



WEAVING THE
FUTURE, TOGETHER
KOTAHITANGA
ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT COUNCIL

DRAFT SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT COUNCIL

MARCH 2024

Planning involves making assumptions about the future which may or may not hold true. This section contains the full list of assumptions that underpin the 2024/34 long term plan.



Te Kauhīhera ā-Rohe o
Ōtorohanga
District Council
Where kiwi can fly



DRAFT SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE/WATER SECURITY

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
<p>Over the medium to long-term our district can expect¹:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the frequency and intensity of storm events • Higher temperatures • Rising sea level (1.0 metre rise for Kāwhia/Aotea over the next 100 years) • A change in rainfall patterns, with a 5% increase in rainfall intensity, producing more extreme weather events and increased drought events. • The climate change legislation will be enacted. 	Low/Medium	<p>Predicted changes in climate may be over or under estimated.</p> <p>If underestimated, the costs of reinstatement/ replacement of Council's infrastructure cannot be funded from normal operating budgets.</p>	Medium/High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a district strategy to help the community and Council understand, adapt and respond to climate change. • Monitor Council's energy use and use this information to reduce our emissions profile. • Continue to ensure, where appropriate, that infrastructure design includes allowance for climate change as required by legislation. • Factor climate change forecasts into Council decision-making.

GLOBAL CRISIS OR PANDEMIC

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
<p>Council will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain business continuity during a global crisis or pandemic • Adequately resource and support any emergency management response in the event of a global crisis or pandemic. 	Low/Medium	<p>The effect of a crisis or pandemic on the Council will be greater than assumed, and levels of service will be significantly affected².</p>	Medium/High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain effective 'work from home' arrangements should staff not be able to attend the workplace³. • Reprioritise some Council business-as-usual activities to focus resources on a major emergency management response, if required.

¹ Envirostrat & AECOM, 2020, Report prepared for Waikato Regional Council, Waikato Region Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory for the period July 2018 to June 2019, page 6.

² Note: Council does not rely on fees/charges from community facilities, therefore any financial impact will be limited should these sites need to be closed.

³ Note: Some of Council's activities cannot be performed remotely.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

		It is unknown when another pandemic or other crisis might occur.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a flexible, 'needs'-based approach to the provision of relief for our residents and ratepayers (eg. rates remission & postponement).
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SIGNIFICANT EMERGENCY EVENTS

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate events will impact the district. No significant additional unplanned disruptive events⁴ affecting our district will occur during the period of this plan. Council will prioritise and contribute, if required, to regional or national events (pending available capacity and resources) NZTA will retain its current emergency repairs subsidy (FAR + 20%). Council will continue to obtain affordable insurance cover for key assets/infrastructure 	High	<p>Unpredictable nature of such events.</p> <p>Draw on resources and capacity to support district, regional or national emergency events</p>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all services have continuity and recovery plans in place in the event of disruption. Ensure that we have adequate insurance to cover the district's key assets against such events⁵. Continue to be involved with sub-regional emergency management activities, and local emergency management and business continuity planning <p>Should a significant event occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond immediately with appropriate resources redirected for the purpose Seek support and resources, including funding, from the appropriate agencies

⁴ Events requiring the declaration of a civil defence emergency. Examples could include earthquakes, other natural disasters or events caused by accidents or incidents.

⁵ Refer to assumption relating to insurance under Finance.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reprioritise our programme/ spend based on need, risk mitigation and available funding.
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CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT POLICY/LEGISLATION

Over the life of this long term plan, it is expected that there will be a range of legislative changes from central government initiatives. At the time of writing, the main changes anticipated related to water management (Three Waters⁶ and National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management), climate change and local government (structure, functions and funding). Other changes are also expected in civil defence emergency management and waste management.

In February 2024, the Water Services Entities Act 2022 and the Water Services Economic Efficiency and Consumer Protection Act 2023 were repealed halting the Three Waters Reform programme.

