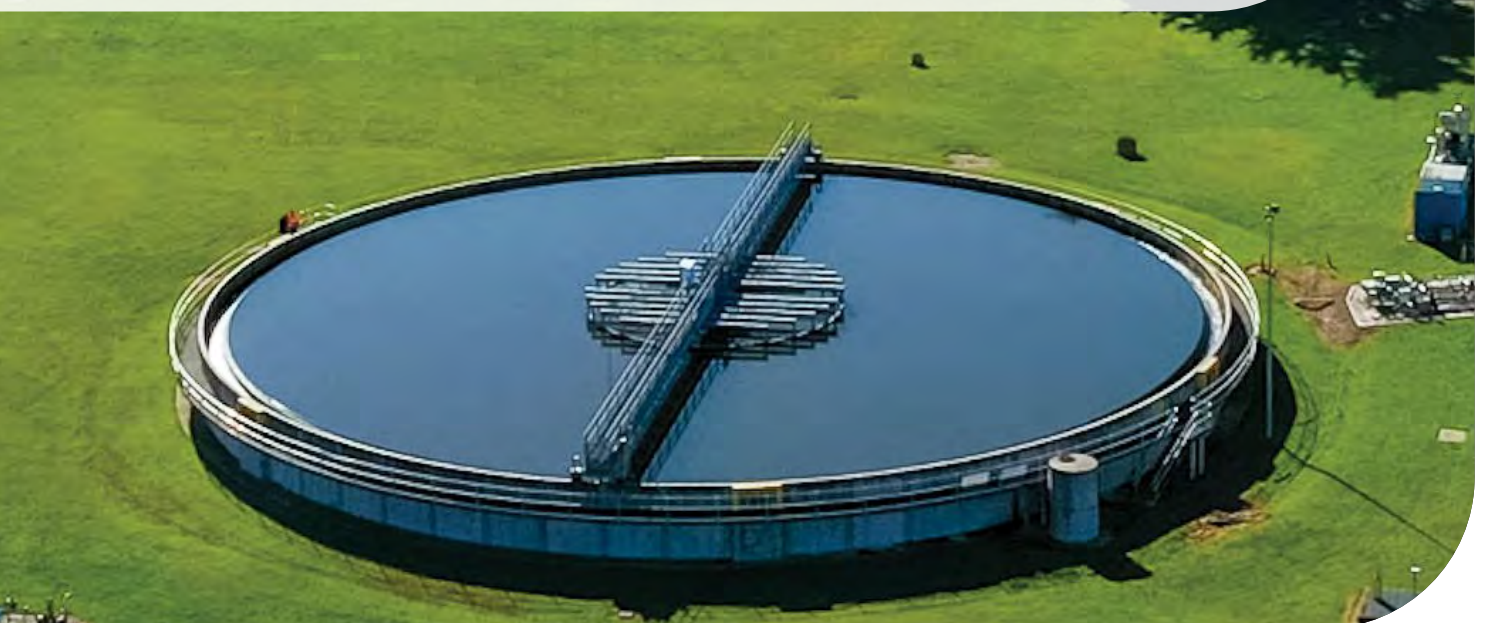
Wastewater

We own and manage the wastewater treatment plant at Awapuni, with wastewater discharges monitored by Horizons Regional Council. The most significant piece of work underway is our ongoing Nature Calls project. It focuses on how we will treat and discharge the city's wastewater for the next 30-50 years.

We lodged our consent applications with Horizons Regional Council in 2022, but in 2024 asked for it to be put on hold. That's because the projected cost was significant and our community and Elected Members voiced concerns about its affordability. Elected Members revised the budget to \$480M and asked staff to take another look at treatment and discharge options. Not long after that request the Government announced changes to the wastewater standards. These were released in December 2025. Staff are looking at what this means for the project and in 2026 will report back to Council and undertake more community engagement on the next steps.

Separate to Nature Calls, we've been continuing to work on upgrading aging pipes around the city, and ways we can reduce stormwater entering the network. We've got smart meters with online monitoring in place, which is helping provide more robust data from our trade waste customers.

At our treatment plant we've made some seismic upgrades as well as improving biogas collection. Over the past two years we've reinstated public tours of our wastewater treatment plant and had hundreds of people come through the doors.





Stormwater

As the city grows, our stormwater network is becoming more important, especially as heavy rain events become more common. In response, the focus has shifted to slowing stormwater down and cleaning it before it reaches streams and rivers, rather than just moving it away as quickly as possible.

We are investing more in stormwater than we have in previous years. This includes using flood modelling to identify areas of Palmerston North at risk of flooding and to assess practical ways to reduce how often flooding happens and how severe it is.

We are continuing to upgrade stormwater pipes across the city to improve resilience, including major upgrades planned for Fitzherbert Avenue in 2025. Alongside this, we are placing greater emphasis on good stormwater design in new developments, working earlier with planners and developers to include features such as grassed swales, rain gardens and wetlands that help improve water quality.

Recent examples include ecological restoration at Tamakuku Terrace and the new pond at Whakarongo that slows, treats and stores stormwater. We also carry out regular cleaning and weed removal in urban streams to improve water flow and water quality.

Our stormwater strategy, which will guide our work in the future is underway and will be reported back to Council in 2026.

Whakarongo attenuation pond and wetland

In 2025, we constructed a pond and wetland on James Line to enable the continued development of the Whakarongo residential area.

The pond provides flood storage for more than 500 lots of new developments in the upper and lower terrace of Whakarongo, including Tamakuku Terrace. It's designed to hold and treat stormwater before flowing into Whakapokapoka Lagoon and then into the Manawatū River.

At 375 metres long and 60m wide it can hold more than 18 million litres of water at capacity (seven Olympic swimming pools). The total catchment area it serves is 64 hectares.

The attenuation pond is a great example of best practice stormwater management. Our stormwater modelling showed the best solution for the entire growth area was a central pond rather than a series of individual solutions by each landowner. The design will allow landowners to subdivide and develop their land at their own pace as there are confirmed discharge points and serviceability.

The pond also meets the hydraulic neutrality requirement under the District Plan and allows Council to successfully meet the discharge consent requirements set by Horizons Regional Council.

As part of the project, we worked alongside our iwi, Rangitāne, to develop a wetland to encourage biodiversity, and attract birds and other wildlife. This included planting thousands of native trees along the banks of the pond.





Improving Awatea Stream

The city's Awatea stream runs through around 200 private properties making access and maintenance challenging. Over many years, sediment and weed growth had built up in parts of Awatea Stream, in some places more than a metre deep.

In 2025 work started on clearing the entire channel of the stream including parts that had not had a focused clean-up for more than 15 years. So far, more than half of Awatea Stream has been cleaned, with over 1,000 cubic metres of silt and debris removed.

Managing the waterway has long been difficult because it passes through so many private properties, where buildings, driveways and gardens limit access. Traditional clean-up methods often relied on heavy machinery, which could not reach many sections of the stream.

