

3 March 2025

Waitaki District Council Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Waitaki

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E te Koromatua, ngā Kaikaunihera mā, tēnā koutou katoa

Submission to: Waitaki District Council Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Waitaki

Subject: Draft Long Term Plan 2025–2034

From: Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa (Creative New Zealand)

1. Creative New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to share feedback on Waitaki District Council's Long-Term Plan 2025–2034 (LTP).
2. We thank Council for its ongoing support of arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi, and commend Council's commitments to community and culture for its vision to get Waitaki 'Fit for the Future'.
3. Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi are a vital part of Waitaki. Investment in the arts and ngā toi is investment in prosperous, healthy and vibrant rohe and communities.
4. The LTP presents a valuable opportunity for Council to **effectively invest in arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi**, and partner with creative communities, iwi and hapū to support the resilience and wellbeing of Waitaki's communities, and enable the district to thrive.
5. We share your aspirations for Waitaki and look forward to continuing to work with you to realise the potential of arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi to support your communities' wellbeing. Our collective approach will ensure the creative sector and ngā toi can deliver value to all New Zealanders and communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.



Key points

6. We acknowledge that local government currently faces challenges in preparing budgets and plans, while managing many competing priorities. We're heartened to see your commitment to arts, culture and creativity. **Ongoing investment and support for arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi in the LTP** is vital to support the resilience and wellbeing of communities, and help the district grow and prosper.
7. We welcome Council's goal of inclusive and sustainable growth, including a proposal to establish an Economic Development Agency. This mahi presents an **excellent opportunity for Council to work closely with creative communities and mana whenua in Waitaki**, to deliver these ambitions for the district.
8. We encourage Council to **embed arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori throughout the LTP's proposals**, to recognise their essential contributions to other prioritised work across the district, including development of the Community Precinct and Ōamaru CBD Revitalisation.
9. We welcome Council's **ongoing investment in the district's unique cultural infrastructure and facilities through the LTP, including the Forrester Gallery extension**. Congratulations to the many hands who have held this fundraising kaupapa over such a lengthy period – it's fantastic to see work begin.
10. We support Council's focus on local and collaborative ways of delivering services and encourage Council **to continue to build partnerships with arts, cultural and ngā toi Māori organisations, iwi and hapū**, as wonderful collaborators and valuable partners to create and maintain flourishing, strong localities.

Response to draft Long-Term Plan 2025–2034

Meeting the challenges ahead

11. Investment in the creative sector and ngā toi is investment in inclusive and resilient communities, collective wellbeing and increased economic activity, and will support the district to navigate the road ahead.
12. The evidence tells us that art, creativity and ngā toi are good for us, our whānau and our communities.



- Engagement with arts, culture and creativity positively enhances wellbeing, and means communities are more likely to have strong connections to community, land and place.¹
 - Two-thirds of New Zealanders believe arts facilities are important to create a vibrant place to live.²
 - The creative sector contributed \$16.3 billion to New Zealand's GDP in 2023.³
13. From our most recent *New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi* research, conducted in late 2023, we know that New Zealanders' personal connection with the arts continues to grow. Over 60 percent of New Zealanders agree that the arts help improve New Zealand society and that the arts help define who we are as New Zealanders. New Zealanders are also increasingly recognising the economic benefits of the arts, and support for public funding of the arts, including local council funding, is higher than ever.
14. **Te reo Māori, mātauranga and ngā toi Māori** – brought to life by tangata whenua and ringatoi – strengthen communities' sense of belonging and connection, and are central to our unique national and regional identities, including in Waitaki. We know from our 2023 research that ngā toi Māori is increasingly embraced by Māori and New Zealanders as a whole.
15. **Pacific arts, culture and creativity** also make significant contributions to the cultural, social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the district, with a wide range of contemporary and heritage artforms. Pacific peoples are more likely to feel the arts are an important way of connecting with their culture and that the arts support their identity. Pacific communities also participate in the arts more often, with 23 percent participating more than 12 times a year (compared to the national average of 19 percent).
16. Creative practitioners and organisations, iwi and hapū, are uniquely positioned to support the district to navigate the road ahead, as connectors, innovators and educators who strengthen communities. They're also particularly skilled at providing effective, strong and innovative ideas for Council's focus areas, proposals and projects.
17. Council has a crucial role in investing in arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi, and the creative sector needs secure, stable support from Council to survive and service communities.

¹ *Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato: Understanding the impact of arts, culture and creativity on the people of the Waikato region.* (2022).

² *New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi.* (2023). Creative New Zealand.

³ *Infometrics sector profiles 2023.* Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture & Heritage.



18. We strongly encourage Council to ensure arts and ngā toi are prioritised throughout the LTP's proposals, projects and outcomes, including by working with the creative community and mana whenua as well-placed partners, to strengthen the social, cultural and economic life of the district.