WATER MANAGEMENT

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
The Coalition Government will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce new legislation which places emphasis on meeting rules for water quality and long-term investment in infrastructure Replace the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM) 2020. 	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability of existing water services to meet new rules for water quality (yet to be determined). Community affordability of legislative changes. 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work constructively with central government for improved water management for the district. Evaluate the effect of proposed legislation/rules on Ōtorohanga District communities, and express the community's views through the appropriate channels. Continue to work with central government and other councils within our region to identify opportunities enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations.

⁶ The Three Waters are water supply, wastewater and stormwater.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No substantive Government policy decisions about the future structure, roles, functions or funding of the local government will be made in the immediate future. Any changes requiring a response from the sector will not be required until mid-2025 at the earliest. The activities and services Council currently provides will continue to be delivered over the period of this plan or until there is a change in the legislation. 	High	<p>Change to the current governance structure could result in reduced local democracy and decision-making.</p> <p>We could be required to deliver services that we had not anticipated or planned for.</p>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the effect of any major changes proposed on Ōtorohanga District communities, and express the community's views through the appropriate channels. Continue to work with central government and other councils within our region to identify opportunities enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations (eg. shared service arrangements).

OTHER LEGISLATION

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
We will continue to see legislative changes over the lifecycle of this long-term plan.	Medium	<p>Time and cost implications.</p> <p>Disruption to existing activities/services</p> <p>New or amended legislation frequently involves additional regulation, reporting, resources, and expertise, as well as community input into the development of associated policies or bylaws.</p>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with central government through LGNZ and other forums to influence policy and legislative change and to make submissions. Continue to collaborate as a region or sector in responding to change, and to streamline plans, policies, and strategies. Continue to monitor changes in legislation and, where changes are proposed, provide input regarding the effects and implications.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

		Changes, some potentially significant, may be required to what we do and how we do it.		
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CHANGES IN COMMUNITY FUNDING POLICIES

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
External funders will continue to support existing grant schemes at the same or similar levels.	Medium	Reduced funding for community purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for additional or top-up funding from Council. • Loss of local services/events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any requests for additional funding would be considered on a case-by-case basis and through the appropriate Council channels.

SIGNIFICANT ASSETS

INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
That forecast population, household ⁷ and business growth can be accommodated through current and planned infrastructure.	Low	<u>Major</u> increase in household/business growth placing pressure on the roading network and community facilities.	High (but unlikely given existing capacity)	Programme and fund any growth-related demand for infrastructure upgrades through development/financial contributions.

⁷ Refer to section on demographic changes below.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

LIFECYCLE OF SIGNIFICANT ASSETS

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
The useful lives of assets are accurately reflected in our asset management plans/registers and are regularly revised as part of the cyclical revaluation process having regard to national standards (International Infrastructure Management Manual) or as per appropriate professional advice.	Low/Medium	<p>Assets wear out earlier than estimated resulting in unbudgeted remedial maintenance costs and/or earlier than expected asset renewal.</p> <p>A service failure may also occur if the asset unexpectedly fails.</p> <p>Actual asset lives may be longer than expected which could result in unnecessary funding of renewal budgets.</p>	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue our programme of asset condition assessments and update affected plans/registers. Reprioritise capital expenditure to mitigate significant impacts (depreciation and interest costs) from short-life assets

FUNDING FOR REPLACEMENT OF SIGNIFICANT ASSETS

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding sources will be as specified in our Revenue and Financing Policy and this policy includes provision for borrowing from the Local Government Funding Agency (LGFA) for new/replacement assets. The LGFA will continue to be able to borrow from capital markets and offer us loan funding on favourable terms. 	Low/Medium	<p>Insufficient funds from depreciation reserves to replace assets at the time required.</p> <p>Not having access to LGFA funding resulting in Council having to borrow through</p>	Medium	Consider any changes to replacement of significant assets during the Annual Plan process (if required).