New equipment is now helping to overcome these challenges. Trucks can now be parked on the road, with hoses that can reach more than 100 metres through private land to reach previously inaccessible areas. These hoses are connected to a powerful vacuum truck that removes sediment directly from the stream. This approach has allowed work to continue with minimal disruption to properties and significantly increased the amount of the stream that can be cleaned.

The work is already making a visible difference downstream. Improved flow through Awatea Stream is helping cleaner water reach Hokowhitu Lagoon, and early signs show the lagoon is beginning to clear. As work continues, these improvements will help protect the lagoon and support the long-term health of the wider waterway system.

Planning how to grow with the flow

Nestled beneath the Tararua Ranges and alongside the mighty Manawatū River, Palmerston North's setting is one of its greatest strengths – but it also brings challenges. Heavy rain and storms can lead to flooding in our low-lying city, putting homes, businesses, and infrastructure at risk.

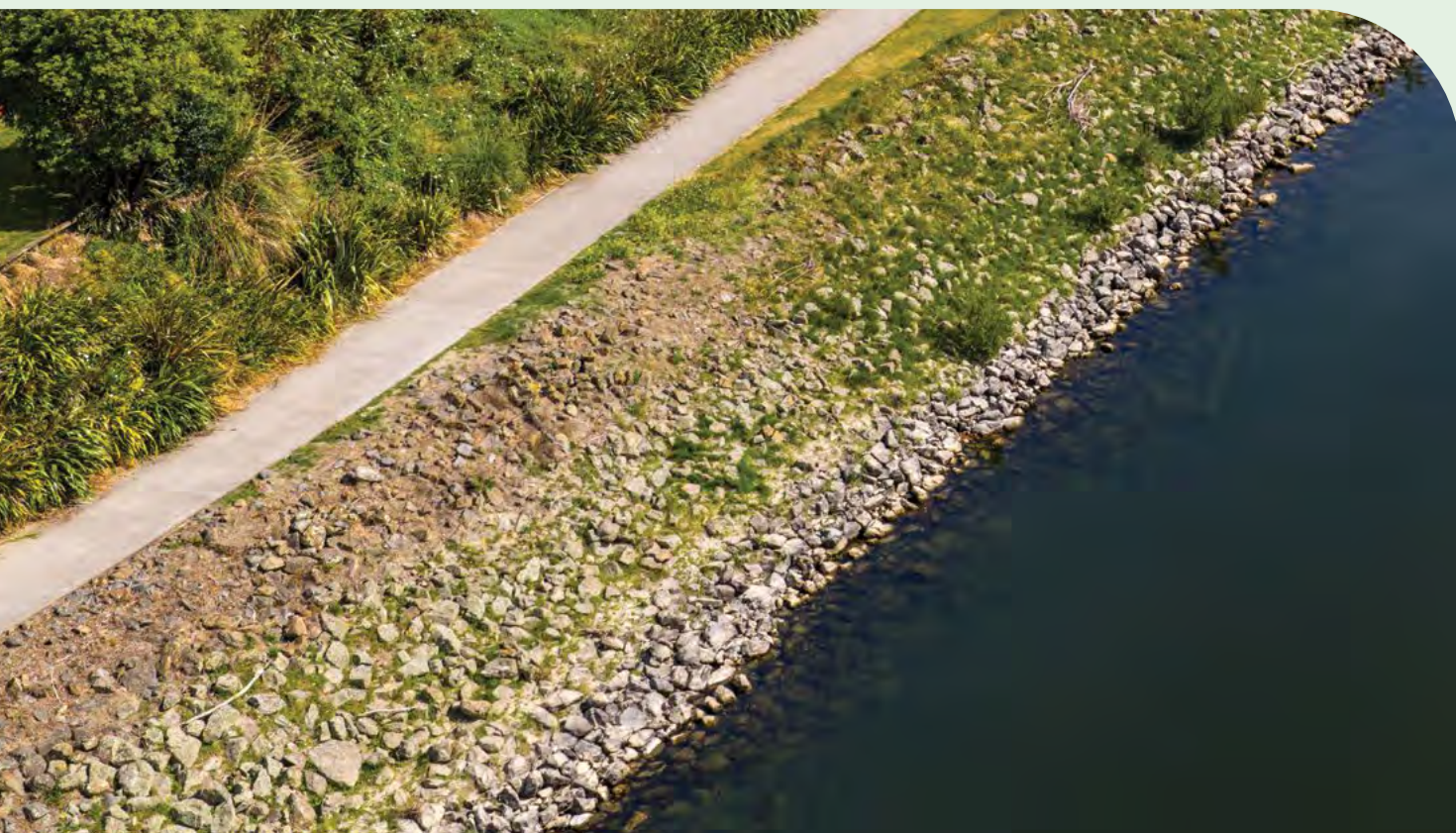
At the same time, poorly managed stormwater can harm our waterways, reducing their health, quality, and mauri (life force). Climate change may also bring more extreme weather in the coming years, including more intense rainstorms that could increase flooding and affect how the city is able to grow.

To protect our people, properties, and environment, the city is developing a strategy for managing stormwater. This Stormwater Strategy represents an important first step toward a more adaptive and considered response to stormwater challenges, helping Palmerston North prepare for both current pressures and future change.

Limited resources, along with gaps in our understanding of the existing stormwater network and levels of service, make planning for the future more complex. Strengthening collaboration with Horizons Regional Council, neighbouring councils, mana whenua, and local communities will be key to managing stormwater effectively within the city and beyond its boundaries.

We worked with Rangitāne o Manawatū on the Stormwater Strategy, which provides a shared direction for action. The Strategy identifies the challenges that stormwater presents for the city, outlines practical, high-level responses that drive better outcomes—reducing flood risk, improving the health of our waterways, and enabling Palmerston North to grow in a more resilient and sustainable way.

The Stormwater Strategy will be presented to Council in the coming months and then opened for community feedback prior to adoption.







Resource recovery



Resource Recovery

Every week, we collect kerbside recycling from more than 33,000 homes and businesses across the city, and we also provide three handy recycling drop-off points for anyone who has more than will fit in their bin.

From e-waste and batteries to tyres and polystyrene, we've got the systems in place to make sure as much as possible is recycled and put to good use, instead of ending up in landfill.

Across the city, there are 735 public bins, and we regularly support local events to help make recycling and waste reduction easy for everyone. We also run household hazardous waste drop-off days once every two years so people can safely get rid of those tricky items like chemicals.

We're out in the community year-round, running tours, school sessions, and workshops to help people understand where their waste goes and how to reduce it. Our Waste Minimisation Officers work with schools, community groups, and local businesses to answer questions, share tips, and encourage change. Every conversation and tour helps build a community that's more aware and more confident about recycling right.














We work with our community by funding community-led projects that reduce waste. Over the 24/25 year, funding from our Resource Recovery Fund went to Organic Packaging Supplies to help remove contamination from the recycled fibre used in their production of egg cartons. Funding also went to Precycle to help with their dishwashing trailer pilot, and Butterfly Compassion Community to assist with their winter wellness program, which provided warm clothing and blankets to vulnerable members of the community.

