

Conclusions and Recommendations

Environmental testing has indicated that any adverse impacts arising from the use of the current on-site effluent treatment systems are not widespread and the Public Health Risk Assessment concludes that there is no compelling reason to introduce a wastewater reticulation, treatment and disposal scheme. Current population modelling also indicates that there is no significant need to cater for a larger resident population in the medium- to long-term future.

Under those circumstances, it is difficult to sustain the proposition that significant public and ratepayer funding should be committed to the development of a wastewater reticulation and treatment scheme at this time.

At its meeting on Wednesday 1 August, the Whakatāne District Council will receive the Beca and ESR reports on the Matatā Wastewater Project Review and consider the following recommendations:

- **THAT** the Council acknowledges the finding of the Institute of Environmental Science and Research Limited Public Health Risk Assessment *“That there is not a compelling case for the introduction of a reticulated sewage disposal system in Matatā on the basis of risks to human health.”*;
- **THAT** the Council indicates its intention not to proceed with the introduction of a fully reticulated sewage disposal system in Matatā, at this time and seeks feedback on that proposal from the community; and
- **THAT** the Council approves the formation of a Matatā Field Investigation Team to include Whakatāne District Council Infrastructure staff, Bay of Plenty Regional Council staff, an appropriate local contractor and system assessor to undertake a package of work to improve septic waste disposal in Matatā and provide recommendations as appropriate for future sewage disposal; and
- **THAT** the Matatā Field Investigation Team report regularly to the Matatā Project Governance Group; and

- **THAT** the Council informs the Ministry of Health of the findings of the review undertaken by the Whakatāne District Council on the proposal to introduce a fully reticulated sewage disposal system in Matatā and its intention not to proceed with the full reticulation option at this time; and that a request be made to extend the Ministry of Health funding timeframe to enable field investigations to be completed, and
- **THAT** the General Manager Infrastructure report back to the Council on the findings of the Matatā Field Investigation Team in December 2012 and June 2013, with recommendations as appropriate for future sewage disposal in Matatā; and
- **THAT** the Council informs the Rangitāiki Community Board, the Matatā Community and stakeholders of its intention not to proceed with the project to introduce a fully reticulated sewage disposal system in Matatā at this time; and of its intention to form a Field Investigation Team to undertake a package of work to improve septic waste disposal in Matatā and provide recommendations as appropriate for future sewage disposal; and
- **THAT** the Projects and Services Committee at its 5 September 2012 meeting considers community and stakeholder feedback on the proposal not to proceed with the project to introduce a fully reticulated sewage disposal system in Matatā at this time and makes a recommendation to the Council to consider on 19 September 2012.

PUBLIC MEETING

Matatā Wastewater Project Review Outcomes, and

Bay of Plenty Regional Council Matatā On-site Effluent Treatment Maintenance Zone Proposal

5.30pm, Tuesday 31 July
Matatā Rugby Football Club
12 Division Street, Matatā



MATATĀ WASTEWATER SCHEME

Project Review Summary

27 July 2012

In early-June, the Whakatāne District Council initiated a review of the wastewater reticulation scheme which has been proposed for Matatā since 2004. This report summarises the findings of the review and the results of the questionnaire residents were asked to complete last month.

The Council will consider a number of recommendations arising from the review (see page 4) at its meeting next Wednesday (1 August), but before that meeting takes place, we would like to brief you directly, answer any questions you might have and listen to any feedback you would like to provide. Accordingly, we would like to invite you to attend a **public meeting** to be held at the **Matatā Rugby Football Club at 5.30pm on Tuesday, 31 July**. Note that Bay of Plenty Regional Council representatives will attend this meeting to discuss a proposed plan change, which would see Matatā included as a maintenance zone for on-site effluent treatment.

You are also welcome to attend the Council meeting on 1 August. We anticipate that consideration of the Wastewater Review and other associated matters will begin at 1pm. Alternatively, you can provide written comments for the Council's consideration by 5pm on Wednesday, 22 August.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

The Chief Executive
Whakatāne District Council
Private Bag 1002
Whakatāne 3158

or, emailed to info@whakatane.govt.nz
by the same date.

Background

The original wastewater scheme concept provided for full reticulation throughout the township, a treatment plant and disposal of treated effluent on nearby sand dune systems. It had an estimated cost of \$4 million and received approval for a funding subsidy of \$3.3 million under the Ministry of Health's Sanitary Works Subsidy Scheme. Following the debris and flooding disaster which struck the town in 2005, the scheme was put on hold.

The project was reactivated in 2008, when changes in the proposed scope and design of the scheme resulted in a new cost estimate of \$9 million. Further work between 2009 and 2011 focused on a proposal to pipe effluent to Edgumbe, Kawerau, or Whakatāne for treatment and disposal, with an estimated project cost of up to \$10.5 million. The funding subsidy available for the scheme had increased to \$6.7 million, meaning the capital cost for the District would be in the order of \$4 million.

