

# Climate Response and Resilience Policy

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Climate Response & Resilience Policy enables best practice, processes and behaviours which are delivered via the climate action and sustainability works programme, the Climate Response and Resilience Strategy with emission targets, and the operational and community Climate Action Plans, in conjunction with Central Government legislation, LGNZ, and Waikato District Council's (Council) existing commitments.
- 1.2 Council is committed to addressing climate change impacts locally now and for the future, by aligning operational decisions and policy positions that address greenhouse gas emissions reductions and risk management through appropriate mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- 1.3 Council is committed to developing processes, plans and strategies which will support the organisation and the district to take actions which reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 1.4 Climate change incorporates a series of legal, indemnity, risk, budgetary, asset management, infrastructure, planning, moral, cultural and environmental implications and obligations, which collectively require climate change considerations to be embedded in plans, policies, decision making, frameworks and deliverables to ensure climate change issues are adequately assessed and addressed.

## 2 Purpose

- 2.1 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Synthesis Report 2023 asserts that major climate changes are inevitable and likely irreversible. and the costs and risks to council are high. Council will need to deploy a broad range of responses, including mitigation, emission reduction, capacity and capability building,

behaviour change programmes, adaptation strategies, proactive leadership, robust planning, collaboration, and resilience building. These approaches are inherently dependent on each other to address the long-term impacts, costs, and severity of climate change, in addition to aligning and delivering on Central Government's commitments and obligations to achieving carbon net zero by 2050 via international agreements.

In addition, climate change impacts in the region and district, such as sea level rise, erosion, drought, temperature increases and storms will have adverse consequences on broader social, cultural, economic, and environmental systems. Climate change will have a greater impact for our disadvantaged community members including, youth, Maaori, disabled and the elderly.

- 2.2 We are currently mandated to prepare our communities for the effects of climate change and incorporate climate change into existing frameworks, plans, projects and standard decision-making procedures (through the Resource Management Act 1991) and, in addition, giving consideration to improving community resilience through public education and local planning. Surveys by IAG (2023) report that 81% of New Zealanders agree that climate change is an important issue to them personally and 74% agree that they have become more concerned about climate change in the past few years (up from 60% in 2018).
- 2.3 This policy provides guidance on Council's responsibilities regarding climate change, including how the organisation undertakes actions that minimise the effects of Climate Change through:
- a) the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
  - b) target setting, reporting and benchmarking of greenhouse gas emissions.
  - c) the development of adaptation and mitigation measures.
  - d) the application of a climate lens across programmes, policies, plans and decision making.
  - e) enabling climate action, mitigation and adaptation through planning, education and collaboration.
  - f) the assessment and understanding of climate related risks.

### **3 Definitions**

Carbon Sequestration	<i>The long-term storage of carbon dioxide or other forms of carbon to either mitigate or defer climate change.</i>
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Climate Action Plan	<i>A plan detailing steps (including specific projects, policies or planning processes) the organisation will develop and implement to achieve the Climate Action Strategy.</i>
Climate Adaptation	<i>Making changes or adjustments to moderate and live with the impacts of climate change.</i>
Climate Change	<i>Refers to changes in the large-scale, long-term shift in the planet's weather patterns and average temperatures. It includes global warming, changes to weather patterns, sea level rise, pollution, and extreme weather events.</i>
Climate Hazard	<i>A physical process or event that can harm human health, livelihoods, or natural resources including (but not limited to); tropical cyclones, thunderstorms, tornadoes, drought, rain, hail, snow, lightning, fog, wind, temperature extremes, air pollution, and climatic change.</i>
Climate Mitigation	<i>Efforts to reduce or prevent emission of greenhouse gases e.g. using new technologies and renewable energies, making older equipment more energy efficient, or changing management practices, consumers, business or community behaviours.</i>
Climate Response and Resilience Strategy	<i>The overarching document outlining why and how best to achieve business objectives responding to climate change.</i>
Council	<i>Waikato District Council as an organisation.</i>
Emissions / Greenhouse Gas Emissions	<i>The production and discharge of substances that cause or exacerbate climate change, for example greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.</i>
Resilience	<i>An ability by the climate, community, built and natural environments to recover from setbacks; an ability which is enhanced by actions and strategies that change processes, practices and structures to prevent, reduce, and/or mitigate climate change severity and effects; and that increase preparedness for any unavoidable impacts.</i>
	<i>Examples of activities that show resilience include actions to reduce per capita greenhouse gas emissions, planning and preparing for reducing the impacts of climate change, action and advocacy to reduce waste and pollution and creating globally sustainable resource use, supporting business and land use activities that reduce impacts on climate change, as well as implementing processes and advocating to meet climate change mitigation requirements. New Zealand has</i>

