Minutes

Manawatū/Whanganui Local Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: Friday 26 September 2025 **Time:** 10.00am – 2.00pm

Venue: Palmerston North Fire Station, 50 Cook Street, Palmerston North 4412

Present:

Materoa Mar (Chair) from 11am
Stefan Speller (Deputy Chair)
Bonnie Kuru-Whaturia
Paul Patel
Amy Valentine
Ross Brannigan

In Attendance:

David Utumapu	Acting Region Manager – Te Ūpoko
Nigel Dravitzki	District Manager – Manawatū – Whanganui
Barry Madgwick	Acting Community Risk Manager – Manawatū – Whanganui
Michelle Bartlett	Senior Advisor, Local Advisory Committees

Apologies:

Bruce Stubbs	Region Manager – Te Ūpoko
Kerry O'Keefe	Community Risk Manager – Manawatū – Whanganui
Paul Sharland	LAC member
Graeme Spiers	LAC member

Welcome

The meeting was opened by the Deputy Chair with a karakia and a round of introductions.

Committee operations

The previous minutes from meetings held 8 April, 6 June, and 16 July 2025 all confirmed.

Correspondence confirmed.

The member interests register was reviewed and updated.

Chair's update

The Fire Fighters Water Supplies Code of Practice consultation will occur with a LAC nominee as our representative. Consultation is anticipated in October.

The LAC Chairs' Hui was held in Wellington on the 17th of July. The focus was on the content from the recent LACs insights reporting. Discussion focused on matters relating to high density urban areas compared to more rural isolated communities. It provided a good networking opportunity with other LAC chairs. Internal structure changes and tensions were also discussed.

The Community Perspectives research report outcomes were presented to the chairs by the researchers from Verian. This report highlights different types of engagement from planned and

structured to more organic engagements and provided six principles for community engagement including the importance of closing the loop with stakeholders.

The Chairs forum with the Fire and Emergency Board will take place in Wellington on 5 November. The deputy chair will be attending on Manawatū-Whanganui LAC's behalf.

Engagement plan

The Committee reviewed and agreed on geographical and portfolio allocations for members to lead engagement.

- *Member Allocations:* Members were assigned to different geographical areas to lead the engagement in that area. Two members were also designated to lead engagement with Hapū, Iwi and Māori communities and as leads with the Community Risk group. All members will connect with relevant Group Managers, Community Risk Managers or Pou Takawaenga in their allocated areas.
- *Engagement Approach:*

    - Members agreed to go through the relevant Fire and Emergency hierarchy before connecting directly with FENZ personnel.
    - Initial introduction between District Leadership Team and the LAC is recommended as a starting point. The District Manager will share an invite to an upcoming Regional Leadership meeting for either October or November 2025.

Specific Initiatives:

- Smoke alarm installation at marae initiated by previous Pou Takawaenga. The new Pou Takawaenga will connect with appropriate contacts to continue this mahi.

Additional Notes:

- Industrial action currently occurring - members advised to be sensitive in timing of approaches.
- An opportunity has been identified to strengthen relationships with government agencies (e.g., Kāinga Ora) to reach vulnerable and isolated communities.
- LAC members can access each other's engagement reports via SharePoint.
- Ongoing meeting frequency to be agreed between members and their local Group Manager/ Community Risk Managers/Pou Takawaenga once connections have been established

Review of Engagements

A member engaged with a rural volunteer at the field days event who was keen to share volunteerism challenges. The volunteer suggested an app could be helpful to streamline recruitment paperwork and was receptive to sharing insights about improving volunteer processes. This engagement was seen to demonstrate effective engagement practice with efficient documentation and responsive community listening.

District update

Operational Updates:

- Spring preparation underway for wildfire season following a relatively dry winter

- Home Fire Safety Visits and Firewise visits are being monitored through KPI's
- Ahi Kura programme continues with practitioners working with children and young people showing interest in fire lighting. The 30-year programme shows strong success with a 98.9% reduction of recidivism rates
- Regional callout statistics shared for past six months, with targeted messaging being developed for the over-65s demographic (65% of home fire deaths are within this demographic).

