

Ashburton District Council
Climate Resilience Plan
2022

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Introduction

Climate change is a global challenge. We want to play our part. This Climate Resilience Plan weaves together all of the climate change projects and actions that Council is currently undertaking, and plans to take over the next ten years.

Climate change action is a core part of local government business, and Ashburton District Council recognised this in 2019 with adoption of our first [Climate Change Policy](#).

Over the last few years, Council has advocated for national climate change action that is fit for purpose. This has been done through submissions to central government, from a local perspective. We have lodged submissions on the following consultations:

- Climate Change Commission draft advice to central government
- Pathways to net zero by 2050 – Ministry of Transport
- Natural and Built Environment – Ministry for the Environment
- National Adaptation Plan – Ministry for the Environment

Our Climate Change Policy was reviewed in early 2022, and Council identified the need to produce this plan in order to provide more clarity about Council's activities, together with accountability measures and the pathway Council will follow to implement the policy. On 6 April 2022, Council resolved to develop a Climate Resilience Plan. This document is the result.

Our reviewed policy focuses on enabling Council to respond to climate change in a more integrated manner. The objective of the policy is to:

- Ensure the sustainability of Council assets and services for the present and future resilience and well-being of the Ashburton District; and
- Enhance the resilience and preparedness of present and future Ashburton District households and businesses; and
- Manage the carbon emissions of the Council to provide an example of effective climate change mitigation for the District, and offer support and encouragement to businesses and households in their mitigation efforts.

As a provincial district, our approach to climate change is different to that of cities and urban districts. We have a strong economic reliance on agriculture, which provides jobs and income for many. Those economic foundations support Council and community investment in social, cultural and environmental well-being. At this point in time we also do not have the same options to reduce emissions that urban centres are pursuing such as increasing public transport. Therefore, this plan focuses on the opportunities that are available and suitable to Council and the Ashburton District.

About the Plan

Climate change is identified as a key issue in our Long-Term Plan. When we talk about resilience in the context of this plan, we are specifically referring to resilience to climate change.

In an uncertain future, resilience is an important requirement for success. Resilience is the ability to anticipate and resist disruptive events, minimise adverse impacts, respond effectively, maintain or recover functionality, and adapt in a way that allows for learning and thriving. In essence, it's about developing the ability to remain effective across a range of future conditions. This will be especially important with the many possible impacts from climate change. The Canterbury Climate Change Risk Assessment, published by the Canterbury Mayoral Forum in 2022, has identified that:

- It has been projected that there will be between 20 and 60 more hot days¹ annually by 2100. As summer temperatures get hotter, drought potential is likely to increase across most of Canterbury. With drier summers, the risk of wildfire will increase and it has been identified that rural areas will be more highly exposed. In Ashburton, the presence of irrigation networks helps to mitigate the risk of wildfire for land served by those networks.
- In winter, it is expected that rainfall will increase by 15-40%. Winter rainfall has the potential to be more strongly associated with storm events. Extreme weather events such as severe storms are also likely to happen more often.
- While an increase in both dry and wet conditions can appear contradictory, a changing climate leads to changes in the frequency, intensity, spatial extent, duration, and timing of weather and climate extremes, and can result in unprecedented extremes. Our district has experienced drought and floods in the past, and these extreme events are expected to intensify.
- In terms of agriculture, increasing temperatures also poses risks of increased heat stress in stock, as well as increases in the occurrence of pests and invasive species. Increased drought potential may introduce a range of stresses, including impacting on water availability. Increased storms, wind and flooding may also increase erosion, and damage crops, pasture, stock and infrastructure.
- In addition to the challenges and risks presented by climate change, it may provide us with some opportunities. The increase in temperatures and reduction in cold days in winter could provide warmer living conditions in winter that reduce energy consumption and improve wellbeing, a longer growing season for horticulture, reduction in crop waste, growth of new crop varieties, increased water storage from winter rainfall, and less disruption to our transportation networks due to less snowfall and icy conditions. It is important that opportunities and risks are not considered in isolation, given the complexity of our economic, environmental and social systems. On balance the direct and transitional risks of climate change appear to outweigh the benefits identified so far.

¹ Hot days are defined as those over 25°C.

Why do we need a plan?

Council has a legal responsibility to promote the social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being of our community. It is anticipated that climate change will have an impact on all of these.

While Council has a Climate Change Policy in place, there is no framework to guide us towards reaching the goals of our policy. This plan provides the pathway needed for us to ensure the necessary actions are taken.

The plan aims to show the community what Council is doing in terms of climate change action, and also aims to provide a basis for the community to hold Council accountable for its decisions.

What does this plan include?

The action plan details the things we are currently working on and the things we expect to work on over the next ten years. This is Council's first Climate Resilience Plan, and will be reviewed regularly (three-yearly cycle), as discussed in appendix A.

This plan is intended to guide the actions and decisions of Ashburton District Council, in order to meet the goals of our Climate Change Policy, within the Ashburton District.