*NB: in terms of this policy*

*agreed to such as the Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).*

Risk	<i>An uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, has a positive or negative effect. Risks can occur from various sources (such as financial, reputation/image, environmental, etc.) and be relevant at either project, operational or strategic levels within the organisation. A risk is quantified in terms of likelihood (probability of occurrence) and consequence (impact).</i>
Risk Assessment	<i>Refers to the overall process of identifying, analysing and evaluating risks. It includes qualitative and, in some cases, quantitative assessment.</i>
Risk Management	<i>The culture, processes, coordinated activities and structures that are directed towards managing adverse effects. The risk management process involves communicating, consulting, establishing context, identifying, assessing and evaluating, treating, monitoring and reviewing risks.</i>

## **4 Application**

4.1 This policy applies to all elected members of Council, the Chief Executive Officer, and all employees. It is their responsibility to ensure that the policy is applied to inform decision making and planning when working within council, and also with external parties including contractors, sub-contractors, agents, stakeholders and intermediaries.

4.2 Effective policy implementation is achieved through Council's commitment to:

- a) Undertake necessary work to develop and maintain a robust understanding of Council's Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) and those of our district.
- b) Assess and understand potential climate-related risks that require adaptation or mitigation.
- c) Implement initiatives to reduce Council's GHG emissions and to increase resilience through adaptation to climate related risks for Council and the district.
- d) Implement the Climate Response and Resilience Strategy and Climate Action Plan that includes staged targets, goals, objectives, actions, and indicators for Council and community to improve performance.
- e) Develop and deliver internal and external engagement, education and behaviour change programmes to deliver on the policy and plan to assist to reach our targets.

- f) Build knowledge, through capacity and capability building, to better enable all individuals to lead the climate change response.
- g) Apply a climate-change lens to decision making, planning and processes.
- h) Prioritise climate change and emissions reduction initiatives and actions by implementing organisational measures and specific targets through the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan processes.
- i) Provide appropriate dedicated resources and funding for planning and delivering climate resilience (mitigation and adaptation) initiatives and actions.

## **5 Relevant Council Documents**

Council policies and strategies that guide our responsibilities and decisions include:

- Climate Response & Resilience Strategy;
- Climate Action Plan;
- Taiao (Nature) in the Waikato Strategy;
- Leasing of Reserve Land Policy;
- Procurement Policy;
- Procurement Entitlement and Disposal of Council Vehicles Policy;
- Strategic Land Acquisition & Disposal Policy;
- District Tree Policy;
- General Policies Reserve Management Plan;
- Roadside Weed Spraying (No Spray Zones) Policy;
- Grass Verge Policy;
- Trade Waste and Wastewater Bylaw;
- Waste Management & Minimisation Plan 2018;
- Waikato District Plan – Operative and Proposed (Sustainable housing/consenting) and all stage 2 natural hazards and climate change;
- Development Contributions Policy.

## **6 Regional, Central Government and International Agreements**

Local Regional, Central Government, and International agreements, legislation and strategies that guide our responsibilities and decisions include:

- Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato: Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River;
- Tai Tumu, Tai Pari, Tai Ao: Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan;
- Waikato Regional Council Climate Action Roadmap;
- Waikato Wellbeing Project;
- Future Proof Strategy;
- Local Government Act 2002;

- Climate Change Response Act 2002;
- Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019;
- Emissions Reduction Plan 2022 – Te hau maahori ki anamata;
- National Adaptation Plan;
- National Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022;
- National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020;
- Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development 2021;
- Cop28;
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals;
- The Paris Agreement.

## **7 Policy statements**

The Local Government Position Statement on Climate Change (Appendix A) describes the approach to Climate Change in the local government area. Waikato District Council has aligned its policy statements to reflect that position statement within the context of our district.

