

**IN THE MATTER OF**

The Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

Notices of requirement for designations under section 168 of the Act, in relation to Te Ahu a Turanga; Manawatū Tararua Highway Project

**BY**

**NEW ZEALAND TRANSPORT AGENCY**

Requiring Authority

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF SARAH LOUISE DOWNS (PORTFOLIO  
MANAGER SYSTEM DESIGN: DEVELOPING REGIONS) ON BEHALF OF THE  
NEW ZEALAND TRANSPORT AGENCY**

**8 March 2019**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is **Sarah Louise Downs**.
2. I am a Portfolio Manager System Design: Developing Regions at the New Zealand Transport Agency ("**Transport Agency**").
3. I have overall responsibility for leading and supporting the design of the integrated transport system with our partners outside the high growth areas. As a portfolio manager I provide advice on optimising investment to those with decision-making delegations.
4. A key part of my role includes delivering the Te Ahu a Turanga; Manawatū Tararua Highway Project ("**the Project**"). I also have responsibility for leading and supporting regional economic development plans, Provincial Growth Fund ("**PGF**") projects delivered by the Transport Agency, and accountability for the walking and cycling activity class.
5. While I am not giving expert evidence, for completeness I have the following qualifications and experience relevant to my evidence:
  - (a) I have a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Geography; Post-Graduate Certificate in Education; and a New Zealand Diploma in Infrastructure Asset Management; and
  - (b) I have worked as project sponsor on a number of large projects, including:
    - (i) SuperGold – bringing the SuperGold fund into the National Land Transport Fund;
    - (ii) Dunedin Future Network;
    - (iii) SH88 (Dunedin to Port Chalmers) Shared Path;
    - (iv) Twin Coast Discovery Route; and
    - (v) Gisborne and Northland PGF packages.
6. I have been involved in the Project at many levels. I have been an active member of the Joint Working Group which looked at how a future freight ring road could integrate with the replacement route. I have attended Accessing

Central New Zealand<sup>1</sup> meetings over the last year, and am linked to the Te Āpiti Governance Group meetings. I have been present at public meetings and public information sessions regarding the Project and the Resource Management Act 1991 (“**RMA**”) process currently underway. I attended the meetings with the Build the Path group and other stakeholders with a vested interest in walking and cycling. I have also attended hui with iwi and meetings with stakeholders such as AgResearch Limited and Meridian Energy Limited.

7. I attend a weekly meeting with the Project team and meet with the Project Management Board for the Project on a monthly basis.
8. My evidence is given in support of the notices of requirement (“**NoRs**”) lodged by the Transport Agency for the Project. I confirm that I am authorised to give this evidence on behalf of the Transport Agency.

## **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

9. My evidence addresses:
  - (a) the Transport Agency's statutory role and functions;
  - (b) the background to and need for the Project;
  - (c) the Transport Agency's objectives for the Project and the scope of the Project, including the Transport Agency's decision not to incorporate a separate walking and cycling facility (or certain other elements) into the Project, as sought by a number of submitters;
  - (d) the benefits the Project will bring to the people and communities of Manawatū, Taranaki, and beyond, and how the Project objectives will be met;
  - (e) the future of the Manawatū Gorge road;
  - (f) a response to submissions;
  - (g) a response to questions by the Hearing Panel; and
  - (h) a response to the Section 42A Reports.

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<sup>1</sup> The Accessing Central New Zealand Governance Group was developed, as part of the Accelerate25 initiative, to focus on ensuring a connected, safe, resilient and cohesive transport network to, from and within the Manawatū-Whanganui Region. Group members include Mayors, councillors and council staff from across the region, as well as Spearhead and the Transport Agency.

10. I am one of the Transport Agency representatives providing statements of evidence in relation to the Project. My evidence is inter-related with that of the other Transport Agency witnesses, namely:
- (a) **Lonnie Dalzell**, who manages the Project team and discusses the collaborative approach taken by the Transport Agency to engaging with tangata whenua, other Project partners, and stakeholders, and to developing the Project;
  - (b) **Scott Wickman**, who summarises the processes by which the Transport Agency considered alternatives in devising the Project; and
  - (c) **Jonathan Kennett**, who discusses the request by a number of submitters for the Project to incorporate a separate walking and cycling facility, and other routes used by cyclists travelling around the region.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

11. The Transport Agency is urgently working to deliver a high-quality Project, and to restore a vital connection between regions and communities, in accordance with its statutory functions. This Project is a top priority for the Transport Agency.
12. Restoring the connection quickly has been the Transport Agency's focus, in response to the major issue created by the closure of the old road through the Gorge, and in line with the widespread, strongly-expressed views communicated throughout by local government and members of the affected communities. The objectives for the Project are to reconnect people via a higher-quality connection – more efficient, more resilient, and safer – than was provided by the Gorge road.
13. There are of course other parts of the State highway and local road networks that are constantly being assessed for further development, and an important aspect of devising the Project has been to define where it 'begins and ends'. The Transport Agency appreciates that many people see the Project as an opportunity for broader potential improvements to the network to be realised, and that view is understandable. The Transport Agency also recognises the importance of 'future-proofing' the design of the Project so as not to preclude future initiatives. However, broadening the reach of the Project would also add complexities and costs and would require further planning, which could delay delivery of the vital connection provided by the Project.

14. I can assure people that the Transport Agency is committed to playing its role in discussions about those matters (with tangata whenua, councils, landowners, and others). In the meantime, the Project will be implemented in a way that does not preclude other works in future.
15. As for the Project itself, the transport and associated social benefits it will provide are very significant, and will make a real difference in the lives of people living in the affected communities. It is important for those benefits not to be downplayed or lost in the face of a discussion about broader potential opportunities.
16. Some of those opportunities are linked with the potential future of the old road through the Manawatū Gorge. That road could provide exciting recreational opportunities, separate to the Project, if questions about geotechnical risk can be resolved and depending on the outcome of discussions with interested parties (and other statutory processes). There are some outcomes that are likely to be able to be progressed in the short-term, and I discuss those below.

## **THE TRANSPORT AGENCY'S STATUTORY ROLE AND FUNCTIONS**

### **Introduction**

17. The Transport Agency is the statutory body charged with operating the State highway network under the Land Transport Management Act 2003 ("**LTMA**"). In line with that responsibility, the Transport Agency is approved as a requiring authority under section 167 of the RMA for the purposes of constructing and operating State highways (as well as cycleways and shared paths).<sup>2</sup>
18. The Transport Agency's statutory objective under the LTMA is to "*undertake its functions in a way that contributes to an effective, efficient, and safe land transport system in the public interest.*"<sup>3</sup>
19. The Transport Agency's statutory functions are defined in section 95(1) of the LTMA. Of relevance to the Project, the functions of the Transport Agency in section 95(1) include:

- (a) *to contribute to an effective, efficient, and safe land transport system in the public interest (...)*

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<sup>2</sup> Requiring Authority status was granted via an Order in Council dated 7 December 1992, with subsequent *Gazette* notices on 10 December 1992, 3 March 1994 (GO1500) and 19 November 2015 (GO6742).

<sup>3</sup> Section 94, LTMA.

- (c) *to manage the State highway system, including planning, funding, design, supervision, construction, and maintenance and operations, in accordance with this Act and the Government Roding Powers Act 1989 (...)*
- (e) *to manage funding of the land transport system (...)*

20. In meeting its objective and undertaking these functions, the Transport Agency is required by the LTMA to exhibit a sense of social and environmental responsibility, while using revenue in a way that seeks value for money.<sup>4</sup>

### **Government Policy Statement and National Land Transport Programme**

21. The LTMA requires the Minister of Transport to issue a Government Policy Statement ("**GPS**") every three financial years.<sup>5</sup> The GPS enables the Minister of Transport to guide the Transport Agency (and the broader land transport sector) on the outcomes, objectives, and short- to medium-term goals that the Government wishes to achieve through the National Land Transport Programme ("**NLTP**") and from the allocation of the National Land Transport Fund ("**NLTF**").<sup>6</sup>
22. The LTMA provides that the Transport Agency must give effect to the GPS when carrying out its planning functions, including preparing a NLTP.<sup>7</sup> The NLTP must also contribute to the purpose of the LTMA, which is to *"contribute to an effective, efficient, and safe land transport system in the public interest"*.<sup>8</sup>
23. The NLTP sets out the Transport Agency's planned land transport investments, including for New Zealand's State highways, over the next three years. Activities are not eligible for funding from the NLTF unless they are included in the NLTP.
24. The current NLTP, which outlines the Transport Agency's investment programme between 2018 and 2021, gives effect to the GPS by setting out activities proposed for funding over that three-year period. This states:<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Section 96, LTMA.

<sup>5</sup> Sections 84 and 86, LTMA.

<sup>6</sup> Section 84, LTMA.

<sup>7</sup> In accordance with section 89(1) of the LTMA, the Transport Agency must give effect to the GPS when performing its functions under subpart 1 of Part 2 of the LTMA in respect of land transport planning and funding.

<sup>8</sup> Section 19B, LTMA.

<sup>9</sup> At page 75.

*“The indefinite closure of the Manawatū Gorge and the temporary closure of SH1 after serious storms has shown the need for a resilient land transport system that keeps routes to key destinations and the region’s communities open.”*

25. The NLTP lists the development of the Project as a key priority for the Transport Agency, with an initial amount of \$122m to be invested “to create a safer and more resilient route across central New Zealand, linking up the east and west with the Manawatū and Wellington” in the 2018-21 NLTP (with the balance of funding to be earmarked in the 2021-24 NLTP).<sup>10</sup>
26. The fact that the Project is committed to receive substantial funding from the NLTF is significant, because there are many potential State highway improvement projects around New Zealand competing for a limited pool of funding. The ‘State highway improvements’ activity class is currently over-committed in the NLTF, and this is likely to continue to reduce over the next two NLTP periods. The Transport Agency’s prioritisation of the Project reflects its unique nature and role in replacing a well-used and highly-valued connection between regions, as discussed below.

## **BACKGROUND TO AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT**

27. The background to the Project is described in the Assessment of Environmental Effects accompanying the NoRs, and I summarise key points below.
28. State Highway 3 (“**SH3**”) through the Manawatū Gorge provided a vital connection between the west and east of the North Island, connecting the Manawatū-Whanganui region with Hawke’s Bay, and the communities of Woodville and Dannevirke with Ashhurst and Palmerston North.
29. Prior to its closure, the route carried approximately 7,600 vehicles per day and was classified as a National Road.<sup>11</sup> It carried freight traffic at a level qualifying it as an important national freight link.
30. The Manawatū Gorge route had a long history of unplanned closures due to slips blocking the road.<sup>12</sup> Over time, the widening of the road required large cuts into the southern side of the Gorge. These cuts steepened the base of

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<sup>10</sup> At page 78.