The plan was developed looking through a Council lens. We want to show that Council's own house is in order before we consider producing a plan that has a wider focus including the community or other organisations. Therefore, this plan does not apply to Ashburton District Council council-controlled organisations or private households and businesses except to the extent those organisations, households, and businesses are users of Council services and assets.

What is adaptation and mitigation?

Responding to climate change involves two complementary types of action: mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation of climate change is where we reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or enhance sinks (sequestration) of GHGs. Sinks are places that absorb more carbon than they give out. An example of mitigation is replacing conventional cars with electric or hybrid vehicles or planting trees to absorb GHGs.

Adaptation to climate change is the process of implementing actions to reduce actual or predicted negative impacts of climate change, for example preparing for more frequent outbreaks of fire by keeping flammable vegetation away from homes or investing in water storage for dry years. Adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm to people, the natural and built environments and infrastructure. It can also include finding ways to exploit beneficial opportunities, for example taking advantage of longer growing seasons as the climate changes.

Mitigation and adaptation are closely linked – the more we collectively take action to reduce GHG emissions at the global level, the better the chance that we will have fewer impacts to adapt to in the future. Some actions contribute to both areas, for example planting coastal vegetation absorbs carbon (mitigation) and also protects properties by stabilising coastlines (adaptation).

While this plan includes actions that have a mitigation approach, such as reducing Council's emissions, the plan has a stronger focus on adaptation. This is because while it is important that everyone do their part in terms of mitigation, we believe that we will have a larger impact from a local perspective by focusing on the protection of our assets and services we provide to the Ashburton District.

How has this plan been prepared?

This plan has been prepared following a stocktake of the things that we are already doing, and by looking at meaningful and achievable steps that we can take within existing resourcing. This is what we have included in our plan.

The plan considers the principles in our policy, including:

- Kaitiakitanga/Stewardship
- Anticipatory Governance
- Equity/Justice
- Informed decision-making
- Work as one
- Resilience

What do we have to think about?

Legislative changes

There is constant and rapid change in the climate change public policy space. The Climate Change Response Act 2002 itself has been amended four times since the Council adopted its first policy. Central Government has released both its Draft Emissions Reduction Plan and Draft National Adaptation Plan for consultation, the latter of which indicates there will be further legislative changes relating to the impacts of climate change. There are things that local government will need to take into account in future, such as increased flood risk for farming activity and urban development on the Canterbury plains and the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity which will require Councils to ensure there are appropriate biodiversity corridors throughout the district.

There are also other changes occurring such as reforms to three waters, the resource management system, and a review into the future of Local Government. All of these changes may have a significant impact on Council's role, and therefore our ability to respond to climate change impacts and risks.

Scientific evidence

When developing and reviewing this plan it is important that we take into account the risks (and opportunities) posed by climate change. In 2022, the Canterbury Mayoral Forum released their [Canterbury Climate Change Risk Assessment](#). This document is the best up to date and localised science that we have available to assess the climate change impacts in the Ashburton District.

It is also important that we think about and keep up to date with new and improved science that is often coming to light. For example, the new [sea level rise information](#) released by the NZ SeaRise project has identified that sea level rise will be much faster than originally forecast in certain areas, due to the additional effect of land subsidence. On the Ashburton Coast, urban settlement is limited to hut settlements at the mouth of the Rakaia, Hakatere and Rangitata rivers. At the river mouths, tectonic movements are not forecast to hasten the effects of sea-level rise.

Covid-19

Covid-19 has had an impact on the way Council does things. For example, there has been a move to working more remotely and conducting more meetings and training virtually, therefore reducing vehicle and air transport emissions that may have been a part of our organisational carbon footprint.

The Plan

What is our vision?

Our vision:

“To be the District of choice for lifestyle and opportunity”

This vision links to the goals of this plan through our community outcomes:



Residents are included and have a voice
Ka whai wāhi, ka whakaputa kōrero kā
kainoho



A district of great spaces and places
He tiriwā pai, he wāhi pai i tēnei takiwā



A balanced & sustainable environment
He taiao toitū



A prosperous economy based on innovation and opportunity
He ōhaka whai rawa i ruka i te aroka hou
me te whai āheika

What are our goals?

Goal 1: Strive to understand climate change and what it means for the Ashburton District now and in the future, and create opportunities to share that knowledge with the wider community

Residents will have a stronger voice when we have better information about the risks and opportunities represented by climate change. This supports Council to advocate to Government for measures that are fit for purpose for our District. In terms of planned actions, this means (objectives):

- Keep up to date with climate change risks to the Ashburton District
- Inform the wider community of climate change updates

Goal 2: Ensure the sustainability of Council assets and services for the present and future well-being of the Ashburton District

Council assets and services underpin our economy, our spaces and places and our environment. Ensuring that our assets and services will meet community needs effectively and sustainably in a changing climate is critical to community well-being. This means (objectives):

- Investigate and implement opportunities for improving the energy efficiency and carbon footprint of Council services
- Investigate and improve the climate resilience of Council assets (including vested assets)
- Ensure that Council plans, strategies, policies and bylaws are fit for the future when viewed through a climate change lens
- Advocate on behalf of the Ashburton District in climate change matters

Goal 3: Enhance the resilience and preparedness of Ashburton households and businesses in the present and for the future

By enhancing resilience and preparedness, we can continue to enjoy a district of great spaces and places, and that our economy remains prosperous. This means (objectives):

- Council supports business resilience and preparedness
- Council supports household emergency preparedness
- We work with our local communities to roadmap local adaptation

Goal 4: [Reduce carbon emissions from Council activities](#)

Reducing the carbon emissions from our own activities will contribute to a balanced and sustainable environment. This means (objectives):

- Understand Council’s current emission footprint
- Identify and implement measures to reduce emissions from Council activities

How will we reach these goals?