Every six years, we take a close look at how Palmy is managing its waste. Our latest report showed that in 2022, we sent about 54,000 tonnes of waste to landfill, but nearly half of that could have been composted, reused, or recycled instead. This information helps shape our Waste Management and Minimisation Plan, which sets out what we're doing to reduce waste and look after our environment.

There's still room to improve, especially when it comes to food waste, construction materials, and recycling from businesses.



Rubbish and recycling

	2023/24	2024/25
 Number of tyres dropped off	1,740	7,076
 Number of rubbish bags collected	502,125	481,786
 Recycling collected from kerb (tonnes)	2,963	3,052
 Number of recycling bins emptied	599,990	603,239
 Recycling taken to drop-off points (tonnes)	763	808
 Glass collected from kerb (tonnes)	1,528	1,395
 Number of glass crates emptied	224,746	210,207
 Glass taken to drop-off points (tonnes)	582	541
 E-waste (tonnes)	58	56
 Number of E-waste items	8,556	8,750
 Motor oil (litres)	13,532	13,223
 Green waste dropped off (tonnes)	6,662	6,055
 Compost sold (m3)	1,286	1,088

The volume of council-collected kerbside rubbish from residential properties has decreased, with total waste to landfill now 52,000 tonnes per year, which is down from the 55,000 tonnes reported in 2022.

In contrast, both the amount of recycling collected from the kerb and the recycling taken to drop-off points have increased.

There has been a small decrease in the amount of glass recycled, both from kerbside collections and drop-off points.

E-waste tonnage has dropped slightly, likely because fewer old CRT televisions and screens are being

disposed of. However, the total number of e-waste items dropped off has gone up, showing continued uptake.

Green waste and compost sales have both decreased, perhaps suggesting that more people are composting at home.

Tyre drop-offs have increased, which is thanks to the Tyrewise Stewardship Scheme which was introduced in late 2024, allowing people to drop off up to five tyres for free.

Polystyrene recycling on form

You no longer have to wrestle with bulky polystyrene that takes up half your rubbish bin! At the end of 2024, we introduced a new drop-off service for clean household polystyrene at the Ferguson Street Recycling Centre, and it's been a raging success.

In its first year alone, five tonnes of polystyrene were dropped off for recycling – and if you know how light polystyrene is, you'll know that's an impressive amount! That's come from more than 4,000 individual drop-offs - the equivalent of 27 recycling truckloads.

Polystyrene has always been tricky to recycle. It's light, bulky, and takes up a lot of space, making it costly to handle. That's why we'd been looking into a recycling solution for quite some time. Thanks to our partnership with E-Cycle, polystyrene is compacted in Palmy using a hot melt densifier before being sent away to be recycled into new products such as picture frames and decorative mouldings.

This initiative is another step towards achieving our goal of diverting 50% more waste from landfill by 2030, as set out in our Waste Management and Minimisation Plan. Every bit of waste we can recycle instead of sending to landfill helps us move closer to becoming an eco-city.





Thousands of tyres recycled

More Palmy locals are recycling old tyres than ever before, with tyre recycling at the Awapuni Resource Recovery Park has increasing a massive 400% from 2023/24 to 2024/25.

The boost comes thanks to the Tyrewise Product Stewardship Scheme, which now lets people drop off old tyres for free. This nationwide initiative ensures tyres are recycled or repurposed instead of ending up in landfills, making it easier for everyone to do their bit for the environment.

Since the scheme launched in September 2024, more than 7,000 tyres have already been dropped off in Palmy - a fantastic start that shows just how eager our community is to do the right thing.

“This scheme is a big step towards reducing waste and protecting our environment,” says Resource Recovery Operations Manager Chris Evans.

“Being able to offer free tyre drop-offs makes it even easier for our community to dispose of them responsibly.”

Under the Tyrewise scheme, residents can bring up to five clean tyres at a time to Awapuni Resource Recovery Park. It covers all air-filled and solid tyres from motorised vehicles, including cars, trucks, buses, motorcycles, trailers, and off-road vehicles.

Once collected, the tyres are recycled into fuel or shredded into granules used to make things like artificial turf, roads, gym floors, and playground mats.

Since March 2025, a small environmental fee has been added to all new tyres sold or imported in Aotearoa. The funds from this fee now fully cover the recycling process, meaning residents can continue to drop off old tyres at no cost.

The Tyrewise scheme is a shining example of how smart, nationwide initiatives can empower communities like ours to protect the environment, one tyre at a time.



Working toward better recycling habits

We're passionate about helping our community understand how to care for the environment, especially when it comes to reducing waste and recycling right.

One of the most effective ways we do this is through guided tours of our Awapuni Resource Recovery Park. These tours give residents a behind-the-scenes look at what happens to recycling once it leaves the kerb.

In the past two years, we've run 35 private group tours and 19 public tours, and they've proven hugely popular. Visitors often tell us things like:

"I feel proud of what Palmy does with recycling."

"It cleared up questions I had and now I can share the right info with others, especially sceptics!"

"I was impressed by the scale of the plant and how carefully everything is sorted."

"Now I understand where my recycling goes and how much effort goes into doing it properly."

On top of this, we also regularly educate our social housing tenants and in the last two years, that's 107 different tenants.

Each tour or visit helps grow a network of informed residents who champion recycling in their homes, workplaces, and communities. The result is a ripple effect of positive behaviour change that strengthens our shared commitment to a sustainable future.

RAD Devices make up-cycling cool

Since the beginning of 2024 over 95 laptops have been diverted from landfill, refurbished and gifted to people in the community who need them for study or work through the efforts of a local group of enthusiastic teenagers.

The initiative was born when members of Recycle-A-Device (RAD) project and the Palmerston North City Library teamed up to create a local R.A.D Club where teenagers meet to repair and up-cycle donated electrical devices - the only club of its kind in the Manawatū.

So far, 60 rangatahi have been taught refurbishment skills; learning the benefits of diverting devices from landfill and reducing e-waste.

The Recycle-A-Device project empowers the next generation of digital thinkers with tangible skills and helps bridge the digital divide for members of the community who may not be able to afford a laptop otherwise.

As well as hosting and facilitating the local club, the City library also offers extra digital support for anyone that needs help using their device as part of their digital literacy kaupapa.

Club members are encouraged to be active in the running of the club. This 'hands-on' nature of the training benefits those who have struggled in traditional education environments.

Because Recycle-A-Device was created by young people for young people, many of the rangatahi who take part say they feel more confident that they can achieve the, at times, highly technical goals, because they can see people their own age leading the way.

Club participants recently reached out to local op-shops to request donations of laptop bags and now both the Arohanui Hospice Op Shop and the Butterfly Compassion Community donate laptop bags to the club.

Get involved: RAD Club runs monthly from the Central Library on Sunday afternoons.

ENM is a drop off point for laptop donations for this programme. Find out which laptops are suitable here: <https://enm.org.nz/circular-economy/Recycling>

"I enjoy coming to RAD club because it helps me put my skills to good use...the club has helped me gain knowledge about computers, how to repair them and the methods to use."

