

Westland District Council LTP Engagement Report 2026

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Introduction

As part of the development of the Long-Term Plan 2027–2037, Westland District Council undertook an initial round of community engagement from 5–24 August 2026. The purpose of the engagement was to better understand community priorities and provide early input into the development of the draft Long-Term Plan, which will go out for formal public consultation in 2027.

The primary engagement tool was an online Budget Challenge, which provided participants with a snapshot of how Council currently allocates each \$100 of rates revenue across key activity areas. Participants were invited to adjust this allocation to reflect their own priorities and provide comments on the reasons for their choices.

Alongside the online engagement, Council held eight community meetings across the district. These provided an opportunity to discuss the Long-Term Plan, the financial challenges facing Council, and the priorities, opportunities and challenges communities see for Westland over the next ten years.

Over the three-week engagement period, 138 responses were received through the online Budget Challenge, generating 418 individual comments. More than 120 people also attended the community meetings.

This report summarises the feedback received through the online Budget Challenge and community meetings. It brings together the key themes raised by participants and highlights areas of common interest as well as differing views. The feedback will help inform the development of the draft Long-Term Plan alongside Council's financial, infrastructure, legislative and other planning considerations.

Roading and Footpaths



\$4.3M 23.5% of the budget today

Roads, bridges, footpaths, and related infrastructure connect communities across the Westland District. These services support safe travel for residents, school buses, emergency services, freight operators and local businesses.

Roading infrastructure

93 answers

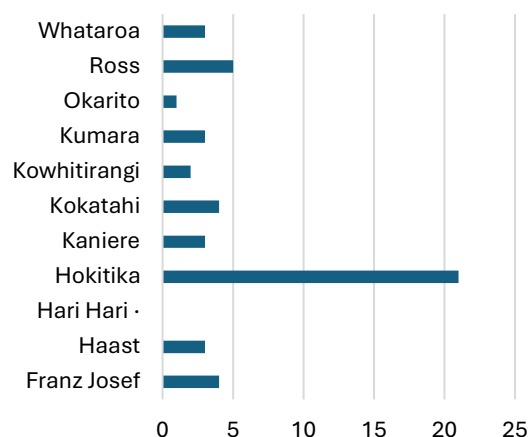


Footpaths

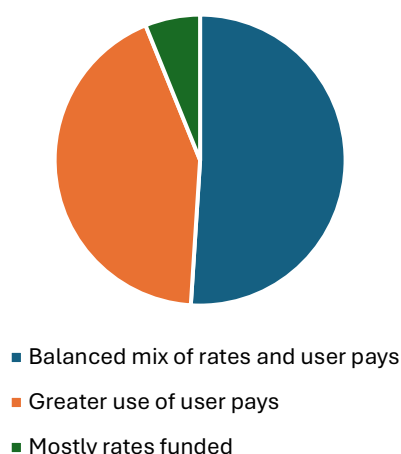
90 answers



Roading and Footpaths



Roading and Footpaths



Feedback highlighted the importance of maintaining a safe, reliable and accessible roading and footpath network across the district. A strong theme was concern about the condition of some roads and footpaths, including uneven surfaces, potholes, drainage issues and areas where existing infrastructure is considered inadequate for current levels of use. Particular concerns were raised about accessibility for older people, people with disabilities, mobility scooter and wheelchair users, and those using prams. Respondents also identified specific areas where they considered safety improvements or additional infrastructure were needed, including parts of Hokitika, South Westland, Franz Josef, Whataroa, Kumara and the Kokatahi-Kowhitirangi area.

A number of respondents wanted greater emphasis on walking and cycling, including safer connections to schools, community facilities and existing trails. There was support for considering footpaths as part of a broader approach to accessibility and active transport, rather than solely as pedestrian infrastructure. Others noted the importance of the road network to residents, businesses and visitors, particularly in rural and South Westland communities where alternative routes are limited and road closures or poor conditions can have significant impacts.

