



# WALKING & RIDING STRATEGY

For the Hurunui District





## From the Mayor

### **Our vision - Residents and visitors can enjoy and safely move around the Hurunui by walking and riding**

Walking, cycling and horse riding is enjoyed by many in the Hurunui and provide many benefits for our people, from better health and well-being, greater environmental and economic outcomes, through to more lively and connected communities.

The Hurunui's terrain offers many great opportunities for people to participate in walking, cycling or horse riding whatever their ability, with flat plains and the more challenging hills and mountains.

Since the Council's first Walking and Cycling Strategy was developed in 2009, great progress has been made to support walking, cycling and horse riding activities across Hurunui.

Across the District we are all very fortunate to have motivated local volunteer groups and individuals who have taken the lead in the development and improvement of walking, cycling and horse riding trails, such as the Hurunui Trails Trust, the Hanmer Springs Track Network Group and the St James Trail Trust.

With such momentum and through working in close collaboration with our communities, we have reflected on our progress and signalled our focus for the future.

It is with great pleasure that I present the Hurunui District's revised Walking and Riding Strategy. This Strategy builds on our vision of providing a safe, sustainable and well planned network of walking, cycling and horse riding trails provided in partnership with our community members. Our aim is to develop a safe network to connect our existing infrastructure, with active transport in mind. This means creating safer and better connections between home and school, sports facilities, town centres and other recreational spaces which will maximise our advantages and link rural and urban communities.

Through this process we endeavour to encourage more residents and visitors to be more active by cycling or walking to work or school and combining these activities into everyday travel and recreation.



Mayor Marie Black  
MAYOR OF HURUNUI

## INTRODUCTION

The Hurunui District is a predominantly rural district characterised by small rural communities. While some of these communities are in close proximity to each other, others tend to be located some distance from other settlements.

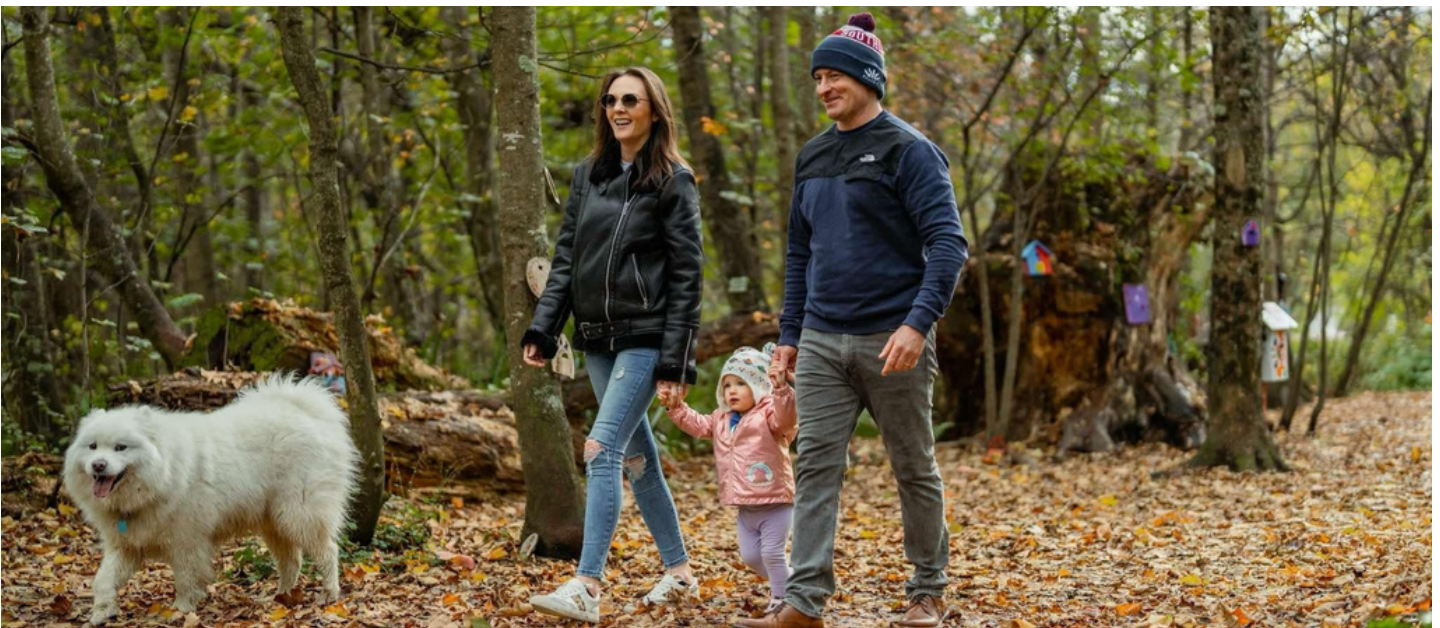
There are no dedicated daily public bus services in the district, but several alternative transport options are available, most of which require prior arrangement. For shuttle and bus services, the Hanmer Connection offers a daily service from Hanmer Springs to Christchurch, while Intercity operates a daily bus service between Christchurch and Picton. Bookings are essential for both services.