RAD Club member





Where sustainability and kindness go hand in hand

Palmerston North's Butterfly Compassion Community is proving that caring for people and caring for the planet can go hand in hand, transforming donated goods into practical help for families while keeping thousands of items out of landfill.

With support from Palmerston North City Council's Resource Recovery Fund, the charity has made a meaningful impact. Since January alone, more than 54,000 items have been redistributed to people facing tough times. These include clothing, bedding, mattresses, shoes, toys and even specially made sensory items for children experiencing trauma or anxiety.

Run by mother-and-daughter duo Trina and Lara Sheridan, alongside a dedicated team of volunteers, Butterfly Compassion Community operates on a simple philosophy: everyone deserves dignity and support, regardless of background or circumstances.

Each week, more than 40 partner agencies — including Women's Refuge, Kāinga Ora and local hospitals — request tailored support packs. The carefully assembled boxes provide everyday essentials, easing pressure on households so whānau can focus on getting back on their feet.

Council's acting Manager of Resource Recovery, Natasha Hickmott, says Butterfly's approach reflects the true purpose of the Resource Recovery Fund.

"This is sustainability in action," she says. "Nothing goes to waste. Items are either passed directly to people who need them or thoughtfully repurposed, such as turning old fabric into bags of cleaning rags."

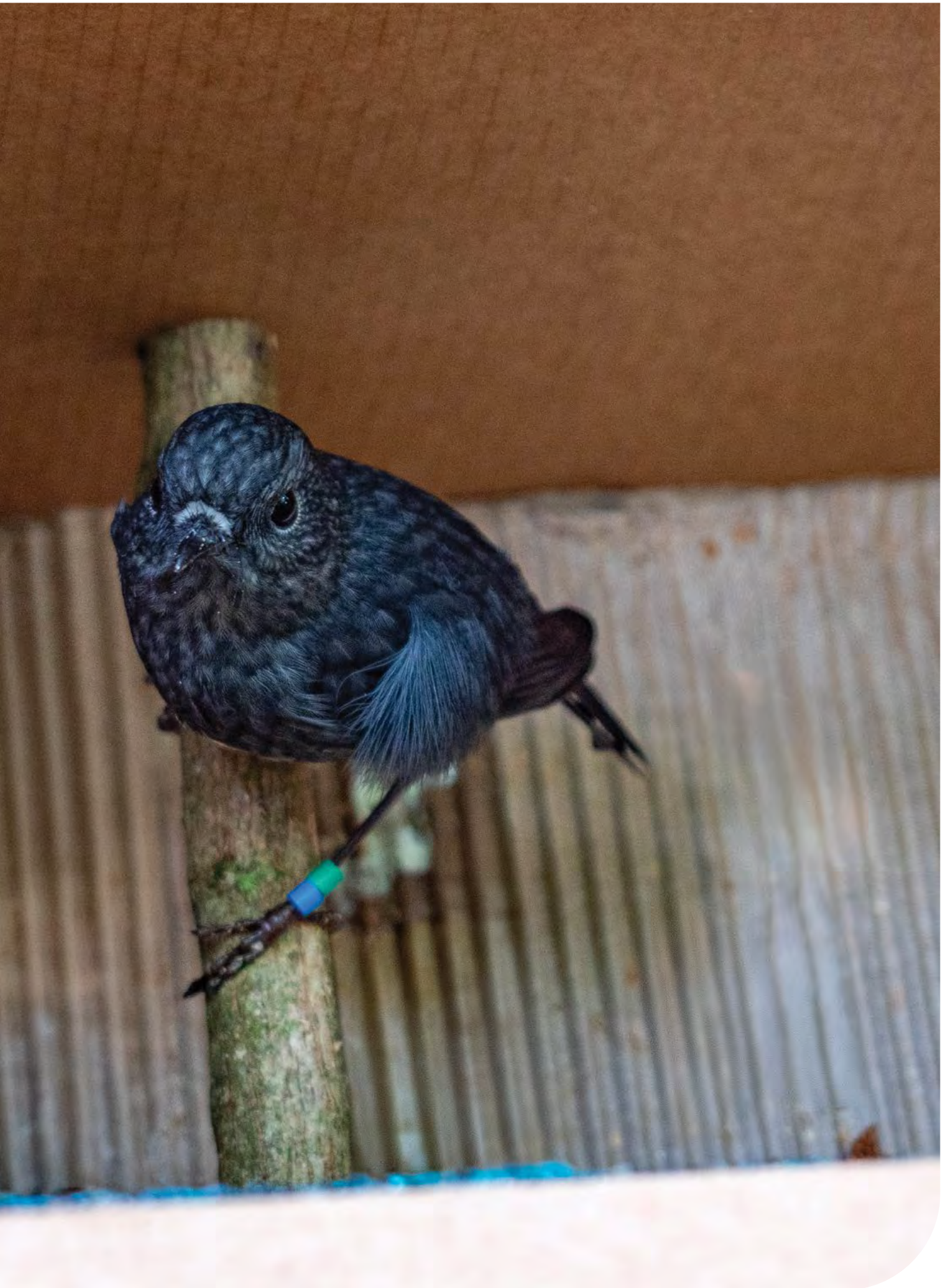
The recent \$7,700 grant is supporting Butterfly's Winter Wellness programme and the expansion of its workspace, enabling the organisation to help more people during the colder months.

As demand grows across the wider Manawātū region, the organisation aims to partner with councils and businesses to expand its proven, sustainable model.



Biodiversity





Biodiversity

Biodiversity is vital to the health of our ecosystems. Maintaining a wide variety of native plants and wildlife enhances our environment, making our forests, rivers and wetlands more resilient to weather events, diseases and climate change. When we look after biodiversity, we're also protecting the natural systems that clean our water, store carbon, pollinate our food and support the wellbeing of our communities.

Our Green Corridors programme is transforming the Turitea River margins from pest-dominated banks into resilient native bush. In 2025, more than 16,000 native trees and shrubs were planted, including around 3,000 enrichment canopy trees. These trees will form the future forest canopy, storing carbon while providing shade, food, and nesting sites for native wildlife.

This planting stabilises slopes, shades and filters waterways, stores carbon and creates connected habitat corridors linking the Turitea Reserve with city green spaces. It builds on years of work that have already established tens of thousands of Green Corridors trees between the Tararua Ranges and the Manawatū River.

Community volunteers remain central to the programme. Each week they contribute more than 90 hours across the Adderstone, Manga o Tane, Pari, and Titoki gullies, and planted more than 6,500 additional natives throughout 2025. Volunteers also maintain trap lines to control animal pests, supporting the return of native birdlife.

In some areas, native vegetation is now close to self-sustaining, with seedlings, ferns, and young trees regenerating naturally. While pest plants like blackberry, gorse, and Old Man's Beard remain a challenge and more regular volunteers are needed to combat these, each season sees stronger, healthier native bush taking hold.