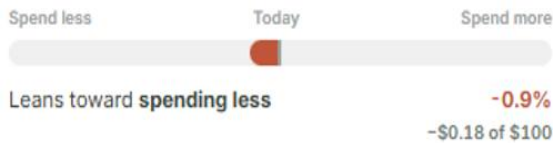
Alongside calls for increased investment, there was also a clear focus on affordability and value for money. Some respondents suggested Council should consider different service levels for lower-use roads, review maintenance practices and contractor performance, explore alternative delivery approaches, and seek

greater external funding for infrastructure heavily used by visitors. Others suggested that targeted maintenance and relatively minor repairs could improve outcomes without requiring full replacement or significant capital investment. Overall, the feedback indicates an expectation that Council balance safety, accessibility and network resilience with affordability, prioritisation and efficient use of ratepayer funding.

Public Facilities



Public Facilities



\$3.7M 20.1% of the budget today

Public facilities provide important spaces and services that contribute to community wellbeing, recreation, learning, and social connection. These include the library, museum, swimming pools, public toilets and other shared facilities. They support residents of all ages while also enhancing the experience of visitors to the district

Hokitika Museum

91 answers



Cemeteries

84 answers



Hokitika Library

92 answers



Public Toilets

86 answers

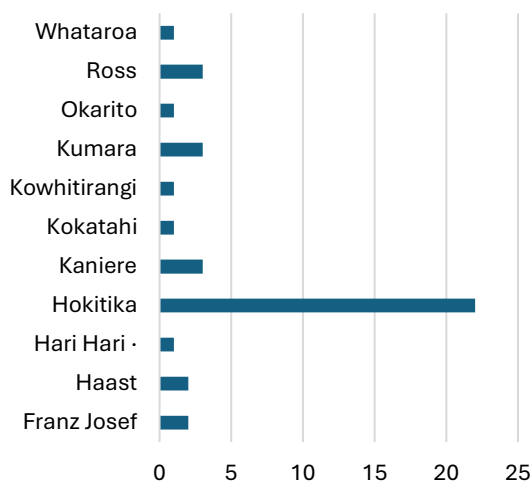


Swimming Pool

87 answers

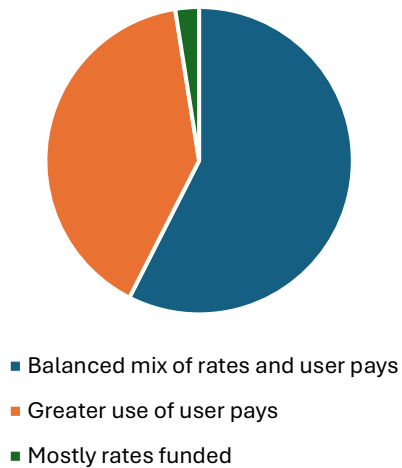


Public Facilities



Feedback reflected strong recognition of the role that community facilities play in supporting the wellbeing, identity and liveability of Westland communities. Libraries, public toilets, swimming pools, cemeteries and heritage facilities were identified as important community assets, with some respondents emphasising that these services provide benefits beyond their immediate function. Libraries in particular were viewed by some as important community hubs, while public toilets were widely recognised as essential infrastructure for both residents and visitors. Respondents also acknowledged the importance of maintaining Westland's heritage and the generally high standard of cemetery maintenance in parts of the district.

Public Facilities



At the same time, there was considerable focus on the affordability of providing these facilities and the extent to which their costs should be met through rates. Some respondents supported greater use of user charges, alternative funding sources, community or volunteer delivery, reduced operating hours, or reviewing the number and location of facilities. Public toilets attracted particular discussion, with differing views on whether existing provision should be maintained, rationalised or supported through visitor-related funding or user charges. Similar questions were raised about the ongoing operating costs and funding of the museum and swimming pools.

Geographic equity was another theme. Respondents from South Westland and other rural communities highlighted more limited access to Council facilities and services compared with Hokitika,

including library and community hub services. There were calls for Council to consider how services can be provided more equitably across a large and geographically dispersed district, including through community hubs and additional support for rural library services.

Overall, the feedback suggests that while community facilities are valued, there is an expectation that Council continues to examine how they are funded, operated and located to ensure they remain affordable and responsive to community needs. This includes considering opportunities for user contributions, external and visitor-related funding, shared or multi-use facilities, community involvement and more efficient operating models, while retaining access to the services communities consider important.

