

# DOES KĀWHIA NEED A WASTE WATER TREATMENT SYSTEM?

The Ōtorohanga District Council is doing an assessment to see if a community wastewater scheme is needed in Kāwhia. This sheet explains why we're doing the assessment, what information we'll be collecting and when decisions will be made. We'll keep the Kāwhia community updated as the assessment progresses.

## WHAT WE KNOW

- The Kāwhia community relies on individual septic tank systems for wastewater treatment.
- Septic tanks work best in free draining soil, with low loading levels and when they are well maintained.
- Kāwhia has high groundwater levels, high loading in holiday periods with many old septic tanks and their condition is unknown.
- There is ongoing concern that septic tank effluent is contaminating the groundwater and polluting Kāwhia harbour.
- Iwi/mana whenua want the Council to uphold the principle of Te mana o te Wai – the health and wellbeing of water.
- The Kāwhia community cannot afford to fund a community wastewater scheme on their own.
- The Government's 3 Waters Reform position indicates that Council's direct ongoing involvement in community water and wastewater services is unlikely, and that any decisions on these services for Kāwhia and Ōtorohanga District may not be made locally.

## WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

We are undertaking a Needs Assessment to:

- Understand the condition and performance of septic tanks in Kāwhia.
- Understand what impact septic tanks are having on the groundwater and Kāwhia harbour.
- We also need to identify what options are available for ensuring a community wastewater system was affordable for Kāwhia (if a decision to proceed was made).

## WHAT WE ARE DOING

We will build a profile of the condition and performance septic tanks in Kāwhia, and we'll do this by:

- Reviewing Council records and other information;
- Undertaking an on-site survey of up to 100 properties in Kāwhia. We'll advise the owners/occupiers of these properties BEFORE the survey starts.

We expect this work will be complete by March 2022.

- We will test groundwater and the harbour for the presence of septic tank wastewater, and undertake this testing programme over an extended period to cover seasonal weather and rainfall variations.

We expect this work will be complete by October 2022

- We will develop affordability options for funding a community wastewater scheme, and explore opportunities for securing external funding (e.g. from the Government).

We expect this work will be complete by October 2022

## UPDATING THE COMMUNITY

The information gathered during the Needs Assessment will be shared with the Kāwhia community, with regular progress reports to the Kāwhia Community Board. A final report on the Needs Assessment is expected to be available to the public by December 2022.

No decision will be made on a community wastewater scheme for Kāwhia until the Council has considered all the information from the Needs Assessment work. The Council will consult with the Kāwhia community BEFORE any final decision on construction is made (which is likely to be in 2023/24 as part of the next Long Term Plan process).

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: What happens if my septic tank system isn't working properly?**

A: You may be required to fix it, and that could mean it has to be replaced.

**Q: What happens if septic tank effluent is contaminating groundwater and the Kāwhia harbour?**

A: This presents an undesirable and unnecessary environmental and public health risk, and steps will need to be taken to correct this. This could mean a community wastewater scheme is the only long-term option.

**Q: Can the Council or the Government just decide that a new wastewater scheme will go into Kāwhia without consulting the community first?**

A: No – the Council will consult the Kāwhia community BEFORE any final decision to build a new community wastewater system is made. If the Government's 3 Waters Reform process results in the responsibility for local water and wastewater services being taken away from the Council, it is yet not clear what consultation obligations the new entity responsible for these services will have. For this reason it may be beneficial to have a confirmed position on a community wastewater scheme for Kāwhia before any changes to local water and wastewater service delivery are made.

**Q: Apart from addressing environmental and public health risks, are there any other benefits to having a community wastewater scheme in Kāwhia?**

A: Yes, a community scheme could allow for: the expansion of businesses and dwellings on sites as the area for septic tanks would not be required; the irrigation of treated effluent to support forestry operations; the development of vacant sections and growth of the township.

Still have questions? Please call 07 873 4000 or  
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