



Waikato District Council

Turning the tide on waste - together

**Waste Minimisation and
Management Plan 2025-2031**

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www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz

Waikato

District Council
Te Kaunihera aa Takiwaa o Waikato



Intro from the Mayor

Kia ora and hello everyone.

Over the past two years council has been looking at our waste services and waste minimisation programme, all to prepare to renew this plan.

Council is required by the Ministry for the Environment to have a Waste Minimisation and Management Plan, but more than that, we hear that waste services are really important to our people.

We see through your engagement with our waste minimisation events and education that there is a desire there to work together to improve waste outcomes for our district.

The plan sets out what council will do for waste minimisation and management for the next six years and how that will be funded.

It covers council responsibilities under several parliamentary acts, and core services. There are also five areas where council seeks to partner with, and enable, our community and business sector to turn the tide on waste.

It focuses on how to reduce food waste from the paddock to the plate, how we can support the construction and demolition industry to slow their waste streams and how we can better support waste outcomes in our rural communities.

It also looks for opportunities where funding can be directed to improve waste outcomes and the financial bottom line, for both council and the private sector by leaning into the circular economy.

It also has actions to bring a kaitiakitanga approach - or stewardship of the environment - to waste

minimisation, so that the work we do is inspired by protection of te taio - our environment.

I am buoyed by the plan's vision to turn the tide on waste – of working together to turn the focus from waste disposal to waste minimisation. And of decreasing the amount of waste going to landfill, on recovering resources and on seeing waste as a resource.

The plan gathers all of our waste aims in one kete (basket), which allows us to keep track of our commitments, to share our vision and to inspire our communities to join us to achieve shared outcomes.

Everything in here is building on our council vision of:

He noohanga aahuru, he iwi whai ora, he hapori tuuhono tahi.

Our vision is to build liveable, thriving, connected communities.

“Let’s turn the tide on waste - together.”

Ngaa mihi,
Regards,

Jacqui Church
Mayor

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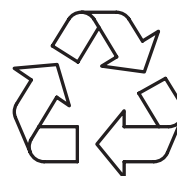


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Introduction

Waikato's plan to turn the tide on waste

We know doing the right thing with rubbish and recycling is important to our community. Waste can harm us, te taiao – the environment and wildlife. It's a wasted resource and leads to landfills filling up fast - and creating greenhouse gases like methane which contributes to climate change impacts.



This Plan forms council's pathway to turn the tide on these negative impacts of waste - and shows how, together, we can move towards a lower waste society, where our community has opportunities to learn and reduce waste at the outset.

Councils play an important role in managing and minimising waste in New Zealand. The Waste Minimisation Act 2008 gives councils the responsibility to promote effective and efficient waste management and minimisation within their district. The Act also requires councils to adopt a waste minimisation and management plan (WMMP), which must be reviewed every six years.

This plan

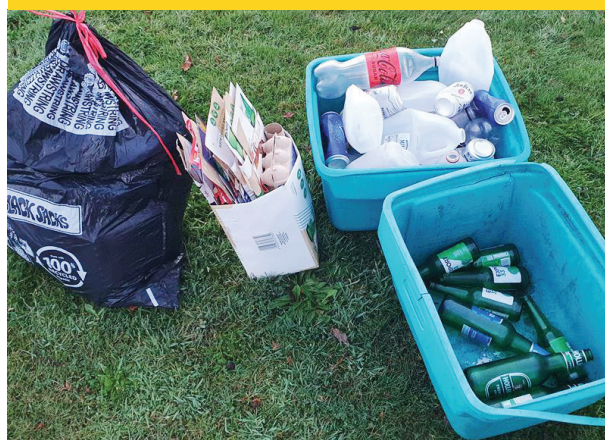
- Provides direction and actions for council to achieve waste prevention, increase recycling and reduce waste to landfill.
- Helps us to efficiently plan for our communities' needs, now and in the future.
- Ensures we comply with central government obligations.
- Allows council to access funding from central government via the waste disposal levy, for the implementation of this plan and the infrastructure required to deliver council's vision.
- Allows us to track our progress and measure our success.

How this plan supports council's vision

Effective waste minimisation and management aligns with council's vision:

**He noohanga aahuru,
he iwi whai ora, he hapori
tuuhono tahi.**

**Our vision is to build
liveable, thriving, connected
communities.**



How this plan supports community outcomes

Council wants to achieve great community outcomes for the Waikato district into the future. Our waste work contributes to these outcomes:



Cultural Ahurea

We celebrate who we are.

Ka whakanui maatou i too maatou katoa.

- **Consideration of Te Ao Maaori principles and practices** in our Waste Minimisation and Management Plan allows for a more informed plan and better alignment with our communities' values.
- **Community consultation** allows us to design a waste minimisation plan and services that provides for our communities' needs.

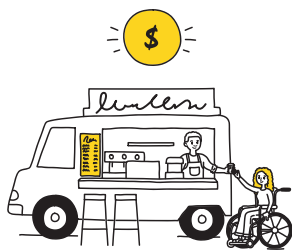


Environmental Taiao

Our environmental health underpins the health of our people.

Ka taunaki too maatou oranga aa-taiao i te oranga o oo taatou iwi.

- **Protection of te taiao** – the environment is achieved by well-structured household waste services.
- **Reducing consumption and increasing recycling and reuse** reduces the impact on Papatuaanuku's natural resources.

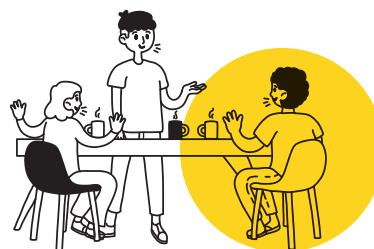


Economic Ohaoha

We support local prosperity.

Ka tautoko maatou i te houkura aa-rohe.

- **By supporting local resource recovery** economic activity we support the district's prosperity.
- **Jobs provided** by the waste and resource recovery sector enables local benefit as well as diverting waste from landfill.



Social Paapori

We have well connected communities.

He hononga whaitake katoa o oo maatou hapori.

- **Delivering waste reduction education** supports information sharing, builds community skills, helps the community save on landfill costs and strengthens community networks.

The WMMP's vision

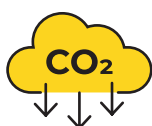
To turn the tide on waste – together.

Our vision is to achieve low waste outcomes for our district by minimising waste, maximising diversion and recycling, and placing a greater emphasis on waste prevention and circular economy thinking. This will result in less waste ending up in landfill. We aim to walk this pathway towards our vision with our communities – encouraging and enabling them to also take opportunities to lead or contribute to low waste outcomes. Turning the tide on waste – together.

Our vision will allow us to achieve the objectives below:

The WMMP's objectives

Our vision will be realised through achieving these objectives:



Protection of our taiao

Providing waste services will help protect the natural environment from harmful effects of waste. A move to low waste, low carbon, circular economy practices will help reduce the use of new natural resources to make things.



Partnerships are our strength

Partnerships with our communities, including mana whenua, business and community stakeholders and other government organisations strengthen our ability to achieve our waste minimisation and management actions - locally and regionally.



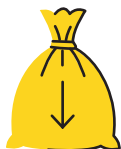
Provide top class services

We strive to provide top class services that suit our communities' needs across social, cultural, spiritual, economic, health and environmental impacts of waste. Our nationally recognised, innovative resource recovery industry is growing.



Economic responsibility

We use council financial resources responsibly, aiming to achieve cost effective services. We advocate or create economic opportunities for business and communities within the waste space.



Low waste is normalised

Our communities, including council teams, are moving towards low waste, by actively engaging in waste avoidance, waste diversion, waste minimisation and resulting in a decrease in waste to landfill.



National contribution

We will represent the Waikato district within national discussions, advocate for waste minimisation and prevention outcomes - such as product stewardship and reuse schemes, and work towards carbon reduction from our waste sector.