Boosting sustainable and inclusive growth

19. It is heartening to see Council's goal to boost sustainable and inclusive growth by strengthening community partnerships, including through the establishment of a new Economic Development Agency.
20. Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori support Council's goal by making Waitaki an even more vibrant and attractive place to live, and enhancing its reputation as a destination to visit and invest in.
21. Waitaki has a strong reputation for arts and culture, with the community undertaking work of national and regional significance. The district's unique arts, culture and heritage assets present **valuable opportunities to enhance the district's development**. This includes your suite of cultural facilities in *Culture Waitaki*, the collaborative home of the Forrester Gallery, Waitaki Museum and Archive, Waitaki District Libraries and Ōamaru Opera House, alongside the Victorian Precinct and Steampunk HQ. These high-quality arts and cultural venues, organisations, events and festivals can enhance local economic growth by attracting investment and visitors.
22. Supported arts organisations, and regular arts and culture experiences, have a strong 'multiplier effect' by feeding other parts of the local economy, including education, health, trade and enterprise, hospitality, retail and tourism. The creative industries – including technology, publishing, film, design, music and performing arts – are rapidly growing and will support Waitaki to diversify its economy by creating jobs, driving economic growth and attracting new business.
23. Strong relationships with the creative community can also foster new partnerships and collective approaches. Arts organisations and practitioners in Waitaki hold valuable existing relationships with mana whenua, funders, government, non-profits, businesses and other community groups. We know important work is already happening in developing relationships across cultural facilities in Waitaki, including the Waitaki Multicultural Council and the Ōamaru Pacific Island Community Group.



24. As the Economic Development Agency takes shape, **we strongly encourage you to consider how it can support the district's unique arts and cultural opportunities**, such as festivals. Cultural events and festivals can be wonderful and powerful ways to bring communities together, celebrate the Waitaki area, and build pride, identity and social cohesion between the many communities that call the district home.
25. The Harbour Street Jazz and Blues Festival is a fantastic example of an annual collaborative community event that brings together local and visiting artists, with over 165 participants and a growing audience of over 3,000. Supported by the Creative Communities Scheme (run in partnership with Creative New Zealand), the festival demonstrates the powerful ability of the arts to uplift and strengthen communities through participation in the arts. It also shows how the creative sector can develop deep and strong relationships embedded in community, utilising shared resources and strengths.
26. **Te reo, mātauranga Māori and ngā toi Māori, and Pacific arts, are central to Waitaki's unique culture and regional identity.** Success in protecting, revitalising and promoting Māori artforms supports many artists, practitioners and tourism operators in the region, and positively enhances the reputation of Waitaki nationally and internationally. Pacific arts groups, collectives and organisations also make significant and dynamic contributions to the arts, and powerfully connect people, communities and opportunities in Waitaki.
27. We encourage Council to explore how it can support and promote Māori and Pacific artforms to showcase Waitaki, provide greater opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with ngā toi and Pacific arts, and support creative communities to thrive.

Community spaces and facilities projects

28. **We are encouraged to see Council's continued investment in the District's renowned network of cultural and community facilities**, including the Forrester Gallery, Waitaki Museum and Archive, Waitaki District Libraries, and Ōamaru Opera House. They all provide spaces and services that support the arts community, grow the reputation of Waitaki, and deliver meaningful social and cultural wellbeing outcomes by bringing communities together.
29. As the creative sector in Waitaki grows, we encourage Council to continue to enable creative communities to access public spaces in the district. It's been fantastic to see vacant retail spaces made available to artists through Council's place-making work. Accessible and affordable spaces for artists and practitioners are crucial for allowing them to share their work with audiences, and create and develop work behind the scenes.



30. **It's heartening to see Council's commitment to the Forrester Gallery's extension**, which will deliver a wide range of benefits to the community. As the project progresses, we strongly encourage Council to actively engage with creative communities, through consultation and by working in partnership with the creative sector to deliver the project. This will help ensure the gallery is fit-for-purpose, high-quality and responsive to the needs of residents and visitors alike.
31. We encourage Council to also carefully consider how to provide adequate resourcing within the Gallery and Council to support the project's development. Council's investment in the 'soft' infrastructure that supports these cultural facilities is equally as important as the physical infrastructure. This includes ensuring these facilities resource and support staff who have the skills, knowledge and experience to successfully deliver services and activities to Waitaki's communities and visitors.
32. As Council develops other community spaces and facilities projects, such as the Community Precinct and Ōamaru CBD Revitalisation projects, we encourage Council to consider how the **creative communities in Waitaki can support their delivery**. As place-makers, educators and storytellers, artists and creatives can support Council to meaningfully increase the use of public and shared space by encouraging a sense of community ownership and pride.
33. We note Council's plans for 'Waitaki Identity and Storytelling' as an Economic Development activity, and **encourage Council to work with hapū, iwi and mātanga to ensure indigenous knowledge is valued and the stories of local mana whenua are appropriately told in community spaces**. The work of Te Whare Koa Marae Trust offers fantastic examples of ngā toi Māori and heritage artforms telling the stories of mana whenua and offering opportunities for connection, including their whare pou made by carvers and students. Meaningful partnerships with iwi, hapū and mātanga will ensure ngā toi and mātauranga can be included and engaged with from the beginning in Council projects, across all aspects of its planning.
34. **Visibility and representation of ngā toi Māori** in a town's infrastructure inspires pride and engagement for people in a region, including visitors, and drives demand for more public art, touring work, lively events and festivals, and Māori content in galleries, museums and other public spaces. Investment in ngā toi Māori also supports the revitalisation of te reo Māori and te ao Māori. It grows knowledge and understanding of the stories, values and places of importance to tangata whenua.
35. As Waitaki is home to one of the country's fastest growing Pasifika populations, we encourage Council to **partner with local Pacific arts organisations and leaders** to empower Pacific arts communities. For example, the Ōamaru Pacific Island Community



