

Whangapouri Creek

Community-led Recovery Planning Report

A report by Catalyse
to the Community-Led Recovery Planning
Leadership Group
and communities of Pukekohe.
November 2025.





Overview

This plan was developed by a community leadership group comprising people from Pukekohe Community Action, Rātana Church, Māori Wardens, Mai Lighthouse, Rivi Consultancy and the Auckland Council Recovery Office, with support from Kidz Social Services, Pukekohe North School, Huakina Trust, Ngā Hou e Wha Marae and Neighbourhood Support as well as several local people and businesses.

The focus is on the Whangapouri Awa and nearby residential area because this area was severely impacted by the 2023 floods. Several homes were removed as a result. The area is likely to be flooded again.

Centering the awa in the plan enabled people to consider both how they could live well with the awa, and how the awa could live well with local people and their activities. This reflects the whakatauki
“Ko au te awa. Ko te awa ko au - I am the creek and the creek is me”.

An awa-centred approach includes the wider catchment area, and invites consideration of diverse past, present and future perspectives, leading to a call to “Mōhio ki tōu awa - know your creek”.



Goals

Understand

Community priorities, aspirations and challenges, and what people need in order to feel ‘recovered’

Identify

Existing resources and strengths as starting points for delivering on priorities.

Prepare

For future disaster events by establishing resilient systems that reduce vulnerabilities.

Explore

Ways to be more connected to one another, grow social cohesion and improve equality.

Contribute

To decision making on reuse of land, and to taking action together to deliver on these goals.

Activities and outcomes

Leadership Group:

Building on existing relationships, connections deepened and new connections were made. Members undertook all promotion, and contributed significantly to activities. A set of Floody barriers was donated to the Rātana Church as relationships developed in this group.

Psychological First Aid Training:

Held at Ngā Hau e Wha marae, this was part of a larger series and engaged 19 people.

Morning Tea

People who had not met before came together at St Patrick's Catholic Church, seeding conversations about connection that have since developed further.

Community Event:

Approximately 180 locals enjoyed kapa haka from Pukekohe North School, sausages from the Ready Response Team, muffins from Mai Lighthouse, chop suey from Rātana Church, ice cream from Sparrow and Sweet, games and kai to take home from St Andrews Anglican Church and fun ways to share what people love and wish for in the area from Catalyse.



Rangatahi from Pukekohe Youth Leadership Council, Māori Wardens and many Rātana and St Andrews church members volunteered at the event.

Community assets produced are in the appendix.

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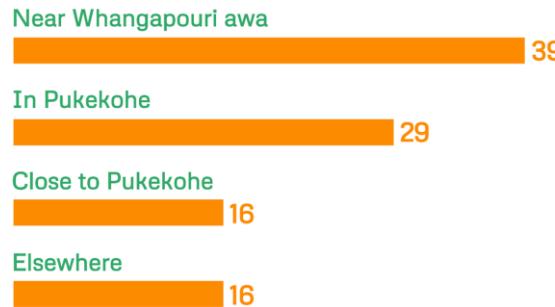
All from one amazing event!			
53	19	18	15
Wishes from the Wishing Tree	Surveys	Entries in the Heart Pulse	Mapped ideas

The best things already are

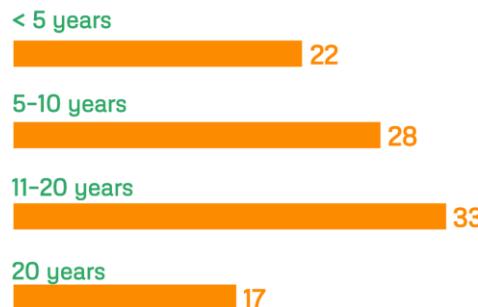
the friendly people, long term connections and memories, sense of culture and community as well as how central it is and “the presence” of the awa. 79% rate living here a 4 or 5 out of 5.

- “Beautiful place, awesome people, lots of memories.”
- “Having family close, meeting new people/families.”
- “...we go down to the creek and hang out with friends. It’s very relaxing.”
- “The kids love the ducks and eels.”
- “I love the ambience and calming effect the awa gives off.”

