

Community Summary Long Term Plan Waikato Regional Council

Arts, culture and creativity contributes to thriving communities. When arts, culture and creativity is supported, strong and visible communities are strong and visible.

Arts, culture and creativity is woven through all aspects of life. It has a key role to play in creating thriving and liveable towns and cities. The creative activation of public spaces supports the preservation of council assets, and promotes social cohesion and community connection. Sustainable creative career opportunities attract and retain workers and innovative businesses.

Arts culture and creativity supports community and individual wellbeing. In Waikato, those who report being highly engaged with arts, culture and creativity have 5% higher overall wellbeing as compared to those with little or no engagement.¹ Research has shown that recreational arts can support mental wellbeing. 'Those who engaged in 100 or more hours/year of arts engagement (i.e. two or more hours/week) reported significantly better mental well-being than other levels of engagement.'²

Councils are currently seeking community feedback around their long term plans (LTPs). Long Term Plans outline Council's activities and how they are managed, delivered and funded³. Under the Local Government Act, Councils must consult with their communities on the LTP (or 10 year plan) every 3 years.⁴ A common theme across these consultations is the need to be strategic around prioritising investment.

It is important that investment in community wellbeing is prioritised and protected. The core role of council, as outlined in the legislation, is to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities. This is the required (or statutory) purpose of council.

We have a role to play in supporting council in this work, by letting them know that we will support them to deliver these wellbeings. We can share with the council and with others in our community that we know and care about more than solely economic concerns. It is important that we share about the other things that we value in our lives.

¹ Huber Social, 'Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in Waikato' (Sydney: Huber Social, 2022), p.22, <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/researchandreports>.

² Christina Davies, Matthew Knuiman & Michael Rosenberg, 'The art of being mentally healthy: a study to quantify the relationship between recreational arts engagement and mental well-being in the general population, BMC Public Health, vol.16, <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-015-2672-7>.

³ Waikato District Council [https://www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/plans/long-term-plan#:~:text=The%20Long%20Term%20Plan%20\(LTP,\(including%20proposed%20rate%20increases\)](https://www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/plans/long-term-plan#:~:text=The%20Long%20Term%20Plan%20(LTP,(including%20proposed%20rate%20increases)).

⁴ Ibid.

This can be as simple as writing an email or letter to council about the things that you care about.

Consultation closes Thursday 2 May 2024

[Here](#) is a link to the council's resources for the Long Term Plan feedback process. It is important to know that you do not need to answer every question, or go into great detail. You can speak from your own experience, and share about what you really value and care about. Anything you can do to add your voice to the chorus is powerful.

You can find the consultation document, supporting documents, and feedback portal here:

<https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/long-term-council-community-plan-annual-plan-and-annual-report/ltp/>

We have pulled out some key moments where arts, culture, creativity and community are mentioned, or could be added. You might want to mention some of these, and what you want to happen with regard to these. Feel very free to copy and paste from here, and make any edits or additions you would like.

Note:

There are 5 main headings where you can give feedback. These are: **Natural Heritage Rate**, Region-wide public transport rate, **Regional development fund, Funding Te Waka**, Funding primary industry compliance, and **Other Feedback**.

You do not need to create an account, but you will need to enter your personal details under each heading, and submit each separately.

Waikato Regional Council's consultation document outlines its plans for the next ten years, and is threaded through with three themes:

He taiao mauriora: Healthy environment

He hapori hihiri: Vibrant communities

He ōhanga pakari: Strong Economy

The Waikato Regional Council's vision is:

Waikato Mārohirohi: Manaaki whenua, whakamana tangata

The mighty Waikato: Caring for our place, empowering our people.

The council's purpose is: Working together for a Waikato region that has a healthy environment, vibrant communities and strong economy.

Council's strategic priorities are:

Wai: Water

Rerenga rauropi, tiakitanga taiao: Biodiversity and biosecurity

Takutai moana: Coastal and marine

Hanganga tauwhiro: Sustainable development and infrastructure

Hononga hapori: Community connections

Whakaheke tukunga: Transition to a low emissions economy

So if you talk about these things, and use these key words, then good stuff.

The four main headings that relate to arts, culture and creativity are: **Other feedback, Regional development fund, Funding Te Waka and Natural Heritage Rate.**

Other Feedback

You might want to talk about how you value council's focus on **vibrant communities**, and **community connections**, and talk about how you think arts and culture contributes to these things.

You might share about what arts or cultural events or features **help to make Waikato a vibrant, and more connected place** and encourage the Regional Council to contribute to more things like that in your community.

You could share about some community spaces you love, and how **being connected with your community supports your wellbeing.**

You might let council know that you support prioritising arts and culture in its planning for our future.

Arts, culture and creativity supports community wellbeing. There is research to support this, like the 2022 Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato report here: <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/researchandreports>. You could point your council towards it.

You might want to share that you are in favour of the council providing ongoing support for the Waikato Regional Theatre, and that you commend their investment so far.

Waikato Regional Council's consultation document also shares about **community resilience.**

You might think that **investing in community, and in arts and culture is an important part of improving the resilience of our region (alongside hard infrastructure like stopbanks and pump stations).** In the face of climate change and an uncertain future, coming together around arts and culture can help to improve our wellbeing. It can help us to be resilient, and be ready to make change together.

There is an opportunity for council to **engage community and artists in increasing education and awareness around climate change and regional wellbeing, and in the realisation of the Climate Action Roadmap.**

The regional council has an opportunity to include creatives, storytellers and mana whenua in telling the stories of essential investments and developments.

There is an opportunity to **include arts and cultural spaces in council's spatial planning**, and to **consider social and cultural wellbeing as a key priority in ensuring sustainable development.**

Regional development fund and/or Funding Te Waka

Under either **Regional development fund** or the **Funding Te Waka** heading, you might want to share something like:

- Investing in regional development and promotion is key to supporting sustainable growth in the Waikato region.
- As a growing region, it is important to consider the implications of reducing the allocated staff and support for this mahi.
- Regional development is beyond economic measures and investment should be reflected through engagement in other areas connected to the local government act which contribute to 'community connections' and 'sustainable development'
- **Arts, culture and creativity can be a powerful tool in regional development, promotion and placemaking.**
- **I encourage you to consider the social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the Waikato region in its development.**

Natural Heritage Rate

Another potential area for connecting arts, culture and creativity into the mahi of Waikato Regional Council is in connection with the '**Increasing our natural heritage rate**' component of the long term plan.

This is connected to their "Natural Heritage Partnership Programme" which has made a number of "community-led conservation projects" possible through their funding. These projects include planting, predator control, community engagement, sustainability programmes and marae-based social enterprises. **Within these projects there is scope to embed cultural storytelling, community engagement through arts and creativity, and education around the natural environment through events, activities and artworks.** *You could submit in support of this if you think that is something that would be good to see more of in the Waikato region.*

Creative Waikato are submitting to the long term plan too, and advocating for support for arts, culture and creativity in the Waikato region. If you want to read some of what we will be sharing, you can check out these documents on our advocacy page: <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/standing-up-for-the-arts> - this will contain links to all our public submissions.