<sup>11</sup> Under the One Network Road Classification (“**ONRC**”). The ONRC is a classification system that divides New Zealand’s roads into six categories (from ‘national’ through to ‘access’) based on how busy they are, whether they connect to important destinations, or are the only route available.

<sup>12</sup> Since 1980, seven road closures ranging in duration from two days to 14 months (in 2011- 2012) were recorded.



the slope and led to greater instability at various locations throughout the Gorge.

31. The scale and frequency of land instability events increased over time, with each event resulting in substantial road user disruption and requiring significant investment to remediate.<sup>13</sup>
32. Following a significant landslide in April 2017, the Manawatū Gorge section of SH3 was closed. The repair and use of the State highway for vehicular and other traffic is currently considered unsafe due to ongoing movement and instability risk, including risks associated with seismic activity. This, in combination with the ongoing maintenance liability, resulted in the Transport Agency deciding to close the existing SH3 through the Manawatū Gorge and to investigate construction of a replacement route.
33. The evidence of **Scott Wickman** discusses in more detail the analysis carried out by the Transport Agency including regarding the possibility of reopening the Gorge road for motor vehicle traffic, and why this was not considered an acceptable solution for the communities of Manawatū and Tararua, or for the transport network more generally – hence the development of the Project.
34. The closure of the Gorge has not resulted in any reduction in traffic volumes traversing the Ruahine Ranges. As a result, Saddle Road and the Pahiatua Track, which have provided the primary alternatives to the Gorge road since its closure, have been required to absorb all traffic that had previously used the Manawatū Gorge route.
35. The evidence and technical assessment of **David Dunlop** explain the transport problems created by the closure of the Gorge road. In short, the increase in traffic using the Saddle Road and the Pahiatua Track has had significant impacts on nearby residents and the wider region and has led to an increase in crash events on these alternative routes. While improvement works on Saddle Road continue, neither of these steep, narrow and winding routes are able to provide an appropriate level of service for a permanent SH3 connection in terms of safety, resilience and efficiency, at least not without significant realignment and improvement (such options were considered during the options assessment, as noted by **Mr Wickman**).

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<sup>13</sup> More detail of this is set out in Part A of the Assessment of Environmental Effects (“AEE”) which accompanied the NoRs for the Project.

36. As set out in more detail in the evidence of **Mr Dunlop** and in Part A of Volume 2 of the AEE,<sup>14</sup> there are fundamental operational issues associated with both Saddle Road and the Pahiatua Track, including:
- (a) relatively poor levels of safety;
  - (b) congestion and travel time unreliability, which affects cars and freight vehicle movements alike;
  - (c) route security issues, in terms of risk of closure from slips and other incidents (and the paucity of other route options);
  - (d) amenity and social effects, in particular for the community of Ashhurst due to significantly increased traffic volumes through the centre of town; and
  - (e) a growing population, leading to all these effects being exacerbated over time.
37. The scale of impacts of the closure of the Manawatū Gorge route has resulted in an urgent need for a replacement route. The Project has been developed in order to ameliorate each of the issues set out above.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT**

### **Objectives**

38. In response to these problems, the Transport Agency developed the following objectives for the Project:
- (a) to reconnect the currently closed Manawatū Gorge State Highway 3 with a more resilient connection;
  - (b) to reconnect the currently closed Manawatū Gorge State Highway 3 with a more efficient connection than the Saddle Road and Pahiatua Track; and
  - (c) to reconnect the currently closed Manawatū Gorge State Highway 3 connection with a safer connection than the Saddle Road and Pahiatua Track.
39. These objectives focus on the urgent task of replacing what has been lost – that is, reconnecting the regions to the west and east via a highway across

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<sup>14</sup> At pages 16 to 19.

rural land, and indeed creating a higher-quality connection than was provided by the Gorge road before that connection was severed.

40. Otherwise, the Project is intended to perform the same essential transport function as the Gorge road did, as an important connection forming part of SH3, albeit with vastly improved geometric criteria and shoulders to provide for faster and safer travel by all users.

### **Elements within the scope of the Project**

41. The Transport Agency now seeks to designate land to accommodate a new State highway connection. This corridor crosses the Ruahine Ranges, from the SH3 western entry to the closed Manawatū Gorge, north of the Manawatū Gorge and south of the existing Saddle Road, emerging near Woodville.
42. The new road will include roundabout connections with State Highway 57 east of Ashhurst and SH3 west of Woodville, as well as a new bridge structure crossing the Manawatū River and a number of other crossings of unnamed streams and providing property access underpasses. The road will be a median-separated carriageway that includes two lanes in each direction over the majority of the route (the second lane provides 'crawler lanes' over and between steeper grades).
43. A more detailed description of the Project, and its construction, is included in Part C of the AEE. The evidence of **Andrew Whaley** discusses the Project's indicative design and the development of the proposed designation corridor.
44. The Project also incorporates various elements enabling better connectivity for active modes, as discussed below.

### **Elements sought in addition to the Project**

#### *Introduction*

45. There are of course other parts of the State highway and local road networks that are constantly being assessed for further development, and an important aspect of devising the Project has been to define where it 'begins and ends'.
46. A number of the Transport Agency's stakeholders (including local authorities), submitters, and the expert authors of the Section 42A materials are forcefully advocating for the Project to be broader in scope than that described above, and to incorporate additional elements.

47. In respect of the councils and submitters, the Transport Agency appreciates that people see the Project as an opportunity for other potential improvements to the network to be realised, which is understandable. As I noted above, the Transport Agency also recognises the importance of future-proofing the Project's design so as not to preclude future initiatives.
48. I discuss below each of the elements raised, and explain why the Transport Agency has not included some of them within the scope of this Project. First, though, I make several overall comments on behalf of the Transport Agency.
49. First, to reiterate, the Transport Agency's urgent priority in developing the Project is to replace the important connection that has been severed. While future-proofing is important, broadening the reach of the Project would add complexities and costs and require further planning which, depending on the nature of the change, would likely delay delivery of the vital connection provided by the Project. Other potential improvements to the transport network, such as those sought by stakeholders, are either the subject of separate projects proceeding on a different timeframe or, in the case of the separate cycling and walking path, have only been raised recently and are yet to be properly investigated. It is important that questions about the scope of the Project do not divert the Transport Agency and stakeholders from the urgent priority of replacing the severed SH3 connection.
50. Further, there are significant costs associated with investigating, designing, consenting, and delivering each of the additional elements that have been raised. The Transport Agency has processes to consider whether such costs should be incurred. In order to commit the additional funding necessary to incorporate any of those elements, the Transport Agency would have to consider that spending to be justified. That would mean deciding that those elements are a higher priority than the other beneficial projects around New Zealand (and indeed these regions), competing for funding from the 'State highway improvements' activity class budget in the NLTF.
51. Those other projects are many and varied, but include (for example) safety improvement works for which funding could otherwise be delayed, if the Project scope were to become broader.
52. Lastly, the Project is being developed in a way that does not preclude further improvements to the transport network in future. The Transport Agency is responsible for the State highway network and for administering the NLTF and hence looks forward to being part of ongoing discussions, analysis, and

statutory processes about future potential improvements to the network. I can assure people that the Transport Agency is committed to playing its role in those discussions (with tangata whenua, councils, landowners, and others) and processes.

*Separate walking and cycling facility*

53. In particular, a large number of submitters on the NoRs have queried why the Project does not incorporate a separate off-road walking and cycling facility.
54. There are various reasons why the Transport Agency does not consider the development of such a facility to be warranted as part of the Project. For one, as discussed by **David Dunlop** in his evidence, the Project will provide benefits for cyclists using either the Project route or the existing alternative routes, and for pedestrians, even without such a dedicated facility, including for the following reasons:
- (a) The Project will create a third route across the Ranges, in addition to the Saddle Road and the Pahiatua Track. Cyclists will not be stopped from using the new road; the section of SH3 through the Manawatū Gorge, before it was severed by slips, did not provide a good cycling connection and was not well used for cycling or walking because of the very confined nature of the corridor and lack of shoulder able to be used by active modes.
  - (b) The new road will provide a 2m-wide space between the outer barriers and active traffic lanes that is able to be used by cyclists. This meets the Transport Agency's standards for walking and cycling on a rural highway. **David Dunlop** discusses this further in his evidence.
  - (c) The Project will lead to a significant (96%) reduction in traffic (in particular, heavy commercial vehicles) on the Saddle Road, where works are currently ongoing to improve road safety – numbers are projected to fall to those observed prior to the closure of the Gorge road, ie around 150 vehicles per day (as opposed to the current numbers of around 6,220 per day) and to about 260 per day by 2041. Obviously such a significant reduction in traffic once the Project is open will make Saddle Road a safer route for cyclists than it is currently. **Jonathan Kennett** discusses in his evidence the possibility of Saddle Road becoming part of the New Zealand Cycle Trail.

- (d) Likewise, when the Project is open, traffic numbers are likely to reduce to pre-Gorge closure levels on the Pahiatua Track – to around 2,200 vehicles per day rather than approximately 3,800 at present. By 2041, there are expected to be around 3,900 vehicles per day using Pahiatua Track, as opposed to around 6,850 without the Project in place.
- (e) As **Mr Kennett** explains in his evidence, the closure of the Gorge road has had poor safety outcomes for cyclists on the Pahiatua Track. The Pahiatua Track is currently identified as part of the New Zealand Cycle Trail touring route, but as a consequence of the closure of the Gorge to State highway traffic that section has had to be closed due to those safety issues.
- (f) The evidence of **Mr Dunlop** explains that the Project will lead to a safer transport environment for all current users of Saddle Road and the Pahiatua Track, as well as previous users of the Gorge road.
- (g) The Project will also be designed to provide ongoing access to the popular walking tracks in the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve, which are on the south side of the Manawatū River. The Project will facilitate access to and connectivity through the Reserve by providing:
  - (i) a new walking and cycling connection from the Ashhurst Bridge to the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve carpark; and
  - (ii) an extension to the existing footpath between the centre of Woodville and Hampson Street (subject to land availability, which is likely). The facility will be extended westwards, through or around the new roundabout proposed as part of the Project, and will facilitate access to the Ferry Reserve. This work will deliver a part of the Lindauer Arts Trail.
- (h) To the extent that there is an aspiration to create better access to the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve or other land on the northern side of the Manawatū River, the new crossing of the River will be future-proofed by incorporating a dedicated pedestrian facility in some form (as well as cyclable shoulders), subject to working through the details with the designers, tangata whenua, landowners, and others. The Project is proposed to pass close to the Reserve, so clearly creates an opportunity for the relevant stakeholders to explore in that regard (in addition to potential access from Saddle Road, across private land). As

discussed below, at this stage I am uncertain whether that is an aspiration shared by all, but this can be explored further.