Turitea Reserve is a thriving hub of biodiversity, largely as a result of a diligent pest control programme that has been ongoing since 2003. Camera monitoring throughout 2025 showed that cat, ferret, and weasel numbers have remained at or near zero across the reserve. Remaining pests are kept under control by around 3,500 bait stations and 1,500 predator traps across the reserve, with our pest control team tracking every capture in GPS records.

These consistent efforts have allowed our native plant and wildlife to thrive. Annual bird surveys show Kererū and Tūi numbers are 46x and 21x those of 2003, respectively. Tititipounamu (riflemen) populations are up 700% in the same time frame, while Pōpokotea (whiteheads) have quadrupled. In contrast, the same species have shown little- to no increase in numbers over the same time span in Gordon Kear Reserve which has no pest control operations, in fact Turitea showed an 80% higher bird density than Gordon Kear in the 2025 survey. These numbers highlight how crucial pest control is to maintain biodiversity in our district.





Average Native Bird Count

Turitea	2003	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022	2024
Bellbird	1.58	1.57	2.34	2.89	4.2	4.23	4.98	4.46	2.77	2.45	2.93
Grey Warbler	1.8	1.48	1.38	1.19	1.37	1.42	1.52	1.34	1.63	1.79	2.47
Kereru	0.04	0.1	0.07	0.41	0.45	0.77	0.93	1.59	1.46	1.49	1.84
Rifleman	0.13	0.64	0.5	0.93	1.05	1.13	1.28	1.11	0.93	0.68	1.05
Silvereye	0.39	2.64	2.81	1.68	1.67	2.38	1.25	0.95	0.84	0.02	1.53
Tomtit	0.76	0.89	0.77	1.27	1.03	0.93	1.2	0.84	1.13	2.86	1.43
Tui	0.13	0.08	1.27	1.02	1.02	1.03	1.9	2.82	2.2	1.26	2.73
Whitehead	1.32	3.41	3.36	4.15	4.29	3.72	4.72	4.33	3.8	4.85	5.45

Bird population surveys are conducted by methodically travelling on foot in lines across the reserves and stopping at set points to count how many birds can be seen or heard in a five-minute period. The results in the table show the average of the number of each bird species present in a five-minute count.

Toutouwai surge in numbers

Following the initial release of 40 toutouwai (North Island Robins) into our Turitea Reserve in 2021 the birds initially did well. But a boom in rat numbers a couple of years later left them struggling to establish population growth in enough numbers to thrive.

In response, a programme of intensified trapping was implemented by the area's pest control teams, helping stabilise the remaining birds. After a year of sustained extra trapping efforts, the existing population was strong enough to bring more birds into the flock.

In 2025 we successfully translocated 40 more birds from Bushy Park Tarapurui and Jean Darcy Reserve to the Turitea Reserve, where they joined the existing population. This translocation was a collaborative effort; delivered in partnership with Rangitāne and Ngā Rauru.

This breeding season 36 adult toutouwai have paired up and been actively breeding over the summer, resulting in 50 brand new fledglings to add to our population, indicating that the species is establishing well.

These results, and the translocation, could not have been achieved without the sustained efforts of our pest control team and the specialist input of Massey and Horizons ecologists, whose work underpins the safe return of native species like toutouwai to the landscape. We look forward to confirming the final population count at the end of the breeding season this year.





Volunteer power makes a big difference to local parks

Long-time members of the Ahimate Reserve Community, Don and Heather Scott built a home in 1972 which backs onto to Ahimate Reserve and since then, have been active in planting and tending the riverside land.

“We know every tree in the reserve” Don said. He is particularly proud of a Rimu tree he planted many years ago which is now thriving at 15 metres tall. ‘It’s been wonderful seeing what was scrappy, marginal land become a real community asset.’

Ahimate Reserve Community facilitate regular native plantings and created a community orchard featuring citrus, avocado, quince and nut trees. The group are passionate about improving biodiversity in the reserve. Outside of the core group, many local schools have volunteered in the reserve, including Riverdale School, Awapuni School and Awatapu College.

‘We love to see the kids getting involved’ said Heather.

‘The kids come back again to visit the things they planted. It gives them a real tie to the reserve’ said Don.

Just ten minutes across town in Terrace End, Pit Park is an inspirational example of the improvement that can be made when passionate locals want to change their local environment for the better.

This community place-making and planting project is now over 25 years old. It began in 1999 when locals worked in partnership with Palmerston North City Council to turn a disused clay quarry, full of weeds and rubbish (including old car bodies and dumped bitumen) into a recreation space now flourishing with native species and full of birds.

Local and long-term participant, Beth Tolley said: ‘The park gives locals a beautiful place to be and children exposure to native plants which they might not otherwise have. It’s been a community effort. Many of the plants have come from the gardens of volunteers or are donated from the wider community.’

Get involved:

Ahimate Reserve Community have working bees on the first Sunday of each month from 9:30 - 11:30 am. Contact: ahimatereservecommunity@gmail.com

Pit Park People meet on the third Sunday of each month, 1.30-3.30pm. All welcome. Jobs can be found for all fitness levels. Stay for a cuppa afterwards! Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pitpark.palmerstonnorth>

Donations of native seedlings always welcome to both projects. Drop plants to a working bee or contact the groups directly.



Food security



Food Security

Food security means that people in our community can reliably get food that is healthy, affordable, safe, culturally aligned, and increasingly, produced in sustainable ways.

At the moment, unhealthy food can often be easier to access than healthier options. This means improving food security is not just about having enough food but also about making healthy food easy to get for everyone.

In 2024 Council took a big step forward by adopting 'Te kaupapahere mō te tūwhita me te manawaroa o te kai – the Food Security and Resilience Policy'. This policy reflects what we heard from community organisations who asked for stronger partnership and support in this space.

Through research and community engagement, we identified where Council could make the most meaningful difference, and the policy now gives us a clear direction for how we'll help to build a healthier, more resilient local food system.

Our goal is simple: we want everyone in our city to have access to nutritious, affordable food, and we want our community to be more resilient to challenges like food poverty, rising costs, and the impacts of climate change. To make this happen, Council will act as a supporter, advocate and facilitator, in partnership with many local community groups already doing excellent mahi across our city.

As part of our most recent Long -Term Plan we've committed \$30,000 a year to support community-led food initiatives through the Environmental Initiatives Fund administered by Environment Network Manawatū.

The Food Security and Resilience Policy supports our wider strategic goals of building a connected, safe community and a sustainable, resilient city. It contributes to outcomes like better access to services, healthier lifestyles, thriving ecosystems, less waste, and strong community partnerships.

The policy was formally adopted on 5 March 2025, and the next step is developing an implementation plan. We'll report progress to Council each year.





Two new urban community gardens put down roots

At the vibrant new mara kai at the Pasifika Centre in Bill Brown Park, different generations work side-by-side. Students as young as five are guided by elders on how to plant and tend vegetables, learning while they get their hands dirty.

Co-ordinator Sunlou Liuvaie says, “we see the garden as an education garden. It’s achieving many different things for young ones who are learning in a safe-space and being guided by elders, like Uncle Alo, one of our keen gardeners.”

