

# TARAWERA SEWERAGE SCHEME

## FACT SHEET

ROTORUA  
LAKES COUNCIL



### HOW WE GOT HERE

In 2015, at the request of Tarawera residents, Rotorua Lakes Council (RLC), Bay of Plenty Regional Council (BOPRC), the Te Arawa Lakes Trust (TALT) and the community began exploring options for reticulation.

This followed the adoption of the Tarawera Lakes Restoration Plan by the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group after collaboration with the community.

A community-led steering committee was set up, including representatives from Tūhourangi Tribal Authority, Te Mana o Ngāti Rangitihi, Māori landowners, Lake Tarawera Ratepayers Association, TALT, BOPRC and RLC.

In 2018, having considered various options, the committee recommended installation of low-pressure grinder pumps on properties and connecting these to a new reticulated sewerage system that would, in turn, connect to Rotorua's main treatment plant via Tarawera Road. The record from the Steering Committee indicates that all voted in favour of this option.

#### The options considered by the Steering Committee:

1. Treatment plant at Tarawera
2. Low pressure grinder pumps + connect to Rotorua across Playne's Farm
3. Low pressure grinder pumps + connect to Rotorua through the road
4. STEP pumps + connect to Rotorua through the road
5. STEP pumps + connect to Rotorua across Playne's Farm

#### Option 3 was adopted as the preferred option because it:

- ensures all properties will comply with BOPRC regulations;
- is the most cost-effective option for property owners;
- supports mana whenua aspirations to return to Tarawera to live;
- avoids identified wāhi tupuna sites;
- can be implemented quickly as no resource consents are required;
- is the most effective option to address the risk to Lake Tarawera water quality.

Arriving at the preferred option followed careful and balanced consideration of all relevant factors including technical, cultural, financial and planning.

Two Cultural Impact Assessments (CIAs) and an Archaeological Report were also commissioned.

The CIAs, undertaken by iwi, considered the cultural impacts from the proposed preferred option and indicated some opposition to the pipeline route. The archaeological report noted that previous modifications on the road corridor had significantly reduced the likelihood of the presence of significant archaeological features in the path of the pipeline.

RLC adopted the project as a draft in 2020 and undertook community consultation as part of the 2021 – 2031 Long-term Plan (LTP). No objection to the project was raised and Council approved funding for the preferred option.

## COMMUNICATIONS WITH TARAWERA RATEPAYERS

Confirmation of support was sought from Tarawera ratepayers from early 2021 through to late 2023. We know the community supports reticulation in principle, but wants to understand what the final cost will be and how we got there. We will work with the community on finding the best solution and communicate appropriately.

Feedback from Tarawera ratepayers was also sought in September 2023 with RLC seeking to establish the level of interest from property owners wanting to undertake self-installation of on-site systems and general views on that option with 75% of respondents indicating they preferred council-led installation vs self-installation.

There have been ongoing updates to Tarawera ratepayers on project progress and RLC has continued efforts to seek alternative, additional funding and has re-allocated \$2m in government “better off” funding that was to have gone towards redevelopment of the Aquatic Centre to the Tarawera scheme.

There have been various discussions between the councils about how the work could be funded. Options for funding will be consulted on as part of Rotorua Lakes Council's Annual Plan 2025/26 process. You can find more information on [www.rotorualakescouncil.nz](http://www.rotorualakescouncil.nz)

RLC is now [April 2025] consulting on funding options for the scheme to assist with final decision-making about how much Tarawera property owners will need to pay towards the capital cost for the scheme and how much should be contributed from the district's wider ratepayer base through the targeted Lakes Enhancement Rate.

## FUNDING DEED FOR THE ROTORUA TE ARAWA LAKES PROGRAMME

Signed in 2008 this Funding Deed (funding commitment) allocated \$72.1m of Crown funding to various lake water quality interventions, which are approved by the Strategy Group and the Crown over the life of the deed, for 4 lakes – Rotorua, Rotoiti, Rotoehu and Ōkāreka.

Under the Deed conditions, the RLC and BOPRC will fund, under their relevant funding policies, the actual costs of implementing the agreed programmes of interventions (for every \$1 the Crown spends on interventions approved under the Deed, the combined contribution of the Councils must also be \$1).

To date, RLC has received \$42.5m from the Crown under the 2008 Funding Deed which has been applied to reticulation schemes and BOPRC has received \$22.5m for interventions across all four lakes that come under the 2008 Funding Deed.

A recent variation re-allocated \$10m of Crown funding – as a loan – to RLC towards reticulation at East Rotoiti. This has to be paid back to BOPRC. This \$10m is included in the \$42.5m.

Remaining Crown funding within the 2008 Funding Deed – including the \$10m to be repaid by RLC – is allocated to ongoing initiatives for Lake Rotorua to achieve agreed nitrogen reduction.

This information, and other financials related to the project, are documented in both Councils' relevant Long Term and Annual Plans, and Annual Reports. Long Term Plans and Annual Reports are required by law to be audited (under the Local Government Act).

## FUNDING FOR OTHER LAKES

Lakes not included in the 2008 Funding Deed have received other Crown funding through arrangements that are separate from that e.g. the funding for Rotoma and Tarawera reticulation.

The Tarawera scheme has its own Funding Deed. The \$6.5m in Crown funding for Tarawera reticulation is coming from the Ministry for the Environment's Freshwater Improvement Fund.

The Funding Deed between the Crown and RLC for Tarawera sewerage reticulation was finalised in 2022, confirming the allocation from the Ministry for the Environment (MFE) and a \$750,000 grant from BOPRC. There is no requirement for BOPRC to provide further funding.

## TARAWERA LAKES RESTORATION PLAN

The Tarawera Lakes Restoration Plan was adopted in 2015 by the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group – the governing body for the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Programme.\*

It was developed in collaboration with the community and sets out actions for that catchment (8 lakes) to protect water quality and public health, backed by scientific research and advice.

Actions in the plan include reticulation. Other actions have already been fully implemented, including farm management across all of the nine contributing catchments.

\*The Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Programme is a partnership between BOPRC, RLC and Te Arawa Lakes Trust (TALT).

## MODERN STANDARDS FOR ON-SITE SYSTEMS

Septic tanks do not meet modern standards for effluent disposal in sensitive lake catchments.

There are about 169 dwellings at Tarawera where on-site treatment and disposal systems that would meet required modern standards for on-site systems could not be installed, due to site constraints like soil type and topography.

This was established by site visits to about 30% of the dwellings at Tarawera and desktop analysis to determine the rest.

The BOPRC Regional Plan does not support on-site effluent systems where connection to a reticulated network is available. Additionally, anyone wanting to continue with an on-site system would need resource consent and any such application would require RLC support, which would not be given where connection to reticulation is available and technically feasible.

Properties with consented on-site systems will be required to connect to reticulation or apply for consent to continue with an on-site system when their current consent expires.

There are existing unconsented septic tank systems at Tarawera that don't comply with the Regional Plan, but BOPRC has not actively enforced the requirement to upgrade these given reticulation is to become available.

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