55. Further, the Transport Agency does not consider that a separate footpath and cycleway alongside the new road would attract sufficient usage or realise other benefits to warrant the very significant costs, which **Mr Whaley** explains could be in the region of \$20 million.
56. Largely this is because of the terrain and climate. As **Mr Kennett** explains, the Ruahine Ranges are approximately 250m high and the Te Āpiti wind farm site is frequently windy, which creates an environment likely to discourage many recreational cyclists (who would likely prefer a path through a more natural or scenic area, rather than alongside a State highway, in any case). Cycle tourists and commuters nonetheless wishing to cross the Ranges will be able to use the shoulders of the new road, or Saddle Road or the Pahiatua Track (with reduced traffic volumes).
57. This may be one reason why a new, sealed cycle path across the Ranges has not been signalled to the Transport Agency before, to my knowledge, as a priority by any of the relevant local authorities or cycling groups. No such activity is identified as a priority in the RLTP. Nor was a separate path raised by councils as a priority when the Transport Agency first scoped the Project and developed the Project objectives, to my knowledge.
58. Nor is the Transport Agency aware of a shared walking and cycling path across the Ranges, of the kind sought by Build the Path, having been the subject of any transport planning processes, high-level or detailed investigations, engagement with iwi, or discussions with landowners.
59. Nonetheless, as noted above, a pedestrian facility can be provided on the new bridge, in addition to the shoulders, so that future opportunities for such connections can be explored further. In particular I am aware, as noted above, that providing access for mountainbikers to the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve on the northern side of the Manawatū River is an aspiration of some groups. Until recently, the Department of Conservation was understood to be of the view that the ecological values in that part of the reserve were such that public access was not encouraged. Further, I understand that earlier attempts to open that area up were met with opposition from Rangitāne o Manawatū, given the risk of facilitating access to areas or sites of high cultural significance.

60. In recent days (on 1 March 2019) the Transport Agency has been provided with a document purporting to be a draft master plan that is being prepared by the Te Āpiti Governance Group, which is a submitter on the NoRs. I append that document to my evidence as **Attachment 1**.
61. I understand the document is being drafted by Jeff Baker, a planner at Palmerston North City Council (which is a member of the Group, and another submitter). That document appears to be in a very preliminary state and, to be clear, while the Transport Agency is a stakeholder of the Te Āpiti Governance Group (and its logo even appears on the front cover of the draft document), this is the first time I have seen this document. The Transport Agency has been advised that the draft document has not been discussed with any stakeholders or landowners, or with tangata whenua, and has not been ratified by the Te Āpiti Governance Group.
62. Nonetheless, I note that a potential mountainbike track near the Project, across land occupied by Meridian's Te Āpiti Wind Farm, is signalled in the draft document. Again, I do not know if there has been any engagement with Meridian, tangata whenua, or others about those plans.
63. In any event, the Transport Agency considers that it is important for those planning processes and discussions to take place before any commitment can be made to progressing a separate walking and cycling path. While the possible provision of walking and cycling facilities on or near the new route in that area (other than across the new Manawatū River Bridge) is not being made as part of the Project, the NoRs do not preclude an off-road walking and cycling facility from being advanced or developed in future.
64. Planning processes will need to consider the broader context, however, such as potential opportunities to maximise the environment for cyclists on Saddle Road or the Pahiatua Track, or to make use of the old State highway connection through the Gorge. If health and safety issues relating to stability / landslides in the Gorge could be addressed, the latter could potentially provide a flat, scenic route for cyclists and pedestrians. **Mr Kennett** discusses these options further in his evidence. The Transport Agency is committed to working through these considerations with relevant stakeholders.
65. To reiterate, it will also be important to undertake a robust assessment of whether the cost of any additional infrastructure is warranted, considering the many competing priorities for funding. It would obviously not be in the public



interest to spend a large amount of money on infrastructure that may not be well used, ahead of other projects which exhibit better 'value for money' attributes and align better with the GPS and overall public interest. If such a facility was implemented as part of the Project then that would be at the expense of another State highway improvement project (or paid for out of the walking and cycling activity class, which is already over-committed).

66. Options that are likely to be well used, on the other hand, will merit detailed analysis and further engagement. Potential effects on landowners, tangata whenua values, and the environment more generally will also be important considerations in those processes.

*Walking/cycling provision on existing Ashhurst Bridge*

67. Another matter that was being progressed separately, before the Project was conceived, is the addition of a walking and cycling facility to the current Ashhurst Bridge. The lack of such a facility has been a long-standing gap in the transport network for active users and a matter discussed in recent years with Councils and the affected community.
68. Since prior to the closure of the Gorge road, the Transport Agency has been investigating improvements to the bridge as a separate, standalone project. The Ashhurst Bridge is currently identified in the NLTP for improvement in 2021-2024 (at an estimated cost of \$8 million), and that improvement will specifically address the safety of walking and cycling for users of the Ashhurst Bridge. As such, the Transport Agency initially considered that folding those works into the Project was not needed, and indeed that the Transport Agency might have been criticised for seeking to claim the benefits of those works for the Project.
69. That said, because of the somewhat unusual 'existing environment' in this case, involving a network disruption that has shifted traffic away from a part of the network already tagged for improvement, improving the Bridge would indeed address the adverse effects of redirecting traffic over the Bridge once the Project opens (as **David Dunlop** identified in his assessment).
70. The current indication is that a 'clip-on' can be attached to the side of the Ashhurst Bridge to provide segregated walking and cycling access; otherwise, a separate structure would need to be built alongside the Bridge to provide such access. These options are subject to ongoing investigations, but the Transport Agency is able to commit to bringing forward the

construction of the new clip-on improvement or separate Ashhurst Bridge structure to next year, 2020. This will connect part of the existing infrastructure network and will provide safety benefits to walkers and cyclists sooner, as well as mitigating the adverse effects of the Project rediverting traffic over the Bridge.

71. I understand that the revised conditions presented by **Ainsley McLeod** include a specific change reflecting the Transport Agency's commitment in this regard, subject to obtaining any necessary resource consents.
72. The Project will also deliver a dedicated walking and cycling connection from the Ashhurst Bridge to the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve carpark.
73. For additional context, I note too that the Transport Agency has been undertaking a programme of other improvement works in Ashhurst and on Saddle Road to help alleviate issues arising from the closure of the Gorge road. Those works have not been explained in detail in the AEE because they do not form part of the Project – further details can be provided to the Hearing Panel if required.

*Possible future bypass of Woodville*

74. The Project does not create a bypass of Woodville, and any works necessary to achieve that outcome are not within the scope of the Project.
75. As **Mr Wickman** notes in his evidence, following the closure of the Gorge road it was made clear to the Transport Agency in public engagement processes that the Project should not incorporate a bypass of Woodville, given the effects that were being experienced by businesses in the town.
76. In any event, the Project does not preclude the potential for a bypass of Woodville, either to the north or the south, if there is to be a desire for that outcome in the future. For example, a bypass route connection to the alignment could be achieved to the east of the bridge structure at the foot of the Ruahine Ranges, with an intersection on Woodlands Road providing access to Woodville (as an example of a potentially feasible option).
77. As the Hearing Panel has identified in its questions of the Transport Agency, the SH2/SH3 intersection is expected to experience capacity issues as a result of increasing traffic flows, with or without the Project being implemented. Part of the rationale for excluding that intersection from the Project (in addition to **Mr Dunlop's** view that upgrading that intersection is

not required to address an adverse effect of the Project) is that determining the future form of that intersection could sensibly entail consideration of broader transport issues (including a potential bypass), that would complicate and could delay the Project.

#### *Regional ring road around Palmerston North*

78. The Transport Agency has been working in collaboration with Palmerston North City Council, Horizons Regional Council, and other stakeholders, to plan for a regional ring road around Palmerston North. This initiative is intended to help reduce heavy vehicle movements within the city and have related benefits for safety and amenity, while providing opportunities for businesses involved in distribution and logistics. A ring road would need to include construction of a new crossing of the Manawatū River.
79. As the Transport Agency was considering potential route options for the Project, a group of council leaders expressed a preference for one option that they considered to be well aligned with the future regional ring road. In response, the Transport Agency's Board directed the Project team to undertake further evaluation of issues raised by the councils, which was fed into the options evaluation process.
80. While the Transport Agency ultimately selected a different option than that favoured by the councils at that time, another outcome of that process was the Transport Agency committing to bringing forward its work on a detailed business case for the regional ring road, including the further bridge across the Manawatū River.

### **THE BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

81. The Project will provide significant benefits to people living in, travelling between, and travelling through Manawatū and Tararua, in terms of safety, resilience and efficiency.
82. Accordingly, the Project is a key priority for the Transport Agency (as reflected in the NLTP) and is described in Horizons' RLTP as follows:

*"It is critical for regional economic growth that the focus remains on the development of an alternative to the Manawatū Gorge as the principal east-west link between Manawatū and Hawke's Bay. Completion of a new route must ensure an improvement to the resilience and*

*availability of the route as well as realising opportunities for connectivity to land use development, freight hubs and efficiency, and tourism.”*

83. The Project will deliver on these outcomes. The benefits of the Project are described further in the evidence of **David Dunlop**, and include those set out below.

- (a) The Project will achieve significant safety improvements for road users through:
  - (i) the reinstatement of a connection between Manawatū and the Tararua District, built to much safer geometric standards than Saddle Road and the Pahiatua Track (and the now-closed Gorge road), including continuous median separation of east and west bound traffic – the new road is expected to have a KiwiRAP safety rating of between 4.1 and 4.5 stars, significantly better than the 2-3 star rating of other routes across the ranges;<sup>15</sup>
  - (ii) an enhanced traffic environment on Saddle Road and Pahiatua Track, due to traffic redistributing from those routes to the Project, including benefits for cyclists (as noted above); and
  - (iii) a greatly enhanced transport environment for residents, pedestrians, and cyclists in and around Ashhurst, as the trucks and other traffic move away from the community onto the new highway, and in light of the additional connectivity for active modes summarised in my evidence above.
- (b) Generally speaking, the Project will increase capacity within the roading network and improve efficiency for general traffic and freight, including public transport and emergency services.
- (c) In particular, the Project will improve efficiency by significantly reducing travel times between:
  - (i) Ashhurst and Woodville, by more than 10 minutes for light vehicles, emergency services, buses, and freight, approximately halving the existing travel time (and providing a faster connection than the Gorge road did); and

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<sup>15</sup> A rating of 4 stars indicates a low- to medium-risk road; 2 or 3 stars indicate a road with major deficiencies in many or some features (respectively).