He says the centre also supports the parents of the young people who attend the after-school learning support group.

‘We offer them financial literacy, parenting support and we share the food we grow with our families. We also want to plant more traditional foods. We’ve already planted taro this year.’

Meanwhile, in the rural settlement of Bunnythorpe, Chloe White-Beck has been gathering the community around her to co-create a new garden with a big vision, the Bunnythorpe Community Garden.

“I actually live in Milson, she says, “but my son goes to Bunnythorpe School and I just love this community.’ Chloe recently completed a Māori Permaculture Course and is keen to put her knowledge into practice.

She has been blown away by local support of the new garden and has visions for it to become a biodiverse syntropic agroforest. After a lot of work clearing and preparing the previous blackberry-choked dumping ground, the first crops went into the ground mid-spring 2025.

“I’m grateful to the Council for their support, says Chloe, “They got on board early as ideas were evolving and they had a flexible approach to our plans.’

Get involved:

The Pasifika Centre Learning Hub Garden is in Bill Brown Park and welcomes donations of seedlings, or materials to build planter boxes for families. Contact Sonny Liuvaie: s.liuvaie@massey.ac.nz

The Bunnythorpe Community Garden (corner of Kairanga Bunnythorpe Road near the roundabout) is open to the public to tend and harvest from. Working bees are held 1st and 3rd Saturdays on the month. Follow the garden’s FB page for updates: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1940672276400417>



Grow, share, repeat

Did you know you can borrow seeds just like books? Palmy residents can get (or donate) seeds at five different 'seed libraries' in Palmerston North and Ashhurst, allowing anyone to grow their own healthy food right at home for free!

The city's seed libraries were set up in 2020 by Manawatu Food Action working together with the City Library. They were inspired by the long-running seed library set up by local resilience group RECAP at the Ashhurst Public Library.

Branch libraries Awapuni, Te Patikitiki and Roslyn were first and then the central branch followed in 2023. Central library staff found an old wooden library catalogue-card cabinet in storage and worked with Blueprint Makerspace to redesign the drawers to suit seed packets instead of catalogue cards.

These seed libraries are looked after by dedicated volunteers, who visit the libraries each week sorting, dividing seed donations into packages, and recording the uptake of seeds.

“The seed libraries mean I can access diverse and interesting seeds without any cost and have also motivated me to improve my seed-saving skills so I can give back from my own garden.”

-Seed Library user, Helen Lehndorf

The seed libraries work on a sharing model. Any member of the public can take or donate seeds. Central Library's handsome seed library is located beside the nonfiction desk on the first floor. There is also an additional seed library at the Environment Network Manawātū office in Cuba Street.

Get involved: All of the seed library sites welcome donations of saved seeds. Donate directly into the seed libraries, or drop donations into the Environment Network Manawatu office, 145 Cuba Street.

Supergrans share practical skills

Across the city, Supergrans cooking classes are in high demand with many ages and cultures. From engaging young people in food education at Youth Space to working with refugee families, to guiding recently-widowed men through learning to cook, Supergrans work to empower people with life skills and independence. Supergrans also work with Special Needs students at Awatapu College and Freyberg High School.

Since 2005, this quietly high-achieving organisation has been offering education and support in essential life skills like cooking meals, learning to preserve, food growing, sewing and clothes repair. Supergrans have a strong environmental ethos, recycling and re-using where they can. For their preserving classes, through their community connections they rescue seasonal produce in summer/autumn which they process, freeze and then use throughout the year. The sugar for the preserving classes is donated by Just Zilch, and Awatapu College's Learning Support Job Club assist Supergrans by washing and removing stickers from donated jars for the preserving classes.

Local Brent Putze does most of the cooking for his family so he attended a Supergrans Asian Cooking class, with tutor Esther Teoh, to extend the range of dishes he can cook, "I really enjoyed the class. Our tutor was so clear, efficient and friendly. She created a really fun and relaxing vibe. I came away feeling energised and inspired about cooking again. It's amazing how much a two hour class can change your life around meal times...and beyond."

Supergrans also work with local health authorities to supply the linens for wahakura (a traditional Māori woven bassinet made of harakeke for infants) created by expectant mothers who weave their own wahakura while attending a wānanaga (class) about childbirth and parenting education. The baby sheets are made from cotton and the woolen blankets are made from up-cycled wool blankets which are edged in satin. Over 50 sets of linen each year are gifted to the mothers for their wahakura. Since 2017, Supergrans have made 373 linen sets for wahakura and repurposed 900 blankets.

Get involved: Supergrans welcome volunteers with cooking, sewing and gardening skills to share. They also run sewing and mending section of Environment Network Manawatū's monthly Repair Cafes.

Email: admin@sgmanawatu.org.nz

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/SuperGransMentoring/>



Growing community kai in Ashhurst

Maybe you've heard of local wonders RECAP but aren't sure what they are all about?

RECAP is a handy acronym for the lengthy 'Resilience and Engagement of the Community of Ashhurst and Pohangina'; a high-achieving organisation doing meaningful resilience work with the local community.

RECAP run a lively and interesting range of activities from crop swaps and sharing shelves, food bank, gardening and composting education, cooking skills classes, they facilitate 'death without Debt' workshops, and collaborate on local disaster-preparedness efforts.

"What we offer is a sense of wellbeing and connectedness for the community...meaningful ways to contribute and join in and then the connections and friendships evolve from there. Our monthly Crop Swaps are especially good for attracting and welcoming new residents to the area" reflects co-ordinator Chris Love.

As well as classes and events, RECAP planted and co-ordinate the Olsson Community Orchard which features a range of fruiting trees available to the community. The orchard is used as an educational space with annual pruning skills workshops offered there. 'While we have lots of ongoing projects...we like to keep asking the community, 'What would you like to learn next?'' says coordinator, Chris.

Another way RECAP supports locals is through the 'Community Kai' initiative. Chris says, 'It's like a mini-Just Zilch. We offer support with food to people through a combination of food rescue and locally donated fresh produce. We also have a small garden dedicated to growing fresh produce for Community Kai. All are welcome. We run Community Kai on a 'no questions asked' basis.'

Local Harvey Jones has been an vital part of RECAP since 1999. The first iteration was called the Ashhurst Action Group, 'We wanted to work together to improve Ashhurst. We started small but we always intended to grow. Ashhurst is the perfect size for this kind of community-building project.'

'I so agree' says Chris. 'We have so many active volunteers. Our community likes to contribute because they can see the tangible benefits of our projects.'

In 2025, Harvey Jones was recognised by Palmerston North City Council with a Civic Honour Award for his years of service to the town.

Get involved: <https://recap.org.nz/>

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/ResilienceAshhurstPohangina>

Community Kai is held at the Ashhurst Public Library, 3:15pm-4:15pm each Tuesday.



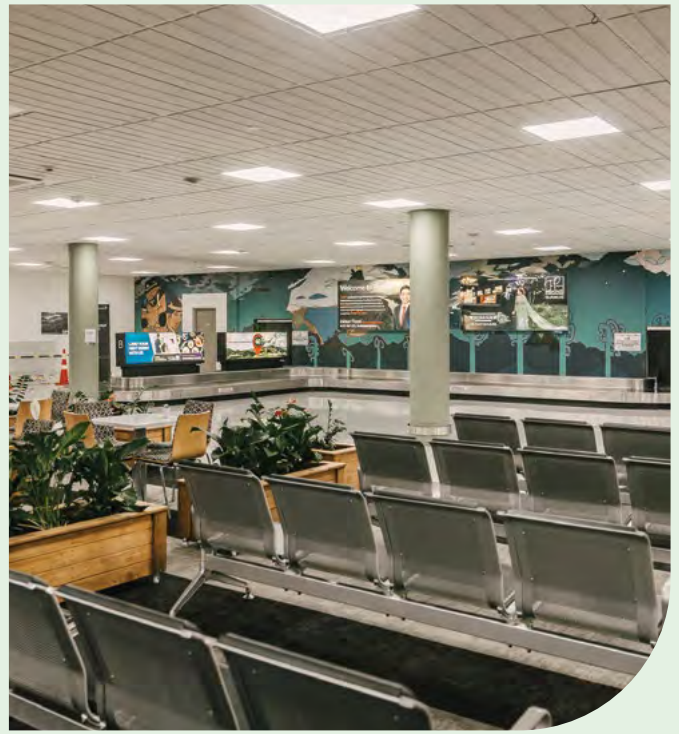




Sustainability across organisations



We can't do it alone. Here's a snapshot of others in our city doing great work.



Redefining the gateway to our region

Palmerston North Airport's Terminal Development Project is a major undertaking; a two-year build that will future-proof our region's gateway for coming generations. Long before the cranes turned up on site, reducing emissions has been a top priority for the airport team.

Two drivers of their approach are minimising environmental impact and promoting long-term resource efficiency. With these twin goals in focus, a range of sustainability initiatives have been embedded into the terminal's design and construction process.

This includes using sustainable building materials like timber and steel fibre reinforcing, ensuring the terminal is equipped with energy-efficient systems, and better utilising extensive natural lighting and LED technology to lower energy consumption. Resilience in the face of climate change is also prioritised, with the terminal's floor level being raised to better protect against one-in-100-year flood risks.

The demolition of the previous terminal's western end was a milestone and proving ground for the airport's approach. Thanks to the meticulous efforts by LT McGuinness Ltd and Central Demolition, 88% of all materials were diverted from landfill. Fixtures, fittings and the existing HVAC plant were carefully removed so that they could be reused in the future terminal, and recycled items included metal, concrete, ceiling tiles, gib and timber. The airport anticipates a similar diversion rate when the eastern wing of the terminal is demolished.

While construction continues, the airport's vision isn't limited to just the terminal development. The airport continues to collaborate with tenants, providing guidance and support to help them reduce their operational emissions, and is working alongside airlines as they navigate their own sustainability journeys. "Retaining our Level 4 Airport Carbon Accreditation is a critical priority," says Chief Executive David Lanham. "It's about showing leadership in reducing carbon emissions and affirming our commitment to global climate goals."

Sowing sustainability into future of farming

Something fresh is growing in Manawatū – and it's more than our tasty crops.

A new region-wide effort is seeking to reshape our rural economy by helping farmers diversify, lift profits, and strengthen the long-term sustainability of local food production.

The Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA) is leading this shift through its Land Diversification project, launched in mid-2025. Designed to help farmers tackle economic and environmental challenges head-on, the initiative gives landowners practical tools to explore new cropping options that support both productivity and the planet.

One early standout is the interactive Crop Suitability Map, which helps farmers look into different options for sustainable and profitable ways to use their land. It's been so well received that regions across Aotearoa – and even overseas – are asking how they can replicate it.

The project's innovative thinking has also helped to earn Manawatū a spot in the European Union's 'International Urban and Regional Cooperation Programme' which promotes direct collaboration between cities and regions on things like smart and effective food production.

Back on home soil, CEDA has launched new 'Grower Guides' full of practical tips from planting and harvesting to expected yields and commercial know-how, all aimed at sparking sustainable innovation and lifting productivity for local growers.

With more tools and insights on the way, CEDA is continuing to explore opportunities right along the agri-value chain. Keep up with the region's progress at ManawatuNZ.co.nz/LandDiversification.



Horizons' doing the mahi for a healthier environment

Air

Since March 2024, the streets of Palmerston North and Ashhurst have been humming with the quiet efficiency of Horizons' 42 brand-new electric buses. In just seven months, these buses saved 535,500 litres of diesel and kept 1,623 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent out of the atmosphere – the same as the emissions from charging over 100 million smartphones. They also prevented the release of 830 kilograms of nitrogen dioxide and 18 kilograms of fine particulate matter, contributing to cleaner air for the community.

Water

Horizons' fish passage team has been hard at work over the last five years, removing or altering 12 fish passage barriers in Palmy's waterways to restore access to critical habitats for native fish. At the Gasworks Drain on Napier Road, for example, the team built a leaky weir using natural materials to raise the stream's water levels, enabling species such as tuna (eels), īnanga, and common bullies to cross a perched culvert.

The team also surveyed fish populations at 13 sites across the district and was excited to find several taonga species, including kōaro, kōura (freshwater crayfish), shortjaw kōkopu, redfin bully, kākahi (freshwater mussels), and even a sizable giant kōkopu - the most threatened species in the region.



Land

Horizons' biosecurity team is busy across 233 sites in Palmerston North, tackling pest plants that threaten our local environment. Woolly Nightshade, a furry, smelly, and highly invasive plant, is the most common pest species in Palmy, present at 127 known sites. To fight back, Horizons launched Woolly Busters in 2025, a citizen science initiative using the iNaturalist app. Locals are already reporting new sightings, enabling Horizons to prioritise areas for treatment to protect our green spaces.

Alligator weed, another invasive plant, continues to threaten the city's waterways. Although years of pest control have reduced its presence, Horizons recently found the weed spreading through the Apollo Drain and along 10 kilometres of the Mangaone Stream, underscoring the importance of ongoing monitoring.

Possum control is also making a difference in the district. Horizons restocks more than 3,200 bait stations across five operation zones that cover Palmerston North, keeping possum numbers at just 2-3% Residual Trap Catch - well below levels that harm biodiversity or farm production.

Horizons' biodiversity team actively manages three biodiversity sites in the district, including two small remnants of native cover on private land, and Te Āpiti - Manawatū Gorge. Intact native biodiversity cover is scarce on the Manawatū Plains, so every fragment matters. Te Āpiti receives significant annual funding and multi-agency collaboration to protect its biodiversity and recreational values. After five years of pest control, Horizons has determined that Te Āpiti's Southern Scenic Reserve Forest is suitable for the reintroduction of toutouwai (North Island robin). Horizons is working with mana whenua partners and the Department of Conservation to aim for an initial release before winter 2026.



