



Recovered Water Management Solution Progress

Infrastructure Committee Update

14th October 2026

Project Summary

Recovered Water Management Solution Project

Identifying a sustainable, affordable and culturally appropriate long-term solution for Rotorua's treated wastewater.

Why is the project needed?

-  The upgraded Rotorua Wastewater Treatment Plant produces treated wastewater, referred to as recovered water, which must be safely managed and discharged.
-  Recovered water is currently discharged into Whakarewarewa Forest under an existing resource consent that expires on 31 December 2027.
-  A sustainable long-term solution is required that meets environmental, cultural, regulatory and affordability requirements.

How does it fit in?

The project determines how the treated wastewater (recovered water) from the Rotorua Wastewater Treatment Plant will be managed and discharged in the long term.



What are we doing?

We are investigating a range of potential solutions and locations, including:



Land contact beds and irrigation to land



Constructed wetlands and natural treatment systems



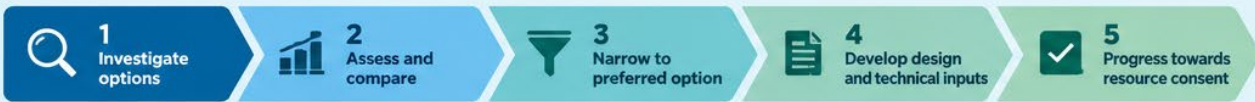
Alternative locations and combinations of options

Options are being assessed against Council's adopted criteria:

-  Relationship with mana whenua
-  Community acceptance and support
-  Environmental outcomes
-  Whole-of-life cost and affordability
-  Implementation risk

What happens next?

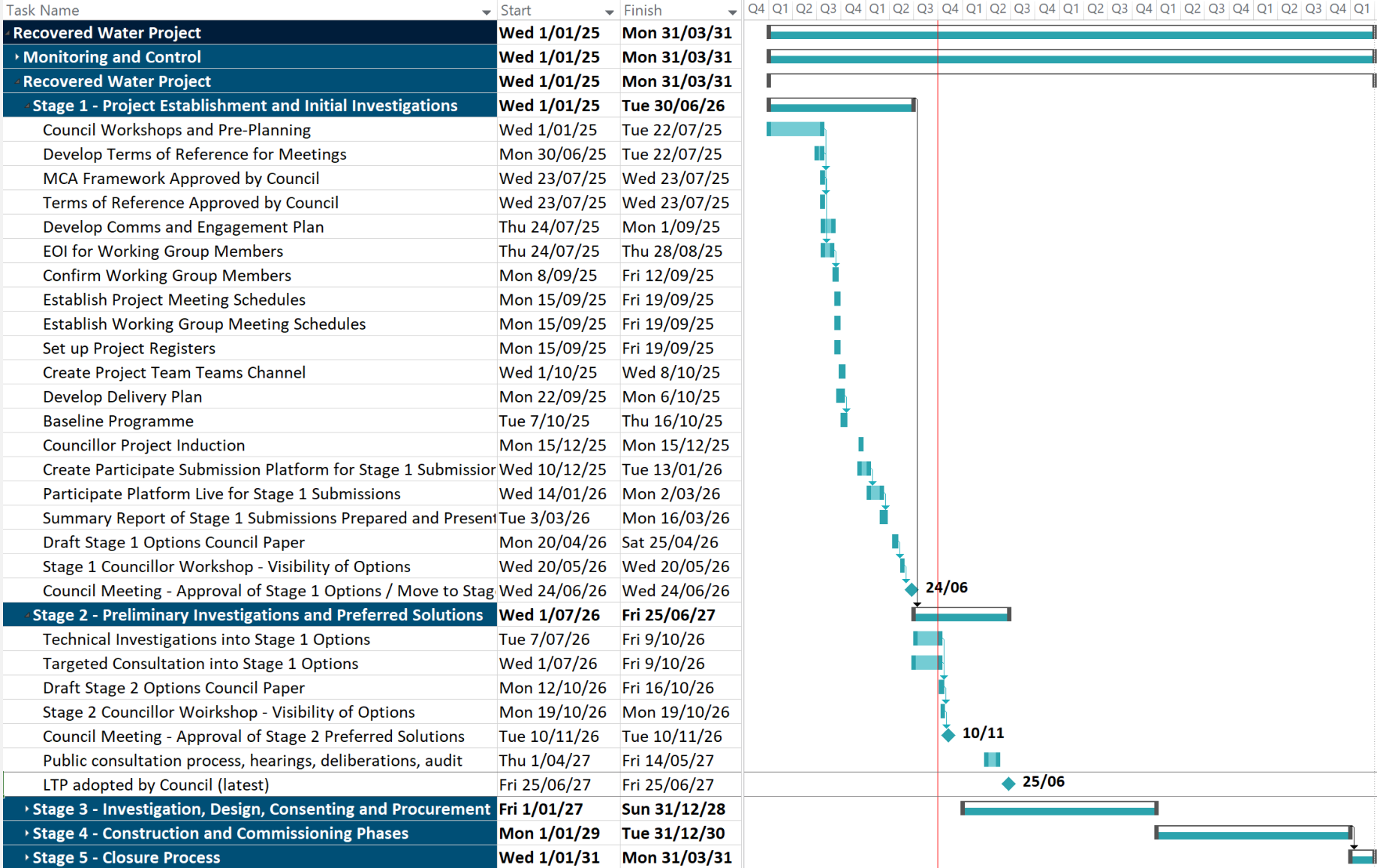
Technical investigations will progressively narrow the options, providing Council with the evidence and cost information needed to select a preferred solution and progress towards resource consent.