- (ii) Aokautere (State Highway 57 South) and State Highway 2 to the north of Woodville – the saving for this trip will be more than 24 minutes, again approximately halving the current travel time (via Pahiatua Track and Mangahao Road).
  - (d) The Project will greatly improve the resilience of the transport network in the event of a significant earthquake and/or slip, road accidents, or other disruption, by providing:
    - (i) a new route between Manawatū, the Tararua District and Wairarapa, built to modern standards, that is more resilient to incidents and events than the Gorge road (Saddle Road and Pahiatua Track will continue to offer alternative routes); and
    - (ii) a new high-quality bridge crossing of the Manawatū River.
  - (e) The Project will promote economic development in the Manawatū-Whanganui, Tararua District and Wairarapa regions, including through:
    - (i) significant improvements in efficiency for freight movements and reduced travel times – current inefficiencies are estimated to be costing more than \$22 million per annum; and
    - (ii) increased economic activity and employment opportunities during the Project's construction period.
  - (f) The Project has a high degree of alignment with key strategic planning instruments, including the GPS and the RLTP.
84. As such, the Project will meet its objectives of:
- (a) reconnecting the currently closed Manawatū Gorge State Highway 3 with a more resilient connection;
  - (b) reconnecting the currently closed Manawatū Gorge State Highway 3 with a more efficient connection than the Saddle Road and Pahiatua Track; and
  - (c) reconnecting the currently closed Manawatū Gorge State Highway 3 connection with a safer connection than the Saddle Road and Pahiatua Track.

## FUTURE OF THE MANAWATŪ GORGE ROAD

85. The Manawatū Gorge road has been closed since April 2017. In this section, I provide a brief update on the Manawatū Gorge road and describe the process the Transport Agency will go through to determine its future.
86. The Transport Agency continues to monitor the risk of slips along the road and, in short, the risk of slips continues to be at an 'extreme' level. This extreme risk rating means that the road is closed indefinitely, and the Transport Agency does not intend to transfer the associated risks to another party. As such, it is too early for the Transport Agency to know what the future of the Gorge road will be.
87. In particular, it is unclear whether or when the slips and face may stabilise sufficiently to enable a recreational cycling and walking trail through the Gorge, a potential option discussed by **Mr Kennett** in his evidence.
88. It is therefore too soon to contemplate the potential outcomes of future statutory processes (including potentially under the RMA) and associated environmental management measures that might be required in connection with any future use. Those processes are entirely separate from this Project.
89. That said, the Project will become the new SH3 route across the Ruahine Ranges, and as such, it is likely that in the future the Transport Agency will undertake one or a combination of the following processes:
- (a) retain the road for a different purpose;
  - (b) revoke the State highway status of the Gorge road under section 103 of the LTMA. This would lead to the road being considered a local road under the control of the relevant territorial authorities (in this case, Palmerston North City Council and Tararua District Council). Revocation may be appropriate if the monitoring shows that the road remains viable for some future use, and the relevant Councils are prepared to take on management of the road in the future; or
  - (c) request that the road be stopped under section 116 of the Public Works Act 1981. This would mean that the road would cease to be a road and the land would then be dealt with in accordance with the Public Works Act 1981.

90. The Transport Agency does not wish to start these processes until the future use of the Gorge road has been decided. As set out above, the Transport Agency will keep consulting with the appropriate parties on the future use of the Gorge road before deciding which of these processes to initiate. If the Transport Agency decides to revoke State highway status, the State Highway Revocation Policy Guidance<sup>16</sup> also requires the Transport Agency to consult (in good faith and with an open mind) with the affected councils, and when appropriate, local iwi.
91. One outcome that could potentially be realised in the near future, subject to those consultation and statutory processes, involves providing walking and cycling access from the Woodville end of the Manawatū Gorge, along the old highway for 2.5 km to Barney's Point, which could then connect to other tracks through the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve. I understand that Barney's Point is of considerable significance to Māori.
92. Partial revocation of the State highway status could be the legal mechanism explored to enable that outcome. Again, however, this is a separate process to the Project.

## **RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS AND SECTION 42A REPORTS**

### **Introduction**

93. As an initial point, the Transport Agency is working hard to deliver this Project in an open, collaborative manner, and within a very constrained timeframe, responding to the clear message from relevant councils and the affected communities that the Project is needed urgently. The Transport Agency is very grateful for the considerable input provided by tangata whenua, landowners, the relevant councils, other stakeholders, and members of the public, which has helped bring the Project to this point. **Mr Dalzell** describes the Transport Agency's approach and engagement processes in more detail in his evidence.
94. The Transport Agency sees the submissions on the NoRs and the upcoming hearings as a continuation of those collaborative processes. It is grateful for the time that people have taken to make submissions and the contribution they will make through their evidence or representations at the hearing, and beyond. The Transport Agency has carefully considered all of the

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<sup>16</sup> State Highway Revocation: Policy Guidance (NZ Transport Agency). Available at: <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/planning-and-investment/docs/state-highway-revocation-policy.pdf>

submissions and is genuinely open to discussing people's concerns with them, and has sought to make contact with all submitters (or their representatives) to work through issues at an early stage. **Mr Dalzell** discusses this further.

### **Submissions relating to the nature of the Project**

95. Other Transport Agency witnesses address submission points in detail. Relevant to my evidence are the many submissions querying the nature of the Project put forward by the Transport Agency and seeking the inclusion of a separate walking and cycling path, and improvement to the Ashhurst Bridge, including the submissions by 'Build the Path' (and its supporters), Palmerston North City Council, Tararua District Council, Horizons Regional Transport Committee, Manawatū Chamber of Commerce, Sport Manawatū, Tararua District Road Safety Group, the Te Āpiti Governance Group, Manawatū River Source to Sea, Wellington Conservation Board and the Woodville Domain Board.
96. I again acknowledge the time people have taken to prepare those submissions. The Transport Agency's response on those matters is set out in my evidence above. As I have explained, the Project is delivering important elements of infrastructure for active transport users, and will be future-proofed for other initiatives.
97. One other aspect of the Project that has been sought by a submitter, Mr Brent Barrett, is the creation of an 'electric highway' whereby the new road includes aspects such as small-scale wind turbines and electric vehicle charging infrastructure on the hilltop. I understand such charging stations to be commercial ventures (similar to petrol stations), and there is a relatively short distance between Ashhurst and Woodville so I am unsure whether such a facility would be well used. Nonetheless, again, the Project does not preclude innovations like this being realised in future.

### **Submissions relating to the future of the Gorge road**

98. The submissions by the Department of Conservation and Forest and Bird raise questions around the future of the Gorge road, and seek that conditions be imposed on the designations regarding pest control in that area.
99. As discussed above, the Transport Agency does not know what the future of the Gorge road will be, for various reasons including the ongoing 'extreme' risk of slips.



100. In the meantime, I do not understand this Project to affect the old Gorge road. The Transport Agency retains control over and responsibility for that road, including in relation to any biosecurity or environmental issues that may arise.

## **RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS BY THE HEARING PANEL**

### **Introduction**

101. I and other Transport Agency witnesses are grateful for the Hearing Panel asking questions and affording us the opportunity, prior to the hearing, to clarify aspects of the NoRs and AEE. I respond below to the questions that are relevant to my evidence.

***In light of the safety concerns expressed by David Dunlop (his para 166), why is a dedicated path for pedestrians and cyclists over the existing SH3 Ashhurst Bridge not being considered and/or implemented as part of this project?***

***It is stated that the Palmerston North Ring Road Route may lead to changes in active mode travel patterns accessing Manawatū Gorge. If this is expected to increase accessibility, and in general terms increased pedestrian and cyclist demand is anticipated anyway, please explain the rationale behind making no provision within the existing SH3 bridge for these modes. (...)***

102. I have sought to explain these questions above; in brief, the Transport Agency now proposes to deliver these improvements (and improve connectivity for active modes in other ways) in conjunction with the Project, and a condition is proposed to this effect.

***(...) Please also explain how this may change the need for a cycle/walking track, how might a combined cycle, walking and equestrian track be incorporated within the NoRs, what would be the cost implications and the design constraints and opportunities and what might a typical cross-section look like***

103. I have also explained above the ways in which the Project will increase connectivity for active modes. Beyond that, the Project does not preclude any specific potential future works to provide a connection for cyclists, pedestrians, or equestrians.

104. If creation of a Palmerston North Ring Road route, for example, were to create an adverse effect on cyclists or other active modes, I would expect any associated future RMA processes to focus on what measures might be required to address such effects.

***Please explain the rationale for excluding the SH2/SH3 intersection from the NoRs if capacity issues with and without the project are expected***

105. I have sought to answer this question in my evidence above. The future form of this intersection requires consideration in any event, and there may be broader considerations to work through with Tararua District Council, iwi, landowners, and others. The Transport Agency's approach regarding the Project is to proceed with the urgent task of reconnecting the regions, while not precluding any future outcome for the SH2/SH3 intersection.

***Given the archaeological status of the now closed SH3 through Manawatū Gorge, what, in your view, would be an appropriate treatment for it in future in terms either rehabilitation or abandonment?***

106. I appreciate that this question is intended for **Dr Rod Clough**, the expert archaeologist advising the Transport Agency, and he answers it in his evidence.

107. From the Transport Agency's perspective, as discussed above, there are a number of potential future uses for the road, subject to ongoing assessment of geotechnical risks, relevant statutory processes, and discussions with tangata whenua and various stakeholders. In considering potential future uses, the Transport Agency will of course strive to be respectful of heritage values and discuss matters further with tangata whenua and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (as necessary).

**COMMENTS ON SECTION 42A REPORT**

108. I comment below on aspects of the Section 42A report and accompanying materials that relate to my evidence.

**Benefits of the Project**

109. As will be addressed in the evidence of other witnesses for the Transport Agency, a number of the suggestions made by the Section 42A report authors to improve the Project have been helpful, and will be adopted by the Transport Agency.

110. More broadly, it is of course disappointing to read the criticism of the Project and the Transport Agency's case contained in the Section 42A report. It is for the Hearing Panel to form a view on whether a desire by the Councils to maximise the benefits of the Project may have led to an overemphasis, in RMA terms, by the Section 42A authors on what they consider to be "lost opportunities". Given the strong desire for the Project to be delivered, I was somewhat surprised by what seemed to me to be a relative lack of emphasis on the transport, social, and related benefits of the Project. Those benefits are substantial, as I have explained above (and as addressed in the evidence of **Mr Dunlop** and **Amelia Linzey**).

### **Separated cycling and walking path and analysis of the GPS and RLTP**

111. Much of the Section 42A report focuses on a desire by its authors for the Transport Agency to implement a separated path alongside the highway. I have explained above the Transport Agency's position on that issue, including how the Project will be future-proofed through provision of a walking and cycling facility across the new Manawatū River Bridge.

112. The authors of the Section 42A report seek to derive support for their argument from the GPS and the RLTP. This culminates in a view expressed as follows (at paragraph 299):

*"We agree with submitters that failing to provide safe, separated, accessible, integrated connection across the ranges as part of this new road for recreational cyclists, which includes tourists, is at odds with the direction in the GPS, the RLTP and relevant provisions in the district plans."*

113. I understand that the report authors' interpretation of the GPS and the RLTP, including whether they require the Transport Agency to implement a separated cycling and walking facility as sought by Build the Path, is addressed in the evidence of **Mr Dunlop** and **Ms McLeod**.