For medical appointments, the Amberley Community Care service and the St Johns Health Shuttle provide transport to Christchurch. The Amberley Community Bus offers a 12-seat van for hire at low cost. The Amuri Community Vehicle can be booked through Culverden Library, and both the Cheviot Community Vehicle Trust and the Hawarden-Waikari Community Vehicle Trust also offer transport options. Additionally, Lifestyle Companions is available for transport.

The Hurunui District Council's Walking & Riding Strategy 2025 has been developed to provide a long-term vision and strategic direction, to encourage and promote the development of walking, cycling and horse riding trails within the Hurunui District, to help overcome barriers to more people walking and riding, and to show that Hurunui District Council is committed to encouraging walking, cycling and horse-riding. The associated Action Plan provides an outline of the journey to get there.

In the context of the Strategy, walking includes the use of mobility scooters, wheelchairs, other mobility devices and recreational devices such as skateboards and scooters (including electric scooters – e-scooters), while riding includes the use of human powered bicycles, electric bicycles (e-bikes) and horse-riding.

The Strategy provides a framework for making walking and riding safer and more attractive, with one of the aims to be to increase the number of people using the walking and riding network. The development of an improved walking, cycling and horse riding network requires investment over time and funding is always a concern. This strategy has been developed to ensure it aligns with the Regional Transport Plans and other national and regional policy documents. The Strategy sets out the direction and priorities for Council and other parties, including New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi and community organisations.



## **Why is Walking & Riding Important?**

Walking, cycling, and horse riding trails serve an important recreational purpose, as a way for people to move about their community, including for traveling to work and school, and has the potential to contribute to the economic development of the district. Walking, cycling and horse riding also provides opportunities for people to have access to the natural environment, which has been shown to have direct health and well-being benefits, including improving mood, reducing stress, and enhancing cognitive functioning.

Encouraging more walking and cycling is an important part in achieving a more sustainable transport system that enables people to decide on how and when they travel, while providing for improved horse-riding trails is important for recreational purposes. An important part of this is to make walking and riding an accessible, safe, enjoyable and healthy activity that becomes a part of daily life whether for transport, recreation or both.

The provision of trails also contributes to a healthy community and can increase safety by reducing the number of walkers, cyclists and horse riders sharing roads with other traffic. Encouraging more walking and cycling also has the potential to provide opportunities for economic development and to strengthen the district's economy.

## **What is our Walking & Riding Network**

The district's walking, cycling, and horse riding network provides people with a variety of options to move around their community. Whether it's offering alternatives to driving for daily activities like commuting to school or work or creating opportunities for recreation and promoting physical health and well-being, the network serves a range of needs.

The walking and riding network includes tracks, trails, and associated infrastructure that is located on both public and private land, with many tracks and trails, particularly those for walking and mountain biking, situated on privately owned properties. Some parts of the network are located on public roads, while others are off-road. Safety concerns arise from certain roads that have high speed limits, heavy vehicle traffic, or narrow lanes, which can pose risks for walkers and riders. These factors can discourage people from using the on-road network.

This Strategy aims to guide the development of the walking and riding network across both public and private lands. It recognises that private landowners have the right to allow or restrict any development and access where the network crosses their property. Applying the Strategy to both public and private lands is crucial to ensure broad, inclusive access for all users. It also helps foster community engagement, supports local tourism, and promotes the sustainable management of the network. By considering both public and private lands, the Strategy aims to create a more coordinated approach to planning, maintenance, and safety. It also encourages collaboration between public authorities and private landowners to preserve and enhance the network for future generations.

Some of the network is single-use, such as pedestrian footpaths in our urban areas, hiking trails in the rural areas of the district and mountain bike tracks around Hanmer Springs, while other parts of the network are shared-use, including roads which are used by both motor vehicles and cyclists, and some tracks and trails shared between walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders.

