

Regional collaboration and shared council services in Taranaki



Te Kaunihera-ā-Rohe o Ngāmotu
**NEW PLYMOUTH
DISTRICT COUNCIL**
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Regional Unity

Taranaki is a successful region with a history of strong regional unity.

For some time now, local governments have recognised the benefits of sharing services with other councils. Such arrangements can result in significant cost savings and efficiencies in service delivery or buying power, avoid duplication and make the best use of scarce resources or technical skills.

Close collaboration and sharing of expertise and experience among councils on core business ensures that councils learn from each other and continuously improve the delivery of services, making their operations more effective and efficient.

The Government is promoting greater use of shared service arrangements to encourage greater cost efficiency in local government and reduced pressures on rates. Local government in Taranaki fully supports these objectives. The four councils in Taranaki are pleased to advise that there is already a considerable degree of shared services and collaboration between them, and further cooperation is being explored.

This document gives an overview of the shared services and collaboration between Taranaki Regional Council (TRC), New Plymouth District Council (NPDC), Stratford District Council (SDC) and South Taranaki District Council (STDC).

Regional position on local government in Taranaki

Statement from the Taranaki Mayoral Forum

Democracy starts locally – and communities matter

Local government is an independent arm of the governance framework of New Zealand and is important for local democracy. Strong local democracy is widely recognised by many commentators as enhancing democracy at all levels. New Zealand is still one of the most highly centralised democracies in the OECD and so having an autonomous, independent system of local government provides a vital counterbalance to the weight and power of central government.

Councils will act in the best interests of our communities

Some local government processes that councils are required to adhere to are costly to ratepayers and the Taranaki councils actively support initiatives to reduce costs to local government in delivering positive and tangible benefits to its communities.

Local government contributes to New Zealand's development

Local government's role as the provider of local infrastructure makes a vital contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of New Zealand.

Local government also provides a very wide range of amenities, services, facilities and events that make cities and districts attractive and vibrant places in which to live, visit and do business. These quality of life factors play an important part in attracting tourists, investors and future residents to Taranaki.

Councils need to make decisions on priorities weighing up costs and benefits to their communities but this is done by democratically elected representatives in consultation with their communities.

New Zealand is not over-governed

New Zealand is not over-governed at the local level compared to most other OECD countries. Local government in New Zealand has a narrower role and fewer functions compared with many OECD countries. New Zealand local authorities serve relatively large populations by international comparison. New Zealand local authorities are also economically smaller than in most OECD countries.

Local government's proportion of total public spending is comparatively low

New Zealand local authority expenditure as a proportion of total public expenditure is significantly less than many other similar sized countries. On the other hand, central government taxes and charges on people and businesses are much greater than local government rates and charges.



Four local councils – but one voice for Taranaki

Local government in Taranaki works as well as anywhere in New Zealand. When Taranaki needs to speak with one voice (often combined with its local MPs) it has unfailingly done so. The unity that Taranaki consistently brings to the table has provided great strength. If several councils each representing their own separate communities or constituencies are able to come together as one, they can be more effective than a lone voice. The four councils are committed to continuing to speak with one voice on matters of interest, concern or importance to Taranaki.

Taranaki is a successful region

Taranaki is now recognised as one of New Zealand's most successful regions when previously it was not. It has strong economic growth, good infrastructure, high quality amenities and a desirable lifestyle. It is a destination of choice for many people. A key reason why Taranaki has moved to be recognised as consistently outperforming other parts of New Zealand across a whole range of economic, cultural, social and environmental measures, is the strong leadership and successful functioning of its local authorities over the past two decades. In other words, Taranaki is a successful region partly because local government works.

Bigger is not necessarily better

Mergers of territorial authorities and regional councils into single larger units of local government don't necessarily translate into lower rates and charges. Independent reports have found that larger authorities may be less efficient and that the better means of achieving economies of scale is to do so on a service by service basis, for example through collaboration or joint ventures.

Efficiency, effectiveness and sharing of services

All Taranaki's local authorities (noting local differences) are efficient and effective in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. This is recognised by external, independent professional organisations whose role it is to audit local authority performance and compliance with their statutory duties. It is also confirmed in everything from community surveys to credit ratings, strength of balance sheets and financial and operational management.

Taranaki's shared services are organised without an overriding body such as a council controlled organisation. This has worked well to date and has avoided the need for another layer of management and cost, to the benefit of our communities.

There are structures and systems in place whereby Taranaki's councils work efficiently together and share services. Approximately fifty (50) examples presently exist and these are presented below. Further collaborations are constantly explored and will be progressed if business cases exist.



Andrew Judd
New Plymouth
Mayor



Ross Dunlop
South Taranaki
Mayor



Neil Volzke
Stratford
Mayor



David MacLeod
Taranaki Regional
Council Chair

Principles for collaboration and shared services

Courageous Leadership

The world of Local Government is changing and we need to embrace that. While Local Government in Taranaki generally works well, we can always do better. The Local Government partners in Taranaki are committed to actively identifying and exploring new or improved ways of operating. This may also involve sharing services outside the sector e.g. with central government or other agencies.