114. For the Transport Agency's part, I can confirm that the Project is a very high priority for the Transport Agency because of its strong alignment with the GPS, and its prioritisation in the RLTP. In respect of the RLTP, I note that that document contains no connection across the Ruahine Range for walking and cycling, despite the views expressed by the Section 42A report authors.

### **New path from the Ashhurst Bridge to the Scenic Reserve carpark**

115. At paragraph 212 of the Section 42A report, the author queries the nature of the new cycling and walking path leading from the Ashhurst Bridge; I have explained above how the Project will facilitate access to the Reserve in various ways, including by providing a new walking and cycling connection from the Ashhurst Bridge to the Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve carpark.
116. I can confirm that the Transport Agency's intention is to provide a continuous connection for cyclists and pedestrians from the Bridge to the carpark.

**Sarah Downs**

**8 March 2019**

**ATTACHMENT 1: DRAFT MASTER PLAN PREPARED BY TE ĀPITI  
GOVERNANCE GROUP**

Provided separately









# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

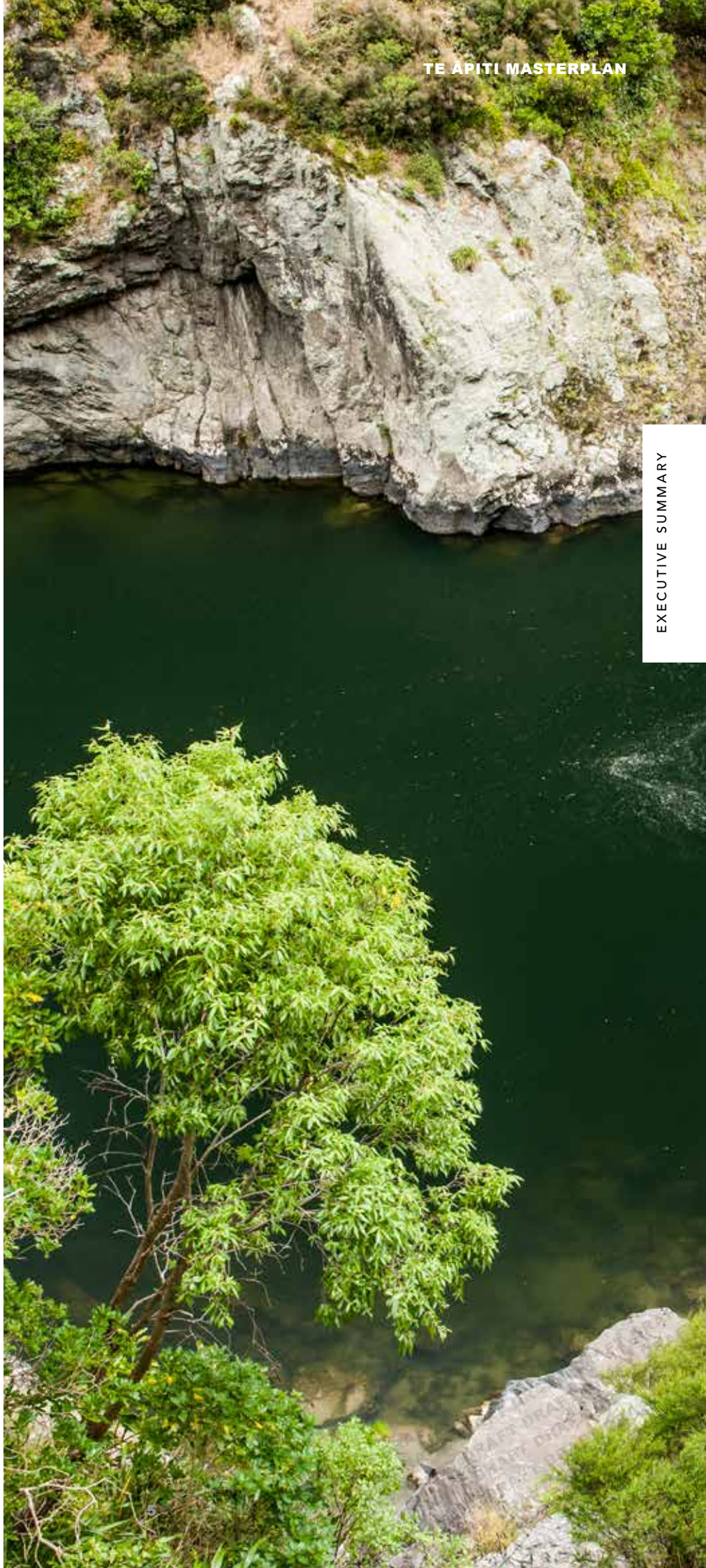
‘Te Āpiti (Manawatū Gorge) is the jewel of the Central North Island, a dramatic place where earth, river and sky form a powerhouse of spirit, beauty, enjoyment, wonder and energy. It is cherished and respected by those who act as guardians.’

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Te Āpiti (Manawatū Gorge) has multiple values, and is being increasingly recognised for these values, locally, regionally and nationally.

This is why it is so important that future management and enhancement of the area be considered in an effective, planned and proactive way, to maximise Te Āpiti's potential, not only in its own right, but for the benefits it brings to the wider Manawatū. The development of this Masterplan provides the next stage in realizing its potential.

# INTRODUCTION

## The Power

The power of this place was always well recognized, from earliest times with the flowing current of the south or 'Te Au-rere-a-te-tonga' being the common reference for the Gorge. During times of heavy flood, the power of this place is really put on show. But even a trip through the forest on a windy day will show the local traveler what strength this place has to offer.

The famous 'red rock' which signaled many things to Māori people as they travelled through the Gorge provides another example. The rock remains visible even in the biggest floods and is known to Rangitane upstream of the Gorge as Potaehinetewhaiwa or Hinepotae, and to Rangitane of the lower Manawatū River (downstream of the Gorge) as Te Ahu a Turanga. It serves several purposes, including kaitiaki (guardian) or tipuna (ancestor), testifying to its significant spiritual importance. The rock remains tapu (sacred) to this day.

## The Play

For recreation enthusiasts, there are multiple options for hiking, running and generally exploring the local environment. The forest environment presents many of the opportunities, and as old roads start to return to nature, their rough glory will present even more opportunity for play. Mountain biking is shaping up to be a popular activity for locals and visitors, with an increasing number of tracks being created each year. Watersports have peaked and troughed over there years too, with canoeing, jetboating and fishing all occurring on the river over time.

This plan presents an opportunity to coordinate recreation opportunities, ensuring that what is maintained and developed into the future, is just right for this place, and achieves a good balance between formed and unformed wilderness space.











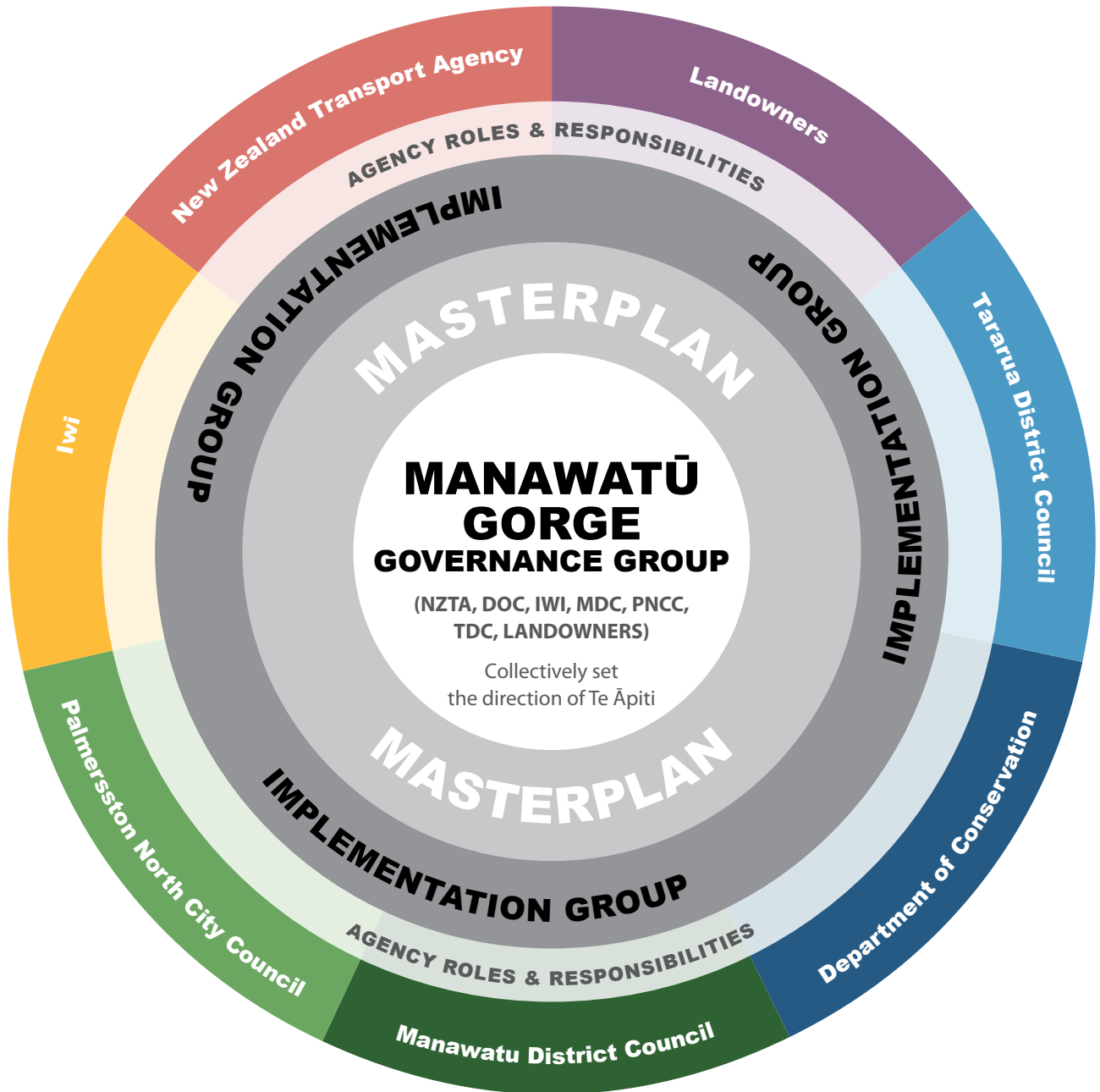


Figure 2: Diagram of Gorge Governance Group

# PUBLIC CONSULTATION & KEY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The draft masterplan has not yet been through a public consultation phase. It is expected that this will occur early in the 2019 calendar year. This section will be completed when submission are received through this process.