Participants live:



Length of time living in area:



Concerns to address are

flood risk and mitigation, community safety, understanding and improving the health of the awa as well as long term planning. In past flood events, people said they mostly received support from other locals (37%), Council (16%), emergency support services (11%), and local cultural and service providers (10%). 16% said they received no support.

- “First and foremost, the wellbeing of the people – keeping them safe.”
- “Educate ourselves on our awa – community awareness and participation with Council.”
- “Better stormwater control.”
- “Make sure all the logs and rubbish are not piling up.”
- “Recurring flooding, climate change and lack of future planning.”
- “The loss of aquatic life in the awa - bring our eels back to our awa.”

To be better prepared for future flooding

people would like to see improvements in creek maintenance, early warnings and have a range of easy-to-find contacts as well as “more community involvement in planning”. 93% said it would be useful to have a website telling people where their nearest emergency hub is.

- “Residents along the creek given sandbags to help with it breaching. Maintenance of the stream taken care of more often, so it is free-flowing.”
- “A source to tell us where to go in harsh weather. Where is our local civil defense hub where can we evacuate to...”
- “Better land management and more planting to slow the flow.”
- “Normalise getting prepared...”
- “Equipment ready. Safety and flood barriers. Sirens to alarm people.”

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Things to make the area and awa better are...

to improve the health of te taiao and te awa, develop a māra kai and pa harakeke, foster more community connections to one another and the whenua as well as reduce pollution and rubbish. People are most grateful to community and faith initiatives for being key to flood responses, recovery and improved future resilience (74%). They said that knowing others in the nearby area enabled them to both “be helped and to be a helper”.

— “Greater people-based management of te taiao: Māori and Pākehā together.”

— “Revive the wairua tapu of the area. Sustain the land around the awa, the life in the awa.”

— “Having more outreach programmes/events like today to bring our community together, bringing our ideas into things.”

— “For the awa to be clean and safe for the families and community and so we can catch eels and have places to swim.”

— “By keeping the waterway clear all the time and keeping rubbish out.”

Interim land use on Category Three sites...

focused on planting, especially food and harakeke, as well as creating community gathering and event spaces, recreation for children and walking/cycling paths. Ideas ranged from very short term to longer term.

— *“Maintenance is vital – keep the area free of debris and make a commitment to a garden, harakeke for weaving, community projects.”*

— *“I would like to see this land be made available for community events. Maybe a stream clean kind of exercise where community come together to clean the stream and more education around looking after the creek.”*

— *“Some of the land I would like to see used for markets, pop up grounds and places to activate neighbourhood events on. Playgrounds for the kids.”*

— *“Add track along the creek to Helvetia Road using Cat. 3 land (part of 5 Summits walk).”*

— *“Given back to iwi hapu, if not wanted, given to free use for community groups.”*

Community involvement...

included both interim and permanent land use, with several people offering specific skills, and some feeling strongly that local iwi should be part of decision making (28%). Others said all locals should have the opportunity to be involved in decision making, particularly Rātana Church and rangatahi: “they are the future” (27%). 32% are more interested in joining in “to make things happen” than in planning.

— *“I would like to be consulted as Māori first regarding land use!”*

— *“By belonging to a group that helps look after the environment. And good communications.”*

— *“I want to volunteer with youth and have more events like this to research our community.”*

— *“I would like to be part of the community group that teaches youth how to look after the waterways in our town.”*

— *“Would love to help decorate or promoting.”*

— *“I would like to help clean the drains/waterways.”*

Event feedback

— “An excellent opportunity for people living in the area to get to know one another better and share concerns the concerns regarding the previous experiences from flooding in the area.

I thought it was great having three different religious groups working together for the community...”

— “Really enjoyed getting out with other community members. Great to be able to visit a new church and see also how close they were to the creek that caused so much damage.”

— “Fantastic in so many ways!

→ working together across a range of organisations and sectors of the community

→ a sense of agreement that we want to work together and share where we are able

→ raising awareness of what is available in our community

→ increased awareness of what is available in our community

→ having fun and meeting new people

→ opportunity to introduce some new strategies and ideas...

→ recognition that more of such community gatherings would enhance our community

→ identifying ways in which we can enhance our environment and reduce the impact of some of the extreme weather events that we are experiencing.”