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

		trading banks at less favourable rates ⁸ .		
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LAND TRANSPORT

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our current, approved local Funding Assistance Rate (FAR) from Waka Kōtahi/NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) of 63% rate will continue to apply for the balance of the 10 years covered by this long term plan. Our land transport programme will be fully funded. 	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The FAR is reduced below forecast levels as a result of a future review by the NZTA. Insufficient funding to maintain current levels of service 	High (depending on the magnitude of the change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reprioritise the roading programme according to the level of funding available. If necessary, consider and consult on increasing the 'local share' of funding in order to maintain levels of service.

ASSET VALUATIONS⁹

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
Assets will be valued in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice/Accounting Policies.	Medium	Actual value of the assets is significantly different to the valuations resulting in higher: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement costs than forecast for undervalued assets 	Medium	Undertake: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular valuations, ensuring asset registers are current Peer reviews of valuation methodologies help ensure valuations are as accurate as possible.

⁸ Based on projected borrowing levels, a 1% increase in the prevailing interest rate otherwise available through the LGFA will increase interest costs by between \$60,000 and \$131,000 per annum.

⁹ Roading, wastewater, water supply and stormwater assets were last revalued in 2023. Council land and buildings were revalued in 2021 and are scheduled to be revalued again in 2024.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levels of depreciation charged for overvalued assets. 		
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RESOURCE CONSENTS FOR COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
Resource consents for infrastructure (new/renewals) will have conditions imposing higher standards than is currently the case.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with new conditions makes the management/operation of the infrastructure unaffordable. Only shorter duration consents are issued. 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to proactively work with consenting authorities and key stakeholders to ensure that our consent applications address their concerns. Monitor proposed legislative changes and work with central government, WLASS and other councils to help ensure the changes are sustainable, practical and cost effective.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

POPULATION GROWTH

Population projections based on the 2023 Census are not expected to be available until late 2024/early 2025. However, the 2018 Census results and subsequent estimates indicate continued growth, albeit slowly. As at June 2023 the total population was estimated to be 10,900, up 0.9% over the previous year (cf. New Zealand 2.1%)¹⁰. Until the results of the 2023 Census are known it is difficult to forecast the current growth trajectory for the district. With these constraints in mind, the assumptions below are based on data drawn from a report commissioned by Waikato Regional Council from the University of Waikato in 2021¹¹. The report estimates the population of the district in 2048 to be 14,083 under a high variant scenario; 12,656 under a medium; 11,241 under a low¹².

¹⁰ <https://ecoprofile.infometrics.co.nz/Otorohanga%20District/Population>

¹¹ Waikato Regional Council Technical Report 2021/22, 2018-base Population, Family and Household, and Labour Force Projections for the Waikato Region, 2018-2068

¹² This equates to an annualised projected population growth rate (2018-2048) of 0.9% for the high scenario, 0.6% for the medium and 0.1% for the low.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
<p>The medium variant scenario for the Ōtorohanga District is most likely.</p> <p>The number of households in the district will grow under a medium-variant scenario rate from 3,872 in 2024 to 4,644 by 2048 (20% increase)¹³.</p>	Medium	Population changes and household numbers are significantly different to that assumed.	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current infrastructure and services can accommodate the projected population growth for the duration of this Plan. • If significantly higher growth rates than those projected occur, particularly in urban (served) areas, infrastructure upgrades will be brought forward. • Funding of growth-related upgrades will be by way of development/financial contributions, meaning limited overall impact on existing ratepayers.

Projected increase in households (2024 – 2034) ¹⁴										
2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
3,872	3,904	3,939	3,981	4,024	4,058	4,102	4,150	4,196	4,229	4,265

POPULATION CHANGE

In 2022, the dependency ratio¹⁵ for Ōtorohanga District was estimated to be 59.6% - higher than for New Zealand as a whole (54.4%)¹⁶. The proportion of young people (0-14) was 20.7% while the proportion of people 65 years and older was 16.6%.