A number of key stakeholders have been involved informally in the formation of this draft including:

- Department of Conservation
- New Zealand Transport Authority
- Horizons Regional Council
- Palmerston North City Council
- Tararua District Council
- Manawatū Mountain Bike Club
- Ferry Domain Reserve Board
- Iwi
- Biodiversity Network Cluster (Environment Network Manawatū)
- Tom Shannon

The formal comments of these parties will be also be reported in this section at the end of the formal submission period

# THE INTENT OF THIS MASTERPLAN & HOW IT SHOULD BE READ

INTENT

This Masterplan has been developed to help guide the future of Te Āpiti (Manawatū Gorge) for the next 30 years. It brings together/ aligns with, rather than duplicates key recent work including the Manawatū Gorge Biodiversity Plan (2017) and the Manawatū Gorge Cultural Values Assessment (2015).

The timing of this Masterplan has been instrumental in setting the overall direction for the place. With the road closure occurring a year prior to its development and the new road currently being in the planning/ design stages, this Masterplan has the potential to influence and guide the enhancement of Te Āpiti in a way that benefits road users and users of the gorge itself.

The vision of *[to be confirmed alongside Governance Group]* sets the desired state for Te Āpiti, and should be constantly reflected on as future decision making occurs. To realise the vision a set of principles have been developed. These help to describe what the priorities are, and build a clearer picture of what the end state might look like. The principles are described through five key focus areas being; Environment, Culture, Education, Recreation and Leadership.

Each of the key focus areas considers the natural environment, the built environment and sustainability. The framework is demonstrated more fully below.

## The Focus Areas

**Cultural** – [Note: The Manawatū Gorge Biodiversity Plan has indicated that statements of the cultural context and importance of biodiversity management at Te Āpiti are being prepared by Rangitane o Manawatū, Rangitane Tamaki Nui a Rua and Kahungunu ki Tamaki Nui a Rua. Perhaps these could be developed further/ refined/ applied for this Masterplan.]

The Te Aranga Māori Design Principles are important to this project and all decisions will be underpinned by the philosophies presented through these principles. They are a set of outcome-based principles founded on intrinsic Māori cultural values and designed to provide practical guidance for enhancing outcomes for the design environment.

Te Āpiti is a rich home of cultural heritage and provides a very real opportunity to continue on as a place of cultural use and celebration. There is an opportunity for increased creative expression to weave iwi/ hapū narratives in a creative and appropriate way.

There is a need to respect and protect the mana whenua significant sites and cultural landmarks. Working closely with the various iwi representatives will ensure this happens.

Cultural practice is still alive and it is our duty to create a place to enable this to continue to thrive. Te Āpiti provides a perfect opportunity to celebrate and enrich the cultural practices.

**Taiao (Natural Environment)** – Te Āpiti is a place to be protected and enhanced being one of the few easily accessible places in the Manawatū that remains set aside for conservation. While it is a modified environment due to historic events; both through man-made and natural events, it is more naturalized than the majority of other publicly available, easily accessible land.

Eroded banks and bluffs, exposed almost sub alpine ridges, and warmer slopes at the edge of the plain and the powerful Manawatū River cutting through the range all make up the Te Āpiti landscape.

This results in a diversity of species and vegetation types. As referred to in the Manawatū Gorge Biodiversity Plan (2017), 'mature hill country forest species such as tawa and podocarps are present, but also species of warmer coastal and coastal slope areas such as nikau palm and ngaio. Spectacular large northern rata are also present. The gorge is also in the "beech gap" area, where beech species are not present due to past glacial destruction of the forest and low subsequent seed spread. Two "at risk" native species are present in the gorge – the giant maidenhair fern (*Adiantum formosum*) and the native verbena (*Teucrium parvifolium*)'.

While there has not been a detailed assessment of wildlife in the gorge area some recent work on bird species and anecdotal sightings have occurred. Local bird species have been sighted in Te Āpiti and include tui, ruru (morepork), pipiwharuroa (shining cuckoo), popokatea (whitehead), karearea (bush falcon), and New Zealand's smallest bird the titipounamu (rifleman), as identified in a recent overview (DOC 2016). The Wellington Green Gecko and southern North Island forest gecko have also both been found in the gorge in the past. Past survey of ground beetles has identified the presence of the quite large (30mm) *Megadromus turgidiceps* beetle.

As referred to in the Manawatū Gorge Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (2017), Te Āpiti provides a long ecological corridor from east to west. It also provides an opportunity to promote linked pest control and other aspects of ecological restoration across nearby private and public land to contribute to a much larger "landscape scale" biodiversity restoration network. This also aligns well with the Government Predator Free 2050 initiative which supports coordinated predator control at a landscape scale.

The impacts of climate change on how the vision for Te Āpiti will be realized, provides an interesting dichotomy. To expect the unexpected is the new norm. This will be the case for the evolution of this masterplan.

**Recreation** – People have been able to enjoy the Manawatū Gorge for over 100 years. Recreation has taken various forms

including waka, cycling, kayaking, jet boating and walking.

The area is in close proximity to Palmerston North and other centres which means it provides people an accessible place to experience and interact with the native forest and observe the dramatic views of Te Āpiti. Being so accessible means that large numbers of people now use tracks in the area, particularly the easier Tawa Loop Walk and other tracks at the Ashhurst end of the Te Āpiti. A mountain bike track from Hall Block Road near the Ballance Bridge was opened in 2013. Additional mountain bike track developments are being considered.

As long as activities occur in a way that complements, not detracts from the environment and cultural values, then it can be viewed as a positive outcome. To ensure recreation occurs in the right place, a collective approach by the agencies has been taken to long in the 'go/ no go' areas for recreation opportunity both now and into the future.

**Education** – There are so many aspects of Te Āpiti that people can learn from. Te Āpiti has the potential to educate about the enrichment of environments for the future, but also to raise awareness of the beauty of this place. Many schools already use the area for education about native plants and other aspects of the natural environment. Additionally the Department of Conservation has launched and is running the site as a Toyota Kiwi Guardian experience. The site has also previously been a Kiwi Ranger site. Both of these programmes provide a teaching resource and encouragement to connect children to the biodiversity.

Further, the infrastructure from (the former) State Highway 3 has a potential offering in terms of education. To be able to literally walk up to and touch these, learn from them and become an outdoor museum of State Highway infrastructure is something particularly unique to this place.

**Leadership Framework** – Having a clear mandate and leadership framework is crucial to the successful implementation of the masterplan. Coupled with this closely is the need for;

- A communications and engagement approach with stakeholders
- Monitoring, evaluation and change process for continual improvement
- Management and execution framework

Recent Treaty of Waitangi settlement processes also reinforce the need for a strong partnership in management of this area. Rangitane o Manawatū, Rangitane Tamaki Nui a Rua and Kahungunu ki Tamaki Nui a Rua are members of the Governance Group.

To ensure the success of the masterplan it requires a sustainable long term financial model.

To achieve the vision a road map has been created for all agencies, showing the project focus areas followed by a more detailed implementation plan, assigning roles, responsibilities and timelines. Ultimately creating the tangible actions, the accountability.

The Masterplan should be reviewed on a regular 3 yearly basis, ensuring that the commitments made by agencies are real, and are forthcoming.

**For our purposes, there are two key areas:**

Te Āpiti, the Gorge, referring to the land and water within the physical boundary of the Manawatū Gorge. Physical measures to enhance, sustain, protect will be a priority for this area. Site specific proposals/ developments feature within the Gorge. Precinct plans for development, possibly even design palettes for precincts.

The Gorge beyond, is the area beyond the Gorge beyond, and includes the wider environment; emphasising the link to local community, the link between the Ruahine and Tararua Ranges and the connection of the river from source to sea for example.

The map below clearly shows the extent of the Gorge beyond, with the land outside of it being the Gorge. Policy, partnerships and other interventions are the priority for the Gorge beyond; i.e. Active promotion of the development of a connection between the Ruahine Ranges and the Tararua Ranges – for ecosystems and walkways.



# POLICY FRAMEWORK

POLICY FRAMEWORK

## VISION (POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES SUMMARY TABLE)

	VALUES
	Values (what are the key values associated with each focus area that will underpin our thinking as we take action on the masterplan)
<p><b>1.</b> <i>Environment Focus Area</i></p> 	Key floral values of mixed podocarp/ nikau forest, key faunal values especially the bird species native to the area, unique landform and river features.
<p><b>2.</b> <i>Cultural Focus Area</i></p> 	<p>The spiritual and physical connection to Te Āpiti for Māori is front and foremost of masterplanning.</p> <p>Traditional cultural practice is encouraged in Te Āpiti.</p>
<p><b>3.</b> <i>Recreation Focus Area</i></p> 	Recreation has been undertaken in Te Āpiti for a long time is a key part of the place.
<p><b>4.</b> <i>Education Focus Area</i></p> 	Te Āpiti provides an opportunity for the Manawatū to enrich people's knowledge of the natural, cultural and built environment.
<p><b>5.</b> <i>Leadership Framework Focus Area</i></p> 	There is a well understood and strong framework for leadership of Te Āpiti and the wider community feel connected with the people and the place.

POLICIES			
	Natural (what is the direction we will take with our natural features as they relate to each focus area)	Built (what is the direction we will take with our built features/ our infrastructure, as it relates to each focus area)	Sustainability (what are the fundamental steps/ priorities that need to be taken to ensure the focus area is enduring through to achieving its vision)
	Protection and enrichment of the natural environment.	Built infrastructure in place in appropriate locations and for a reason.	Clear management, monitoring and improvement process in place to ensure continual improvement for a better environment.
	<p>Te Āpiti has many specific sites of importance for cultural reasons.</p> <p>This masterplan places emphasis on appropriate care of these through engaged and proactive planning.</p> <p>The Te Aranga Māori Design Principles will be considered through decision making about Te Āpiti.</p>	<p>Some culturally significant areas are for commemoration and celebration. Where appropriate to do so, and where in keeping with the surrounding environment, built infrastructure may be provided to highlight the key values associated with the place.</p> <p>The Te Aranga Māori Design Principles will be considered through decision making about Te Āpiti.</p>	<p>Clear and agreed management approach to both natural and built cultural features of the Gorge.</p> <p>Traditional cultural practice is encouraged and sustainably managed in Te Āpiti.</p>
	Recreation activities are undertaken in harmony with the environment and in parts where it is appropriate to do so, avoiding sensitive environmental areas.	Infrastructure is designed in accordance with a design framework for Te Āpiti, with infrastructure in place for the purpose to sustain recreation activity where it complements the overall direction of the masterplan and is not detrimental to the environment or cultural values of the place.	Clear management, monitoring and improvement process in place to ensure continual improvement for a better recreation experience.
	Environmental education to encourage better knowledge that can be transposed into every day life and encourage respect for, and promotion of Te Āpiti for its special attributes/ defining natural features.	There is an opportunity to learn about the existing historic infrastructure of Te Āpiti (particularly associated with the road), as well as some of the key safety infrastructure. Education also requires some infrastructure such as signage which will feature in Te Āpiti.	Long Term and coordinated programme of education in place for Te Āpiti.
	Te Āpiti is subject to a sustainability programme where the protection and enhancement of the natural environment is at the forefront of thinking. The place is protected through appropriate legislation.	There is a clear manager and owner of all infrastructure in Te Āpiti. Assets have asset management plans in place so they can be effectively maintained.	A long term programme of leadership is documented with full commitment from key agencies demonstrated through clear accountability.