The WMMP supports and aligns with council's plans and strategies:

- Annual Plan
- Long Term Plan
- Taiao (Nature) in the Waikato Strategy
- Climate Response and Resilience Strategy
- Waikato District Community Blueprint



Funding

This plan's actions and outcomes are funded by a range of sources. How individual actions are funded are specified in section "The Action Plan" on page 21.

Weekly waste services

One of the biggest connections council has with the community is the weekly collection of rubbish and recycling. These services are funded by a mixed funding model. Currently most of the cost is covered by targeted rates from eligible properties. A smaller proportion currently comes from 'user pays' via rubbish bag sticker and tag sales.

Illegal dumping and litter bin servicing

These services are funded via the general rate as they are district-wide services.

Waste Disposal Levy

Council receives funding from the Ministry for the Environment, called the Waste Disposal Levy (the levy). This funding is used predominantly for all of the waste minimisation education and community projects in this plan. This funding does have some conditions on how it will be used, and it must be:

- Allocated to waste minimisation activities in, and with, our communities, such as avoiding waste generation and increasing resource recovery.
- In-line with *The Government's waste and resource efficiency strategy 2025*.
- Planned for, approved by council and listed in this plan.

More on the levy

The Ministry for the Environment collects levies for waste disposed of at landfills. The levy collected by the ministry for class 1 landfills has increased from \$10 per tonne in 2021 to \$60 per tonne in 2024. Since 2023, levies have also been applied to other classes of landfill. (see table opposite).

Half the levy collected by the ministry is allocated out to councils (based on population levels) for use in waste minimisation.

The remaining half of the levy is retained by the ministry for allocation to waste projects - like building recycling infrastructure and landfill remediation, environmental projects (like improving harbour water quality) and to cover ministry costs. These allocations are subject to change by government.

Facility Class	Waste types	1 July 2024	1 July 2025	1 July 2026	1 July 2027
Municipal landfill (class 1)	Mixed municipal wastes from residential, commercial and industrial sources	\$60	\$65	\$70	\$75
Construction and demolition fill (class 2)	Accepts solid waste from construction and demolition activities, including rubble, plasterboard, timber, and other materials	\$30	\$35	\$40	\$45
Managed or controlled fill facility (class 3 and class 4)	One or more of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contaminated but non-hazardous soils and other inert materials (eg, rubble) soils and other inert materials. 	\$10	\$15	\$10	\$20

Due to the initial levy increase and expansion to other fill types, the revenue allocated to Waikato District Council from the waste levy increased over the last few years. For example, the last quarter before the increased levy was applied Waikato received \$69,900 from the Ministry for the Environment (Q1 2021/22), and in the last quarter of 2024 it was \$450,621.



Note: Although it is likely that councils will continue receive funding from the waste levy there is some uncertainty in this funding area. As such, Waikato District Council may need to seek further/alternative funding such as co-funding opportunities with other local councils, central government or private business, to achieve actions listed in this plan. If the criteria for the levy changes or the amount council receives reduces then this will impact on the council's ability to deliver this plan.



Influence from Waikato and beyond

Our focus is on outcomes for the Waikato district, but we must also align with New Zealand-wide policies, international agreements and respond to the international recycling markets:



Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato

Te Ture Whaimana is the primary direction setting document for the Waikato River and activities which affect it. It sits ahead of all other subordinate legislation or planning documents under the Resource Management Act (1991).

The vision of Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato is:

“Tooku awa koiora me oona pikonga he kura tangihia o te maataamuri.”

...“for a future where a healthy Waikato River sustains abundant life and prosperous communities who, in turn, are all responsible for restoring and protecting the health and wellbeing of the Waikato River, and all it embraces, for generations to come.”

Many different types of pollutants have the potential to affect river water quality, including waste from litter and illegal dumping.

National policy

The Government's waste and resource efficiency strategy

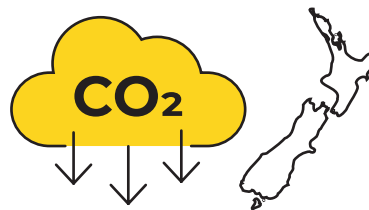
The Ministry for the Environment's *The Government's waste and resource efficiency strategy 2025* presents the Government's priorities for minimising waste and improving waste management.

Changes needed right now:

The new Government Waste and Resource Efficiency Strategy sets out what the Government wants to achieve, and the tools to help the country get there.

These are the outcomes it sets to achieve:

1. Reduction of waste disposal per person.
2. Increasing reuse and recycling of materials and products so that we retain valuable resources in the economy.
3. Minimising emissions and environmental harm from waste and litter.
4. Ensuring resource recovery and disposal facilities are managed to minimise their environmental impacts.
5. Limiting the environmental harm caused by contaminated sites including legacy sites.

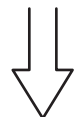


Emissions reduction

In Aotearoa New Zealand's Emissions Reduction Plan 2022 the government committed to:

A minimum of **10% reduction in biogenic methane emissions by 2030**

24 to 47% reduction by 2050 compared with 2017



New Zealand's second Emissions Reduction Plan (2026-2030) closed for consultation in August 2024 and will set the direction for climate action for the next five years. It outlines the seven key policies which the government believes will have the greatest impact on reducing emissions. It focuses on sectors that are the key drivers of emissions – energy, transport, agriculture, forestry and waste. Councils are expected to play their part in these actions. These include:

- A proportion of the Waste Minimisation Fund (the central government portion of the Waste Disposal Levy) will target infrastructure projects and systems that reduce organic waste and emissions.
- Develop and implement schemes for businesses, manufacturers and consumers to take responsibility for the products they produce and buy (product stewardship schemes).
- Expand and upgrade resource recovery facilities (including transfer stations).
- Enabling households and businesses to reduce organic waste.
- Increasing the amount of organic waste diverted from landfill.
- Reducing and diverting construction and demolition waste (and reusing it where possible).
- Increasing the capture of greenhouse gases from municipal landfills by determining which landfill types accept which types of organic waste, reviewing the scope of landfills that require landfill gas capture systems (including smaller facilities) and improving settings to raise the average gas capture efficiency.

We're going to need to make changes to achieve the 40% reduction in emissions from waste by 2035 (relative to 2017 levels). Those changes will impact everything...from waste systems, to what we do as individuals.

International recycling markets

International recycling markets have shifted significantly since 2017. Historically, China was the largest buyer of recyclables, at one stage purchasing more than 50% of all the world's supply.

In 2017 the Chinese Government restricted the importation of 24 types of material. This created a

global surplus of recyclables like paper, cardboard and mixed plastics, and prices paid for recyclables dropped significantly.

Added to that, the Basel Convention (listed to the right) bans sending unsorted recycling offshore.

In response, the Aotearoa New Zealand Government standardised the items that can be collected in kerbside recycling across the country and banned some hard-to-recycle plastics. The government is also looking to increase investment in reprocessing of recycling, with the aim of processing as much of our own recycling as we can, right here in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

All of this means the **quality** of recycling we collect, and sort is more critical than ever.

International agreements



Aotearoa New Zealand is party to the following international agreements:

- **Montreal Protocol** – aims to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of numerous harmful substances.
- **Basel Convention** – aims to reduce the movement of hazardous waste between nations.
- **Stockholm Convention** – aims to eliminate or restrict the production of and use of persistent organic pollutants.
- **Waigani Convention** – bans export of hazardous or radioactive waste to Pacific Islands Forum countries.

Impacts of international policies and agreements can influence the waste sector, such as:

- The products we can sell from local recycling sorting facilities
- Whether our contractors can export them for processing.
- This can affect costs, including what our ratepayers might need to pay for specific waste services.





Views on waste

How we view waste affects how we deal with it

There are many ways people view waste, such as something to be got rid of – or as something that should never have been created. Views have also changed over time and continue to change with our rangitahi being more knowledgeable and concerned around waste and environmental issues than any generation before them.