Group frequently brings Pacific communities together for arts and cultural events, to support local families and young people. Investing in Pacific arts increases understanding of Pacific communities and the place of Aotearoa in Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, builds resilience and enhances social cohesion.

36. This work can also build capacity into the creative ecosystem and play a key part in creative workers' income. While the arts funding system tends to deliver well for the public, it does less well for those working in the sector. The median income of creative professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand remains stubbornly low at \$37,000 compared with \$61,800 for salary and wage earners.
37. We urge Council to enable creative communities to continue their valuable work in the district, by creating a thriving creative sector that supports residents throughout Waitaki. They are strong ambassadors for Waitaki at a national level, and we are looking forward to seeing their ongoing work for their communities.

Changes to fees and charges

38. In light of the district's increasingly diverse population, **we encourage Council to ensure its arts, cultural and creative programmes, facilities and services are accessible and fit-for-purpose** to meet the needs of the community.
39. We are heartened to see there are no proposed changes to fees and charges for the Forrester Gallery and Waitaki Museum, or to visitor fees for the Opera House. These facilities are of immense value to the district and attract visitors by providing access to high quality arts experiences. This also ensures Waitaki residents and communities' participation in arts and culture.
40. We note the proposal to increase fees for hiring spaces at the Opera House and removal of 'The Study' for hire, and are encouraged by their intended use to develop a much-needed education programming budget. Council's investment in the 'soft' infrastructure that supports these cultural facilities, including resourcing programmes, ensures these cultural facilities can engage more directly with communities and build new audiences.
41. We also encourage Council to meet with iwi and hapū, and members of Pacific communities to understand the support they need for their arts and cultural activities, such as by providing dedicated spaces for Māori and Pasifika communities to make, rehearse and show their work.



Creative arts and heritage strategy

42. We strongly encourage Council to continue the **development of a creative arts and heritage strategy for the district**. A coordinated approach across the district's key creative agencies will offer significant benefits for the arts, culture and creative community. We encourage Council to consult closely and widely with the arts community, to create a strategy that can deliver specific actions to support the creative sector and grow its potential.
43. We're proud to fund and support the Creative Communities Scheme administered by Council. In light of the district's diversifying population, we encourage Council to ensure membership of the Creative Communities Scheme assessment panel reflects Waitaki communities, especially in representation of Pacific peoples.

Creative New Zealand's interest and investment in the arts in Waitaki

44. Creative New Zealand is the national arts development agency of Aotearoa New Zealand, responsible for delivering government support for the arts. We are an autonomous Crown entity under the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act 2014.
45. Our legislative purpose is to *encourage, promote, and support the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders*. We do this by *Investing in the arts, Developing the arts, Advocating for the arts, providing Leadership in the arts, and Partnering for the arts*.
46. Creative New Zealand receives funding through Vote: Arts, Culture and Heritage and the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board Te Puna Tahua. In 2023/24, Creative New Zealand **invested \$79.4 million** in the arts.
47. We recognise the importance of Waitaki to arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi in Aotearoa New Zealand. For arts that are delivered in the Otago region, **\$2.5 million** of direct financial support was provided by Creative New Zealand in 2023/24. Of this, **\$51,158** in funding went directly to Waitaki, supporting individual arts projects and arts and cultural organisations.
48. Under the Creative Communities Scheme, we also fund territorial authorities directly to support local arts activities. In 2024/25, funding of **\$282,098** was provided to the Otago region, which included **\$29,083** to Waitaki District Council and your creative communities.



Final thoughts

49. Thank you again for the opportunity to share feedback on your LTP. We understand there's considerable pressure on all local councils' budgets, and we acknowledge and celebrate your continued commitment to investing in arts, culture and creativity as part your overall investment in the wellbeing of Waitaki.
50. Shared investment is vital for a resilient and supported arts and cultural sector, and we value our ongoing work with you to maintain this collective approach. By working together, and in partnership with arts, cultural and ngā toi Māori organisations, we can continue to build strong, healthy, prosperous and vibrant communities.
51. While we do not wish to address Council in person in support of our submission, please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or if you wish to discuss it further. The key contact person is:

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Position: Senior Advisor, Advocacy (Local Government)

Kaiwhakamahere Matua Taunaki, Kāwanatanga ā Kainga

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Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa, nā



David Pannett

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Pou Whakahaere Matua, Rautaki me te Tūhono