Therefore, we will:

- 7.1 Collaborate with other agencies, organisations, and the community to achieve a consistent understanding of environmental, social, cultural and economic opportunities and consequences of climate change in our communities including but not limited to those related to:
  - a) Infrastructure (vertical and horizontal).
  - b) Waste Management.
  - c) Public Transport.
  - d) Building.
  - e) Energy.
  - f) Regulatory function.
  - g) Land use.
  
- 7.2 Collaborate with neighbouring Territorial Authorities, including Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council, Waikato Regional Council, Auckland Council, Central Government, and other agencies to gather information, carry out research, develop strategies and processes, collaborate, and to clarify each agency's functions and responsibilities.
  
- 7.3 Ensure that low emission, climate-resilient development is adopted as a key tenet into development and land-use decisions, in addition to associated end use impacts where practicable, including our district plans, annual plans, long term plans, urban design and development, building control, energy use, transport planning and waste management.

- 7.4 Set emission reduction targets in line with Central Government and partner Council's commitments e.g. the Paris Agreement, UNSDGs, Glasgow Agreements, Waikato Regional Council.
- 7.5 Incorporate emissions reduction targets into investment decisions that we make on transport, fleet, procurement, waste management, buildings, water and energy use.
- 7.6 Plan for and provide infrastructure which recognises and reduces the risk of hazards, such as floods, storms, and sea level rise including:
  - a) Particular consideration to geographically vulnerable communities.
  - b) Renewal and relocation of coastal infrastructure (including future planning during insurance valuation).
- 7.7 Include the effects of climate change (adaptation) as part of all hazards assessments, and consider the emissions impact (mitigation), in decision making, including through sections in Council report templates.
- 7.8 Plan for the impacts of climate change on Council's three waters infrastructure and services including:
  - a) Factoring climate change projections into all freshwater investments and adapting management practices accordingly.
  - b) Identifying change requirements in infrastructure investment including land use and green infrastructure, e.g. wetlands, rain gardens and swales.
  - c) Considering future requirements for increased water storage solutions.
  - d) Modifying building standards with consideration to water storage and increased efficiency of use.
- 7.9 Promote and encourage the conservation and enhancement of natural environments and their biodiversity to aid in emissions reduction (mitigation) and climate change effects (adaptation).
- 7.10 Strive for best practice in response to Climate Change - including but not limited to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and, where possible, encourage avoidance of risk rather than remedial measures.
- 7.11 Provide information, education, and deliver initiatives to support behaviour change.
- 7.12 Accept that the dissemination of information regarding climate change can be emotive and communicate with communities and stakeholders in an empowering and considerate work manner.
- 7.13 Value Te Ao Maaori and the concept of interconnectedness of our people and environment.
- 7.14 Ensure that the requirements for the Climate Response and Resilience Strategy and the Climate Action Plan, and associated guidance, remains up to date and aligns with current best practice and science projections and research.

## **8 Policy review**

8.1 This policy shall be reviewed at three yearly intervals or as otherwise required by the Chief Executive or Climate Action and Sustainability Manager.

8.2 As this policy is an internal Council document, its review will not trigger external consultation under the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, but internal consultation will be required.

## Appendix 1 – Local Government Leaders’ Climate Change Declaration

In 2015, Mayors and Chairs of New Zealand declared an urgent need for responsive leadership and a holistic approach to climate change. We, the Mayors and Chairs of 2017, wholeheartedly support that call for action.

Climate change presents significant opportunities, challenges and risks to communities throughout the world and in New Zealand. Local and regional government undertakes a wide range of activities that will be impacted by climate change and provides infrastructure and services useful in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing resilience.

We have come together, as a group of Mayors and Chairs representing local government from across New Zealand to:

1. acknowledge the importance and urgent need to address climate change for the benefit of current and future generations;
2. give our support to the New Zealand Government for developing and implementing, in collaboration with councils, communities and businesses, an ambitious transition plan toward a low carbon and resilient New Zealand;
3. encourage Government to be more ambitious with climate change mitigation measures;
4. outline key commitments our councils will take in responding to the opportunities and risks posed by climate change; and
5. recommend important guiding principles for responding to climate change.