There are some key concepts used internationally and locally to frame how we create items and keep 'waste' in use (the circular economy), how we can best approach reducing waste at the outset, plus a framework for what happens to an item after its primary use is over (the waste hierarchy). And how the principles and practice of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) could also show the way forward for how we handle waste in the Waikato District.

These are all great frameworks to keep in mind when thinking about the issues and problems we will be working on.

The waste hierarchy

We’re all familiar with “reduce, reuse, recycle”.

But the reality is that, while we see a lot of recycling, we don’t see much reducing or reusing. In addition to reuse, reduce, recycle there are other steps that need to be added – such as rethinking or redesigning – as well as how to reduce our consumption in the first place.

The waste hierarchy puts how we deal with waste into a preferred order, with the best option

avoiding waste all together, and the least preferred is disposal (such as to landfill or incineration).

Individual actions or nationwide policy at the top of the triangle can have more impact than actions or policy at the lower point of the triangle. In general, actions further up the hierarchy can reduce the costs at a lower level, while environmental impact is generally reduced at higher levels.

Te rautaki para - Waste hierarchy.

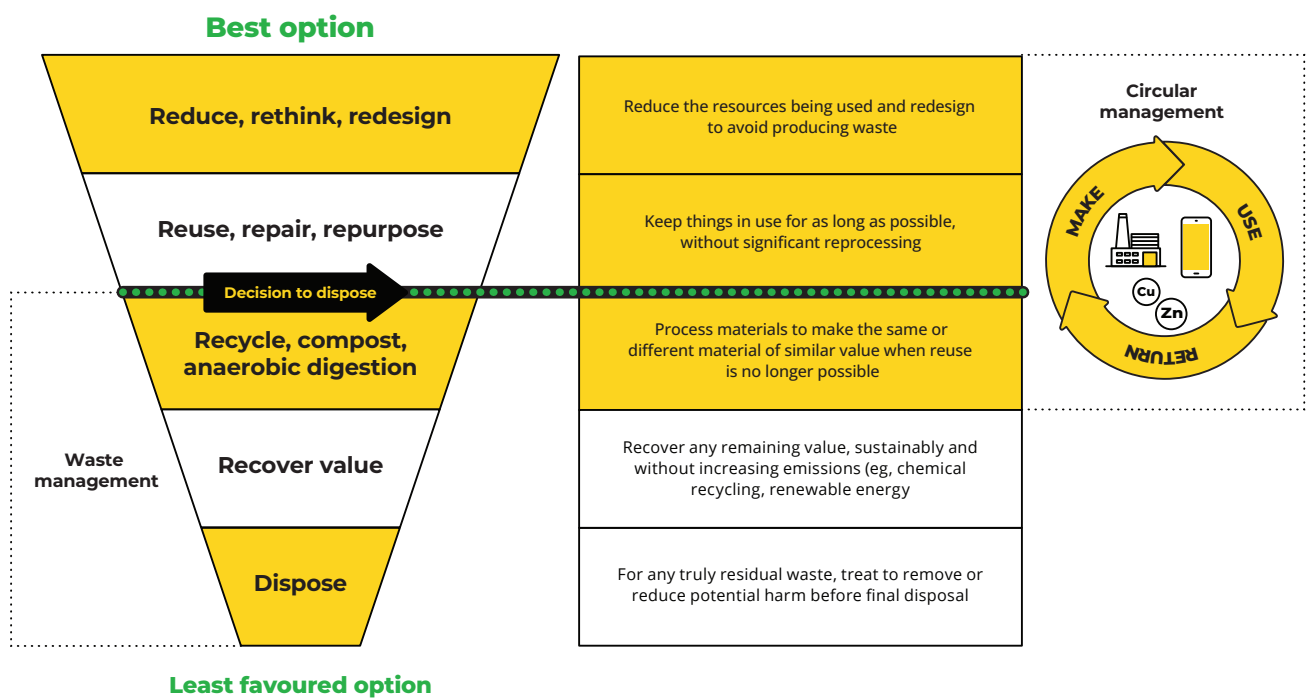
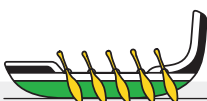


Image of the waste hierarchy and links to the circular economy



The circular economy - Ōhanga āmiomio – keeping things in use

The circular economy describes a system where waste is designed out before it is created, as opposed to the traditional 'take-make-waste' of a linear economy. Products are made from high quality materials so they can last. The materials are also easy to re-use or recycle, and so materials are kept in use and don't need to be chucked out. This helps keep the environment protected from excessive primary resource use (e.g. mining). It also helps the consumer, as everything you buy could be repaired, returned, refurbished by the retailer or manufacturer - not piling up in your garage or dumped in landfill.

World leaders in the circular economy, the *Ellen McArthur foundation*, state:

"The circular economy is based on three principles, driven by design:

- *Eliminate waste and pollution*
- *Circulate products and materials (at their highest value)*
- *Regenerate nature*

It is underpinned by a transition to renewable energy and materials. A circular economy decouples economic activity from the consumption of finite

resources. It is a resilient system that is good for business, people and the environment."

Minimising waste generation leads to a more efficient use of natural resources, reduced pollution and less harm to our environment.

A simple example of circular economy in practice is using a metal drink bottle instead of many single use plastic water bottles. The bottle can be used for many years, and then if needed could be recycled into another bottle.

Another example is leasing, not owning, whiteware. If repairs are needed, the company who made it comes and repairs it. If it can't be repaired, a replacement is provided to you, and the company takes the unrepairable one away. When the manufacturer is responsible for repair of broken items, and any items that are 'unrepairable', they soon consider longevity in their design ideas. For example, they will rethink the design to make sure the part that is failing most often is easily accessed, and replaceable. When companies sell products and leave repair and end disposal to the customer (our current system) they are much less motivated to make it repairable or easily able to be refurbished and resold.

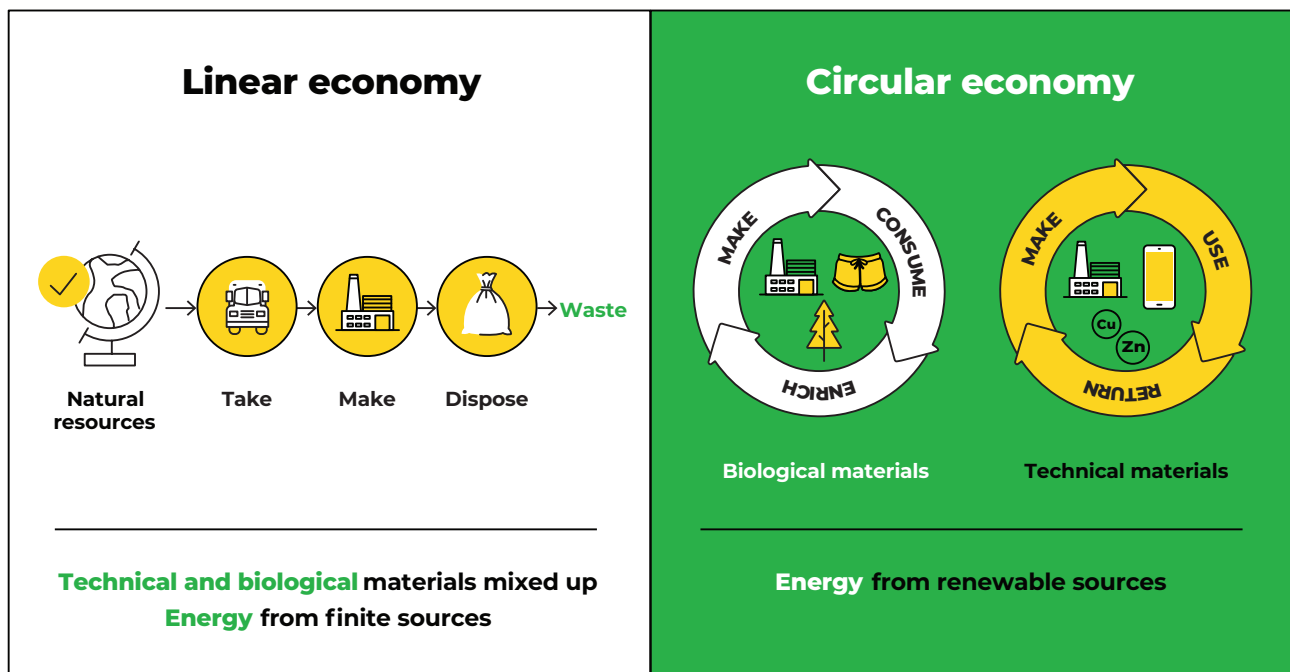


Image from the Ministry for the Environment



Waikato district's movement towards a circular economy

Consumer demand for waste reduction is seeing a small but growing number of circular products, systems and solutions coming to market in New Zealand. Council's Zero Waste Guide 2024 listed over 30 Waikato businesses and organisations offering products or services in the waste reduction and circular economy space.