Organisational Challenges:

- Fiscal environment remains tight with reducing insurance levy funding
- Executive Leadership Team has recently been restructured with reduced Director positions; next stage to be announced soon, with the next stage of the restructure proposed to be completed by the end of 2025
- Industrial action is ongoing with a focus on fleet and equipment rather than pay increases; next bargaining round scheduled for 8-9 October 2025.

Recognition: Two Foxton Beach brigade members received 50-year service medals at a recent event.

Community Risk Manager (CRM) Update

Volunteer Brigade Leadership Development: Acting CRM is project managing the new volunteer brigade leader development and review process. This relates to implementing all 20 recommendations from Belinda Clarke's culture review. All new Chief Fire Officers will be appointed for a five-year term with structured support, development, and performance review processes. Existing leaders can opt into the new system but will not have their terms and conditions changed. The process includes succession planning and development support if issues arise.

Community Risk Management:

- Kerry O'Keefe leads the Risk Reduction team covering compliance, fire evacuation, and emergency response plans
- Community Readiness and Recovery team manages Home Fire Safety Visits, Firewise, and readiness requests

Waitarere Beach Pilot Project: Community engagement event scheduled for 27 September at Surf Lifesaving Club over two sessions (10am and 2pm) focusing on wildfire preparedness. This collaborative initiative with Council and Emergency Management will serve as a pilot project for working with isolated communities. A new community preparation tool (accessible via website) Prepare for Wildfire | Fire and Emergency New Zealand provides personalised assessment and planning resources for participants. The event has been promoted through posters at local businesses and community groups, as well as through social media, with several LAC members planning to attend to observe risk reduction processes. Waitarere Beach was selected due to local risk knowledge, single road access concerns, strong council cooperation, and identified brigade gaps. The pilot may be replicated in other communities, with Wellington CRR team planning to observe and learn from the approach.

Pou Takawaenga

Information was shared regarding the Marae Digital Connectivity Programme which can assist whānau, hapū and iwi to achieves goals and aspirations and can include smoke alarms and an 'interconnected alarm system' as part of the package. The programme is free to register and will be implemented for marae that meet the specified criteria. Further details are available at: https://www.tpk.govt.nz/en/nga-putea-me-nga-ratonga/marae/marae-digital-connectivity

General Business

- SharePoint & access for committee members

  The National Local Advisory Committee team is working to get everyone access to SharePoint as we are currently procuring a new Board Management application and will need all members to have access. New log in guidance has been distributed, if members are still having issues, please contact IT Support on 0800 374 843

- Communities of Interest

  This tool was developed to understand what's important in each region and to assist in the engagement strategies and recruitment of LACs to ensure members are across key communities and geography in each region.

- Community perceptions report

  Report and presentation included in meeting packs

  Senior Advisor gave an overview of the presentation – of note are the four engagement types, challenges, and six principles for effective engagement.

- Updates from previous local Insights reporting

  2024/25 Insight – Learnings from operational reviews is not visible to LACs – link to Operational reviews provided in meeting pack.

  2023/24 Insight – Concern from LACs that carbon forestry is increasing fire risk – Link to information and research on carbon forestry and fire risk provided in meeting pack.

Future Meeting Locations

Confirmed:

- 27 February 2026: Whanganui station. LAC will explore engagement opportunities around this meeting.

Proposed:

- Waimarino National Park visit to explore responsibilities around the mountain, potentially Ohakune location

- Week beginning 20 April: Awaiting guidance from FENZ district team regarding specific dates (may require out-of-cycle meeting)

Closing

The meeting closed at 2:00pm with a karakia.

Action Log

Date	Action	Responsible	Due	Status
26 September 2025	Re-circulate map of District showing stations in each area	District Manager	Post meeting	Progressing
26 September 2025	Share information and brochures for the Ahi Kura programme with LAC members	CRM	Post meeting	Progressing
26 September 2025	Invite LAC to an upcoming District Leadership team meeting Oct or Nov	District Manager	Post meeting	Progressing
8 April 2025	Contact list of LAC members to be distributed	Senior Advisor	Post meeting	Complete
8 April 2025	Draft Manawatū/ Whanganui engagement plan to be updated with priorities discussed and forwarded to LAC members	Senior Advisor	Post meeting	Complete