Regulatory and Compliance

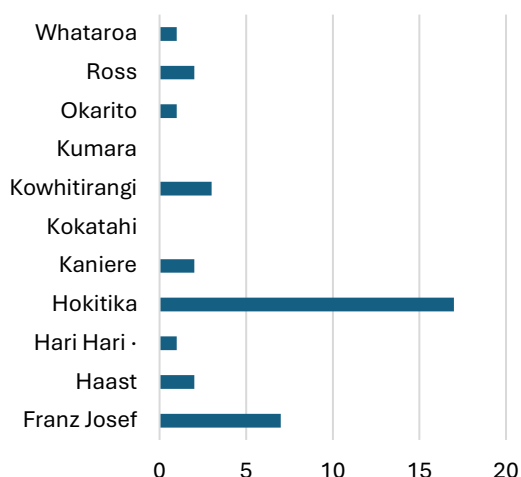


\$3.2M 17.7% of the budget today

Regulatory and compliance services help keep our communities safe, healthy, and well-managed. This includes building and resource consents, environmental health, alcohol licensing, animal control, and monitoring activities to ensure people, businesses, and developments meet legal and environmental requirements.

Feedback on regulatory and compliance services focused strongly on efficiency, proportionality and value for money. A number of respondents considered current regulatory processes to be complex, time-consuming or costly and wanted Council to look for opportunities to simplify requirements, reduce duplication and improve processing times.

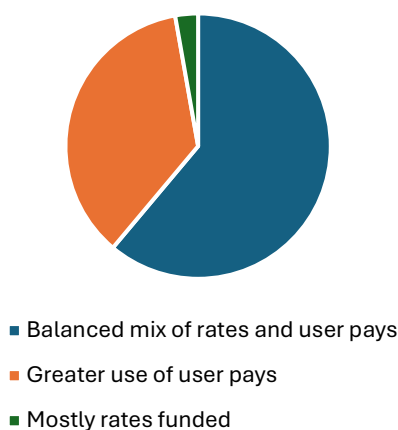
Regulatory & Compliance



There was also a desire for Council's regulatory approach to be practical and enabling, particularly when working with residents, businesses and those undertaking development, while continuing to meet its statutory responsibilities.

Greater use of technology was a recurring suggestion, including automation, AI, audiovisual inspections and photographic evidence where appropriate. Respondents also identified opportunities to reduce travel and improve coordination of inspections across the district, particularly in South Westland. Shared services, greater regional coordination and consolidation of some regulatory functions were also suggested as potential ways to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Regulatory & Compliance



There were differing views about how regulatory services should be funded, although there was considerable support for greater application of user-pays principles where the regulatory activity primarily benefits an individual or business. Building consents, permits, licensing and dog control were among the activities identified in this context. Other respondents distinguished between these individual services and wider compliance and enforcement activities that provide a public benefit, suggesting that an appropriate balance between rates funding and cost recovery should be maintained.

Some feedback also highlighted the importance of effective monitoring and enforcement, including property-related health and environmental issues, animal control and the safety and

compliance of Council-owned facilities. Overall, the comments suggest an expectation that Council deliver its regulatory responsibilities in a way that is efficient, proportionate and responsive, with clear consideration of opportunities to streamline processes, make better use of technology and appropriately allocate costs between individual users and the wider ratepayer.

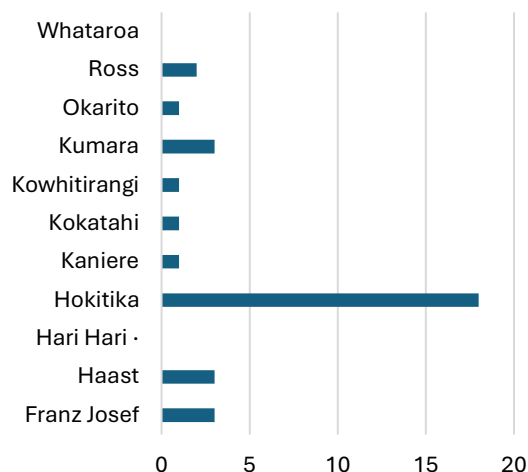
Community Halls



\$1.7M• 9.4% of the budget today

Community halls are important gathering spaces that support local events, meetings, celebrations, emergency response, and community activities. They help bring people together, particularly in smaller rural communities, and provide flexible spaces for a wide range of community groups and organisations.