A few examples are:

- A dairy farm providing milk in refillable glass bottles.
- A resource recovery operator processing disused plasterboard into lime to be added to compost.
- Food rescue collaborations where producers, manufacturers and wholesalers donate surplus food to food banks to distribute it through the community.

We can build on these steps and take guidance from the government's "Waste and resource efficiency work programme 2024 to 2026" to support the roll-out and up-take of mandatory product stewardship schemes and any future container return scheme. Regional direction for us is guided by the Waikato Regional Council, with its publication *The journey to a circular economy in the Waikato region* and research on *circularising organics* and *return to reuse*.

We can also urge and support the government to make some of the big changes that council needs to help us, and help our local community to transition to a circular economy. And to advocate for what will help our community e.g. regional infrastructure and mandated rural waste product stewardship schemes.

Kaitiakitanga and waste management

The traditional knowledge systems that guided the way Maaori interacted with the taiao (environment) and practiced kaitiakitanga (guardianship) could offer a way forward in leading waste management.

The concept of a circular economy emphasises kaitiakitanga and the interconnectedness of all living systems within our taiao. Being good kaitiaki (guardians) means taking responsible steps today to protect and sustain resources for our mokopuna and future generations.

By minimising waste, we uphold our responsibility to protect and restore the taiao and recognise the holistic relationship between land, waterways, and oceans — ki uta ki tai (from the mountains to the sea). This approach reflects the understanding that waste and pollution on land inevitably impact our rivers and ultimately flow to the sea.

These values inspire waste management strategies that honour the reciprocal relationship between people and the environment, fostering a way forward where resources are continuously reused, and the burden on our environment reduced.

Over time and through partnering with Maaori, we want to learn more about pathways to integrate more Te Ao Maaori principles and values into our plan now and in the future.



Waste changes over time

We last looked in-depth at Waikato's waste in 2017/18. A lot has changed with waste across Aotearoa/New Zealand since then....

In 2018

Central government's waste strategy for New Zealand was already eight years old and contained no goals, actions or responsibilities.

The waste disposal levy, charged by the Ministry for the Environment was
\$10 a tonne
and was only applied to Class 1 landfills.



China announced it would no longer accept recycled materials from other countries. This meant New Zealand (and other nations) had far fewer recycling options.

Many of us relied on single use plastic items, like plastic shopping bags, and couldn't imagine life without them.

In 2018 the gate fee per tonne at landfill was
\$81.74 per tonne.



The carbon impact of waste services, landfills and our consumer society was rarely discussed.



In 2024

A new national strategic document, Te rautaki para - Waste strategy (2023), has targets for the nation, government and local councils. In March 2025 this was replaced by a new strategy "The Government's waste and resource efficiency strategy".



The waste disposal levy for Class 1 landfills is
\$60 a tonne increasing to \$75 per tonne by 1 July 2027.
The levy is also now applied (at lower levels) to construction and demolition fills (class 2) & managed or controlled fill facility (class 3 & 4).

The Ministry for the Environment standardised what can be recycled kerbside across the nation. More plastic is being recycled in New Zealand, but some challenges remain with lower value plastics.

Single-use plastic bags were phased out in 2019.

Single-use plastic produce bags, straws and cutlery were phased out in 2023. Communities are generally more aware of responsibilities around waste



In 2024, due to the increased waste levy and rising inflation the
per tonne rate was \$191.



Now waste has its own chapter in the country's first Carbon Reduction Plan. Data shows **4.5%** of all greenhouse gas emissions and **8.5%** of all methane emissions in New Zealand are from the waste sector¹.

CH₄

¹ Waste sector emissions | Ministry for the Environment

What hasn't changed for waste?

What hasn't changed much since 2018 is how we service our community for rubbish and recycling:

- There haven't been substantial changes to the operation of weekly services, or for rural pop-ups and drop-offs.
- The price of sticker and tags (user pays part of rubbish service costs) has not changed since 2018.

And as such, as we looked towards new waste contracts in 2027, work was undertaken to review current services and look to see if there were any opportunities to do things better or more efficiently. The result of this work is a 17a Service Review.

Following the review, staff worked up some suggested service changes to share with councillors. These were workshopped in November 2024, and council will inform and formally consult on waste services changes in the 2025-2034 Long Term Plan. We encourage everyone to have their say! This consultation will be asking for community views on:

- Increasing the user pays charges to be in line with cost increases since it was established in 2017.
- Proposed change to rubbish services so all households have the same service (phasing

out wheelie bins that a small percentage of households in Tuakau have currently).

- Increase weekly recycling capacity by adding a glass recycling crate for each household.
- Proposed increase of the number of rural monthly recycling pop-ups for areas that don't get weekly services.
- Removal of a few businesses that are in the household service route.





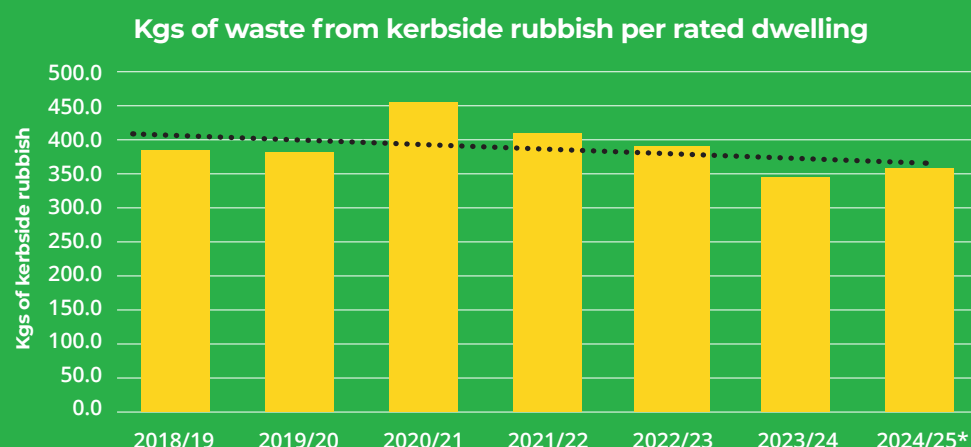
Waikato's waste a snapshot

How much waste we generate, what type of waste it is, and what we do with waste all have big implications on costs and environmental outcomes. Let's take a deeper look...

How much waste?

In 2023/24 households in the Waikato district send approximately 10,045 tonnes of household rubbish to landfills (waste collected from kerbside collections and transfer stations).

We have had a bit of an up and down time with waste volumes over the past few years. In 2020/2021 Covid caused a sizeable jump in volume, but overall, the district hasn't been experiencing steep growth of waste generation, so that is some good news! See graph below:



*The data for 24/25 was the year to date until February 2025 then estimated forward to the end of that financial year.