The walking and riding network must meet the needs of all users, catering to various levels of ability. This includes ensuring that individuals who use mobility scooters, wheelchairs, and other recreational devices, such as skateboards and scooters, have access to the network.



## WALKING

The Council maintains a footpath network that is just over 70km in length, the majority of which has asphaltic concrete surfacing.

In addition to the Council managed network of footpaths, there is an extensive network of off-road tracks and trails throughout the district. Many of these trails and tracks can be found in and around the Hanmer Springs area, along with a more extensive network of tramping trails in the hill and high country that are managed by the Department of Conservation.



## CYCLING

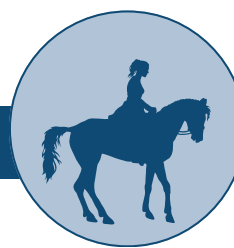
People cycle for different reasons including:

- On-road cycle training and racing - cyclists who do this complete long distance road circuits mainly on the wider major road network. These cyclists tend to cycle at speeds of around 30km/h and seek good road surfaces
- Leisure – this involves people who cycle for enjoyment and general exercise, usually on recreational tracks and in parks and reserves
- Transport – to reach a destination such as work, schools or to go shopping.

There is an extensive network of off-road mountain biking tracks around the district, centred mainly in the Hanmer Springs area. This includes the 59km long St James Cycle Trail that offers challenging, mixed riding through stunning scenery of mountain peaks, crystal clear waters, high country lakes, alpine meadows, subalpine beech forest, and expansive grassy flats.

Other trails of note include the multi-day Hurunui Heartland Cycle Ride between Kaikōura and Christchurch, the Waipara Valley Vineyard Trail, and the Cheviot Coastal Classic centred around Cheviot and Gore Bay.

There are currently no dedicated cycleways managed by the Council within the district.



## HORSE RIDING

There are a number of areas available for horse riding in the district, including various trails in and around Hanmer Springs, on many of the district's beaches, along public roads, as well as a number of horse trekking operations on private farms.



## COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

This Strategy was prepared after carrying out targeted community and stakeholder consultation. This included surveying the community and visitors to the district to understand levels of participation and what people found enjoyable or difficult, and what they thought walking and riding in the district should look like in the future. We also reviewed other walking and cycling strategies to ensure the Strategy aligned with contemporary best practice examples.

The survey received over 200 responses from residents of the district and over 100 responses from visitors. The feedback identified a number of issues and challenges, concentrated around the following key themes:

### Connection

Many respondents just wanted more options, including one way 'loops', and longer trails, while others advocated for a network of interconnected trails for recreation, tourism, and moving around the district, both within and between townships.

One comment that was representative of the feedback noted:

***"A walker/rider should be able to go anywhere in the district with safety and enjoyment". Whether someone is getting from A to B or out enjoying the district recreationally."***

### Safe and accessible for all

- there needs to be tracks for all ages and abilities
- we need tracks with good surfaces to allow for pushchair and wheelchair access
- roads throughout the districts tend to be quite narrow which feel unsafe for walking and riding and so discourage these activities
- more education including signs on how to share trails with other users, such as horse riders and mountain bikers
- improved directional and information signage, including showing distance, points of interest and rest areas





### **Tourism and recreation**

Hurunui is acknowledged as a trail destination with world class trails and more recreational opportunities could bring a tourism boom to Hurunui. Others suggested running events in the Hurunui.



### **Promotion**

Greater promotion of the existing network of walking and cycling track network was identified, as was more promotional material, such as maps and brochures, and more information online.



### **Active transport-centric development**

Where it is safe for kids to walk to school, that there are better streetscapes for pedestrians and that there are safe options to walk and cycle from homes to shops and to the next urban area using off road paths.



### **Collaboration**

Many responses identified that more liaison between the Council and stakeholders, including landowners, would help to achieve innovative solutions.



### **Horse Riding**

Feedback to the council included a strong response from the horse riding community, with their feedback basically boiling down to horse riders having access to more tracks of a variety of lengths, including loop tracks/ choose your own adventure, and that more thought is given to infrastructure to not exclude horses.



## WHAT THE WALKING & RIDING STRATEGY 2025 INCLUDES

This Strategy identifies the Vision, Goals and Policies that will help us achieve our vision for walking, cycling and horse riding in the Hurunui and is designed to:

- guide Council decision making on the district's walking, cycling and horse riding network priorities
- set out how we will work with our community and stakeholders
- provides information on our plan to make our district a more active transport friendly area out to 2050
- provides the context and support to develop business cases for funding

**The Strategy's associated Action Plan outlines the general methods that the Council will use to achieve the overarching Vision and supporting Goals and Policies of the Strategy, which are expected to provide the following benefits:**



### **For people:**

- Improved health and well-being from physical activity
- Improved health and well-being from having access to the natural environment
- Independence from needing to rely on using cars
- An inexpensive means of travel
- Increased satisfaction from outdoors recreation
- Creation of opportunities for social interaction
- Improved access to, interaction with, and appreciation for the natural environment.