We ask that the New Zealand Government make it a priority to develop and implement an ambitious transition plan for a low carbon and resilient New Zealand. We stress the benefits of early action to moderate the costs of adaptation to our communities. We are all too aware of challenges we face shoring up infrastructure and managing insurance costs. These are serious financial considerations for councils and their communities.

To underpin this plan, we ask that a holistic economic assessment is undertaken of New Zealand's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and of the opportunities and benefits for responding. We believe that New Zealand has much at stake and much to gain by adopting strong leadership on climate change emission reduction targets.

We know that New Zealanders are highly inventive, capable and passionate about the environment. New Zealanders are proud of our green landscapes, healthy environment and our unique kiwi identity and way of life. Central and local government, working

together with communities and business, can develop and implement ambitious strategies based on sound science, to protect our national inheritance and security.

### Council Commitments

For our part we commit to:

1. Develop and implement ambitious action plans that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support resilience within our own councils and for our local communities. These plans will:
  - a. promote walking, cycling, public transport and other low carbon transport options;
  - b. work to improve the resource efficiency and health of homes, businesses and infrastructure in our district; and
  - c. support the use of renewable energy and uptake of electric vehicles.
2. Work with our communities to understand, prepare for and respond to the physical impacts of climate change.
3. Work with central government to deliver on national emission reduction targets and support resilience in our communities.

We believe these actions will result in widespread and substantial benefits for our communities such as; creating new jobs and business opportunities, creating a more competitive and future-proof economy, more efficient delivery of council services, improved public health, creating stronger more connected communities, supporting life-long learning, reducing air pollution and supporting local biodiversity. In short, it will help to make our communities great places to live, work, learn and visit for generations to come.

### Guiding Principles

The following principles provide guidance for decision making on climate change. These principles are based on established legal<sup>1</sup> and moral obligations placed on Government when considering the current and future social, economic and environmental well-being of the communities they represent.

#### 1. Precaution

There is clear and compelling evidence for the need to act now on climate change and to adopt a precautionary approach because of the irreversible nature and scale of risks involved. Together with the global community, we must eliminate the possibility of planetary warming beyond two degrees from pre-industrial levels. This could potentially threaten life on Earth (Article 2 of the UNFCCC). Actions need to be based on sound

scientific evidence and resourced to deliver the necessary advances. Acting now will reduce future risks and costs associated with climate change.

## 2. Stewardship/Kaitiakitanga

Each person and organisation has a duty of care to safeguard the life-supporting capacity of our environment on which we all depend and to care for each other. Broad-based climate policies should enable all organisations and individuals to do all they feasibly can to reduce emissions and enhance resilience. Policies should be flexible to allow for locally and culturally appropriate responses.

1 These Guiding Principles are established within the: Treaty of Waitangi, Resource Management Act 1991, Local Government Act 2002, Civil Defence and Emergency Management Act 2002, Oslo Principles 2014, Principles of Fundamental Justice and Human Rights.

## 3. Equity/Justice

It is a fundamental human right to inherit a habitable planet and live in a just society. The most vulnerable in our community are often disproportionately affected by change and natural hazards. Approaches need to consider those most affected and without a voice, including vulnerable members in our community, our Pacific neighbours and future generations.

## 4. Anticipation (thinking and acting long-term)

Long-term thinking, policies and actions are needed to ensure the reasonably foreseeable needs of current and future generations are met. A clear and consistent pathway toward a low carbon and resilient future needs to provide certainty for successive governments, businesses and communities to enable transformative decisions and investments to be made over time.

## 5. Understanding

Sound knowledge is the basis of informed decision making and participatory democracy. Using the best available information in education, community consultation, planning and decision making is vital. Growing understanding about the potential impacts of climate change, and the need for, and ways to respond, along with understanding the costs and benefits for acting, will be crucial to gain community support for the transformational approaches needed.

## 6. Co-operation

The nature and scale of climate change requires a global response and human solidarity. We have a shared responsibility and can not effectively respond alone.

Building strong relationships between countries and across communities, organisations and scientific disciplines will be vital to share knowledge, drive innovation, and support social and economic progress in addressing climate change.

## 7. Resilience

Some of the impacts of climate change are now unavoidable. Enhancing the resilience and readiness of communities and businesses is needed so they can thrive in the face of changes. Protecting the safety of people and property is supported by sound planning and a good understanding of the risks and potential responses to avoid and mitigate risk.