Show me the Benefits

Shared Services and/or collaborations must deliver tangible benefits by way of either improved levels of service or reduced costs. The overriding priority is that the benefits should outweigh the costs and the end result must be an improved service/facility for the region's residents. Ideally there should be some benefit (cost savings or efficiencies or improved levels of service) to all parties involved. The costs of implementation should be not be disproportional to any benefits.

Our Community - Our Solution

We will enter into discussions with an open mind but accept that one size won't always fit all. Each Council has its own political climates and may differ in its approach to collaboration. We won't always agree and this is appropriate and acceptable. Any party has the right to opt out of any initiative at the outset.

Gaining an independent view

We will always be open minded. However, independent parties can bring a valuable and objective view of the world and we reserve the right to use them as and when appropriate. We will not pay external parties to tell us what we should already know and we will provide a clear brief with a fixed budget. We will agree in advance on a relevant cost-sharing model.

Our people are important

Shared Services have the ability to impact on our peoples' jobs and livelihoods. Incumbent staff need to be aware of the intentions to investigate services and activities. We will communicate regularly.

Learning from the experiences of others

We will learn from other's mistakes. We will retain core competencies that are vital to remain effective and efficient. We will have clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

Some local authorities around New Zealand have established Local Authority Shared Services (LASS) companies to 'run the business' of shared services. We haven't done that in Taranaki because relationships among local authorities in Taranaki have been very good and we have got on and reached agreement on collaboration and shared services where it has been sensible to do so.

In other words, it has been a deliberate decision not to establish a local authority shared services company in Taranaki. This has minimized the need for expensive overheads in running a separate organization and maximized local benefits. The 'pros' and 'cons' have been considered with the conclusion that current collaboration and shared service arrangements in Taranaki work very well for this region.

Regional collaboration and shared services

REGIONAL STRATEGY

CIVIL DEFENCE

In 1983/84 the councils in New Plymouth and Stratford contracted the Taranaki United Council to deliver civil defence services. This was continued in 1989/90 after the local government amalgamation when the NPDC and SDC contracted the service to TRC, at which time a close liaison was established with STDC. In the early 2000s, STDC also contracted this service from TRC.



There are five layers to Taranaki CDEM:

1. Civil Defence Emergency Management Group, comprising the Mayors and Chief Executives/Chairman of the four councils.
2. Coordinating Executive Group, comprising the Chief Executives/senior staff of the four councils and other key stakeholders.
3. Operations, comprising two full-time staff, part-time contracted personnel, plus key staff seconded from the four councils and volunteers from the community during emergencies.
4. Advisory groups for seismic/Taranaki volcano, rural, lifelines, general hazards, welfare, hazardous substances and health.
5. Service delivered to TLAs.

Benefits

- The service is based at TRC's CDEM offices on Robe Street, New Plymouth, enabling all councils to contribute to the staffing and operations of a single service in a cost-efficient way.
- No matter where in the region an emergency is, it will be responded to with resources from all four councils.
- The Ministry of Civil Defence has a single agency to work with in Taranaki.

LAND DEVELOPMENT AND SUBDIVISION INFRASTRUCTURE STANDARD

In 2010 Standards New Zealand released its standards for land development and subdivision infrastructure (NZS4404:2010). NPDC received approval from Standards New Zealand to use this as the basis for its own Land Development and Subdivision Infrastructure Standard – the first in New Zealand to do so – and later worked with STDC to add amendments for STDC’s use.

As the council’s joint standard is based on the national document, it incorporates the latest in best practice yet reflects local circumstances.

The standard encourages sustainable development and best practice design while emphasising liveability and environmental quality, and applies to private development as well as developments by the councils. The key areas covered in the standard include requirements for earthworks and geotechnical needs, roads, stormwater, wastewater, water supply, landscape and network utility facilities.



Benefits

- The councils’ joint standard has replaced a variety of documents that previously incorporated the various codes relating to land development and subdivision infrastructure.
- Developers are working to the same standards in both New Plymouth and South Taranaki districts.
- The joint standard complies with best practice in New Zealand for urban development.

POWERCO GARDEN SPECTACULAR

NPDC and TRC have gardens included in the programme and also provide guided walks.

Benefits

- Helps the Taranaki Arts Festival Trust provide a variety of high-quality



venues and activities throughout the region.

- Gives residents and visitors the chance to gain greater understanding of public gardens with the aid of expert guides.
- Reinforces to residents some of the facilities that councils provide to their communities.

RURAL FIRE

The Taranaki Rural Fire Authority (TRFA) became a legal entity on 1 July 2013, and it manages preparation and response to all fires in rural areas in Taranaki. (Fires in urban areas are responded to by the New Zealand Fire Service.)



Previously the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils each managed the rural fire responsibility for their own areas. Under the TRFA, the three councils and the Department of Conservation work together across the entire region.

Benefits

- This joint approach is more efficient as training and claims are managed by TRFA, and the public has a single website and phone number for the rural fire authority no matter where they live in Taranaki.
- Having a single provider also ensures consistent messaging about fire restrictions or prohibitions in the region.

WASTE MANAGEMENT/REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The four councils in Taranaki comprise the Taranaki Solid Waste Management Committee, to take a regional approach to managing solid waste.