### **For the environment:**

- Reduced carbon emissions
- Reduced air and noise pollution
- Decreased reliance on petroleum products
- Greater sustainability over the long term.



### **For the transport system:**

- Can reduce traffic congestion and increase efficiency.
- Urban areas and activities are more accessible
- Helps constrain the demand for new vehicle related roading infrastructure.



## OUR PRINCIPLES

**Four key principles form the basis of this Walking and Riding Strategy. These principles will guide and inform the decisions that will shape our walking, cycling and horse riding future.**

**Collaboration** - The Council recognises that it cannot implement this strategy on its own. We endeavour to continually work to build and strengthen relationships with all stakeholders, including mana whenua, New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, Hurunui Trails Trust, St James Trail Trust, Hanmer Springs Trails Network Group, Community Boards and committees, neighbouring councils and any other stakeholders.

**Inclusive** – we consider the needs of all users to ensure walking, cycling and riding infrastructure is accessible to, and usable by, as many people as possible.

**Efficiency** – make best use of existing infrastructure and prioritise actions that will have the greatest benefits first.

**Strategic alignment** - the Strategy aligns with relevant national, regional and local strategies and plans.

The four principles are not mutually exclusive, and nor are the principles set out in a hierarchy. All the principles have been weighed up in an overall consideration of the relative influence any given issue or opportunity may have in the implementation of this Strategy.



### What is the definition of Active Transport?

Active transport is physical activity undertaken as a means of transport and not purely as a form of recreation. This can include walking, cycling, horse riding, skating and skateboarding. It is a great way to keep healthy and fit, save money and reduce your impact on the environment. Active transport is an easy way to be regularly active and can help you fit 30 minutes of physical activity into your daily routine.

## THE STRATEGY

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### GOAL 1:

A district committed to walking and riding for health, well-being, environmental and economic reasons

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#### This means:

- encouraging travel behaviour changes through strong leadership and collaboration with key stakeholders
- promotion of walking and riding in our district
- reviewing funding and resource prioritisation for walking and riding

#### POLICIES

- Council recognises the importance of forming and maintaining relationships with stakeholders involved in the development and maintenance of walking, cycling and horse riding trails and infrastructure in the Hurunui District
- Council will work with stakeholders, including developers and private landowners, to:
  - promote the Hurunui District as a leading walking, cycling, and horse riding destination, including for events
  - increase participation in walking, cycling, and horse riding
  - support opportunities for the economic development of the district
  - bring about a positive change in peoples' attitudes towards using walking and cycling as viable alternatives to car use
  - support the maintenance of public access to existing walking and riding tracks, trails, and infrastructure, including where it is on private land
  - advocate for the provision of public access to proposed walking and riding tracks, trails, and infrastructure, including where it is proposed to be established on private land



#### Vision:

*Residents and visitors can enjoy and safely move around the Hurunui by walking and riding*



- Council encourages the use of public land for the development of a network of walking, cycling, and horse riding trails to suit the volume and type of use, where it is safe, appropriate and practical to do so.
- Improve data collection and monitoring to aid in understanding of walking, cycling and horse riding trends and needs to ensure any proposals to provide for new or extended walking, cycling, or horse riding infrastructure is based on evidence.