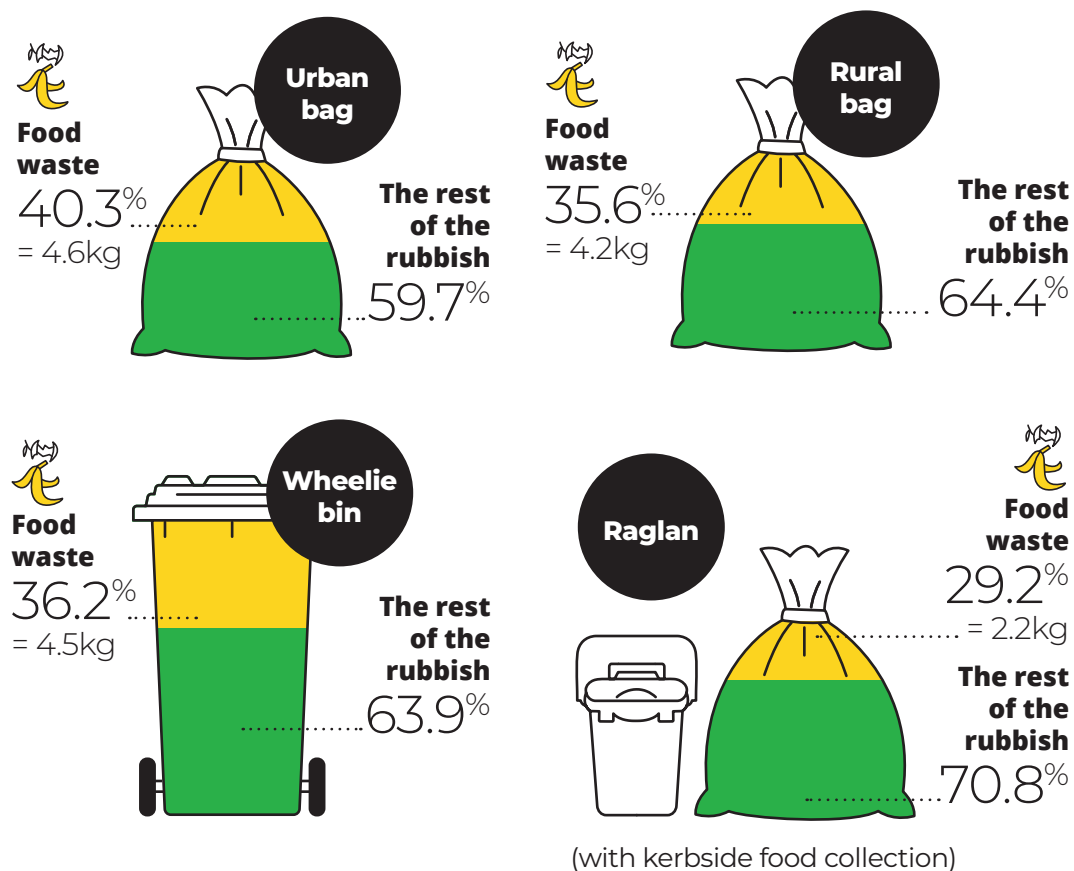
What's in the kerbside waste?

The single biggest source of waste from kerbside collections is 'organic material' which is mostly food waste and some garden waste.



a) Food

Food and food scraps is the largest single waste type in kerbside rubbish (see graphs below, created from our waste audits in 2024, 2022, 2018 and 2013). The lowest percent of food waste in rubbish is found in Raglan bags, where there is a separate food scraps services collection provided.



Food waste is a nationwide trend

The Ministry for the Environment states in Aotearoa New Zealand on average the:

Office worker produces
0.6 kilos of food waste per week

cafés produce
67 kilos of food waste per week

supermarkets produce
1173 kilos of food waste per week



b) Green waste



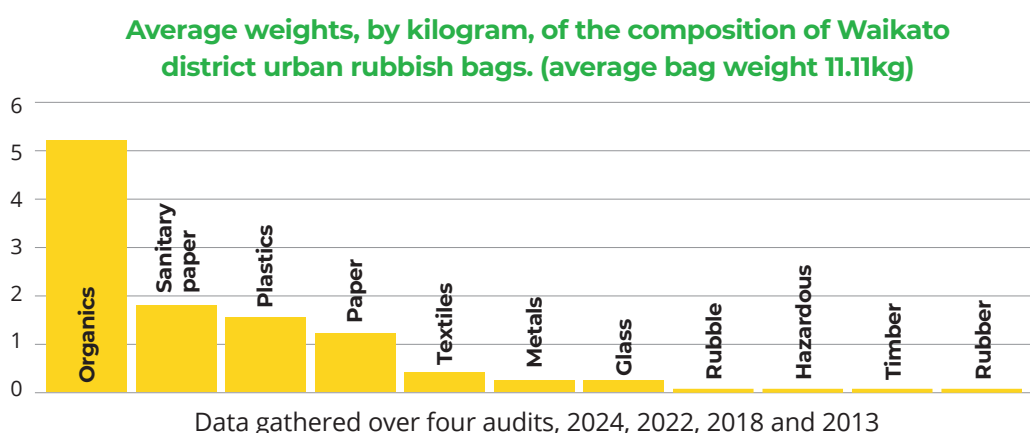
Green waste such as garden prunings and lawn clippings are another large component of kerbside rubbish, especially when a household has a wheelie bin.

For example, households with an urban bag service put out an average of 0.25kg of green waste a week. Wheelie bin serviced household put out more garden waste at 0.77kg a week (averaged over four waste audits).

c) Organics

Putting organics into landfill causes greenhouse gases as bacteria produce methane when they break the organic matter down.

Overall, organics in our rubbish can weigh more than the paper, plastics, metals, glass, textiles, nappies, sanitary waste, rubble, timber, rubber and potentially hazardous waste **put together!** See graph below from our solid waste audit data.



Recyclables

Recyclables are currently a large component of kerbside rubbish.

The 2022 data showed an average of 1.3 kg of good clean recycling goes into the rubbish each week per household.



- Most of it was clean paper and cardboard – which is easy to recycle.
- Plastics were the next most weighty recycling in the rubbish at a third of a kilogram per household set out.

It mightn't sound like much, but when we have 30,070 houses that we collect from, district wide we could have recycled 2,032 **more** tonnes of recycling each year!

How do we know??

Waste audits: We know what's in our kerbside rubbish bags as council regularly does solid waste audits. We collect sample of kerbside rubbish from across our district, and hand sort the contents in to more than 20 categories. These solid waste audits are required by the Ministry for the Environment. The data is used to plan future waste services and guide waste reduction education, and to inform this plan.

The council completed solid waste audits in 2013, 2018 2022 and 2024, averaged results are used in this plan.

Waste assessments: In 2023, the council completed a waste assessment which assessed waste services (private, council and community-led). It considered specific waste types, future demand, government policy implications, carbon impacts and potential opportunities.