Under the National Waste Minimisation Act 2008, all councils were required to develop a strategy to minimise waste in their areas. In Taranaki, the four councils worked together to develop the Waste Management and Minimisation Strategy in Taranaki – an over-arching document, within which each council develops its own plans.

Benefits

- Shared expertise and resources in managing solid waste and developing significant strategies.
- Each council in Taranaki is working towards the same goals for managing and minimising waste. (See also: Waste Minimisation.)

REGIONAL TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

This is a statutory committee of TRC comprising representatives of the region's four councils and the NZ Transport Agency. Its role and functions are to undertake the statutory requirements of the Land Transport Management Act 2003 and in particular prepare the Regional Land Transport Plan and any variations for approval by TRC, and advise TRC on any significant legislative changes, programmes, plans or reports relating to the region's land transport system.

The committee also liaises with the Ministry of Transport, the Commissioner of Police, other regional and district councils and other interested parties on transport matters.

Benefits

A single regional voice on all matters relating to land transport in the Taranaki.

REGIONAL TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Since 2004 the three district councils have had a joint contract with Venture Taranaki Trust (VTT) for the delivery of tourism development and promotion in the region. Prior to, and since that time, VTT has also been funded by the district councils to promote regional economic development. VTT is often used as an exemplar for application in other parts of New Zealand.

Benefits

This approach minimises duplication of resources and provides a consistent regional approach to tourism development and promotion in a cost effective way.



REGULATORY

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Key initiatives currently being progressed by the region's councils include reviewing oil and gas planning provisions in regional and district plans and consenting processes, providing the community with better access to oil and gas consenting information, and promoting best-practice in the oil and gas industry using existing Taranaki industry models.



Benefits

- Greater transparency and accountability for the regulation of the oil and gas industry.
- Better access to information for the public.
- Councils will work proactively and collaboratively with reviewing oil and gas planning, provisions and consenting processes.

REGIONAL PLAN ENFORCEMENT

TRC has transferred responsibility to the relevant district councils for enforcing rules in its Regional Coastal Plan (for hard protection works and noise) and the Regional Air Quality Plan (banning the backyard burning of waste in residential areas). Other memoranda of understanding with district councils have been developed for on-site domestic wastewater treatment systems, drainage and stormwater, odours and dust.

In relation to the Regional Air Quality Plan, both NPDC and SDC have signed an agreement to enforce in their districts the ban on garden or rubbish fires on sections less than 5,000m² in urban areas serviced by weekly rubbish collections. The TRC has retained this role in the STDC area. Before this transfer of responsibility, NPDC and SDC could only take court action against people causing a nuisance from urban burn-offs. Now, the councils can issue a fine instead.

Benefits

- Better integration and efficiency of implementation of regional rules where district councils are better placed to do the job.
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities, avoiding duplication.
- Faster response to fire nuisance.
- Cost savings from not having to take court action.

COMBINED DISTRICT LICENSING COMMITTEE POOL (Sale And Supply of Alcohol Act)

Under the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act, councils are required to have at least one District Licensing Committee (DLC) for considering applications under the Act, e.g. for manager's certificates, special licences, etc.

NPDC and SDC have one DLC each, comprising independent members of the public which are drawn from the same pool of candidates. (This process includes recruitment, job specifications and job contracts.) Note: each council appoints their own Commissioner to their DLC.

In addition, all three district councils in Taranaki run a shared training programme for DLC members, and have the same guides and handbooks for all three DLCs.

Benefits

- NPDC and SDC have shared the costs of establishing their independent DLCs, and also shared the expertise of their staff.
- All DLC personnel in the two districts are trained in the same way.

DEVELOPMENT OF COMBINED LOCAL ALCOHOL POLICY AND LOCAL APPROVED PRODUCTS POLICY

Councils are required to develop a Local Alcohol Policy (LAP) under the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act, and a Local Approved Products Policy (LAPP) under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2013.

NPDC and SDC have the same policies for alcohol and psychoactive substances.

Benefits

- NPDC and SDC have a consistent approach to all matters relating to alcohol and psychoactive substances, including liquor licencing.
- The two councils have shared their expertise and have not had to duplicate research.
- Alcohol-related businesses that have a presence in both districts can work within a consistent regulatory framework.

STOCK EFFLUENT WORKING PARTY

Comprising members from all four councils in Taranaki, this working group meets periodically as required to discuss issues around stock effluent. The working party has been operating since about the time of the local government amalgamations in 1989.

One of the working party's projects has been the development of stock effluent facilities throughout the region, where truckies can offload the material safely rather than have it splash onto the roads during the transport of stock.



Benefits

- Consistent environmental control of stock effluent on our roads.
- Development of infrastructure to help transport operators avoid fouling the region's roads.
- Improved road safety.

IMPROVED CUSTOMER SERVICE

GUIDED WALKS PROGRAMME

Every summer NPDC operates the Guided Walks programme, which provides a series of walks by NPDC, TRC, the Department of Conservation and other groups.

Benefits

Having walks provided by these three organisations enables the delivery of a diverse walks programme for the public.