Community Halls



Feedback demonstrated that community halls and similar facilities are highly valued in many of Westland's smaller communities, where they can provide an important focal point for meetings, events, recreation and community connection. Respondents highlighted their role in bringing established and newer residents together and supporting social and community wellbeing. In some locations, halls serve multiple purposes and provide services that may not otherwise be readily available locally.

The role of community facilities in emergency preparedness and response was also a significant theme. In isolated communities, halls and community centres may provide an important gathering point or potential welfare facility during an emergency. Some

respondents raised concerns about whether particular facilities are sufficiently resilient or fit for this purpose and suggested that, where facilities have an emergency management function, Council should explore opportunities for support from other agencies or external funding sources.

Community Halls



- Balanced mix of rates and user pays
- Greater use of user pays
- Mostly rates funded

At the same time, respondents questioned whether the current number, size and ownership of community facilities remains appropriate. Suggestions included reviewing utilisation and whole-of-life costs, consolidating facilities where there is duplication, making greater use of existing school or community-owned buildings, and reconsidering large facilities as they reach the end of their useful life. Some respondents supported smaller, multi-purpose facilities that better reflect contemporary community needs rather than replacing existing halls on a like-for-like basis.

There was also support for communities having a greater role in the management and funding of local halls, including community ownership or management, fundraising, sponsorship, user contributions and accessing external grants. However, views

differed on the extent to which responsibility should shift from Council, with some respondents considering continued Council support important, particularly for insurance, essential maintenance and facilities serving small communities with limited capacity to fund them independently.

Overall, the feedback suggests that community halls remain important infrastructure for many Westland communities, but that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be appropriate. Future investment could consider the role and utilisation of each facility, its importance for community resilience and emergency response, the availability of alternative facilities, whole-of-life costs, and the capacity of individual communities to contribute to their ongoing operation and maintenance.

Economic Development



\$1.1M 6.2% of the budget today

Economic development activities support a strong, resilient, and diverse local economy that creates opportunities for businesses, workers, and communities across Westland District. This includes supporting local businesses, attracting investment, encouraging employment opportunities, and promoting

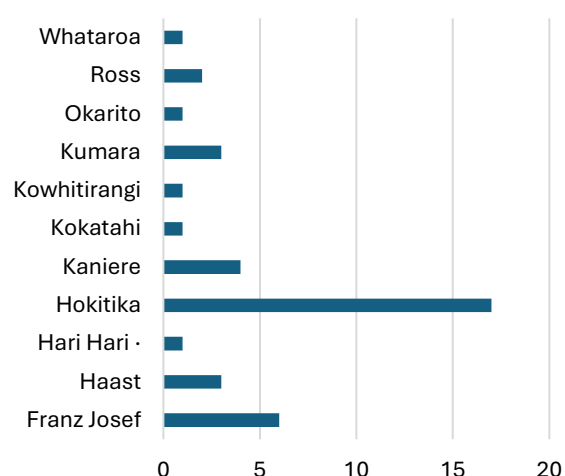
Westland as a visitor destination. Tourism is one part of this work, helping generate economic activity and support local jobs.



Feedback recognised the importance of economic development, tourism, employment and investment to Westland's future, although there were differing views about the role Council should play. Some respondents

supported Council taking an active role in creating the conditions for economic growth, attracting investment and employment, supporting local communities and ensuring infrastructure can accommodate visitor and economic activity. Tourism was identified by some as a significant economic driver with the potential to generate jobs and investment, while others highlighted opportunities to support skills development, education and pathways into local employment.