To qualify for the Ministry of Health subsidy funding, the project must be started by 30 June 2013 and completed by 30 June 2014. To gain an understanding of the development options which would meet that timing requirement, and the original drivers for the project, Council staff reviewed the original business case and health impact assessment supporting a reticulated wastewater scheme. Council's view was that the supporting documentation was unconvincing and, given the scale of the investment involved, it was considered prudent that a full review of the justification for the project be undertaken.

The Beca consultancy was engaged to carry out the review and report back to Council by 1 August 2012.

Review Findings

The assessment of wastewater disposal options for Matatā was broken into two work areas:

- A new Public Health Risk Assessment to examine previous health assessments in the light of up-to-date health and environmental testing data - carried out by the Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR); and
- A summary of previously-considered options with updated costings and commentary on any further options which could be considered.

Based on the results of environmental testing of streams and drains by the Bay of Plenty Regional Council in 2011 and early-2012, further testing by ESR in June and an analysis of public health notifications for the past 10 years, ESR has concluded that:

“... there is not a compelling case for the introduction of a full reticulated sewage disposal system in Matatā on the basis of risks to human health.”

Key findings include:

- A review of the notifiable disease database indicates that the incidence of possible waterborne, sewage-related diseases is not elevated in Matatā, compared to the wider Whakatāne District, or the country as a whole;
- Microbial monitoring indicates elevated coliform (potentially harmful microbes which indicate the presence of human or animal waste) numbers in the lower Waitepuru and Waimea Streams and the Clarke Street drain. The Waitepuru and Waimea findings are not dissimilar to typical streams in areas which have reticulated sewage systems;

- Faecal (human waste) tracking analysis shows the stream findings are not consistent with raw human sewage, indicating that some degree of treatment has been achieved in septic tanks and by passage through soil;
- Contamination identified in the Clarke Street drain testing and in a pipe near the Matatā Hotel is consistent with inadequately treated sewage. These “hot spots” need to be investigated;
- Limited groundwater testing found no detectable coliform contamination;
- An assessment of on-site wastewater disposal systems indicates potential issues with septic tanks, but environmental conditions would not prevent such systems, or more advanced processes, from being used effectively if properly designed, installed and maintained;
- Contamination of water is unlikely to result in disease because Matatā has reticulated drinking water, swimming is not a factor in places where elevated coliform levels have been detected, other recreational uses would provide limited exposure, and mahinga kai are not harvested from the areas concerned.

Beca’s review of previously considered wastewater reticulation and treatment systems covered 12 options involving disposal close to Matatā, with updated (1 July 2012) cost estimates ranging from \$8.4 million to \$10.5 million. The 11 options involving treatment and disposal in other areas (Whakatāne, Edgecumbe or Kawerau) have updated cost estimates ranging from \$10.7 to \$13.8 million.

Additional options which could be considered include: a partial reticulation scheme servicing high risk areas in Matatā; and a ‘sub-regional’ wastewater collection and treatment scheme servicing Matatā, Edgecumbe, Whakatāne and any other communities within a serviceable radius.

Beca’s view is that if a wastewater scheme was to be pursued, the only options likely to comply with the Ministry of Health subsidy funding timeframe would involve treatment and discharge via the Whakatāne wastewater treatment plant.

If a wastewater scheme is not pursued, or there is a significant delay until sewage is reticulated, Beca makes the following recommendations:

- That properties in the “hot spot” areas be investigated to establish the causes of contamination and treatment solutions;
- That groundwater level monitoring is undertaken in areas where residents have reported problems and in areas where elevated coliform levels were detected by environmental testing;
- That a field investigation team be formed to undertake inspections of septic tank systems in problem areas;

- That the Council work with community organisations to ensure that there is an awareness of the situations which could result in health risks;
- That consideration be given to initiatives to reduce water use, improve stormwater and drainage control, and upgrade on-site treatment systems; and
- That Matatā be included as a Bay of Plenty Regional Council maintenance zone for onsite effluent treatment. This would involve the collection of information on existing septic tank age, condition and maintenance records and establish a mandatory inspection and maintenance regime for on-site systems.

Survey Results

A Matatā Wastewater Questionnaire was hand-delivered to all homes with mailboxes and posted to property owners who do not have street delivery address in early-June. There were 131 responses, which equates to just over half of the total households in the township. The following table summarises the survey results.

2012 Matatā Wastewater Questionnaire

QUESTION	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Is a sewage reticulation, treatment and disposal system needed in Matatā?	41%	45%	14%
Would you be prepared to see your rates increase to cover treatment costs?	24%	66%	7%
Are you aware of problems with your septic tank?	11%	83%	3%
Have you noticed bad smells in streams or drains?	20%	76%	1%
Can we inspect your septic tank and effluent field?	67%	26%	

Opinion is divided as to whether a wastewater scheme is needed, with slightly more people (45%) believing it is not needed. Most people (64%) would not want to see their rates increase to pay for a scheme. A high proportion of residents (83%) have not noticed any problems with their septic tank on-site treatment systems and have not noticed any bad smells in the town’s drains and streams (76%). Most people (67%) are happy to have their septic tank systems inspected.