

Manukau Harbour Forum feedback to the Our Water Future discussion document – May 2019

Context

The Manukau Harbour Forum (MHF) is a collective comprised of representatives of the nine Auckland local boards on the shores of the Manukau Harbour.

The forum was created in 2010 in response to concern about the deteriorating state of the Manukau Harbour and the urgent need for a collaborative response to improve its condition.

The member local boards are; Franklin, Manurewa, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Puketāpapa, Whau, Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Maungakiekie-Tāmaki, Papakura, and Waitākere Ranges.

This collective recognises and values the special relationship that Mana Whenua have in relation to the harbour.

The role of the MHF is to champion the sustainable management of the Manukau Harbour on behalf of the communities the members represent. The Manukau Harbour is considered to be something special and an asset of regional significance for all Aucklanders, for which a collective and concerted effort is needed to realise its potential. The MHF know they can't do this alone and look to work collaboratively with others to deliver on a vision that is largely shared.

Vision for the Manukau

The Manukau Harbour is recognised and valued as a significant cultural, ecological, social and economic taonga, and that a programme of integrated harbour management is developed that will ensure that it has a rich and diverse marine and terrestrial environment that is able to be enjoyed by all.

Since forming the Forum has endeavoured to raise the profile of the Manukau Harbour alongside of the many interested and passionate groups and individuals who surround and are on or in the harbour.

As is noted the MHF is made up of elected members from a diverse range of backgrounds and whom in turn are representative of communities and local board areas that are all different. The MHF members seek to give some initial insight through this feedback to items that have come to their attention in relation to water through every day interactions with the people they represent.

Manukau Harbour Forum involvement with wider Our Water Future community engagement

The MHF has sought to support the Council in its current 2019 discussions with its community around Auckland city and it's region's water future.

In line with the 2019/20 Annual Budget the MHF hosted a community stall at the Onehunga Festival with a focus on the Water Future discussion document. Around 80 attendees interacted with forum members, staff and volunteer youth leaders and shared views and gave feedback. This feedback is attached.

The MHF supported over 40 young leaders 3 day environment based leadership development course. Whilst the overall programme was relatable to the Water Future discussions a specific engagement session as facilitated to get direct feedback around what they enjoyed about what, what they valued, the challenges they would take on if mayor around water, and how they would support whanau to be resilient in a climatic event. This feedback is included.

This coming June the MHF is looking to host a Manukau Harbour focused Water Future discussion symposium where Council and key stakeholders will be present.

Manukau Harbour Forum feedback on Our Water Future directions

The MHF support the intents and approach being undertaken by Auckland Council in looking to deeply engage with the people of Auckland around water. Water is a need for people and our ecosystems, we have seen aspects of water stress occurring across the globe and are now experiencing these locally.

The bilingual goal of the life supporting capacity of Auckland's water being protected and enhanced is a clear and strong cornerstone on which to build this conversation. As part of discussion the aspect of accessibility to all was also identified as a key point which could be referenced within a vision.

The five values are inclusive with utilitarian function through to fun and excitement and around to ecosystems, mauri and the lifeforce within water.

The six principals to guide our work and our collaboration align very strongly with the who we will need to collectively work to achieve the vision the MHF and many others have for the Manukau Harbour, environs and catchments. The aspect of education and self-accountability for action was identified as potentially requiring some strengthening.

Auckland Council's role as a unitary authority includes ensuring that there is a robust knowledge base to support integrated management. The MHF is proud of its influential and supportive advocacy which has seen Auckland Council work alongside of WaterCare to develop and implement a system of integrated monitoring sites to enable the creation of a harbour wide hydrodynamic model in regards to water movements and identifying sources of contamination, heavy metals and sedimentation.

Through Long-term plan and Annual Budget processes the MHF through its nine local boards have championed and advocated for the development and implementation of planning frameworks and projects to support the integrated management of the Manukau Harbour. The MHF request that integrated regional spatial planning and associated engagement work around the Manukau Watershed be prioritised for completion in 2020.

The MHF and member boards are supportive of the Auckland Council regional Natural Environment Targeted rate and the Water Quality Improvement Targeted rate and the Forum looks forward to the development of a coordinated and forward looking programme of interventions to improve the water quality and biodiversity of the Manukau and its catchments and seeks the opportunity to be involved as governors with a local mandate and a shared regional interest.

Over the past three terms the nine-member boards have overseen the delivering of many local projects that have assisted in improving environmental and social aspects of the Manukau. Over the past three years an estimated \$22m of local projects have been implemented through local board areas.

The MHF boards have each also contributed local discretionary funding annually to facilitate the running of the Forum and to support the delivery of a small work programme. This has been supported by staff from Infrastructure and Environmental Services, Healthy Waters and Local Board Services.