— “I have never had a hongi before until today. I've lived here for 13 years.”

— “Through this, we've learnt that there is so much more to gain by working together, more than working only within our own [cultural] groups.”



This work helped:

				
Understand	Identify	Prepare	Explore	Contribute
Flood risk and mitigation, community safety, understanding how the awa and te taiao can be healthy, long term planning and workshops that includes a māra kai, pa harakeke and reduced pollution/ rubbish in the awa and local area.	The friendly local people, long term connections, sense of culture and community to work with and build on, as well as 'experts' who can walk alongside locals and resources to make things happen that help locals feel safe, prepared and connected (including ensuring the awa and nature it sustains is improved).	Improved creek maintenance, early warnings, a range of easy-to-find contacts (including a website for Emergency Hubs) and "more community involvement in planning".	Foster more community connections to share stories that help recovery, know neighbours and grow social cohesion. Enable locals being part of both decision making (local iwi, Rātana Church and rangatahi in particular) and action taking eg how to improve the health of the awa and te taiao. Specific practical skills were offered.	Improving the health of the awa and te taiao e.g. through planting, especially food and harakeke. Creating community gathering and event spaces, recreation for children and walking/cycling paths. Ideas ranged from very short term to longer term.

What next?

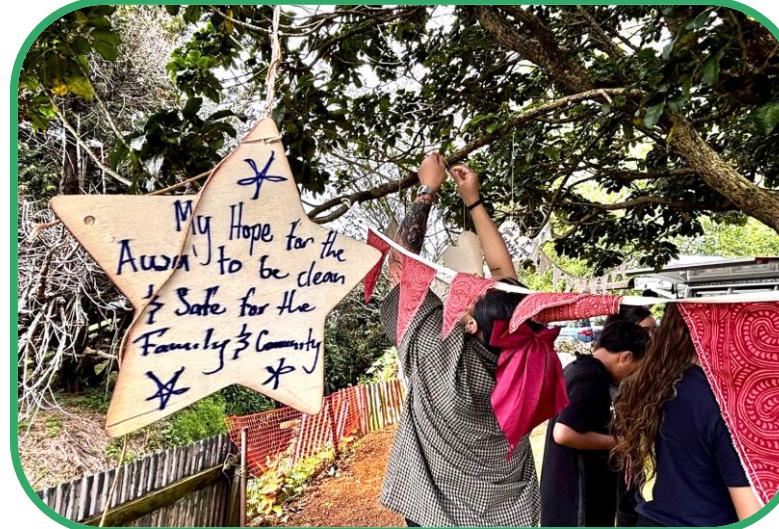
Practical actions that include locals and grow community connections and resilience as the health of the awa and flood preparedness improves.