¹³ Waikato Regional Council Technical Report 2021/22, cit.op., page 125.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The dependency ratio is the number of under 15-year-olds and over 65-year-olds as a ratio of the rest of the population.

¹⁶ Source: [Infometrics.co.nz/otorohanga-district/population/age-composition?compare=new-zealand](https://infometrics.co.nz/otorohanga-district/population/age-composition?compare=new-zealand)





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

In a recent report commissioned by Waikato Regional Council, the age structure of Ōtorohanga District is highlighted as amongst the most youthful in the region¹⁷. The report also forecasts a slight increase in the population aged 65 years and over from 14.6% in 2018 to 21.0% by 2043.

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
The median age of District residents will increase over the long term.	Medium	Population and household numbers are significantly different to that assumed.	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A major increase in the proportion of older people would likely change the nature/type of services demanded from Council. However, although Council would be required to alter service delivery arrangements, this is unlikely to have a major impact on costs. The ability to pay for services remains a significant issue for older people who are typically on fixed incomes. Council will continue to take affordability into account when it sets its budgets.

RATING UNIT GROWTH

There are currently 4,290 rating units in the district. Rating unit growth is driven by economic factors and population growth.

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of rating units will increase in line with population growth¹⁸. The majority of growth will occur in residential and lifestyle properties. 	Low-Medium	Rating unit growth is significantly different to that assumed.	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If significantly higher growth rates than those projected occur, particularly in urban (serviced) areas,

¹⁷ Waikato Regional Council Technical Report 2021/22, cit.op., page 63.

¹⁸ Refer to population growth table above.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current infrastructure and services can accommodate the projected growth rate for the duration of this Plan. 				<p>infrastructure upgrades will be brought forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding of growth-related upgrades will be by way of development/financial contributions, meaning limited overall impact on existing ratepayers.
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Projected increase in rating units (2024/25 – 2034/35)										
2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
4,290	4,306	4,322	4,338	4,354	4,370	4,386	4,402	4,418	4,434	4,450

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

GENERAL

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
Economic activity is expected to be slow into 2024 with a low to no growth forecast until early 2024. BERL anticipate a 1.2% increase in GDP in the June 2024 year ¹⁹ .	High	Economic factors vary significantly, from the assumptions in this plan affecting our ability to deliver on the agreed work programmes, in terms of the either scope or timing.	Medium/High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programmes and budgets annually, or as required. Signal reductions or increases in work programmes and budgets in future annual plans should conditions change, when appropriate.

INFLATION

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
The cost of future projects included in this plan will be consistent with the Business and	Medium (overall)	Price level changes increase significantly from those	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor cost projections against actuals, and where there are

¹⁹ Report prepared for Taituarā by BERL: Cost adjusters 2023 final update, October 2023, page 5.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

<p>Economic Research Limited (BERL) ‘legacy cost adjusters’ for the local government sector (refer Table below)²⁰.</p>	<p>Relatively low in the short-term but less certainty in the longer term due to fluctuations in the economy.</p>	<p>used in preparing the work programmes and associated budgets resulting in²¹:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for extra funding to maintain existing levels of service • Higher debt levels due to higher capital costs • Increased operating costs from interest expense leading to increases in rates. 		<p>significant differences ensure any changes in levels of service are reflected in budget forecasts and annual plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider deferring or revising the scope of projects should forecast cost increases exceed budgets.
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Legacy Local Government Cost Adjuster (per annum % changes)										
Activity	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
Planning and Regulation	2.6	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8
Roading	2.9	2.0	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.9
Community	2.7	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.8
Water and Environment	3.6	2.5	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.1

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

STAFF AND CONTRACTORS – AVAILABILITY

Recruitment of specialist technical staff has been difficult for Council in the recent past and securing contractors can also present challenges. The significant weather events that severely impacted Te Ika a Maui (North Island) - Cyclone Hale in January 2023 followed by Cyclone Gabrielle in February – may serve to compound the availability of suitably qualified personnel. Although the impacts of the cyclones were largely concentrated in other districts, when combined with the ongoing forecasted capital expenditure from other central and local government agencies in the upper North Island, the flow on effects of these events are likely to be felt across the motu (Country) in both the immediate and long-term future. A potential consequence for the district is an ongoing shortage of people resources which may reduce our ability to complete projects in the timeframes indicated and for the costs budgeted.

