

# Policy

## CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

<b>TEAM:</b>	Strategy and Policy
<b>RESPONSIBILITY:</b>	Strategy and Policy Manager
<b>ADOPTED:</b>	6 April 2022
<b>REVIEW:</b>	Every three years or as required
<b>CONSULTATION:</b>	As required
<b>RELATED DOCUMENTS:</b>	Ashburton District Council Long-Term Plan 2021-31 Ashburton District Plan Resource Management Act 1991 Local Government Act 2002 Climate Change Response Act 2002 Canterbury Climate Change Risk Assessment

### Policy Objective

To enable the Council to respond in a more integrated manner to climate change 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.

### Definitions

**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.

**Council** means Ashburton District Council.

**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.

## Policy Statement

### 1. Scope

- 1.1 This policy is intended to guide the actions and decisions of Ashburton District Council.
- 1.2 This policy 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.

### 2. Current Position

#### Climate change and its impacts

- 2.1 Climate change has the definition contained in this Policy.
- 2.2 The Canterbury mayoral Forum commissioned and published a Canterbury Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCCRA) from Tonkin & Taylor which was released in 2022. The full Technical Report and a Summary Report can be found at [www.canterburymayors.org.nz](http://www.canterburymayors.org.nz)
- 2.3 Based on an RCP 8.5 scenario, the CCCRA states that climate projections for Canterbury by 2100 are:
  - a. Sea level is predicted to rise by about 0.8m above present day levels
  - b. Our annual mean temperature is set to rise by 1.5 to 3.5°C. Overall our maximum daytime temperatures will be up 2.5°C. Canterbury's alpine and subalpine areas could be 5-6°C warmer.
  - c. Wildfire will become more likely as hotter, drier summers occur. Rural areas will be more highly exposed.
  - d. Drought potential is likely to increase across most of Canterbury
  - e. There will be between 20 and 60 more hot days<sup>1</sup> annually. It is also predicted that there will be 20-50 fewer cold days per year.<sup>2</sup> As temperatures rise, there will be less snow days across the region.
  - f. Wind is likely to increase in speed, and winter and spring are likely to be windier. This seasonal change is likely to be more strongly felt in inland areas north and west of Rangiora.
  - g. Summer rainfall is projected to increase up to 20% in the inland Canterbury plains. It is projected to gradually reduce towards coastal areas. Winter rainfall has the potential to be more strongly associated with storm events.
  - h. Severe storms are likely to happen more often.

#### Risks and opportunities

- 2.4 The overall findings in the CCCRA show that climate change risks are threatening all eleven categories of risk in the framework, and that direct and indirect risks will increase over time. While present risks are currently rated as insignificant or low, by 2100 there are high or extreme risks against all values. Present day risks that are rated high or extreme include those related to biodiversity, water, infrastructure services, economic prosperity and sense of community.
- 2.5 The CCCRA also identifies opportunities arising from the projected increase in temperature, and reduction in cold days in winter:
  - i. Warmer winter living conditions that reduce energy consumption and improve wellbeing

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<sup>1</sup> Hot days are those over 25°C.

<sup>2</sup> Cold days are those at or below 0°C.

- j. A longer growing season could present opportunities to increase productivity, reduce crop waste and grow new varieties.
- k. Increased water storage from winter rainfall.
- l. Less disruption to transport networks due to less snow and ice.
- m. Increased air and ocean temperatures may provide a new environment for new marine fish species.

2.6 It is important to note that opportunities cannot be considered in isolation, as the risks may outweigh the benefits.

### **Council duties and responsibilities**

2.7 Council has a range of duties and responsibilities that can impact on, or are impacted by, climate change. These include land use planning, corporate planning, relationships with Māori, land transport, water supply, wastewater treatment, and disposal, stormwater treatment and disposal, waste management, civil defence emergency management, public health, building control, resource consenting and environmental monitoring. This list is not exhaustive.

2.8 Council also has a range of statutory duties, in terms of climate change. Section 5ZW of the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019 sets out requirements for Council to report upon climate change risks and planning, upon request by the Minister or Commission.

2.9 Future operational activities also offer scope for new climate change response. Strategy and policy work offers the opportunity to build environmental and economic resilience by enabling, promoting and supporting climate-appropriate services and assets.

2.10 In summary, climate change response is essential local government work. Council's approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation will benefit from more consistency and alignment as this will be more effective and efficient than ad hoc approaches.

### **Response from Central Government**

2.11 Since the Policy was first adopted in 2019, Government has put a number of initiatives in place, including:

- a. Formation of the Climate Change Commission in November 2019, primarily to give advice to Government on emissions reduction
- b. Amendment to the Climate Change Response Act 2002 to enable the setting of emissions budgets, emission reduction targets and creation of an emissions reduction plan.
- c. Amendments to the same Act now require New Zealand to prepare a six-yearly national climate change risk assessment, and national adaptation plans.

2.12 The parts of the work programme in terms of climate change response that the Government is still developing includes:

- d. A National Emissions Reduction Plan – due May 2022
- e. A National Adaptation Plan – due August 2022
- f. Reform of the resource management system, including statutory guidance on managed retreat
- g. Waste minimization initiatives

2.13 The unfolding of these initiatives will provide more certainty about the roles and responsibilities of local authorities (and may increase them). They will also provide better information, support and (potentially) funding for local authorities as they manage local climate change response.

### **Response from Council**

2.14 Council puts most of its climate change effort into adaptation, as will many territorial authorities. Government and local communities expect that local government will pay increasing attention to all aspects of climate change.

2.15 Council will develop a 'Resilience Action Plan' which aims to set out the actions that are or will be

taken in order to give effect to this policy. The plan will also provide a document to report against on a six monthly basis.

- 2.16 Council has work underway to establish a benchmark for its carbon emissions and will work to reduce these emissions.

### 3. Policy Goals

- 3.1 Council will 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.
- 3.2 Council will respond to climate change in ways that:
- a. Ensure the sustainability of Council assets and services for the present and future well-being of the Ashburton District; and
  - b. Enhance the resilience and preparedness of Ashburton households and businesses in the present and for the future; and
  - c. Reduce carbon emissions from its own activities.

### 4. Principles

- 4.1 In making decisions that can impact on (or are impacted by) climate change, Council will consider the following principles, alongside other decision-making considerations:
- a. **Kaitiakitanga/Stewardship** – Council shares in a collective duty of care to safeguard the natural environment. Policies and decisions on climate change need to be flexible and enabling to allow for local decisions and empower organisations and individuals to reduce emissions.
  - b. **Anticipatory Governance** – Council will think and act with the long-term in mind to provide clear and consistent plans towards a low emissions economy.
  - c. **Equity/Justice** – Council will consider the needs of the most vulnerable and those without a voice – including future generations – as it responds to climate change. This includes recognising and advocating for the needs of communities and individuals disproportionately affected by climate change.
  - d. **Informed decision-making** – Council will use the best available information to understand the potential impacts of climate change and available options for responding to those impacts – including their costs and benefits. Council will make this information available to engage in meaningful conversations with communities.
  - e. **Work as one** – Wherever practicable, Council will work co-operatively and collaboratively with partner organisations and communities in the District. Council will also strive to ensure greater alignment and integration of its activities relating to climate change.
  - f. **Resilience** – Some impacts of climate change are already inevitable. Council will work with communities and businesses to improve their understanding of climate change risks and what they can do to avoid and mitigate climate change risk so that they can continue to thrive.

### 5. Decision-making and resource allocation

- 5.1 Council will have appropriate regard for climate change adaptation and mitigation in its decision-making and resource allocation.
- 5.2 Council will continue to develop its people, processes and tools to ensure that decision-making and resource allocation that can impact on (or is impacted by) climate change is integrated, effective and efficient.