INTEGRATED REGIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (IRIS)

IRIS is a multi-million dollar custom-designed, workflow driven software application for a range of core regional council functions. IRIS is owned by six regional councils – Northland, Waikato, Taranaki, Horizons, West Coast and Southland – through a company, Regional Software Holdings Ltd.

Benefits

- These councils have access to systems that they would not be able to afford individually.
- Cost savings as each council doesn't need to replicate systems for core services.
- Consistent approach to delivering similar functions.
- Consistent approach to dealing with legislative change and national reporting.

LAWA

The LAWA (Land, Air, Water Aotearoa) website is a partnership between the 16 regional and unitary councils, Cawthron Institute, Ministry for the Environment and Massey University, and is supported by the Tindall Foundation. LAWA provides the public with up-to-date validated information on one website about freshwater and beach water quality, surface water and groundwater quality, and rainfall across New Zealand. TRC, along with other regional councils, regularly sends data to the website.



The website can also be used to share news or promote events such as riparian planting.

The councils are committed to developing LAWA to provide data for all environmental domains – air, land, biodiversity, coast and soil.

Benefits

- The LAWA website gives organisations, scientists and the public direct access to environmental data across New Zealand in a standardised way.
- Allows people to learn independently about the state of our environment.

LET'S GO RIDE-SHARE BOOKING WEBSITE

As part of the Let's Go programme to encourage more people to leave their cars at home in favour of alternative transport options, NPDC established the Let's Go Carpooling website in 2011. The following year, SDC, STDC and TRC joined in.

The site enables those who want to find someone in their area to carpool with to connect and coordinate online.



Benefits

- The region-wide approach to carpooling means it is easier to organise commutes that cross council boundaries.
- The message of carpooling is consistent throughout the region.
- Carpooling becomes a viable option among the various types of alternative transport available.

LIBRARY SHARED SERVICES

NPDC is part of Kōtui, a shared library management and resource discovery service used by 17 public library networks. Puke Ariki uses this software for various services, from databases for book collections and Puke Ariki members to the public catalogue, budgeting and collection acquisitions.

The SDC library system is hosted



by STDC which uses the open-source Koha Library System. This hosting arrangement allows Stratford Library to maintain its independent library collection while enjoying the benefits of a shared service.

Benefits

- Through Kōtui, Puke Ariki is able to buy additional services as required. A recent change to the library management system was achieved at a substantial discount through this consortium.
- Shared technical support gives Puke Ariki access to expert advice on the software when required.
- By adopting Koha, SDC and STDC avoided costly upgrades to their legacy library systems and (along with other users world-wide) share any elective development costs for the software.
- Residents of both South Taranaki and Stratford districts can access the resources in the eight libraries across both districts and borrow and return seamlessly between them.

PEST CONTROL

NPDC, SDC, STDC and TRC work together on plant and animal pest control to ensure a coordinated approach to planning and operations, and lock in long-term cost savings.

Benefits

- Reduces the chance of cross-border re-infestation by pests.
- Cost savings from pests being dealt with efficiently rather than repeated operations following re-infestation.

PUKE ARIKI MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

TRC is a foundation partner of Puke Ariki and works with the facility to deliver annual projects.

Benefits

- TRC's foundation partnership with Puke Ariki helps ensure the museum service has a regional focus with fresh projects every year.
- Exhibitions at South Taranaki museum are also funded through TRC's partnership agreement with Puke Ariki.



PUBLIC TRANSPORT

TRC works with NPDC, SDC and STDC to provide public transport services and infrastructure across the region.

The Hawera-New Plymouth Connector bus service was launched in association with WITT and the Taranaki District Health Board on 24 February 2014. All four councils worked together through the feasibility process to establish this new service without the normal NZ Transport Agency subsidies.



TRC works with NPDC to provide the Citylink service in New Plymouth and its surrounding areas, and with STDC and SDC to provide the SouthLink services in coastal and south Taranaki.

Benefits

- Improved transport options for Taranaki residents.

RATES COLLECTION

NPDC, SDC and STDC collect TRC's rates as part of their own rates notices.

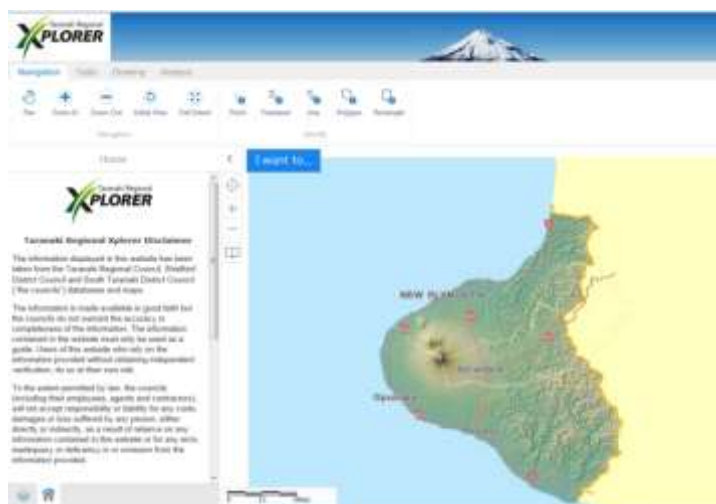
Benefits

- The ratepayer gets a single rates notice and makes a single payment, rather than paying their district council and TRC separately.
- The district councils receive a fee from TRC for the service.
- Greater consistency of rates notices means less confusion for the ratepayers.
- The overall cost to the region is lowered as TRC doesn't need its own staff resources and rating system.