Economic Development



A strong theme was that Council's contribution to economic development should focus on areas that provide wider community benefit and where Council can make a practical difference. This included providing fit-for-purpose infrastructure, maintaining connectivity, creating efficient and enabling regulatory processes, advocating for investment and external

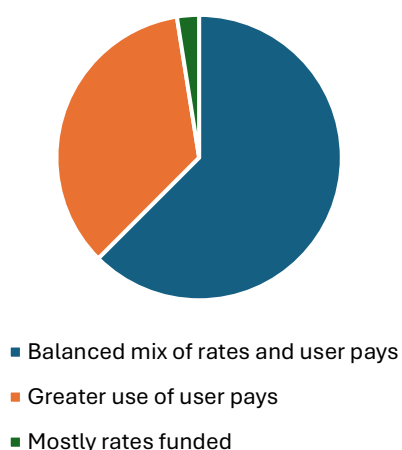
funding, and supporting initiatives that benefit both residents and visitors. The West Coast Wilderness Trail was

frequently discussed in this context, with respondents recognising its economic and visitor value while also questioning how its ongoing costs should be funded.

There were mixed views on Council’s direct involvement in tourism promotion and visitor services. Some respondents supported continued or increased investment given tourism’s importance to the district, while others considered that tourism promotion should primarily be undertaken or funded by businesses, Development West Coast, regional or national tourism organisations, or central government. The future role and delivery model of the i-SITE also attracted differing views, ranging from retaining a visible visitor information service through to reducing, integrating or replacing the current service as visitor information increasingly moves online.

Affordability and accountability were recurring themes across the feedback. Respondents wanted greater clarity

Economic Development

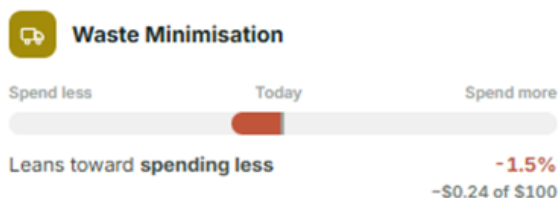


about what Council-funded economic and community development activities achieve and whether these represent value for money. There was support for seeking greater contributions from external funders and those who benefit directly from tourism activity, rather than relying solely on general rates. Community grants and development support were valued by some respondents, particularly in smaller communities where access to resources and alternative funding can be limited.

Overall, the feedback suggests support for economic development that delivers tangible benefits for Westland communities, alongside a desire for greater clarity about Council’s role relative to other organisations. There is an expectation that Council focus its resources where it can add the

greatest value, work collaboratively with regional and national partners, demonstrate the outcomes from its investment, and consider alternative funding and delivery models where appropriate.

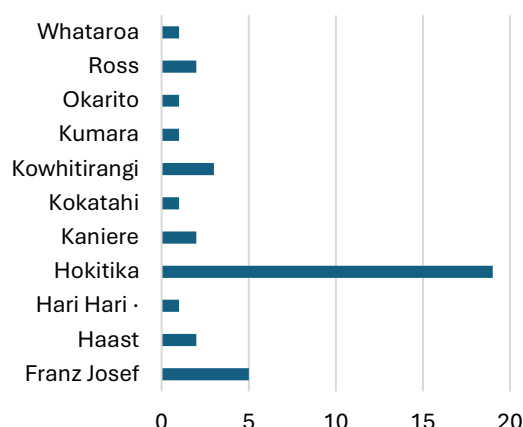
Waste Minimisation



\$2.9M 15.7% of the budget today

Waste minimisation services help reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill while keeping communities clean and healthy. This includes rubbish and recycling facilities, public litter collection, education programmes, and initiatives that encourage people to reuse, recycle, and reduce waste.

Waste Minimisation

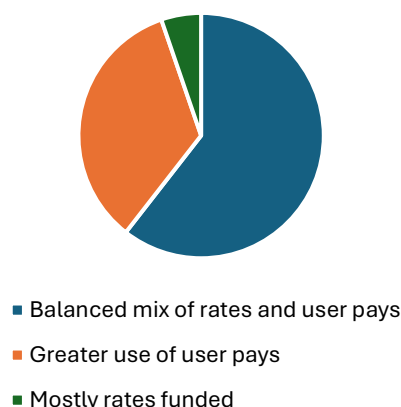


Feedback recognised waste management as an essential Council service, with considerable interest in how services can be delivered more efficiently, equitably and sustainably. While some respondents considered current service levels appropriate, others raised concerns about collection frequency, bin capacity, transfer station costs and access to recycling and disposal services. Household circumstances also influenced views, with some families reporting that existing general waste capacity is insufficient, while others considered current provision adequate.