Climate Action Joint Committee

The Climate Action Joint Committee allows councils across the Manawatū-Whanganui region to work together on climate change. A big focus is understanding and planning for climate risks, especially flooding.

A Regional Flood Vulnerability Assessment maps flood risk across about 50 towns, helping councils see where risks are highest and where more modelling is needed. This will guide future flood protection, infrastructure planning, and upgrades.

The committee also supports national work on climate adaptation through the National Adaptation Framework.

Recent work plans include improving access to hazard data through a regional portal, working more closely with tangata whenua and communities, aligning emissions tracking between councils, and looking at options like solar energy to reduce costs and emissions.



Country's first fully electric bus fleet leading the way

Palmerston North became home to the country's first fully electric bus network from March 2024 - and it's clear people are making the most of it.

Before the new network, public transport use in the city was decreasing. In its first year of use, patronage on the new Palmerston North electric network grew 41.3%, with more than 1 million passenger trips taken. Growth is looking just as strong in the network's second year, with the network carrying more than 2 million people between launch day and the end of 2025.

With buses running every 30 minutes from 6.30am until 9pm daily, and as often as every 15 minutes at peak times, people are taking advantage of the fast, frequent and direct services.

The new fleet is also making a big environmental difference. In their first 22 months of service (March 2024 - December 2025), the new electric buses prevented 1.47 million litres of diesel from being used and stopped 4,460 tonnes of CO2 equivalents from being released into the atmosphere. You would have to plant 202,700 trees and let them grow for 10 years to offset that much CO2. The cleaner buses also prevented the release of 2.3 tonnes of air pollution.

Delivered by Horizons Regional Council, the new network is helping the city achieve its goals of reducing emissions from transport while also reducing congestion for people who need to drive.

Palmerston North residents will soon have another low-carbon transport option, with the Palmerston North-Feilding bus service going fully electric from June 2026. Buses will operate between Feilding and Palmerston North from 6.30am to 8.00pm on weekdays, and 8.00am to 7.00pm on weekends, with increased frequency during peak times, including school runs.

Small changes, big impact at our libraries

On any given day, our library teams are finding simple ways to waste less and share more.

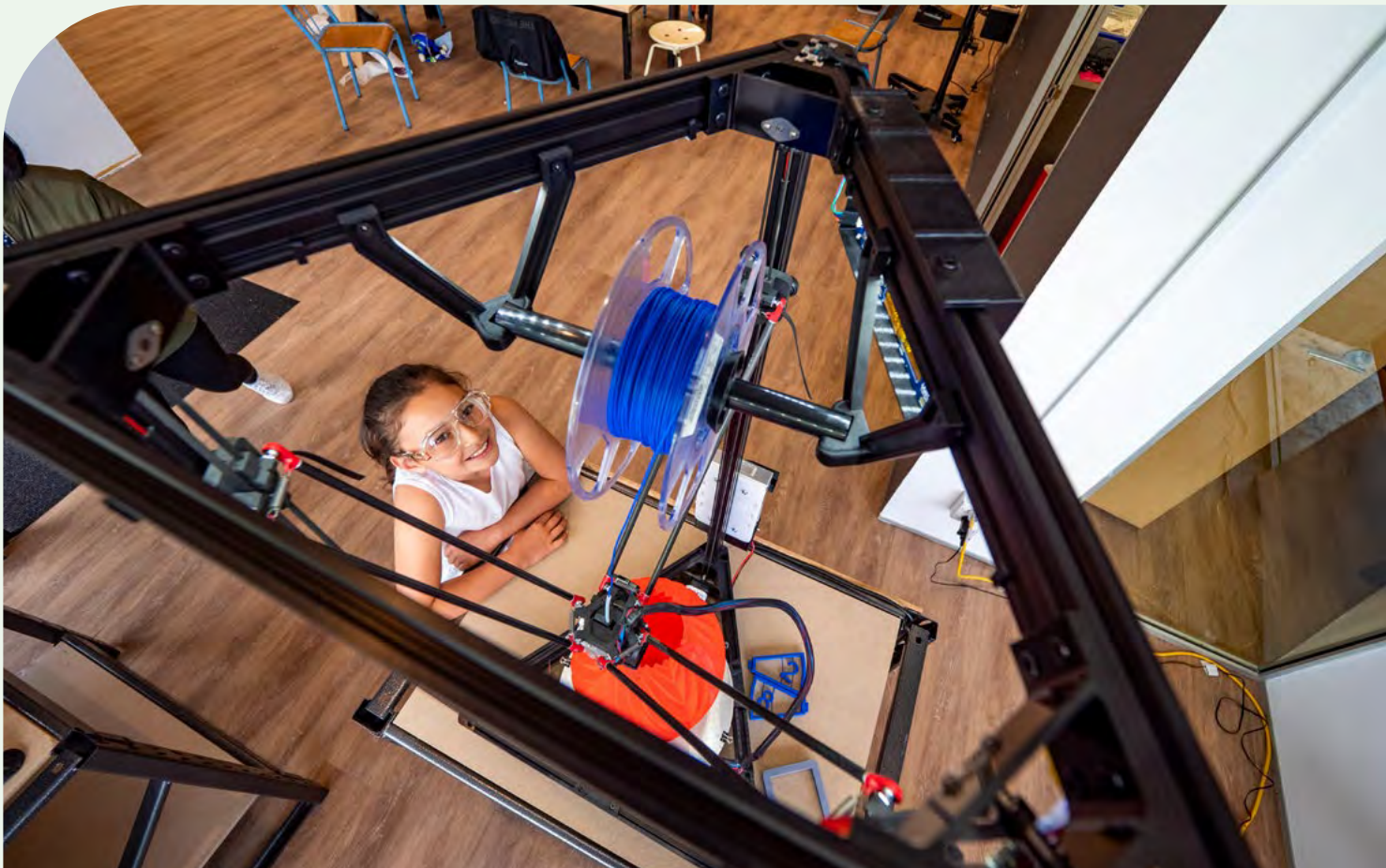
All libraries have collection points for used batteries and spots where reusable fabric bags can be picked up or left for others.

Old dog registration tags can also be dropped off at Central Library for recycling. Customers often take yesterday's newspapers to reuse, with the rest recycled, and signs at water coolers encourage people to refill their own bottles instead of using disposable cups.

Behind the scenes, small changes are adding up. Most notices and reminders are now sent by email or text, saving paper and postage, and library cards can be scanned directly from a phone app. Suppliers use recyclable packing chips, and the community regularly share surplus fruit, seeds or garden plants.

At Blueprint, waste is kept to a minimum. Old 3D printer filament is returned to be remade, failed prints are recycled into sheets, and fabric scraps and wood offcuts are reused for community projects.

Awapuni Library has also made a simple swap, replacing paper cups with reusable tumblers. Awapuni Community Librarian Laura Clifford says the change has been easy and well received, saving thousands of cups from landfill and earning plenty of positive feedback from the community.



Find out more
about what
we're doing:

pncc.govt.nz

  @PNCityCouncil



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