REGIONAL XPLORER

STDC, SDC and TRC collaborate to provide regional geographic information system (GIS) services to the community via Taranaki Regional Xplorer.

Regional Xplorer is a free web-based mapping and local authority information service. Users have



access to property information, infrastructure services, environmental services, planning information and aerial photography.

Benefits

- Cost-savings from creating and maintaining a single system.
- A single public portal and free access to information on territorial and regional local government services.
- Lower costs for Councils as users access their own information and photography.

WATER SUSTAINABILITY GROUP

Formed in 2014, this group comprises the three district councils in Taranaki and it also liaises with TRC. Its aims are to identify common messaging for water conservation, improve public education around water use and conservation, and reduce costs through shared advertising.



Benefits

- Consistent messaging around water use and conservation will reduce confusion among Taranaki residents.
- The development of resources, e.g. webpages, advertisements and information packs, will improve education initiatives by the councils.
- Shared advertising will reduce costs and increase the reach of the councils' messages.

SPECIALISED STAFF SHARE

BUILDING ACT CONSENTS FOR DAMS

Most North Island regional councils, including TRC, have delegated their Building Consent Authority functions for dams to Waikato Regional Council.

Benefits

- Avoids duplication of specialist skills.
- Significant cost savings as TRC is not required to become a Building Consent Authority and meet the high compliance costs.

INSTRUMENTATION AND ELECTRICAL

Instrumentation and electrical (I&E) services are about having the right electrical and electronic hardware and software to run a variety of systems, from wastewater pump stations to swimming pool water treatment to lighting at sports venues and festivals.

NPDC has a dedicated I&E Team. Since 2002 the team has been contracted to provide water and wastewater I&E services for STDC, and since 2014 NPDC has been contracted to provide water I&E services for SDC.

These contracts include designing systems, managing project contracts and contractors, planned and reactive maintenance, automation of systems and professional advice.

The water treatment plants in South Taranaki, Stratford and New Plymouth districts are all controlled by NPDC's SCADA (supervisory, control and data acquisition), which enables operators to control what is happening within their plants (such as inflow, chemical dosing levels, etc).



Benefits

- STDC and SDC get access to professional skills that are highly sought after in local government. By contracting to NPDC, the two councils have standardised processes and systems, consistently high level of workmanship, more efficiency with a quicker turn-around on projects, and better value for money.
- The contract prices change each year depending on the programme of work involved. In 2013/14 NPDC received \$200,000 from STDC and \$20,000 from SDC.
- NPDC's size means it has the necessary critical mass to employ the right number and calibre of staff.

HARBOURMASTER SERVICES

TRC has an agreement with Wellington Regional Council for WRC to provide Harbourmaster services to TRC where conflicts of interest, etc. arise with the TRC's Harbourmaster.

Benefits

- Ready access to external Harbourmaster skills when necessary.
- Business continuance assured.

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE RESPONSE

TRC is contracted by the region's three district councils to be the first responder to a spill of hazardous substances or organisms to the environment, under section 97(h) of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act (1996). TRC also provides advice for contaminated land.

Benefits

- The district councils can deliver their hazardous substances responsibilities by accessing skilled staff who are not normally with their organisations. These skills are readily available without the district councils having to spend funds and time on staff training.
- TRC's location in the centre of the region means hazard response can be quickly deployed, regardless of where the incident occurs.
- Any costs faced by the district councils relate directly to any incidents that occur, not to preparation and training.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Under section 18 of the Health and Safety Act, councils are required to establish health and safety standards for contractors who undertake council work.

Since 2012, STDC has adopted NPDC's health and safety standards for contractors and the systems for pre-approving contractors for meeting those standards. This means that a contractor who is pre-approved at one council is automatically pre-approved with the other.

The two councils also share health and safety training when appropriate.

Benefits

- Sharing health and safety standards and a contractor pre-approval system saves time for both NPDC and STDC.
- Contractors benefit from not having to fill out the same paperwork with each council.

HYDRA MOWING

Since the 1990s NPDC has included in its district-wide contract for hydra-mowing (the cutting of grass on a hill) the stopbanks in Waitara and New Plymouth's Waiwhakaiho Valley. The stopbanks are owned by TRC and the cost is shared between NPDC and TRC.

Benefits

- Including the stopbanks' hydra-mowing in NPDC's larger contract results in a better price for the stopbanks' maintenance.
- By having the stopbanks mowed 10 times a year, the grass is forced to grow a longer root system, which further stabilises the stopbanks.

ROAD SAFETY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

Roadsafe Taranaki was established by the 3 district councils in 2004 and is managed by STDC. Roadsafe Taranaki is responsible for submitting a 3 year strategic plan and annual accountability reports to NZTA. The STDC is responsible for the employment of staff to implement the plan which includes the identification of roadsafety issues, bringing together associated groups to address the issues and the delivery of targeted education campaigns.