Beyond kerbside

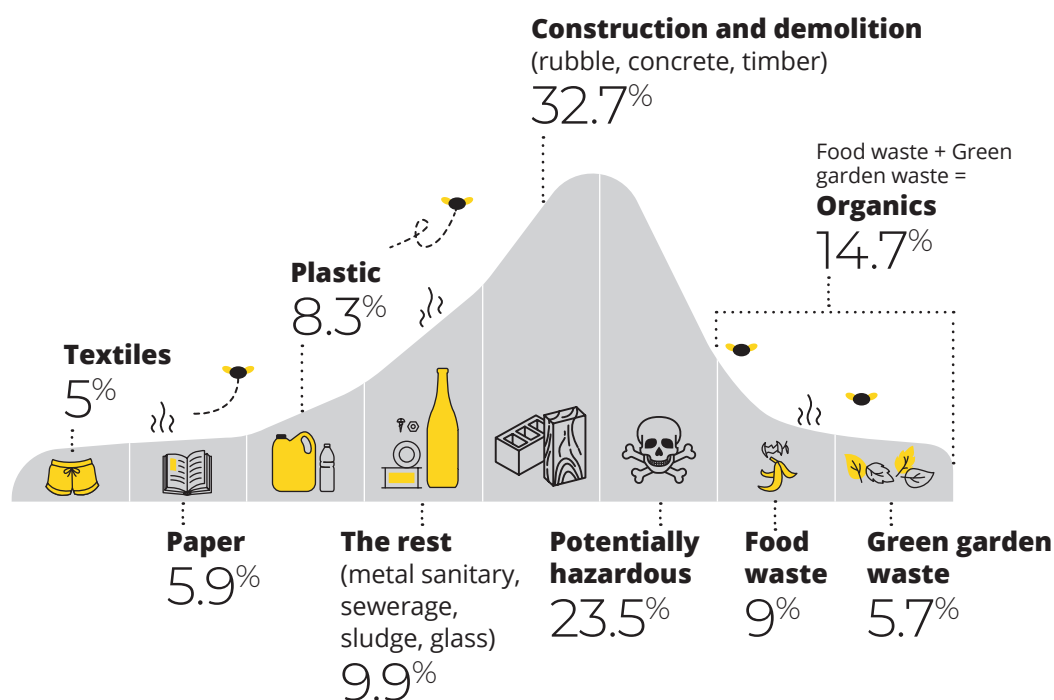
Kerbside data doesn't represent the whole 'waste pie'. There is a large amount of waste sent to landfill that is generated by industry, and handled by commercial waste operators (not council), and from residents using skip bins for clean-ups. We can rely on national data for general trends.

Largest waste streams

National surveys of Class 1 municipal landfills (that take household, commercial, industrial, medical and green waste) in a 2020 report by Waste Not consulting for the Ministry for the Environment show:

- Construction and demolition waste is the largest source of waste at 32.7%
- Potentially hazardous waste was second largest at 23.5%
- Food waste at 9%
- Plastics at 8.3%
- Garden waste 5.7%

Waste composition of Class 1 landfills in Aotearoa NZ



Note: The Ministry for the Environment is best placed to estimate what our largest waste streams are, but even the Ministry concedes the data is poor. To improve that, from 1 July 2024 legislation was enacted making waste facility operators (landfill owners and operators) record the tonnages of waste disposed at, and diverted from, their facility as well as (for the first time) collect data and report on the source of the waste they receive. Over time we will have a much clearer image of what kind of rubbish and how much of it ends up in a landfill.

Note: At time of writing the Council is waiting for Government direction on whether they will licence centrally or whether all local councils will need to licence each operator. If it's the latter, council is already working cross regionally on a waste operator licencing project, so all operators can be licenced to cover the Waikato region and the Bay of Plenty region once, rather than by each council.



In 2025, there was no data or information to say that Waikato would be any different from the rest of New Zealand from 'our' waste in Class 1 municipal landfills. In fact, we may have even be worse as regional areas like ours do not have access to as many infrastructure solutions (like construction and demolition material recovery facilities) as metro areas.

Resource recovery centres – pulling their weight in waste diversion

Ministry for the Environment data shows for waste sent to class 1-4 landfills for the 2023/24 year, only 10.8% was diverted. However, waste that is sent to transfer stations for the same year had 41.5% diversion.²

Xtreme Zero Waste in Raglan runs a long-established resource recovery centre that engages with customers to keep as much waste out of landfill and in use in the community as possible. Recent data shows they divert just over 50% of everything that enters their site, making it a national leader in diverting waste from landfill and showing that investing in resource recovery centres is an effective way to help our communities prevent waste.



² [*Waste facilities and disposal | Ministry for the Environment*](#)

The action plan

What will we do...

Waikato District Council has a set of actions to be undertaken from 2025-2031. The actions span three areas:

- Core services
- Opportunities to improve
- Council responsibilities.



Core services

Core services include actions that council has statutory responsibilities to deliver, and services that our communities value.

Provide appropriate waste services for the community:

Actions	Sign of success
<p>Services</p> <p>Rubbish collection services provided to all eligible residential dwellings.</p> <p>Recycling collection services provided to all eligible residential dwellings, schools, kura and early childhood education centres.</p> <p>Funding: rates, user pays and waste levy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less than 30 substantiated complaints received from the community about missed weekly waste collections per month.• Councils service request KPI's are met annually.
<p>Educate</p> <p>Continue education and encouragement for our communities on waste prevention on good purchasing decisions, recycling practices and reducing rubbish to landfill.</p> <p>Funding: waste levy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least one educational promotion per quarter.• The amount of recyclable material in the rubbish reduces over time (from 2024 baseline)
<p>Increase capacity</p> <p>Provide new crates to increase recycling capacity [depending on outcome of Long Term Plan consultation].</p> <p>Plan for replacement of older recycling crates as they age and deteriorate.</p> <p>Funding: waste levy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An increase in recycling volume from the year prior to additional crate provision.• A project to offer replacement of older style crates is rolled out by the start (or as part) of the new waste contracts (July 2027).
<p>Support</p> <p>Support recycling outcomes for standard kerbside recycling items.</p> <p>Funding: waste levy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure maximum recycling outcomes are achieved for standard kerbside material.

Litter and illegal dumping

Having a tidy district is important to our residents.

Actions	Sign of success
Litter bins Provide appropriate level of service for public litter bins. Funding source: rates (services), levy (policy).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Measured through contract management.• 75%+ Customer satisfaction with 'waste collection services' measured from the customer satisfaction quarterly survey.• Policy is created by the end of 2026 to inform where new litter bins are installed and to guide a review of current litter bin locations and levels of service. Review, including consultation is completed by the end of 2028.
Address illegal dumping Continue to address illegal dumping across the district. Funding source: rates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The overall percentage of service requests responded to within agreed timeframes (83%)• The overall percentage of service requests completed by Council within agreed timeframes (77%)
Reduce Research, education and enforcement projects to reduce illegal dumping. Funding source: rates – this would need to be approved as a new budget via the Long Term Plan process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver at least two projects by 2031.



Behaviour change programmes focused on the waste hierarchy

The council will continue to deliver an annual education programme that delivers on this plan's goals and actions, and helps our community send less waste to landfill and hopefully saves them some money too.

In 2024 the Waste Minimisation Community Fund was offered for the first time and was oversubscribed. The council will continue to support community-led waste minimisation projects via this annual contestable fund targeted to enable community ownership of their waste projects and outcomes.

Actions	Sign of success
Education Waste minimisation education and engagement programmes are delivered across the district. This will be achieved by direct council delivery, in partnership and by trusted providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme results in over 1,000 kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) engagements each year. And increases by 100 engagements year on year.
Funding Offer an annual Community Waste Minimisation Fund for local waste minimisation projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of eligible applications received and/or funding requested amount is steady or increasing year on year. • Over 75% of funded projects report positive outcomes of their funding allocations.
Pop-up collections Pop-up events are planned, district-wide, to help the community to do the right thing with hard to handle wastes e.g. household hazardous materials, e-waste.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least three events are run per year that help our community safely dispose of or recycle, hard to handle waste streams.
Event waste Support small community event co-ordinators, larger (ticketed) event businesses and council run events, to reduce waste generation, increase recycling and composting, and embed reuse systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2029 have event waste resources and/or event reuse systems that can be used district wide. (e.g. bin covers, signage, wash trailer). • Develop process to support small events with funding for composting and recycling service costs.
Learning Support community capacity by funding attendance at hui, training, or workshop opportunities on relevant waste topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented offers of support for the community to attend.
Funding source: waste levy.	

Opportunities to improve

Five opportunities to improve waste reduction in our district were highlighted in the 2024 Waikato Waste Assessment:

1. Enable greater kaitiakitanga approaches to waste minimisation
2. Support better outcomes for waste from farms and rural communities
3. Increase diversion options for organic waste
4. Tackle construction and demolition waste
5. Seeing (and using) “waste” as a resource to support the movement towards a circular economy

Enable greater kaitiakitanga approaches to waste minimisation.