Equity of service provision across the district was a strong theme. Respondents from rural and South Westland communities noted that they do not necessarily receive the same kerbside collection or recycling services as other parts of the district and questioned

how these differences are reflected in rates and charges. There were calls for improved access to recycling and drop-off facilities in rural communities, alongside suggestions that a greater user-pays approach could provide a clearer relationship between the services people receive, the waste they generate and what they pay.

Waste Minimisation

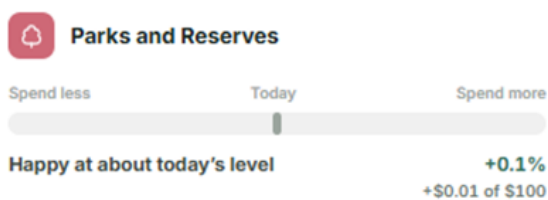


Waste minimisation and resource recovery also featured prominently. Some respondents supported greater investment in reducing the amount of material going to landfill through recycling, reuse, resource recovery, education and potentially new waste technologies. Others questioned whether all existing recycling activities are achieving sufficient environmental or financial benefit and wanted greater transparency about what happens to material collected for recycling. There were differing views on introducing additional services such as green waste collection, highlighting the need to consider both demand and cost before expanding services.

The impact of visitors on waste volumes was another concern, particularly in tourism communities such as Franz Josef and Haast. Respondents questioned the extent to which local ratepayers should meet the cost of visitor-generated waste and suggested that Council consider opportunities for visitor-related or alternative funding. Others highlighted the importance of maintaining accessible disposal options, noting that higher charges or reduced services could contribute to illegal dumping.

Overall, the feedback suggests that the community expects Council to maintain effective waste and recycling services while continuing to look for opportunities to reduce waste, improve resource recovery and control costs. Future decisions will need to consider differences in service availability across the district, affordability and user-pays principles, the impact of visitors, and whether changes to collection, recycling or disposal services deliver demonstrable environmental and financial benefits.

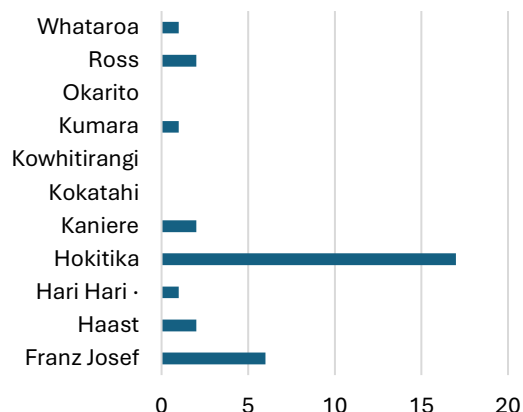
Parks and Reserves



\$1.4M• 7.4% of the budget today

Parks, reserves, playgrounds, gardens, and open spaces provide places for recreation, relaxation, and community activities. These areas contribute to the district's natural character, support healthy lifestyles, and create attractive spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy.

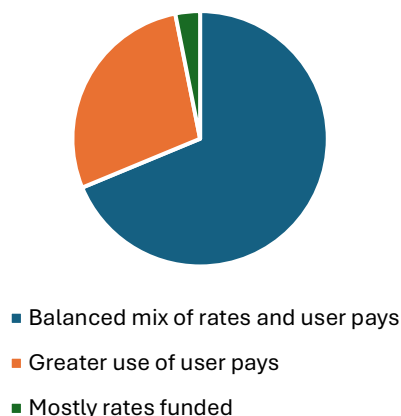
Parks and Reserves



Feedback recognised parks, reserves, playgrounds and open spaces as important contributors to community wellbeing, recreation and the attractiveness of Westland's towns and settlements. Well-maintained public spaces were seen as benefiting both residents and visitors, supporting active lifestyles, community connection and the overall presentation of communities. Some respondents also highlighted the environmental benefits of green spaces and opportunities to increase native planting and biodiversity.