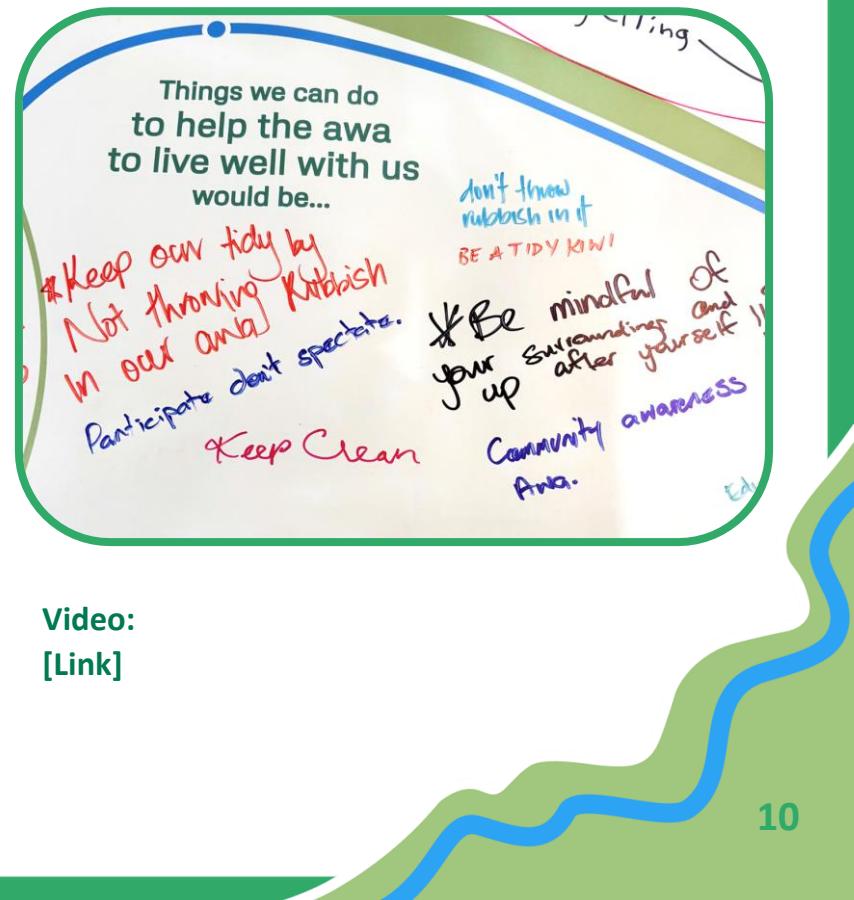
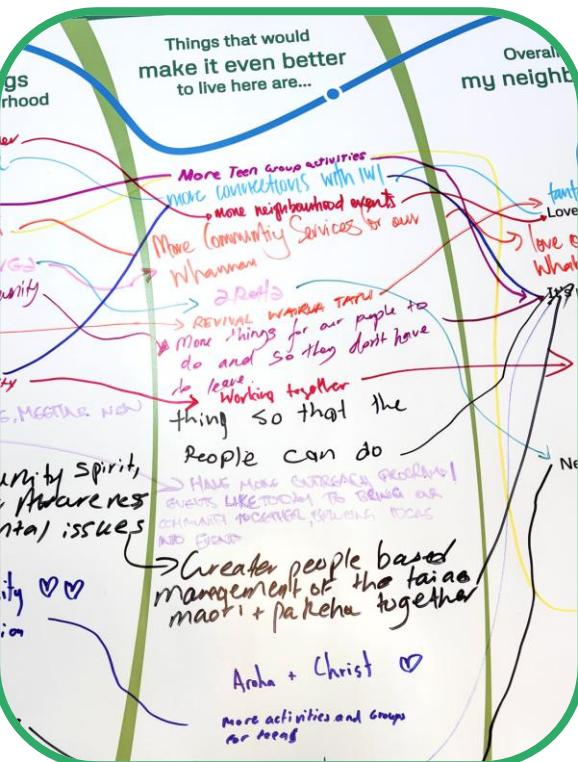
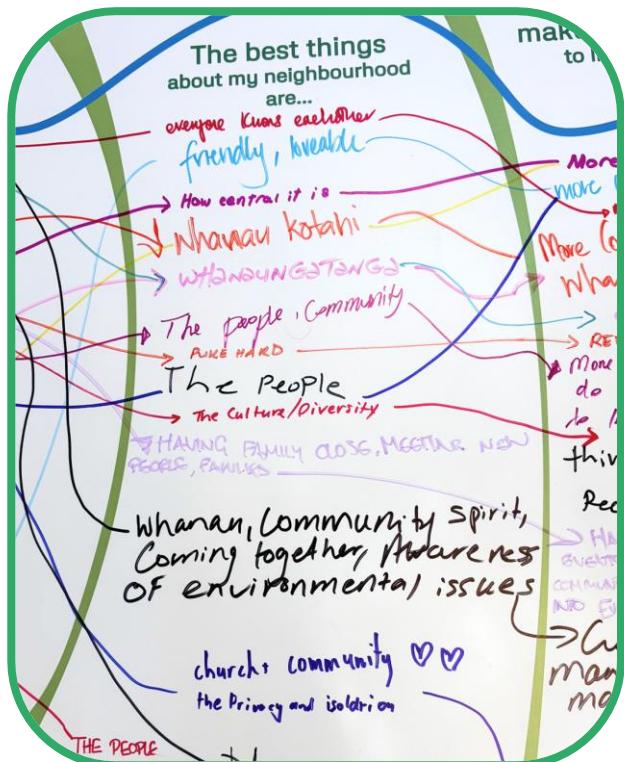
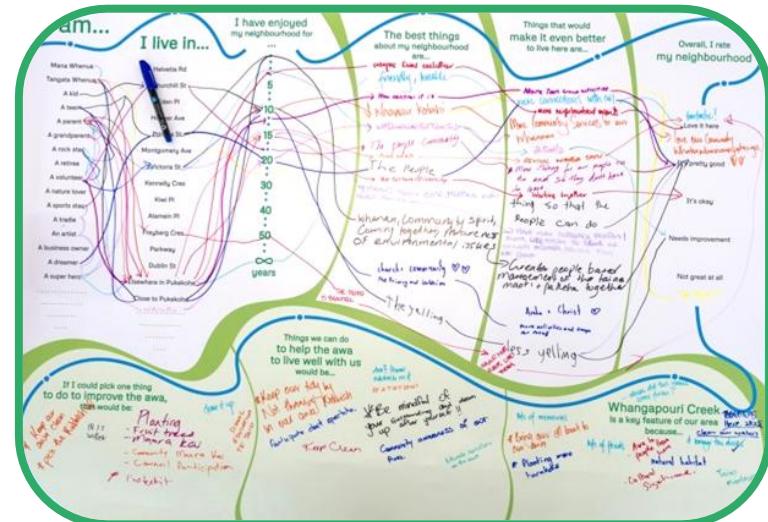
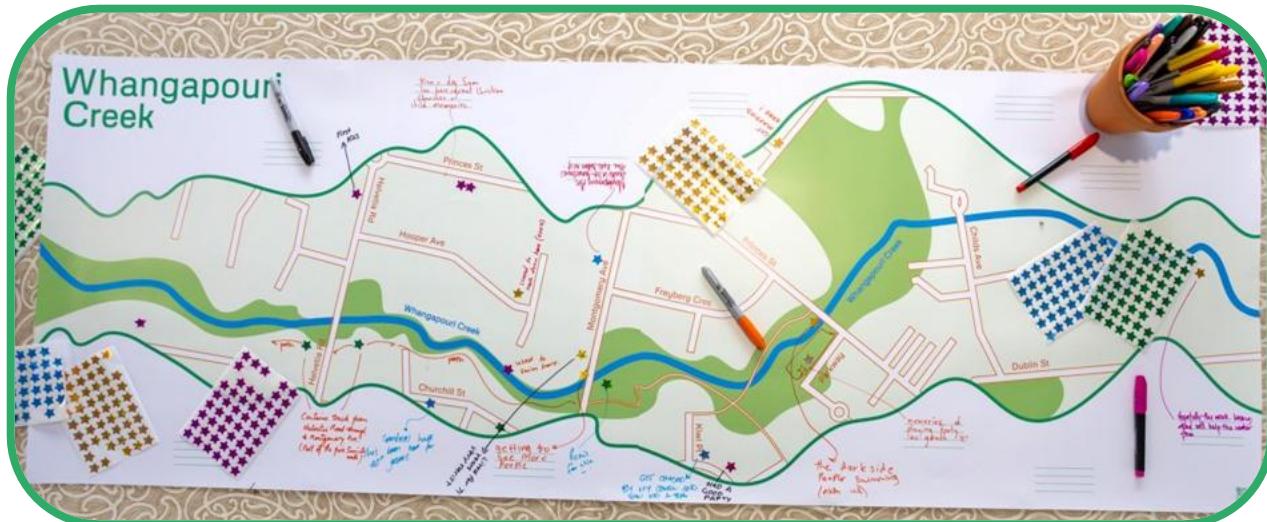
Quick wins:

- Clear, well known wayfinding - digital (web/social media) and in place (consistent signage)
- Cleaning and maintaining the awa for flood risk and social connection/cohesion/better understanding of the creek
- Workshops/training of various kinds as requested by locals
- Technical and other expertise not available in the community
- Space to share stories to grow local connections and assist recovery
- Interim land use - improved processes

Longer term:

- Strengthen local ability to respond to flood events through better local connection and clear communication about assistance available
- Establish more inclusive processes for both decision making and action taking including Plan Change 120 and increasing urbanisation.





Video: [Link]