²⁰ Taituarā, cit.op. page 32

²¹ Note: A price level decrease from those used to prepare the budgets would have a favourable impact on Council’s operating and capital expenditure budgets and rates.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
Sufficient internal and external resources will be available to undertake capital works and maintain operational needs over and above business as usual responsibilities.	Medium/High	Scarcity of suitably qualified staff, contractors and consultants driving costs upwards.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively undertake workforce planning on an annual basis and adjust budgets and work programmes accordingly. Continue to look for and investigate opportunities for shared services.

SERVICE DELIVERY CHANGES

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
The range and nature of our services will remain unchanged from those signalled in this Plan.	Medium	Government allocates new/additional functions/responsibilities without sufficient support funding	Medium/High	Advocate that the Government makes provision for revenue raising should new functions or responsibilities be proposed local government.

FINANCIAL

DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

A review of our current Development Contributions Policy is underway and a draft for consultation will be completed in late 2024.

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
Our Development Contributions Policy accurately forecasts growth and the funding of growth-related infrastructure costs.	Medium	Growth is higher than forecast and the required infrastructure has not been accounted for in our policies or this Plan	Low/Medium	Continue to monitor growth and amend our policies accordingly.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

CONTRACTS

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
There will be variations in prices from the re-tendering of major contracts, in addition to variations recognised in this Plan.	Low/Medium	That the variations may exceed budget.	Medium	Monitor the market and ensure robust procurement practices are applied to our tendering processes.

INSURANCE

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
We will be able to obtain adequate insurance cover for the life of the long-term plan.	Low	Significant weather events both nationally and internationally could potentially make insurance unaffordable or worst case we are unable to insure our assets.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If unable to obtain insurance we would self-insure and establish an insurance fund to cover replacement of assets. Alternatively, we could debt fund any losses.

BUILDING CONSENT NUMBERS

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
Building consents numbers will continue to slow in the short-term (1-2 years) then gradually rise.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of revenue Staff retention 	Potential excess capacity for period of reduced consent activity.	Existing staff levels will be maintained to ensure industry knowledge is retained. Staff will be reassigned to other related duties (eg. assisting neighbouring councils, improving building quality control processes and systems).





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

LOANS RECEIVABLE

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
The Ōtorohanga Kiwi House will be able to repay the loan provided as per the terms of the loan agreement.	Medium/High	Given the current economic climate, there is the potential that they may not be able to repay the loan within the expected timeframes.	Low/Medium	Continue to work with and monitor the Kiwi House to address any issues as soon as they arise.

INVESTMENTS

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
Our investments will increase over the life of the plan by inflation.	Medium	If investments do not increase by the forecasted amount, the impact is only on the balance sheet, reflected in lower investment balance and lower revaluation reserve balance.	Low	Monitor these investments to ensure that the valuation is reasonable.





SIGNIFICANT FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS

IWI/MĀORI

TE TIRITI

Outstanding Te Tiriti claims remain to be settled throughout the district.

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
Te Tiriti settlements will occur at different stages during the life cycle of the long-term plan	Low	Significant new responsibilities will be placed on the Council as a consequence of the settlement.	Low/Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue to work constructively with existing and new Te Tiriti partners.Advocate that the Government funds any significant financial impacts associated with local settlements.

ENGAGEMENT

We assume that:	Our level of uncertainty	Risk	Impact	What we will do
We will continue to build strong relationship with iwi/Māori	Low	Capacity of iwi/Māori to engage	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Be transparent about Council's work programmes and allow mana whenua to identify their priorities for engagementIdentify opportunities where Council may be able to assist with building capacity