A strong theme was the importance of maintaining existing assets before developing additional facilities. A number of respondents considered that Council should focus on keeping existing parks, playgrounds, tracks and reserves safe, tidy and fit for purpose, with concern that creating additional assets could increase future maintenance costs. Others suggested reviewing the number and utilisation of existing parks and reserves, including whether under-used or duplicated facilities remain necessary.

Parks and Reserves

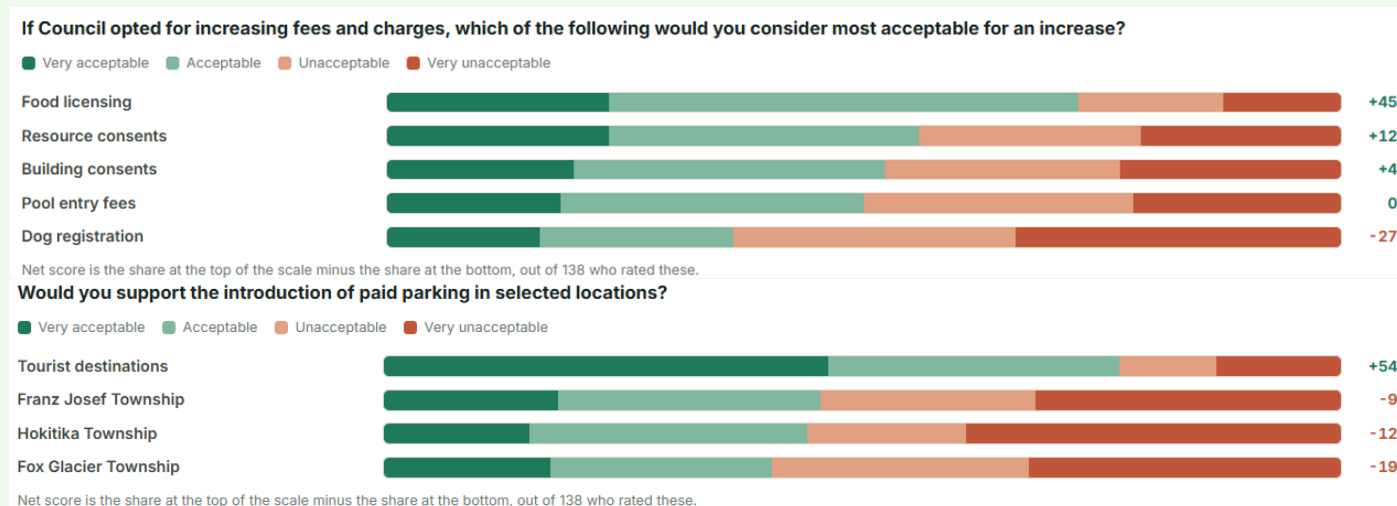


Respondents also highlighted the importance of considering provision across the whole district. While some communities considered they already had sufficient access to parks, reserves and natural recreation opportunities, others wanted greater attention given to public spaces outside Hokitika. Feedback suggested that well-maintained parks, playgrounds and town entrances can contribute significantly to the liveability and appearance of smaller communities and tourism destinations, and that investment should reflect differing needs across the district.

Community involvement and alternative funding were also recurring themes. Suggestions included greater involvement of community groups and volunteers in maintaining tracks, trails and public spaces, seeking sponsorship and external funding, and considering greater contributions from users or organisations that receive particular benefit from Council facilities. Some respondents considered Council should provide a core level of maintenance while enabling communities to contribute to enhancements where there is local demand and capacity.

Overall, the feedback suggests continued support for parks, reserves and open spaces, alongside an expectation that Council carefully manage the extent of its asset base and associated maintenance costs. Future investment could prioritise maintaining existing facilities to an appropriate standard, assessing utilisation and community need before developing new assets, supporting equitable provision across the district, and working with communities and other funders where opportunities exist.

How acceptable the options were?



Feedback on introducing paid parking was mixed. Several respondents supported the concept, particularly in high-use visitor locations, as a way of increasing the contribution visitors make towards the infrastructure and facilities they use. There was a strong view among those supporting paid parking that local ratepayers should not be expected to meet the full cost of infrastructure required to support significant visitor numbers, particularly in tourism destinations.