The Forum has commissioned independent advice as part of its 2018/19 programme as to how it can bolster its advocacy and governance role and work within the Auckland Council shared governance model alongside of the Governing Body in improving and restoring the water and land environments of the Manukau Harbour watershed for current and future generations. The MHF is looking to engage across the Auckland Council

governance entities and welcomes the proactive involvement of senior staff, along with Councillors of adjoining Wards along with all the other councillors in this water body of regional scale and significance that serves so many local purposes.

Manukau Harbour Forum commentary on 4 Big issues identified in Our Water Future discussion document

1. Cleaning up our waters

The cleaning up of waters links directly to the Manukau Harbour Forum and its aspiration of water quality and vitality for the Manukau Harbour and its watershed of multiple catchments and tributaries.

The Manukau Harbour has a long history as being a receiving environment for impactful activities to its detriment. A impactful long term approach to remediate and restore the Manukau Harbour is desired. Consideration needs to be given to not only just managing issues of the here and now, but also what is to be done to repair/reverse major issues including sedimentation, chemical and biological contamination, and reducing biodiversity.

There has been historical monitoring of shellfish beds within the harbour to give insight across multiple indicators, however the size and number of beds themselves is being impacted to an extent that consideration needs to be given how they in themselves can be supported. Associated with water health is food chain vitality, at the apex level knowledge of the make up and sizes of fish stock appears to be a area that could benefit from increased data collection.

2. Meeting future water needs

In meeting future water needs the WaterCare treatment plants in Mangere and Waiuku will be within the mix. The forum supports a public discussion being held around the process of treated water being reused and brought up to potable standard. As well as providing an aspect of increased local resilience and making reuse of a valuable resource it is members current understanding that such a process would also reduce further the amount of water that is being discharged to the harbour from the water treatment plants along with associated nutrient loads.

Home and business-based use of water could also have flow effects to the harbour. At source capture and reduction of waste water at a unit level has significant impact at a systems scale. Water sensitive design from the likes of rain water collection, grey water use, and water efficient devices again reduces the impact on the harbour through less waste water to be managed and control over storm water which at peak times gets into the waste water system.

Most of the Manukau Harbour catchment is rural land which includes many agriculturalists and horticulturalists utilising aquifers, the aspect of demand and use rights needs to be considered.

3. Growth in the right places

Auckland is an area of change with all of our Manukau watershed environment having been modified to some extent. The Forum acknowledges that growth and development will occur and supports a more compact city. Particles from private motor vehicles from their tyres, brakes and exhausts invariably end up being washed off roads with wet weather. The integrated development of storm water management systems with roading projects goes some way to improving situations, and aspects such as increasing cycling and walking and public transport use have a systems impact.

Future change should from this point forward be one of positive development. Positive development is where change improves the environment forward from its current state.

Growth in the right places can include obvious matters such as being aware of flood plains and coastal erosion areas, however Council through the unitary Plan manages growth to the extent it can under national legislation. The forum has expectations that Council along with other territorial local authorities will be working with central government around changes required to enable councils to say no.

In looking at issues facing the Manukau sedimentation is a critical issue, when reflection on development soil type needs to be considered and managed as much of the Manukau catchment to the east has soft clays as a soil type. With urban development and channelling overland water into existing waterways it has been observed that with the increased volume and velocity that creeks and streams become more turbid and edges become steeper.

Food production is another significant activity in the Manukau watershed area. Consideration needs to be given to the managing of the food producing plains so that they remain productive whilst controlling runoff and nutrient flows. Irrigation plays an important part in supporting production and increasing pressures, subsequently we are at a time when refreshed scrutiny and consideration is made with regards to water access and its uses.

With the development occurring and significant increases in impermeable surfaces with roofs and ground paving more focus and regulation needs to be given to managing stormwater on site and within neighbourhoods. Rain water collection and detention measures need to be able to accommodate the more intense rain events that will develop as climate change impacts are experienced. There is opportunity to utilise this investment in stormwater management to not create sunken investment in hard infrastructure rather the opportunity to invest in solutions that also provide ecological and people wellbeing outcomes through wet lands, sculptured overland flow paths and detention areas that are also open space and recreational areas.

4. Adapting to a changing water future.

The MHF acknowledge will be pressure on drinking and arable water supply due to growth of population and competing demands. That there will be impacts due to rising sea levels and more severe weather events.

In a diverse city peoples expectations and how they use water varies. Education and raising peoples understanding of the true value of potable water and how easy choices are able to significantly reduce and manage individual, family and business “water footprints”.

Council needs to continue to encourage and support business through education, regulation and monitoring enforcement to manage water flows piped and naturally sourced or captured into and out of their premises. Conservation, reuse, onsite capture and reduction of waste water across a product lifecycle needs to be a key expectation.

Waterways and discharge points all eventually run to our harbours and coastal areas. The Manukau Harbour is a receiving environment that has been significantly degraded through these inflows and is now a heavily modified environment around the bulk of its perimeter.

Whilst talking issues at the source is a vital requirement, a strategic rehabilitation plan needs to be developed that gives consideration to what can be done to assist the healing process and the reinstatement of mauri to this significant water body and its tributaries.

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