Actions	Sign of success
Partnerships Partner more actively with whaanau, marae, hapuu, iwi and Maaori organisations to support the kaupapa around waste minimisation and para kore.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One partnership or collaborative event/ engagement/education session every two years with mana whenua or Maaori groups. And include the considerations of Maaori organisations including Waikato Tainui and Para Kore.
Funding Actively encourage marae and Maaori organisations to apply for waste minimisation community funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An increase in eligible applications from marae and Maaori organisations from 2024 baseline.
Support Support organisations and businesses that are leaders in the Maaori waste sector to lead work locally.	Relative to 2024 baseline an increase in: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financially supported targeted delivery in Waikato• Connections and partnerships are formed with Maaori providers and partners.

Funding source: waste levy.



Rural / farm waste

There are a large number of rural properties and farms in our district.

Farm plastics and agrichemicals and their containers were deemed priority products for product stewardship by the Ministry for the Environment (under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008) in 2020. As yet neither of these schemes to support recycling of farm plastics and agrichemical containers is live. Private agricultural waste services and the current voluntary product stewardship schemes can be cost prohibitive to farmers and don't cover all farm waste. Distance to travel to service rural communities waste adds a lot of costs, making the market slow to deliver options for rural areas.

There is currently no mandated product stewardship under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 to support recycling of farm plastics and agrichemical containers. These materials were selected by the government as a priority product and the scheme is still in development. Private agricultural waste services and the current voluntary product stewardship schemes can be cost prohibitive to farmers and don't cover all farm waste. Distance to travel to service rural communities waste adds a lot of costs, making the market slow to deliver options for rural areas.

Actions

Sign of success

Minimise and divert

Look to support community-led rural waste minimisation or diversion initiatives and community groups working on these issues.

Deliver pop-up or community events for rural wastes.

- Fund or develop three partnerships or collaborative projects to reduce rural waste by 2031.
- Delivery at least one per year.

Advocate

Continue to advocate to central government for the delivery of the mandated product stewardship schemes that cover farm plastics and agrichemicals.

- Demonstrate that council's waste services team takes each MfE consultation opportunity to advocate for rural waste outcomes.
- Share opportunities to have a voice with rural communities.

Build capacity

Build capacity in the rural community and sector by providing learning opportunities on waste topics to rural leaders/rural waste businesses.

- Documented offers of support for attendance to relevant training, learning or hui are extended through rural, council and community networks.

Raise awareness

Raise awareness of existing recycling solutions for rural waste streams, such as for silage wrap and agrichemical containers.

- Demonstrate sharing information on recycling solutions for rural waste streams with rural communities.

Funding source: waste levy.

Keep organic material out of landfill

Organic waste (food and garden waste) makes up a significant percentage of waste sent to landfill.

District wide waste audits undertaken in 2024, 2022, 2018 and 2013 show that, on average, 46.5 per cent (5.17kg) of our household rubbish is organic material - such as food scraps, waste foods. and garden waste.

Actions	Sign of success
Consult As part of regular service reviews, we will consult with the urban community if they would like a weekly kerbside food scraps service. Funding source: in the case of future kerbside food scraps collections, they will be funded by rates. Containers, education, promotion and some services could be funded by the levy or grants.	If a kerbside food scraps service starts, success will be measured by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Level of participation from eligible households• Reduction of food scraps remaining in kerbside rubbish• Volumes of food scraps diverted from landfill via the service.
Encourage Encouraging home composting and support community composting initiatives. Funding source: waste levy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding is provided for, or council delivers, at least one composting education session per year.• Two community composing collaborations per year from 2028/29, in partnership with committed community projects such as mara kai and community gardens.
Partner Partner with businesses, community groups or organisations to reduce food waste anywhere in the system from the paddock to the plate. Funding source: waste levy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participate/support/fund two partnerships or collaborations in the food waste prevention space by 2031.
Education Provide community education focused on reducing food waste in the home. Funding source: waste levy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fund or deliver at least one education offering per year on reducing food waste in the home.• Educate on possibilities of future kerbside food scrap collection services in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 years.



Diversion of construction and demolition waste

Construction is a major sector of the Waikato economy, and all new urban, business and industrial development contributes to construction waste. Ministry for the Environment surveys of Class 1 municipal landfills in 2020 show that construction and demolition waste at a third of material in a landfill being this type of waste.

It is not easy to access construction and demolition waste services in all corners of our district and there are challenges for commercial businesses finding viable markets. The scale of these solutions often needs government-level support or at least regional co-operation. Council will be open and proactive to enabling options for construction and demolition waste to become available/viable in our district.

Actions	Sign of success
Fund Fund infrastructure at transfer stations and resource recovery centres to divert this from landfill and enable circular economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where economical and physically feasible, by 2028 all waste sites in council control have a specific construction and demolition bin that will be post sorted.
Support Support the construction industry to reduce waste and/or increase resource recovery of construction and demolition materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff to continue to connect with the construction and building sector to work in partnership for waste minimisation. Fund or develop two partnerships or collaborative projects for construction and demolition waste minimisation by 2031.
Investigate Investigate the feasibility of de-construction social enterprise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A feasibility study on deconstruction social enterprise is completed and presented to council by 2028.
Advocate Advocate to government for equitable regional access to government-funded diversion infrastructure and to progress product stewardship schemes for large construction and demolition waste streams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council's waste service team to take every consultation opportunity to advocate for regional equality for construction and demolition infrastructure investment.
Increase capacity Consider creating a staff role to focus on construction and demolition waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions and engagements on construction and demolition are increased from baseline (prior to specific staff starting).
Raise awareness Raise awareness of existing diversion solutions for construction and demolition waste streams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate sharing information on prevention and re-use of construction and demolition waste.

Funding source: waste levy.

Using waste as a resource

“There is no such thing as waste – just material in the wrong place.”

Michael Thompson, ‘Rubbish Theory’ (1979).

Seeing ‘waste’ as a resource is a totally different way of thinking. It does require systems level change that will need to be led internationally and nationally. It would mean working towards a circular, low waste and low carbon model, and away from the extractive, high natural resource use linear towards landfill model that we have now. This is a long-range culture, and systems shift but small projects can be enacted locally that would reduce waste to landfill and can support other council priorities around wellbeing, employment and economic development.

Some examples are: recycling precious metals from e-waste, commercial food waste collection by bike to be composted, micro business repairing one brand of whiteware for social resale. These are all happening right now, in New Zealand. Businesses like this often have low set up costs and could be eligible to apply to Community Waste Minimisation Funding. Once operating they could be a real earner for a community group, social enterprise or entrepreneur that they can grow at a speed that suits them.

Actions	Sign of success
Increase participation Support increased understanding of, and participation in the circular economy by locally operated businesses and industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund or develop two partnerships or collaborative projects to increase participation in the circular economy by 2031.
Raise awareness and boost Raise awareness of existing circular economy solutions in our district and boost their impact where practical.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate sharing information on circular economy success stories, or ways to get involved. • Facilitate connections between parties to enable collaboration.
Support Regional reuse solutions using waste as a resource typically needs scale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out/develop two partnerships or collaborative projects in this space by 2031 • Participate in regional and national forums. • Be open to supporting projects that are out of district but provide opportunity or benefit to the Waikato district community.
Community benefit Support or enable participation and infrastructure by community and local groups in any national container return scheme that is rolled out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even the playing field to enable our community groups to be part of any future national container return scheme.
Product stewardship Support local efforts to create product stewardship schemes or enact ‘cradle to grave’ responsibility for products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out/develop two partnerships or collaborative projects in this space by 2031.
Funding Fund/partially fund infrastructure projects to use waste as a resource and divert waste from landfill.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New infrastructure for using waste as a resource achieves greater than 50% diversion rates.

Funding source: waste levy.



Council responsibilities

There are several data, reporting, planning and licensing responsibilities that council is required to keep on top of to remain compliant with the Ministry for the Environment and other relevant acts and laws.