However, support was frequently qualified by a desire to protect residents from additional costs. Many respondents considered that locals should continue to have access to free or discounted parking, including through resident permits, free periods or designated areas. Others suggested that charges should be targeted specifically at visitor destinations or introduced only during peak periods rather than applied broadly across town centres. Respondents also emphasised that any charges should be reasonable and proportionate.

Those opposed to paid parking questioned whether there is currently sufficient parking pressure to justify introducing charges, particularly in Hokitika and smaller townships. Concerns were raised that paid parking could discourage residents from shopping locally, negatively affect businesses, reduce accessibility to visitor destinations or detract from the visitor experience. Some respondents considered that better management of existing parking, including encouraging all-day parkers to use areas outside the central business district, could address parking availability without introducing charges.

The financial viability of paid parking was another significant consideration. Respondents questioned whether the costs of technology, administration, monitoring and enforcement could outweigh the revenue generated. There was greater support for simple, technology-based approaches that minimise enforcement costs, with some respondents suggesting that any proposal should demonstrate a clear net financial benefit before proceeding. Some also wanted revenue generated from visitor parking to be reinvested into the communities or infrastructure where it was collected.

Overall, the feedback indicates that there is some support for paid parking as a potential mechanism for visitors to contribute towards the cost of infrastructure, but less support for a broad district-wide charging regime affecting residents. Any future consideration would need to demonstrate a clear rationale and financial benefit, consider impacts on local businesses and accessibility, minimise administration and enforcement costs, and explore mechanisms that recognise the contribution already made by local ratepayers.

Other Comments

The additional comments reinforced affordability as a significant concern for respondents, particularly in relation to continuing rates increases and the ability of households and businesses to absorb further costs. Some respondents called for Council to reduce expenditure, staffing and reliance on consultants, focus more strongly on core services and distinguish between essential services and discretionary expenditure. Others cautioned against short-term reductions that could result in deferred maintenance or poorer long-term outcomes and encouraged Council to take a strategic approach to managing its finances and assets.

There was a strong expectation that Council continue to explore funding sources beyond the local rating base. Suggestions included greater central government contributions, visitor-related charges, external funding and partnerships, and ensuring those who place additional demand on local infrastructure contribute appropriately towards its cost. Respondents highlighted the challenge of funding infrastructure and services across a geographically large district with a relatively small ratepayer base, particularly where infrastructure also supports significant visitor activity and wider regional or national interests.

Geographic equity was another recurring theme. Respondents from rural communities and settlements outside Hokitika expressed concern about the level of services and investment they receive relative to the rates they pay. Roads, community facilities, recreation opportunities and access to services were frequently raised in this context. While the specific priorities varied between communities, the underlying message was that Council should consider the needs of the district as a whole and recognise that appropriate service provision may look different in smaller and more isolated communities.

Council performance, efficiency and accountability also featured prominently. Some respondents wanted greater scrutiny of staffing, salaries, consultants, contracting arrangements and organisational costs, together with clearer evidence that expenditure is delivering value for ratepayers. There were also calls for improved customer service, communication and responsiveness, and for Council processes to be practical and efficient. Conversely, other respondents acknowledged the difficulty of balancing competing priorities and expressed appreciation for Council services, staff and the opportunity to participate in the Budget Challenge.

Infrastructure and core services remained a priority across the additional feedback. Roads, footpaths, water, wastewater, waste management and community resilience were identified as areas where respondents generally expected Council to maintain a strong focus. There was also interest in opportunities to improve efficiency through technology, shared services and greater collaboration with neighbouring councils, particularly in the context of potential changes to local government arrangements.

A smaller number of comments raised broader environmental, social and policy matters, including climate and environmental protection, community wellbeing, public spaces, road safety and Council procurement. These demonstrate the range of outcomes that different members of the community consider important when Council makes long-term funding and investment decisions.

Overall, the additional feedback reflects the challenge Council faces in balancing affordability with the need to maintain infrastructure, services and community assets across a large and dispersed district. While respondents differed considerably on where expenditure should increase or decrease, recurring expectations were that Council demonstrate value for money, prioritise essential services, consider fairness across communities, seek a greater contribution from external sources and users where appropriate, and make long-term decisions that are financially sustainable.