The intended outcome

 A consentable, environmentally sustainable and culturally appropriate long-term recovered water solution that provides value for money for Rotorua ratepayers.

Programme



Note
Select Stage 3 tasks continue in parallel with the LTP process.

Project overview

- The upgraded WWTP that commenced construction in late 2022 is now nearing commissioning and will be producing fully treated recovered water in the first part of 2027
- The landowner where the current disposal occurs has indicated that they no longer support the use of their land for forest discharge, so a new solution to dispose of or reuse the resource is required.
- Council adopted an MCA process in June 2025 that outlined how a new solution should be assessed.
- A working group were selected in October 2025, to oversee the initial investigations, assess solutions, and work towards recommending a final solution/s for Council consideration in December 2026.
- The working group completed the production of a 'long list' of solutions that they assessed against the MCA stage 1 criteria, and Council approved their recommendations in June 2026 to proceed to stage 2 of the MCA evaluation.
- Council will make a decision in December 2026 which solution/s should proceed into the public LTP consultation process commencing in April 2027.
- Council will adopt a solution in June 2027 that will proceed into the detailed design and consenting phases.

Focus areas

Short and medium term

Key achievements

- Design consultant engaged, with significant design now well underway.
- All landowners identified within MCA stage 1 engaged with, to gauge whether they were interested in working with RLC to explore viability of their site being considered for concept design and assessment by the WG.
- A number of solutions/sites are not proceeding further with landowners stating that their land is not available for consideration.
- Site visits commenced with landowners indicating a desire to continue to explore viability.

Focus for October

- Utilise the working group meeting for initial assessments against the MCA stage 2 criteria.
- Continue landowner engagement where landowners have indicated that they wish to continue to explore viability with RLC.
- Continue solution investigation, design and reporting processes.

Focus for the next period

- Engagement continuing with wider group of landowners that could be affected by any of the solutions.
- Continue more detailed investigations to enable sequential assessment (as more detail becomes available from consultants) by the WG against stage 2 MCA values.
- RLC officers focus on gathering any additional information required outside those solutions being investigated by the WG, to enable Council to understand the full breadth of possible solutions, with risks and opportunities clearly articulated.
- Focus on Council workshop on 19th November.
- Focus on Council infrastructure meeting on 9th December, to consider the WG recommendations from stage 2 of the MCA assessment, and any additional considerations that may be necessary outside those recommended by the WG.

Pātai?