# ENVIRONMENT

POLICY FRAMEWORK

1. ENVIRONMENT FOCUS AREA			
Values	Natural Feature Policies	Built Feature Policies	Sustainability Policies
<p>The mixed podocarp/ nikau forest is a distinguishing feature of this place and should be maintained and enhanced.</p> <p>Recent faunal assessments also indicate that there are a number of interesting local bird species, gecko and insects are present.</p> <p>While the place has been significantly modified over the past 100+ years, the priority is for this place to be continually enriched by the vision of reviving the near natural setting that once existed before people.</p> <p>Protection and enrichment of the conservation values of Te Āpiti in a way that aligns with the Te Āpiti Manawatū Gorge Biodiversity Management Plan (2017), 'A healthy and diverse forest ecosystem in a dramatic landscape that connects people with the environment and management of our precious biodiversity'.</p> <p>The geological features of the area are significant. To this effect an investigation into the potential for Geopark Status is a priority.</p> <p>Showcasing and celebrating the unique landscape of this place, preserving it for future generations.</p> <p>Recognition of the Manawatū River as a significant habitat for aquatic life, with protection and enhancement mechanisms in place.</p>	<p>Ensure that decision making about future protection and enhancement of Te Āpiti is undertaken in an informed way ensuring that decisions are made based on good information.</p> <p>Re-introduction of key strategic species into the place that were once abundant in the region to 1) enrich Te Āpiti and 2) contribute to reversing the overall biodiversity decline (this may include species such as the North Island Robin)</p> <p>Protect and enhance the existing native species of the area, with an emphasis on those that are in decline/ rare and of significance to Mana Whenua.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the area on a national stage initially through an investigation into Geopark Status however in other ways as opportunities are presented.</p> <p>Manawatū River Accord as a key framework through which the Manawatū Gorge (river environment) is protected and enhanced.</p> <p>Support and encourage landscape scale ecological restoration, beyond just the boundaries of Te Āpiti.</p>	<p>Built infrastructure is required where there is potential for natural features (especially those features that are rare or sensitive) to be damaged or destroyed.</p> <p>Built features are only required where education and recreation activities have been identified as appropriate for the area (and the areas have been pre-selected for use in this way).</p> <p>Design framework in place to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to the installation of all appropriate infrastructure in the area. This includes application of The Te Aranga Māori Design Principles.</p> <p>The priority will be for sustainable methods for building construction wherever possible (locally sourced materials, WSUD measures)</p>	<p>Clear and agreed management approach to both natural and built features of the Gorge.</p> <p>Regular monitoring of progress towards implementing the Masterplan and overall vision.</p> <p>Evaluation of monitoring and change plan for overall Masterplan.</p> <p>An open improvement forum for the Environment Focus Area exists and is supported by the Leadership of the area. This may require the engagement of a project manager to establish and run the programme.</p>





POLICY FRAMEWORK





# CULTURAL VALUES

## 2. CULTURAL FOCUS AREA

<b>Values</b>	<b>Natural Feature Policies</b>	<b>Built Feature Policies</b>	<b>Sustainability Policies</b>
<p>The spiritual and physical connection to Te Āpiti for Māori is front and foremost of masterplanning.</p> <p>The appropriate level of care will be given to all spiritual and physical sites in Te Āpiti; whether protection, enhancement, commemoration, celebration.</p> <p>Exercising cultural practices has an important place in Te Āpiti and provision is made for undertaking these practices accordingly.</p>	<p>Spiritual significance of Te Āpiti is recognised and cherished as a key philosophy of the Masterplan. Where possible the spiritual significance will be articulated to enable a wider understanding of its meaning.</p> <p>Te Āpiti has many specific sites of importance for cultural reasons. Some of the sites are known, understood and available for celebration and commemoration. On the other hand others are less known, and for good reason. This masterplan seeks to respect both through engaged and proactive planning.</p> <p>A process will be supported whereby significant sites can be identified, managed, protected and enhanced.</p> <p>Local flora and fauna which are familiar and significant to mana whenua are key natural landscape elements to be protected and enhanced in Te Āpiti.</p> <p>The natural environment is protected, restored and enhanced to levels where sustainable mana whenua harvesting is possible.</p>	<p>Some culturally significant areas are for commemoration and celebration. Where appropriate to do so, and where in keeping with the surrounding environment, built infrastructure may be provided to highlight the key values associated with the place.</p> <p>Māori names are celebrated through Te Āpiti and Mana Whenua significant sites and cultural landmarks are acknowledged. These are established with Mana Whenua involved.</p>	<p>Iwi partnership arrangement developed for the effective and continual use of Te Āpiti for traditional cultural practice.</p> <p>Clear and agreed management approach to both natural and built cultural features of the Gorge.</p> <p>Regular monitoring of progress towards implementing the Masterplan and overall vision.</p> <p>Evaluation of monitoring and change plan for overall Masterplan.</p> <p>An open improvement forum for the Environment Focus Area exists and is supported by the Leadership of the area.</p> <p>Acknowledgement of the multiple Māori perspectives of Te Āpiti through site planning, management and enhancement.</p>



POLICY FRAMEWORK

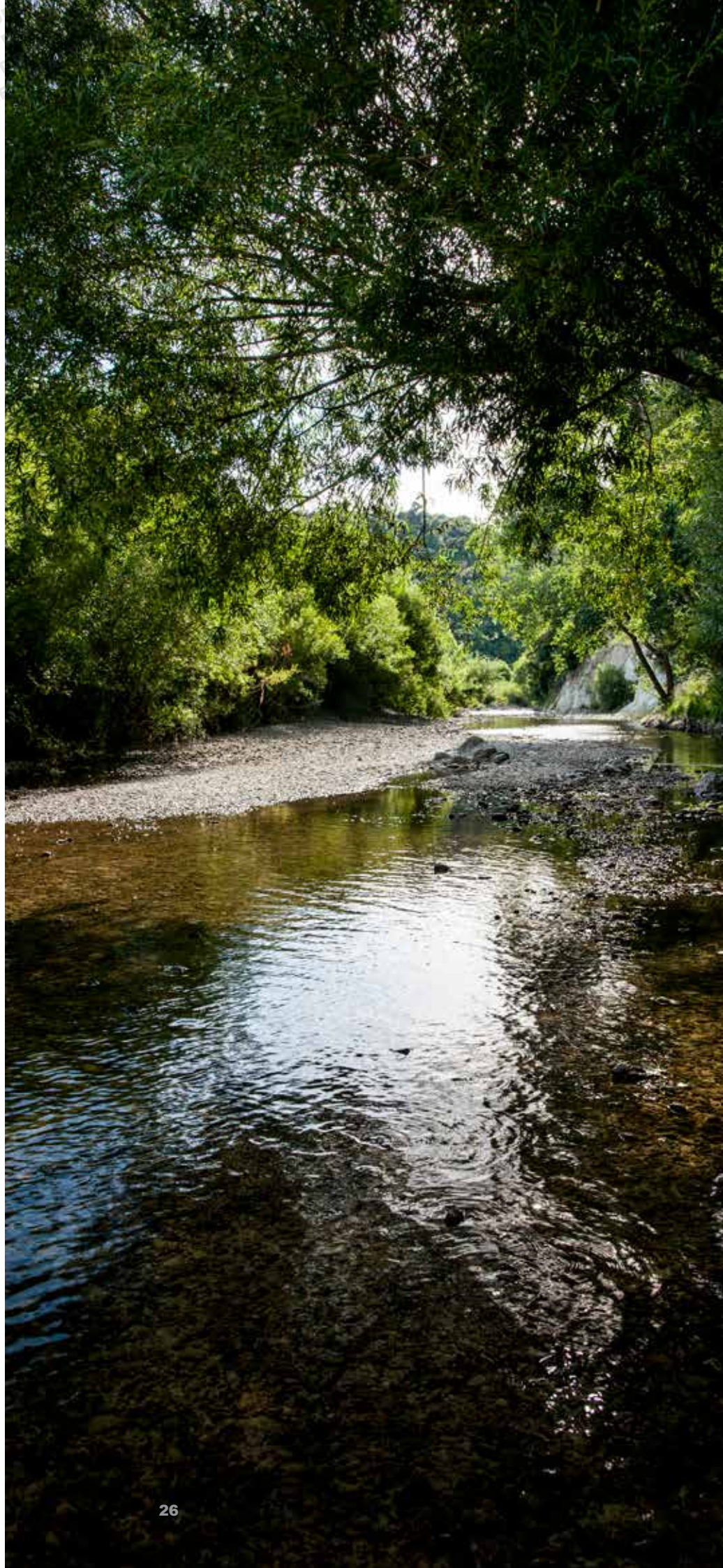
# RECREATION VALUES

POLICY FRAMEWORK

3. RECREATION FOCUS AREA			
Values	Natural Feature Policies	Built Feature Policies	Sustainability Policies
<p>The natural environment of Te Āpiti provides an important setting for people to recreate for regular activity and one off events. It is one of the few, readily accessible locations in the Manawātū to recreate, especially for walking, running and mountainbiking.</p> <p>Te Āpiti has the potential to achieve a Great Walk status, and improvements to the area will support the realization of this.</p> <p>Water based activities such as kayaking, jet boating, and rafting have been undertaken through Te Āpiti for a long time and are considered an important feature. [position on motorized water sports such as jetboating needs discussion at GG level]</p> <p>Recreation has occurred in Te Āpiti for over 100 years. It is seen as an important part of the fabric of the region - access to good quality facilities in Te Āpiti is important to the community.</p> <p>Recreation activities in Te Āpiti are cherished due to the way interaction can so readily occur with the natural environment. Therefore it remains important that recreation complements rather than detracts from the natural setting experience.</p> <p>Te Āpiti will be developed for recreation, in a way that enables and encourages accessibility for all (creating areas for limited mobility access).</p> <p>The Ashhurst and Woodville communities provide an important linkage for recreation. Close linkage/ strong alignment with the activities of these communities will assist with regional tourism promotion.</p>	<p>Recreation opportunities will be encouraged where they compliment the surrounding environment and do not detrimentally affect the environmental or cultural values of the area.</p> <p>A transparent plan of where recreation is actively encouraged, is essential to the overall success of Te Āpiti. With this in mind, careful planning to ensure appropriate placement of recreation infrastructure is crucial to the ongoing enrichment of the place.</p> <p>Activities such as bird watching and other passive recreation leisure activities that compliment and build the knowledge and prosperity of the place will be actively promoted.</p> <p>Water based recreation activities are acceptable provided they are not restricted by other mechanisms such as bylaws or rules in district or regional plans and provided they do not disturb the current or potential natural values of Te Āpiti (bird breeding habitat/ disturbance through noise etc).</p>	<p>Infrastructure to sustain recreation activity will be installed where it complements the overall direction of the masterplan and is not detrimental to the environment or cultural values of the place.</p> <p>Infrastructure, where it supports the drive for Great Walk status will be a priority.</p> <p>This masterplan encourages development of infrastructure that enhances recreation connectivity between the Ashhurst and Woodville communities (such as walkways and cycleways).</p> <p>Infrastructure for limited mobility access will be considered where appropriate and able to do so.</p> <p>Design framework in place to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to the installation of all appropriate infrastructure in the area.</p> <p>Department of Conservation track standards will be achieved for all walkways.</p> <p>The priority will be for sustainable methods for building construction wherever possible (locally sourced materials, WSUD measures).</p>	<p>Clear and agreed management approach to both natural and built features of the Gorge.</p> <p>One off events where track closure/ area restriction occurs is acceptable however only by prior agreement of the Governance Group.</p> <p>Regular monitoring of progress towards implementing the Masterplan and overall vision.</p> <p>Evaluation of monitoring and change plan for overall Masterplan.</p> <p>There is a long term programme for improving the recreation experience, supported by the Leadership of the area.</p> <p>Modular experiences (ability to change and evolve readily) to ensure the approach to recreation provision is up to date and relevant as the dynamics of the place evolve over time.</p> <p>The recreation activities are integrated to provide for experiences beyond their own individual benefits.</p>











# LEADERSHIP

POLICY FRAMEWORK

## 5. LEADERSHIP FOCUS AREA

<b>Values</b>	<b>Natural Feature Policies</b>	<b>Built Feature Policies</b>	<b>Sustainability Policies</b>
<p>This plan has been developed to provide guidance on the direction of Te Āpiti. It needs to be supported by all agencies until such a time as agencies collectively agree to a review. Regular review is important as more information is found over time to inform decision making.</p> <p>At the time of preparing this Masterplan, the Manawatū Gorge Governance Group was the key agency with overall mandate for the area. Over time this mandate should transition to a more formalized mandated group to oversee the masterplans implementation.</p> <p>There is a well understood and strong framework for leadership of Te Āpiti.</p> <p>The leadership framework enables stakeholders to be engaged and feel part of the process.</p> <p>The framework is underpinned by a sound financial base.</p> <p>The masterplan and Te Āpiti itself is compliant with legislation; Health &amp; Safety, Resource Management Act 1991, Reserves Act 1977, Local Government Act and Conservation Act.</p>	<p>Te Āpiti is subject to a sustainability programme where the protection and enhancement of the natural environment is at the forefront of thinking.</p> <p>The River Accord Actions form a crucial part of the masterplan programme.</p> <p>Te Āpiti is considered as a Regional Park - within a suitable paradigm of recognition; regional park, covenant etc.</p> <p>Investigate how mechanisms to regulate and control activity in Te Āpiti (concessions for operators etc) can be most effectively implemented.</p>	<p>There is a clear manager and owner of all infrastructure in Te Āpiti.</p> <p>An Asset Management Plan is in place and is current for all built infrastructure.</p> <p>There is a clear replacement/ renewal plan in place for all key assets in Te Āpiti. Where replacements or renewals are required there is also a sound process for ensuring replacements or renewals are actually required.</p>	<p>A Memorandum of Understanding (or other agreement) is established and in place at all times between agencies.</p> <p>Acknowledgement of the post Treaty of Waitangi settlement environment where iwi living presences can include customary, cultural and commercial dimensions.</p> <p>A long term programme of leadership is documented with full commitment from key agencies.</p> <p>Partner agencies are fully accountable for key actions within the masterplan. Over time as the leadership framework for the masterplan evolves, this accountability may evolve into a different form at which point this plan should be reviewed and updated.</p> <p>There is embedded ownership of the masterplan and its priorities.</p> 



# CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

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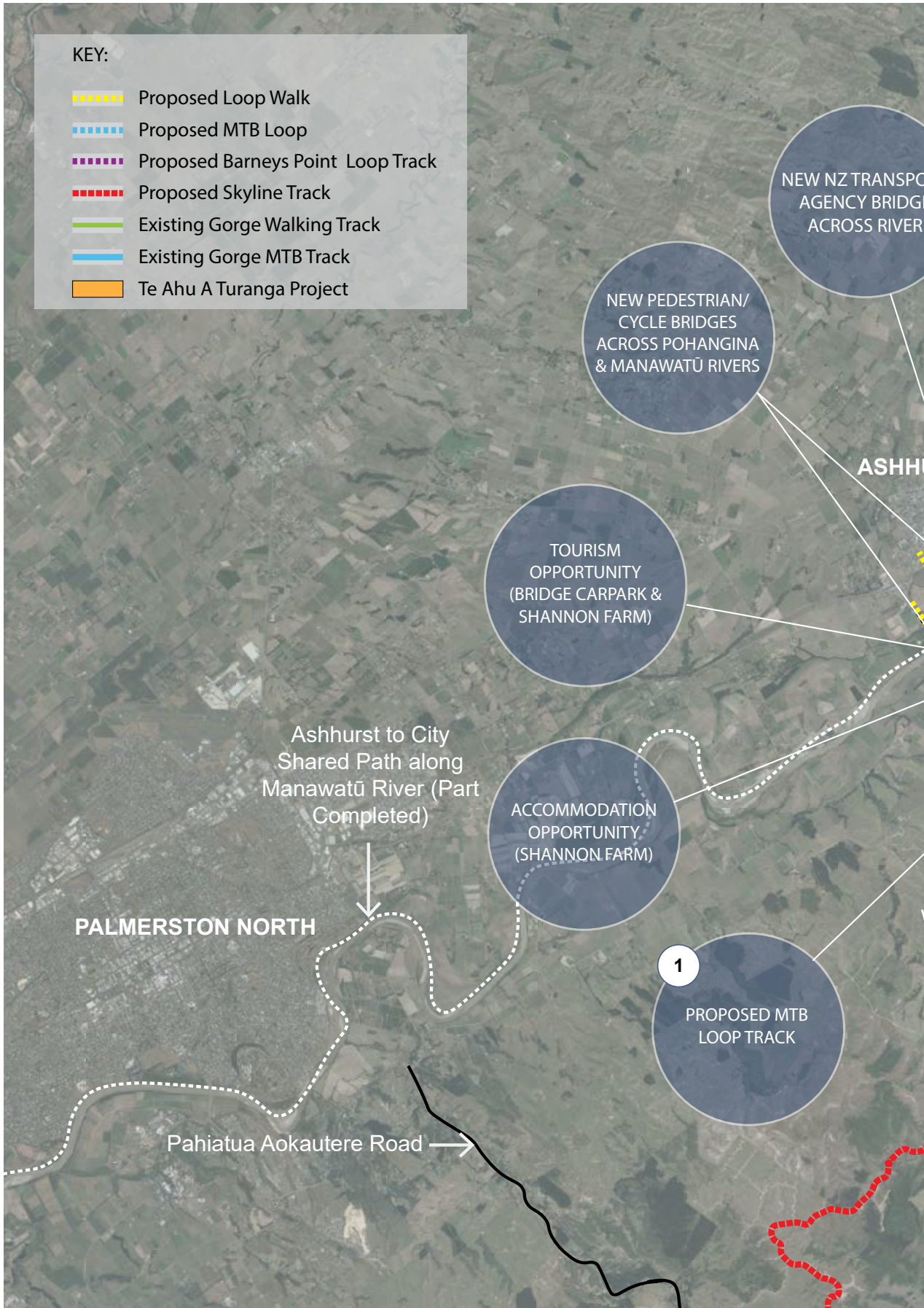
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# APPENDIX 1: DRAFT MASTERPLAN

APPENDIX 1





# APPENDIX 2: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (SHORT FORMAT)

The following implementation table has been developed based on the five key focus areas, with a focus on priority items to be implemented in the first three years.

APPENDIX 2

Focus Area	Action Item Year 1	Agency	Cost	
<i>Te Āpiti-wide actions</i>				
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop full fauna and flora species inventory.</li> </ul>		\$\$\$\$	
<b>Cultural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iwi partnership arrangement developed for the effective and continual use of Te Āpiti for traditional cultural practice.</li> </ul>			
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish position to oversee site wide education/ coordination of activities associated with Te Āpiti</li> </ul>		\$\$\$\$	
<b>Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop heat map of priority recreation areas (also identifying sensitive areas from a cultural, ecological and landscape perspective)</li> </ul>			



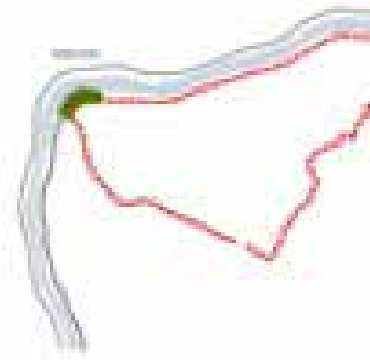


Focus Area	Action Item Year 1	Agency	Cost	
<p><b>Leadership Framework</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop partnership agreement for all agencies within the Manawatū Gorge Governance Group that commits each party to this masterplan</li> <li>Commence discussions with iwi representatives to establish effective engagement avenues for advancing the Mana Whenua values of Te Āpiti</li> <li>Develop monitoring plan that considers the effectiveness of this plan</li> <li>Prepare 'Geopark' application to UNESCO New Zealand</li> </ul>		<p>\$\$\$\$</p>	
<p><b>Specific Place Plan actions</b></p>				
<p><b>Place Plan 1 – Barney’s Point</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commence discussions with NZTA on the feasibility of opening walkway to Barney’s Point.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Place Plan 2 – Ruahine/ Tararua Connection – Ferry Reserve Enhancement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop project concept (mini vision and business case) and seek endorsement for concept</li> <li>Commence investigations into potential linkages</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Place Plan 3 – Shannon Block/ Visitor Centre</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop conceptual masterplan (high level) for Place Plan 3</li> <li>Engage with NZTA on conceptual masterplan</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Place Plan 4 – Old Road Re-Opening</b></p>				



# APPENDIX 3: 'BARNEYS POINT' PLACE PLAN EXAMPLE

APPENDIX 3



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**IMAGE TO BE  
UPDATED**



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