Benefits

- The Roadsafety Education Programme is subsidised by NZTA (currently 61-62%).
- Additional external funding is raised through sponsorship and other agency contributions.
- Achieving a coordinated regional approach to road safety through bringing together multiple organisations including Police, NZTA, DHB, New Plymouth Injury Safe, ACC, TRC as part of the Road Safety Action Plan group (RSAP).

TARANAKI CAPACITY BUILDING INCUBATOR

The three district councils have signed an Accord with the Taranaki Capacity Building Incubator with the objective of building the capacity of community groups and organisations for stronger and more sustainable communities.

Other partners include Tui Ora, TSB Trust, Sport Taranaki, Te Puni Kokiri, Department of Internal Affairs and the Bishops Action Foundation - which acts as coordinator .

Benefits

- A regional approach and the sharing of resources. Outcomes to date include the Wheelhouse Website, Regional Training Calendar and joint delivery and funding of community training programmes. Work in progress includes a joint Regional Community Directory.

TRADE WASTE SERVICES

In 2013 NPDC began helping STDC with elements of the new Trade Waste Bylaw it was developing – in particular, sampling grease traps and investigating how the bylaw would affect industries, cafes, restaurants, etc.

Benefits

- Sharing of expertise.
- Consistent research methodology between South Taranaki and New Plymouth districts.

TRIENNIAL ELECTIONS

The four councils and the Taranaki District Health Board run a joint election process. This includes appointing the same Electoral Officer (currently an NPDC officer) to manage the triennial elections. NB: a review of election management services is currently under way.

Benefits

- Greater efficiency in voting and counting systems.
- Consistency of approach to the voting process.
- Shared costs with subsequent savings for the organisations involved as each council does not have to have a part-time specialist to handle matters relating to elections.

WATER TREATMENT PLANT OPERATION

STDC provides full water treatment processing operations for all three SDC plants. This includes day-to-day operations, maintenance and after-hours call-outs, plus water quality testing at the plants and throughout the reticulation.

Benefits

- SDC has reduced costs through out-sourcing to STDC.



- STDC gains revenue from the operations contract.
- Common systems and support for both districts.
- No duplication of water treatment personnel between SDC and STDC.

WASTE MINIMISATION

A regional Waste Minimisation Officer coordinates waste minimisation efforts across Taranaki. The role is funded by all four councils.

Before the role was created, none of the four councils had the resources to put into public education.

Benefits

- Consistent messages about waste minimisation throughout the region.
- Expert input into the development of strategies, such as the Regional Waste Strategy.
- Cost-sharing between the four councils.

(See also: Waste Management/Regional Governance)



BUYING POWER

CHEMICALS

In May 2006 the three district councils formed the Taranaki Buying Group to purchase chemicals for the treatment of water, wastewater and swimming pools.

Benefits

- The combined purchasing power of the three councils means they can leverage a good price for the chemicals.
- The supplier, Orica, is also providing greater technical support to SDC and STDC than previously.



LIBRARY DATABASES

Electronic Purchasing in Collaboration (EPIC) is a consortium of libraries, including Puke Ariki, that purchases access to online databases, coordinated through the National Library.

Benefits

- Local residents get access to a variety of information databases.
- Access fees are substantially lower through EPIC than if Puke Ariki purchased the access individually.

INSURANCE

In July 2010 the four councils in Taranaki combined to form the Taranaki Insurance Group. This group uses broker services from Jardine Lloyd Thompson to place insurance for all councils' needs including material damage (e.g. buildings, museum collections) and vehicles.

Benefits

- By combining, the four councils have an increased buying power to get the best 'bang for their buck'. In particular, the smaller councils have benefited from receiving greater coverage for the same or similar amount of spend.
- If there is another major disaster in New Zealand (e.g. the Canterbury earthquakes), the Taranaki Insurance Group's combined strength will make the four councils better able to withstand the pressures from a stressed insurance market.

VALUATION SERVICES

In 2012 the region's three district councils signed a six-year contract with Quotable Value to provide valuations of all properties in their districts. This information is used by the district councils as well as TRC to set the rates requirement for each property.

Benefits

- The combined contract ensures a consistent approach to property valuations throughout the region.
- Also, the combined contract has given the district councils a 10 per cent cost reduction for the service.

REGIONAL AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Every part of the land area governed by Taranaki's councils is photographed from the air. These aerial photographs provide the base maps for everything that a council does, from land use and rainfall ponding analysis to roads, pipe locations and residential development.



Every five years TRC, NPDC, STDC and SDC share the cost of updating the urban and rural photos throughout the region.

As well as using aerial photos for their own purposes, all councils except NPDC provide the photos to the public at no cost. NPDC currently charges for this service but is looking at future developments which involve changing this to a free service and making the images available on more platforms, e.g. mobile devices. (See also: Regional Explorer).

Benefits

- This combined approach saves money and prevents duplication of aerial work.

WASTE MANAGEMENT – WASTE DISPOSAL

In the early 2000s there were six public landfills in Taranaki: three in New Plymouth District (the city's Colson Road, and the Okato and Inglewood landfills), one in the Stratford District and the Manaia and Patea landfills in South Taranaki District.

In 2001, the three district councils set up a working group to look at the benefits of making solid waste a regional activity and the discussions focused on two major initiatives.

It was agreed that as each of the smaller landfills across the region closed, all solid waste would be transferred to the Colson Road Landfill in New Plymouth. It was further agreed that when Colson Road was full, (originally projected to be around 2015), all waste would

then go to a new regional landfill to be developed south of Eltham. This site had been purchased in 1995 by STDC and consented as a future landfill.

Better waste management practices have since extended the life of Colson Road and it is now expected to last until 2019. In the meantime discussions are under way to ensure the new regional landfill south of Eltham is operational by the time Colson Road Landfill reaches capacity.

Benefits

- Cost-savings region-wide from having a single landfill in operation.
- Environmental benefits from closing old under-performing landfills and operating regional landfills that meets national standards.
- NPDC receives payment from SDC and STDC for use of the Colson Road Landfill. Cost sharing for the new landfill is under discussion.

WASTE MANAGEMENT – WASTE COLLECTION

Kerbside collection of residential waste and recycling used to be operated separately in the three districts until 2006, when the first region-wide joint solid waste collection contract was signed.

A second region-wide contract has now been agreed to and will operate from October 2015 for an initial period of seven years with an option for a further two years. In addition NPDC is currently establishing a mixed resource recovery facility (MRRF) that will receive and process the recyclables from all three district councils.

Benefits

- Cost savings from economies of scale – the collection contracts would have cost five per cent more if each district contracted to the same collector separately.
- Certainty for the future of waste management in the region.
- Having all of the region's residential recyclable material processed through NPDC's MRRF will make the facility economically viable.
- Consistent branding of waste and recycling messages throughout the region.
- The single contractor can structure their business more efficiently than if it was operating three different collection contracts in Taranaki.

JOINT FORUMS

MAYORAL FORUM

The Mayors of the three district councils and the chair of TRC meet to discuss issues and priorities affecting the region.

Benefits

- Greater coordination and integration of functions and responsibilities.
- Four of the region's senior leaders acting as one on issues that are important to Taranaki.

ADVERTISING GROUP

The four councils collaborate on advertising for regular services, e.g. dog registration deadline reminders, rates deadline reminders and water conservation.

Benefits

- Consistent messages on the same issues throughout Taranaki.
- Better use of advertising budgets.

PENSIONER HOUSING

The three district councils are involved in an informal group of local government staff across New Zealand who work in the pensioner housing sector, which meets once or twice a year to network and discuss ideas and issues and bring in guest speakers.

Benefits

Professional support and upskilling of staff managing pensioner housing.

SOCIAL HOUSING COLLABORATION

NPDC is part of the Social Housing Collaborative, a regional group of housing and support providers who meet as required to discuss housing issues. The members include Housing NZ, Taranaki Emergency Housing Trust, Ministry of Social Development, Prisoners Aid, Work and Income, New Plymouth Women's Centre, CHAT (Community Housing Action Taranaki), Emergency Housing Waitara, NPDC, Taranaki Women's Refuge and Taranaki District Health Board.

Benefits

- Professional support and discussion among workers in the social housing sector.
- The ability for agencies to make a collective response to housing needs.
- Production of the booklet *Housing in Taranaki*.

REGIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY COLLABORATION GROUP

The Taranaki Disability Strategy was signed off by the three district councils, Taranaki Regional Council, Taranaki Disabilities Information Centre, the Disabled Persons Assembly, Taranaki District Health Board, the Ministry of Social Development, the Maori Coalition Group, Sport Taranaki, Parafed and Idea Services late in 2012.

The Taranaki Disability Strategy aims to make our community a place that is accessible for all people. The benefits are that the Taranaki community is aware of and understands the issues facing people with disabilities, and that people with disabilities are valued for their strengths and abilities and have equal opportunities to participate.

Benefits

- Enables a region-wide strategic approach to disability issues.

REGIONAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP (RTAG)

The region's four councils and the NZ Transport Agency meet regularly to consider regional land transport issues, including funding issues.

RTAG provides advice to the Regional Transport Committee (RTC) on its statutory responsibilities, provides technical advice and support to the RTC on its transport responsibilities generally, liaises with the Ministry of Transport, the NZ Land Transport Agency, the Commissioner of Police, district councils and other interested parties on land transport matters, and advises the RTC on any appropriate new initiatives.

Benefits

- Provides a mechanism for coordination and integration of land transport issues across Taranaki.
- Provides regionally consistent advice to the RTC enabling a single voice on all matters relating to land transport.

SERVICES COORDINATION GROUP MEETING

The three district councils and the NZ Transport Agency meet with service utility companies (e.g. telecommunications, gas and electricity companies) to discuss matters associated with the Corridor Access Request System and the National Code of Practice for utilities access to the transport corridors. These matters can include insulation of underground services, codes of practice, coordination of activities and compliance requirements.

This working party was established by NPDC, and later included the South Taranaki and Stratford district councils.

Benefits

- A common understanding of processes and standards between the councils, NZTA and service utility companies.
- Improved coordination of work programmes.
- Utility companies know there is a common approach to work along transport corridors throughout the region.

STATE HIGHWAY 3 WORKING PARTY

Comprising representatives from TRC, Waikato Regional Council, NPDC, Waitomo District Council, NZ Transport Agency, New Zealand Automobile Association, Western Central Road Transport Association, New Zealand Police and road maintenance contractors, this working party collaborates on SH3 issues between New Plymouth and Hamilton.

Another working party involves NPDC, SDC, STDC, and the Ruapehu and Wanganui district councils, which is focused on cross-border state highway issues between the five councils.

Benefits

- Coordinated approach to roading issues within and across council boundaries.

TARANAKI BIODIVERSITY TRUST AND FORUM ACCORD

This is a region-wide initiative of 19 signatories, including the region's three district councils and TRC, who have come together to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the region.



Benefits

- Enhanced community capacity and biodiversity gains through the pooling of resources, and by prioritising and coordinating the efforts of different agencies, trusts and community groups across the region.

TARANAKI MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES NETWORK

Puke Ariki coordinates the Taranaki Museums and Galleries Network, which meets regularly to share ideas and discuss any issues in the sector. Volunteers and staff from 15 museums and galleries from Mōkau to Waitōtara take part.

Benefits

- Professional support for museum and gallery staff throughout the region – which is particularly beneficial for those facilities with few staff or that are run by volunteers.

- Maintaining a regional overview of museum and gallery services.

YOUTH SERVICES COLLABORATION

Every year, NPDC organises a number of networking and capability building workshops and forums for organisations that work in the youth sector. These meetings provide an opportunity for discussions on relevant issues and collaboration on projects.

Also, NPDC, SDC and STDC work with local providers such as the YMCA, Taranaki Youth Service and Tu Tama Wahine o Taranaki, on youth development projects.

Benefits

- Improves collaboration between youth agencies.
- Helps develop a region-wide approach to youth issues and opportunities rather than groups launching projects in isolation.

WATER/WASTEWATER OPERATIONS

Every three months, staff from the three district councils meet to discuss current issues relating to water, wastewater and stormwater, and provide advice or recommendations regarding their management and related technical systems, e.g. asset management systems.

Benefits

- The region's water and wastewater engineers are kept up to speed on important issues in the sector.
- All district councils are aware of what each council is working on and the projects that are coming up.
- Collaboration and assistance on projects between the three councils.

INITIATIVES UNDER INVESTIGATION

COASTAL CONTRACT

This is a proposed contract to monitor all consented structures in the coastal area, e.g. boat ramps, jetties and wharves. Currently NPDC gets a coastal engineer's assessment of the district's structures and provides this to TRC, which then has it peer reviewed by its own engineers. NPDC, TRC and STDC are discussing having the district councils monitor the structures on behalf of the regional council, which would save on tendering costs.

FOOD ACT REGULATIONS

NPDC, SDC and STDC have endorsed jointly a single document providing feedback to the Government on these regulations. Discussions are under way between the three district councils about whether a shared service would work, and how to mitigate risks (e.g. an operator registering in one district but causing issues in another).

GAMBLING POLICY

NPDC, SDC and STDC are exploring a combined approach for the next review of this policy document.

GENERAL BYLAW REVIEW

STDC is well advanced in its bylaw review while NPDC and SDC are about to get under way. Discussion has begun on whether the three councils can align their bylaws, either in whole or in part.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

ICT Managers at NPDC, SDC and STDC are investigating the opportunity for collaboration and potential sharing of resources, systems and procurement, and the potential to share services, development costs, etc on projects such as intranet development and the paperless agenda. However, most shared service opportunities would require councils to be using the same processes before there could be technological alignment with resulting savings.

NATIONAL CYCLE TRAIL (Taumarunui to New Plymouth)

A 15km section of Junction Road, between Whangamomona and Inglewood, is unsealed with very rough loose stones. This route is part of the National Cycle Trail but is very difficult for cyclists. There is an opportunity for the New Plymouth, Stratford and Ruapehu district councils to work together on the sealing of this section of road for the benefit of cycling tourism in the three districts. (Note: The three councils have already collaborated on the installation and maintenance of cycle trail signs on this route.)

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Property managers at the three district councils meet on an ad-hoc basis on particular projects or issues, however there is potential for a formal arrangement to be established. A joint property managers' group would be able to explore issues such as joint contracts (e.g. cleaning contracts) and a greater sharing of expertise.

ROADING COLLABORATION

A Taranaki roading collaboration working party consisting of the three district councils and the NZ Transport Agency was established in 2013 to explore models for the region to collaborate on road operations, planning, project prioritisation and resourcing. A consultant is currently looking at all the roading functions within each council and will make a recommendation on potential models.

SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

NPDC has a staff member who is responsible for the safety management system relating to maintenance, renewals, new projects and user behaviour on our roads. (Note: This position is vacant as at April 2013.) NPDC is investigating sharing this person's expertise with SDC and STDC.

SEPTAGE COLLECTORS

The three district councils have an issue of septage (liquid waste) collectors crossing council borders to discharge their waste in areas with lower costs, which is putting pressure on certain collection infrastructure. The councils are investigating taking a regional approach to this industry, e.g. consistent pricing for collection, and monitoring of septage companies' operations.