Waste data improves our knowledge of waste:

To manage waste well we need to know the types and amounts generated and disposed of. Council has a good understanding of the types and volumes of kerbside rubbish and recycling. The weekly collections travel over a weighbridge, creating accurate weight information. Council also regularly audits what's in the rubbish and recycling.

We know less about waste that the private sector controls, such as the skip bins collected from households and businesses, transported straight to landfill or to private transfer stations. Because of this 'blind spot' council doesn't have a complete waste picture for the district. The more we know, the better we can support facilities and services that help the whole of the community do the right thing with their waste.

The Ministry for the Environment also requires councils to have certain data for waste in our district. To enable access to data controlled by the private sector, council needs to license waste operators and disposal sites. Councils from the Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions are working together to create a waste operators licensing and data collection system. This partnership will allow reduce cost and staffing needs for Waikato District Council to achieve good waste data outcomes as they will be spread across many councils. To enable this council needs to introduce a Solid Waste Bylaw.

Actions

Sign of success

Bylaw and licensing

Develop a Solid Waste Bylaw.

Participate in regional solutions for licensing system for operators and facilities to enable full reporting as required by the Ministry for the Environment.

- A bylaw is adopted to become operational by 1 July 2027.
- Licensing will be led by Bay of Plenty Local Authority Shared Services (BOPLASS) and will be on that project timeline.
- Council's data reporting is on time and received by the Ministry for the Environment.

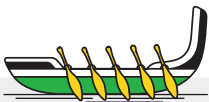
Funding source: waste levy.

Undertake a compositional waste audit every three to six years

Completing waste audits generates a key piece of detailed data that we can use to track trends in waste disposal and recycling contamination. Council uses that information plan for education/diversion initiatives and future services.

Actions	Sign of success
Audit Complete compositional waste audits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Undertake a compositional waste audit every three years, or as required by best practice, or if specific data is need.Audits follows the national Solid Waste Audit Protocol.
Communicate Use audits as a communication and educational activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Each audit results in educational collateral. For example video, infographic, public tours.

Funding source: rates and waste levy.



Waste and resource recovery infrastructure and resilience

We are starting to connect the dots with places across our district with transfer stations and resource recovery sites to help our community with larger waste items that weekly collection cannot handle. But we still have gaps in this network, most noticeably, Ngaaruawaahia and some of our larger rural villages don't have anywhere to drop large waste items, without travelling to Te Rapa in Hamilton or to Huntly. And we can do more on diversion of certain "waste types"/resources from landfill e.g. scrap metal, tyres and whiteware.

Actions	Sign of success
<p>Build</p> <p>Increase community access to transfer stations and resource recovery centres to divert waste from landfill and support education within our communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new northern resource recovery centre is operational in Tuakau by 2027. • At least one other new community resource recovery centre is operation by 2031.
<p>Plan</p> <p>Work with our communities and the resource recovery sector, to plan for and develop a network of resource recovery centres to service urban areas and provision for servicing of rural villages.</p> <p>This could include pop-up services and events, not just physical sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2027 we have a Connected Resource Recovery Plan created to inform the next Long Term Plan. • Our planning includes engaging with our communities on their needs and wants.
<p>Support skills</p> <p>Support the growth of our communities' skills in resource recovery operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills growth opportunities such as scholarships, and education, and conferences made available as they occur.
<p>Increase capacity</p> <p>Grow resource recovery capacity within local organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support start-up costs where applicable for organisations that increase local resource recovery – especially for waste streams that are not currently provided for.

Funding: Any infrastructure will be funded via rates (via the LTP process), waste levy and possibly other investment and grants.

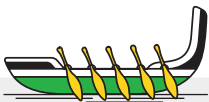
The desktop actions will be funded via waste levy.

Disaster waste management

Natural disasters are significant waste generators (for example the Christchurch earthquakes and large-scale flooding in Cyclone Gabrielle). Planning for how to sort, transport, store or dispose of disaster waste can significantly reduce cost implications, speed to return to normal for the community and waste outcomes when reacting to a natural disaster.

Actions	Sign of success
<p>Prepare</p> <p>Create a Disaster Waste Management Plan that provides direction for emergency response and clean-up of disaster waste in the Waikato district.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan is written and peer reviewed by 2029.• Plan is naturalised throughout council and the civil defence emergency management framework annually.• Any lease or contracts indicated as critical in the plan to handle disaster waste are drawn up by 2031.• Waste team have appropriate training in civil defence emergency management to enable competency in such events.

Funding source: rates - this would need to be approved as a new budget via the Long Term Plan process.



Working together across council

Support outcomes across other council business units to reduce waste to landfill and deliver win-win-win outcomes for waste, the community and council. For example (but not limited to):

- When/if council owned buildings need to be removed – investigate deconstruction or removal over demolishing and landfilling.
- Investigating the best outcome for the by-products of wastewater treatment and reducing what ends up screened out and heading to landfill (wipes, flushed sanitary item etc).
- Apps/training etc that share best practice waste reduction practices for specific industries e.g. construction, roading.

Often our neighbouring councils are struggling with the same recycling education as we are, or are looking to help their community reduce food waste at home. Working together maximises our council's small team's impact.

Actions	Sign of success
Support Support other council business units, where applicable, on projects that reduce waste generation or volume of waste sent to landfill.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff support and funding is available to other council unit on waste related outcomes.
Network and collaborate Network and collaborate where appropriate via participation in projects with Waikato Regional Council, the Central North Island Waste Liaison Group, WasteMINZ and other relevant networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work delivered locally benefits from knowledge from wider groups.• Gain access to resources developed by others.
Joint projects Where possible participate in regional projects that would delivery benefit for our local community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek to participate in regional projects that suit our communities' needs.
Funding source: waste levy	

Monitoring and evaluation

Medium term

From now until 2031

The waste team will report annually as part of council's annual plan process on actions delivered and progress from this plan.

Council will continue to undertake solid waste kerbside audits every three years. This is a smaller data set (approximately 500 households) but provides quality data on things like the amount of recyclables in the rubbish, different types of rubbish by weight and proportion, proportions of recyclables, and contamination in our recycling.

Through the waste contracts management, we also get whole of service data (volumes, contamination, diversion rate etc) monthly.

Long term

2035 and beyond...

The Waste Assessment Report's data and analysis will track long-term trends of district-wide waste generation - and the end outcome for that waste - was it diverted, composted, recycled or disposed?

Recent government mandates for licensing of waste operators and data provision will increase accuracy of this data. Council will need to complete Waste Assessment Reports in 2029 and 2037, these reports will contain annual tracking documents of progress against the Waste Minimisation and Management Plan's actions, which will be reviewed by an independent waste expert.

Reporting and communication

Council's waste services manager provides the following reports and communications to evaluate, track progress and fulfil statutory requirements:

Project reporting:

- Waste projects are evaluated - incorporating, where possible, feedback to track behaviour change over time.

Monthly (internal):

- Reporting to council executive on deliverables.
- Tracking of face-to-face engagements within our waste minimisation programme.

Regularly with our community:

- Share news releases on waste minimisation projects.
- Advise of community waste minimisation funding opportunities and celebrating outcomes (including on our website).
- Post on social media about what's happening in Waikato's waste minimisation space and how to get involved.



Annually:

- To council's waste steering group (councillors, service delivery management and other council staff) on the face-to-face engagements within our waste minimisation programme.
- Via council's Annual Report, featuring specific waste measures from the Long Term Plan.
- To the Ministry for the Environment on council's waste disposal levy funding allocations.

As required:

- Council's waste delivery programme is eligible to be audited by the Ministry for the Environment.

The Waste Minimisation Act requires council report on:

- How the implementation of this plan will be funded.
- Information about any grants made.
- Expenditure of waste levy funds.



Join us on the journey

**Keep in touch and be part of our
waste minimisation projects at**

<https://www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/reduce-waste>



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