Goal 1: Strive to understand climate change and what it means for the Ashburton District now and in the future, and create opportunities to share that knowledge in the wider community

Objective	Action	By who	By when
1.1 Keep up to date with climate change risks to Ashburton District	1.1.1 Continue to support regional collaboration in response to climate change	Executive Team, Strategy & Policy Team	Ongoing
	1.1.2 Undertake a Local Climate Change Risk Assessment	Led by Strategy & Policy	Short term
1.2 Inform the wider community of climate change updates	1.2.1 Continue to be a part of and spread awareness of the ‘It’s Time Canterbury’ campaign	Communications Team	Ongoing
	1.2.2 Ensure Council’s climate change webpage is kept up to date	Communications Team, Strategy & Policy Team	Ongoing

Goal 2: Ensure the sustainability of Council assets and services for the present and future well-being of the Ashburton District

Objective	Action	By who	By when
2.1 Investigate and implement opportunities for increasing sustainability	2.1.1 Form an internal Energy Management Group to investigate and implement energy savings	Executive Team	Ongoing
	2.1.2 Assess Council buildings and investigate the viability of solar panels	Property Team	Medium term
	2.1.3 Continue investment in biodiversity	Open Spaces Team	Ongoing
2.2 Investigate and improve resilience of Council assets	2.2.1 Invest in climate-resilient core infrastructure	Assets Team, Roding Team, Projects & Operations Team	Ongoing
	2.2.2 Investigate a requirement for developers to provide climate-resilient infrastructure	Planning Team, Assets Team	Short term
	2.2.3 Use sustainable design in major projects	Led by Projects & Operations Team	Ongoing
2.3 Ensure that Council plans, strategies, policies and bylaws are fit for the future when viewed through a climate change lens	2.3.1 Incorporate climate change into Council's report template and guidance to report writers	Strategy & Policy Team	Short term
	2.3.2 Provide information and training to staff and elected members on climate change issues	Strategy & Policy Team	Ongoing
2.4 Advocate on behalf of the Ashburton District in climate change matters	2.4.1 Respond to Government and other agencies when they seek feedback on climate related proposals	Council, Strategy & Policy Team	Ongoing
	2.4.2 Pro-actively advocate on issues of concern to the Ashburton District	Council, Strategy & Policy Team	Ongoing

Goal 3: Enhance the resilience and preparedness of Ashburton households and businesses in the present and for the future

Objective	Action	By who	By when
3.1 Council supports business resilience and preparedness	3.1.1 Develop a Resilient Business Plan	Economic Development Team, with Ministry of Primary Industries	Medium Term
3.2 Council supports household emergency preparedness	3.2.1 Develop community response plans for all Ashburton communities and review existing plans	Emergency Management Team	Ongoing
3.3 We work with our local communities to roadmap local adaptation	3.3.1 Develop a district adaptation plan	Led by Strategy & Policy Team	Medium Term

Goal 4: Reduce the carbon emissions from Council activities

Objective	Action	By who	By when
4.1 Understand Council's current emission footprint	4.1.1 Commission a carbon footprint analysis for Council activities	Executive Team	Short term
4.2 Identify and implement measures to reduce emissions from Council activities	4.2.1 Develop an emissions reduction plan for Council activities	Energy Management Team	Medium term
	4.2.2 Implement the emissions reduction plan and report progress annually	Energy Management Team	Ongoing

Appendices

Appendix A - Monitoring and review

Monitoring and reporting

The progress of actions and projects outlined in the plan will be monitored. If any actions or projects become unfeasible, they may be removed. New actions and projects can be added and approved by Council as required. A report on progress on the plan's implementation will be prepared as part of Council's overall six-monthly reporting.

Community satisfaction

It is recommended that a question about Council's climate change action is added to the Annual Resident's Survey to capture more data.

Review

The plan should be reviewed alongside the Climate Change Policy, every three years or as required to coincide with Council's Long-Term Plan. This review cycle reflects the need to maintain alignment with national programmes, legislation and related projects regionally and locally.

Appendix B - Glossary of terms

Below is a glossary of terms in the context of this plan.

Adaptation means:

- in human systems, the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects, to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities
- in natural systems, the process of adjustment to actual climate and its effects

Climate change means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

Greenhouse gases (also known as GHGs) are gases in the earth's atmosphere that trap heat. The main greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆), hydrofluorocarbons and perfluorocarbons.

Mitigation means a human intervention to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases.

Resilience means the capacity of social, economic and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation.