

A young girl with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a red jacket, is kneeling in a forest. She is planting a small green sapling into the ground, which is covered with fallen brown leaves. The background shows trees with some autumn-colored leaves.

Have your
Say!

OUR NATURAL PLACE



Draft Biodiversity Strategy *Consultation document*

We're developing a strategy to help protect and restore our district's precious biodiversity. We want to hear what you think. Find out more inside!

We are accepting feedback until Sunday 26 November.



The Scree skink (Oligosoma waimatense) inhabits the Ō Tū Wharekai wetland area, but is classed as nationally threatened. Photo supplied by DOC.

INTRODUCTION

The Ashburton District is bordered by the Pacific Ocean in the east, Southern Alps in the west, the Rakaia River in the north and the Rakitata (Rangitata) River in the south. It is a district that identifies itself with these natural environments and at the same time relies on them as the backbone of our economy. Through this special environment biodiversity is connected with our culture, our heritage and our economic resources.

While parts of the district are rich in biodiversity, our indigenous (or native) biodiversity remnants on the plains are acutely threatened. Managing these threats requires collective action from the community to ensure that we plan for their survival and that our district's biodiversity thrives.

Ashburton District Council recognises the importance of indigenous biodiversity in our district and so we've asked local environmental organisations, iwi, landowners, government agencies and many other stakeholders to help us develop a new kaupapa (strategy).

In our draft strategy, we've developed a vision, goals and objectives that aim to support the protection, maintenance and restoration of biodiversity, to gather and share knowledge, and to encourage community collaboration and participation into the future. The document is a long-term commitment and has a lifespan of 20 years. It is intended to be a living document and the progress of actions outlined in the Action Plan will be monitored to ensure it remains current and meets the needs of our community.

Now it's time for you to have your say. We want to know what you value about our native environment, whether you support the draft strategy and what you think the Council should be doing to protect and enhance our indigenous biodiversity.

If you'd like to find out more, we'd encourage you to read the full strategy on our website at ashburtondc.govt.nz/haveyoursay

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hear from YOU!***

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ashburtondc.govt.nz/haveyoursay



Ashburton Lakes and wetland system.

WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY?

Biodiversity contributes to the important natural processes that are necessary for ecosystems to sustain life. It provides us with clean water, air, food and resources like wood and fibre, and services like pollination.

The Ashburton District is surrounded by special natural environments, the rivers in the north and south, the alps and the sea. While parts of the district are rich in biodiversity, our indigenous biodiversity remnants on the plains are threatened.

The community plays an essential role in caring for our district and has already done amazing mahi in the area of biodiversity protection and restoration, like the 30-year plan for Lake Camp and Lake Clearwater, Wakanui Beach restoration projects, several native planting projects and pest control.

To get even more community members onboard, the strategy also focusses on education and empowerment of the community and on working together to achieve the goals.

We are keen to hear what you think about the proposed vision for Biodiversity in our district, the goals we aim to achieve and the actions on how we plan on getting there!

GOVERNMENT DIRECTION

Apart from the actions that were identified with the stakeholders during the development of the strategy, there are also legal requirements for a Council to contribute to the management of Biodiversity in the district. One notable example is the National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS-IB), which came into force in August 2023 and mandates Council to complete the assessment of Significant Natural Areas (SNAs), within the next five years. The NPS-IB advocates for increasing vegetation cover, establishing ecological connectivity and providing awareness and education to landowners on restoration of indigenous biodiversity. It also highlights takata (tangata) whenua as partners in indigenous biodiversity management.

In the draft strategy, actions required under the NPS-IB are marked in **bold**. You can view the full strategy document including the action plan at ashburtondc.govt.nz/haveyoursay



Tussock grassland around Lake Heron (Ashburton Lakes)

A BIT OF BACKGROUND

WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

When we talk about biodiversity we talk about the variety of plants, animals and their environment; from micro-organisms and fungi, trees, plants and animals - the genes they comprise, and the ecosystems they are a part of. In the strategy we refer to indigenous biodiversity, meaning all living organisms that occur naturally in New Zealand, and how they interact with their environment. Most of this indigenous biodiversity are endemic – meaning they are found nowhere else in the world.

THE CHALLENGES OF TODAY

The Ashburton District is rich in biodiversity and outstanding landscapes. We host three braided river systems and several lowland streams, Ō Tū Wharekai – Ashburton lakes and wetlands, coastal dongsas, the marine environment of the Canterbury Bight and outstanding mountain ranges. The district is home to a variety of native fish, birds, lizards and vegetation, some of which are rare or threatened.

Today, the district is considered a highly modified environment with few native vegetation remnants left on the low plains and around 25% native vegetation in the high country. Unfortunately, there is an ongoing significant loss of habitat in our high countries, lowland streams, and our unique braided rivers with remaining native vegetation being threatened by weeds, pests, land use changes and human behaviour.

Another important driver of biodiversity loss is climate change. More frequent events like floods and droughts and

sea level rise can result in changes to ecosystem services and species biology. At the same time, our strongest natural defence against climate change lies in biodiversity¹. Biodiversity acts as a natural carbon sink, sequestering carbon from the atmosphere and acting as a nature-based solution to global warming. Biodiversity helps provide stability and resilience to our environment as we adapt to the fluctuations and disturbances brought about by extreme weather events.

WHAT DOES COUNCIL CURRENTLY DO?

In 2010, Council introduced the Biodiversity Working Group and along with the combined efforts of stakeholders, important progress has been made for biodiversity in the district.

Notable achievements include the development of a Biodiversity Action Plan in 2011, the introduction of Biodiversity Grant funding, improved Rūnaka engagement, appointment of a full-time Council Ecologist and Biodiversity Advisor and biodiversity projects on Council land such as the Wakanui Beach Restoration Initiative.

Over the last five years, Harris Scientific Reserve, a dryland kākūka remnant, has seen biannual planting to extend the kākūka forest and other native vegetation plant coverage.

And Council's grant programme continues to fund biodiversity restoration planting projects, weed controls and environmental education programmes right across the district.

¹ [United Nations \(2023\)](#). Biodiversity - our strongest natural defense against climate change.



Volunteers at the King Charles Coronation Planting 2023 - Harris Scientific Reserve

WHO ELSE IS INVOLVED?

Protecting our district's natural environment and achieving the strategy's goals will require all parts of the community to work together. The strategy includes actions such as connecting people to the natural environment, introducing indigenous species for ecosystem restoration to new greenfield developments and township landscape design and extending school environmental programmes.

Successful implementation will see volunteers helping at a planting day, the landowner replacing pine trees in their shelterbelt with natives, Manawhenua sharing their knowledge on taoka (taonga/treasure) species, Council funding projects through biodiversity grants and stakeholders collaboratively engaging with schools to improve environmental education.



The kōwhai is commonly found throughout indigenous remnants across Mid Canterbury.

Urban residents, farmers, developers, agencies, Council and community groups all have an important role of turning the strategy's vision into reality. This strategy shares ownership for protecting our district's environment equally among the community.

HOW HAS THIS STRATEGY BEEN PREPARED?

This draft strategy was prepared in partnership with Te Rūnaka o Arowhenua. It builds on an initial workshop with the Ashburton District Biodiversity Advisory Group (ADBAG) and a review of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) progress to date, consideration of other Council's plans and strategies, integrating the latest government direction and the outcome of the SWOT analysis from a workshop with key stakeholders in the district held in May 2023.

The key stakeholders included representatives from Environment Canterbury, QEII National Trust, Department of Conservation, Ministry of Primary Industry, Federated Farmers, Ashburton Community Conservation Trust, Fish and Game, Fonterra, Foothills Landowners, Synlait, Forest and Bird, Awa Awa Rata Reserve Society, Ashburton Water Zone Committee, Foothills Landcare Group, Kānuka Mid Canterbury Regeneration Trust, Mt Somers Walkway Society, Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective (MCCC), Whitcombe Landcare Group, Lake Heron Conservation Society and farmers.

Following the stakeholder workshop, the draft strategy has been further developed by Council staff with the input from Elected Member discussions and workshops.

A DISTRICT WHERE
BIODIVERSITY IS
PROTECTED AND
ENHANCED FROM THE
MOUNTAINS TO THE
SEA (KI UTA KI TAI)
BY A COMMUNITY
THAT VALUES AND
CARES FOR IT.



The following four pages contain a form for your feedback.
We encourage you to skip to page 12 and finish reading the
consultation document before completing your submission.



You may also want to read
the full draft strategy.

Grab your copy from the
Ashburton Public Library,
Council office or our website.



Scan the QR code
to read the full
draft Strategy.



Your feedback

Have your Say!

DRAFT BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY 2023

Submissions must be received by Sunday 26 November

HAVE YOUR SAY

Your feedback will help us to know whether we are on the right track. Please note all submissions are public documents and will be made available on Council's website with the names of submitters included.

Submissions presented in the form of a petition or accompanied by multiple signatures will be processed as a single submission.

You can provide your feedback and read the full draft strategy online



ashburtondc.govt.nz/haveyoursay

Please note that by making a submission, your information will be used in the following ways:

- Submission material, including your name and organisation (if applicable) but excluding your contact details, will be included in material available to Council, media and the public at our office and on our website.
- The contact details you provide will be used for administration of the consultation process, including informing you of the outcome of the consultation.
- The information you have provided will be stored and held by Council. If you would like to request access to, or make a correction to your personal information, please contact the Council staff.

FOLD HERE

Your details

Name: _____

Organisation (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Do you wish to speak in support of your submission at the hearing?

(If no boxes are ticked, it will be considered that you do not wish to be heard)

Yes: The hearing is expected to be held in the Council Chamber on **Thursday 14 December 2023**. Please note that hearings may be live-streamed to our online channels.

No: I do not wish to speak in support of my submission and ask that my written submission be fully considered.

If yes, do you wish to present: In Person Virtually

DRAFT BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY 2023

DRAFT STRATEGY

The full draft strategy is available at ashburtondc.govt.nz/haveyoursay

You can submit on any or all of the questions. You don't have to complete every question and you can comment on any aspect of the draft strategy. You can provide attachments to support your submission.

1 Think about what our district, thriving with biodiversity, could look like in 20 years' time. What do you see?

2 Do the goals and objectives of the strategy capture what you see as the key issues facing biodiversity in the district?

Yes No

Please explain:

3 What do you see as the top five priorities from the objectives mentioned in the strategy?

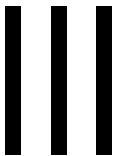
TICK UP TO FIVE OBJECTIVES	
Identify and protect ecological values	<input type="radio"/>
Identify and protect taoka (taonga) species and their habitats	<input type="radio"/>
Prevent further loss of threatened indigenous species via pest control	<input type="radio"/>
Properly manage human activity on biodiversity	<input type="radio"/>
Increase indigenous vegetation cover	<input type="radio"/>
Interconnect biodiversity sites and threatened species habitats	<input type="radio"/>
Support projects that aim to restore and interconnect indigenous biodiversity sites	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage ecotourism	<input type="radio"/>
Research and collect data on the state of biodiversity	<input type="radio"/>
Document and share knowledge of Manawhenua on biodiversity	<input type="radio"/>
Share knowledge on indigenous biodiversity with the community	<input type="radio"/>
Sustain and improve school environmental programmes	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders	<input type="radio"/>
Council to take a leadership role in working together and encouraging conservation and enhancement	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage the public to participate in conservation and celebration of biodiversity	<input type="radio"/>
Support community projects that protect and maintain indigenous biodiversity	<input type="radio"/>

4 We have identified 55 actions to reach the goals in the strategy. You can read about them in the Action Plan on pages 28 - 35 of the draft strategy. Is there any specific action or anything else Council should be doing to support biodiversity in the district?

Note – Goals and objectives related to water quality for rivers, lakes and wetlands are regulated via the Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan and therefore not part of this strategy.

5 Any other comments or feedback:

FOLD HERE



Ashburton District Council
PO Box 94
Ashburton 7740



Mayor Neil Brown and Council Ecologist and Biodiversity Advisor Dr Christian Chukwuka at a tree planting event.

Have your say online
ashburtondc.govt.nz/haveyoursay

**We want to
hear from YOU!**

DRAFT BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY VISION AND GOALS

OUR VISION

A district where biodiversity is protected and enhanced from the mountains to the sea (ki uta ki tai) by a community that values and cares for it.

This vision links to all four community outcomes as envisioned in our current Long-Term Plan:



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 and 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

OUR GOALS

GOAL 1

PROTECT AND MAINTAIN

The remaining indigenous biodiversity in the Ashburton District is protected and maintained.

This means (objectives):

- 1.1 Ecological values within the district are identified and protected.
- 1.2 Taoka species and sites with takata whenua cultural values are identified and protected.
- 1.3 Further loss of threatened and at-risk indigenous species is prevented by the control or eradication of pest species (fauna and flora)
- 1.4 Impacts of development and human activity on significant ecological values are properly managed.

GOAL 2

RESTORE AND INTERCONNECT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMUNITY

The indigenous biodiversity in the Ashburton District is restored, enhanced and ecologically interconnected for the benefit of the community.

This means (objectives):

- 2.1 Indigenous vegetation cover within the district has increased over time.
- 2.2 Biodiversity sites and habitats of indigenous species and taoka are interconnected.
- 2.3 Community projects that aim to restore and ecologically link indigenous biodiversity sites and habitats in the district are identified and supported (support: time / expertise / biodiversity grant)
- 2.4 Eco-tourism through biodiversity is encouraged and promoted in Ashburton District

GOAL 3

EDUCATE AND ENHANCE AWARENESS

Knowledge on biodiversity is gathered and shared, informing and empowering the stakeholders and the community.

This means (objectives):

- 3.1 Research into and collection of data on the state of biodiversity in the district is improved.
- 3.2 Knowledge of Manawhenua world view / biodiversity within the district is documented and shared.
- 3.3 Knowledge of Ashburton indigenous biodiversity is shared with the community and stakeholders (landowners, industry groups, environmental protection groups, local and regional government agencies).
- 3.4 School environmental programmes are sustained and improved.

GOAL 4

COOPERATE, ENCOURAGE AND CELEBRATE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Collaboration and participation among Council, Rūnaka and Stakeholders in the wider community for conservation and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity is encouraged.

This means (objectives):

- 4.1 Cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders is encouraged.
- 4.2 Council takes a leadership role in working together and encouraging conservation and enhancement.
- 4.3 The general public is encouraged to participate in conservation and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity.
- 4.4 Community projects that aim to protect, maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity are supported.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We're seeking feedback from the community up until Sunday 26 November. Use the form provided on page 7 or visit ashburtondc.govt.nz/haveyoursay to make your submission.

On Thursday 14 December, submitters will have the opportunity to present their views to Council in person at the hearing, after which Councillors will consider and deliberate on all the submissions received.



Cabbage Tree (Cordyline australis) - Harris Scientific Reserve, Ashburton.



Craspedia rugosa (Lake Heron woollyhead)

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Copper butterfly (*Lycaena salustius*) feeding on a *Muehlenbeckia* flower nectar - Wakanui Beach.



Banded Dotterel / Pohowera numbers are in decline due to invasive predators, habitat loss and human activities, particularly around breeding sites. Photo by Val Clemens

OUR NATURAL PLACE

Draft Ashburton District
Biodiversity Strategy 2023