



WAIPUKURAU AND WAIPAWA WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT SOLUTION A TOP PRIORITY

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Initial findings from an independent review of Waipukurau and Waipawa wastewater treatment plants has found that neither plant are likely to be able to achieve the resource consents required for ammonia discharge.

Central Hawke's Bay District Mayor Alex Walker and the Council are concerned by the preliminary results but hopeful that now the issues are being clarified, appropriate solutions can be put in place.

"Our community has been very patient with the on-going issues – it is more than frustrating," she said.

"Performance of the plants has been under question by councillors and community for several years and we are starting to get some clear answers. We now have something to work with but there is some irony in the fact that we have some of the most rigorously treated waste water in the country but are still unable to meet all resource consent conditions. The quality of our wastewater discharge now is vastly improved on five years ago."

In September, following on-going odour issues at the Waipukurau Wastewater Treatment Plant and breaches of the resource consent requirements, Central Hawke's Bay District Councillors asked the newly appointed Chief Executive to have an independent review of both plants to be undertaken.

Upgrades to both systems in 2013 and 2014 were required to meet increasing resource consent expectations to improve river conditions. The plants currently meet consent levels for biochemical oxygen demand, suspended solids, pH, E.coli, and have achieved outstanding results in reducing phosphorous entering the river by over 97%.

Issues with storm-water infiltration into the waste water networks have also caused consent levels for *E.coli* to be breached at times since the plant upgrades and resulted in a conviction earlier this year. The breaches occur when the treated wastewater bypasses the final UV treatment step due to overloading. An additional pond was installed in Waipukurau earlier this year to address the overloading.

The independent review is being carried out by The Wastewater Specialists Limited with their finalised report and recommendations to be presented to Council at the end of November.

The report will cover the capacity of both systems to deal with current residential and trade waste demands, as well as future growth projections for the District. It will also cover off potential solutions and options for the future.

CHBDC Chief Executive Officer Monique Davidson says the situation is more than disappointing.

“We will need to wait until the full report is released so we can gain a better understanding of the issues and what can be done to fix them. However, we felt it prudent to advise residents and ratepayers of the initial findings so that they are aware of the gravity of the situation.”

“We will work with all agencies, including Regional Council and Central Government to ensure that Central Hawke’s Bay has a long-term sustainable solution, one that will allow for growth in the District as well as improved environmental outcomes,” she says.

“It may be timely to include the villages of Otane and Takapau in that conversation as well.”

In the next few weeks, CHBDC will be engaging in a District-wide conversation about drinking water, wastewater and stormwater, branded as #thebigwaterstory. Mrs Davidson says earlier this year residents identified water as being a main area of concern.

“We have been planning for this conversation and it will continue, but it was important to us that as a Council we were upfront with our community on the situation we are dealing with,” she says.

Mrs Davidson says Council is committed to working through all options and keep the community informed throughout the process.

Ends

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CHBDC Wastewater Treatment Plant Q and As

Q. What has the review found?

A. The review is still ongoing. It is being carried out by The Wastewater Specialists Limited. Its initial findings are that the current treatment plants in Waipukurau and Waipawa will not fulfil current consent requirements or the long-term environmental outcomes hoped for as both plants are failing to deal with ammonia levels.

Q. Will we have to build new plants?

A. It is too early to say. We need to wait until the full review is completed. It will be presented to Council at the end of November, and it will cover the capacity of both systems to deal with current residential and trade waste demands, as well as future growth projections for the District. It will also cover off potential solutions and options for the future.

Q. How much ratepayer money has been spent on the Treatment Plants, and when were they built?

A. The plants were built by Waterclean Technologies in 2013 at Waipawa and 2014 at Waipukurau. The total cost was \$6.4million. Additional work required to make the treatment plants work better has cost \$2million.

Q. How did Waterclean Technologies get the job?

A. Council underwent a procurement process prior to awarding the contracts to Waterclean Technologies. The final decision was made by elected members at the time based on the best information that was made available to them.

Q. Shouldn't Waterclean Technologies pay to fix them or build new plants?

A. Both Treatment Plants are still under warranty. Council has entered into confidential discussions with Waterclean Technologies about this.

Q. Who ordered the review and why

A. A resolution was put to Council in September, and it was endorsed by all Elected Members. The resolution came about due to frustration about the ongoing issues with the plants.

Q. How much has the review cost ratepayers?

A. The review cost is minimal in terms of the cost of operating & building wastewater plants.

Q. When will we know more?

A. The final report will be completed by the middle of next month and then presented to Council by the end of November – once it is tabled at Council it will be a public document and Council will ensure information about the report is spread as wide as possible to ensure all residents and ratepayers can see for themselves the challenge we face.

Q. Why are you telling us now when the full review is not completed?

A. Due to the serious concerns raised in the initial review, Council felt it was prudent to make the public aware of the issue we are about to face. We are committed to being transparent with residents about the issues and considerations for the future.

Q. What about the odour issues at the Waipukurau Wastewater Treatment Plant? When will that be fixed?

A. The odour issue is separate to that raised by the initial review. It does remain a priority for Council to fix the odour issue as it is very frustrating for the Treatment Plants neighbours. To date,

Council has undertaken some actions that have improved the situation for some residents, but more work needs to be done.