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**GOAL 2.**

More People Choosing to Walk &  
Ride More Often

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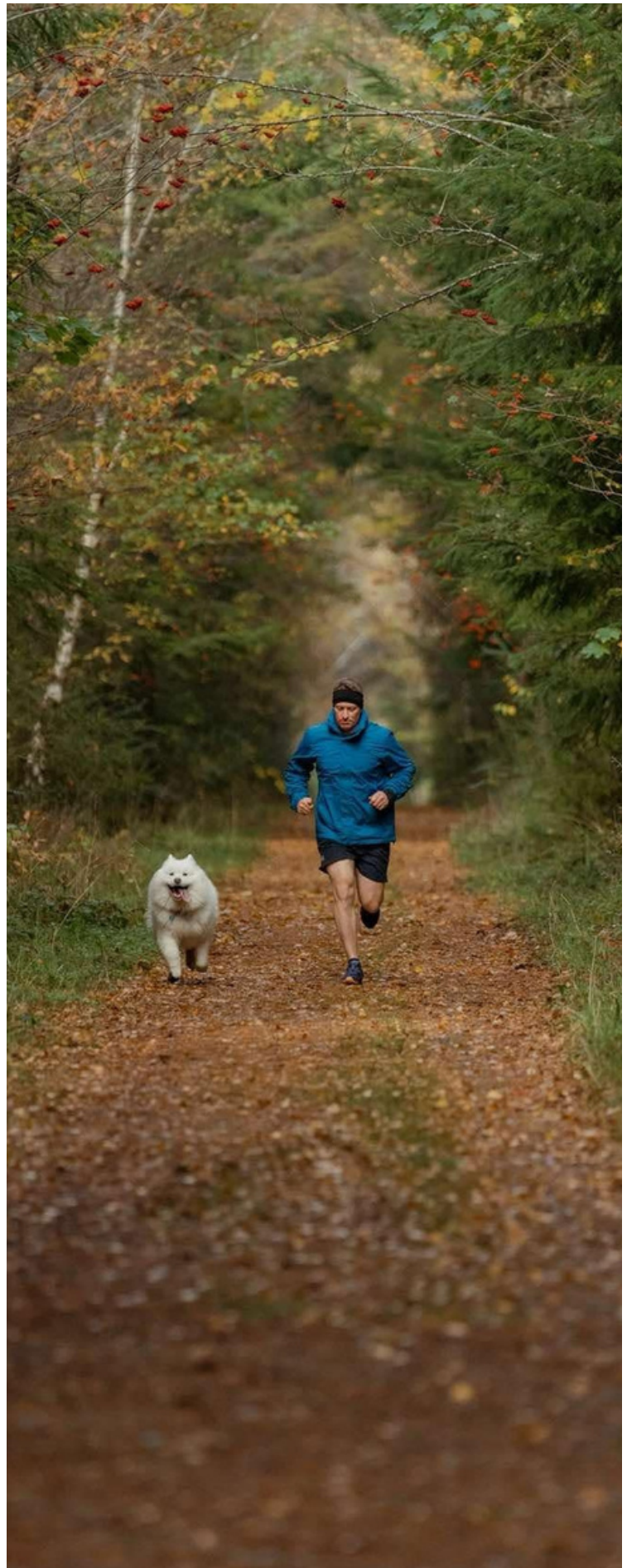
**This means:**

- networks that are safe, easy to use, and link to where people want to go
- facilities meet the needs of people in urban and rural areas
- Information available about places to walk and ride enable informed decision making for all users

**POLICIES**

- a. Council will work with stakeholders, including developers and the wider Hurunui community, to co-ordinate the development of an interconnected, accessible and inclusive network of walking, cycling and horse riding trails across the district, for a variety of abilities, as opportunities and resources allow
- b. Maintain, and enhance the district’s existing walking, cycling and horse riding network to suit the volume and type of use, and expand that network as opportunities and resources allow.
- c. Work with schools to promote and instil walking and cycling safety directly with children as part of any curriculum or shared programmes.

*“I am making it a priority to get more walking and maybe cycling in the future. It’s the safety aspect that makes me find excuses not to”*



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### GOAL 3.

A safe, accessible and integrated walking, cycling and horse-riding environment

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#### This means:

- facilities and networks are good quality and fit for purpose
- people feel safe using the walking and riding networks
- the walking and riding network meet the needs of people with varying abilities and allow for the use of different mobility devices
- there is a good level of accessible wayfinding signage, maps and network information
- walking and riding networks are unified, including linkages, and people can get to where they want to go

#### POLICIES

- Improve walking and riding facilities and infrastructure, including wayfinding information and safety signage, to increase accessibility
  - Investigate State Highway, railway and river severance issues for communities
- Support programmes that improve safety for motorists, pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders
  - Encourage the development of walking, cycling and horse riding trails that connect with walking and cycling trails in neighbouring districts
  - Encourage the development of safer, more accessible walking and cycling environments to and around schools, to encourage children, parents and caregivers to walk or cycle to schools.
  - Use relevant nationally accepted standards, guidelines and best practice to plan, design and construct walking, cycling and horse riding infrastructure
  - Regularly review existing walking and riding facilities in the district to ensure they comply with the relevant adopted standards, guidelines and best practice methods.
  - Ensure walking and cycling is supported by the District Plan including the use of Integrated Transport Assessments.
  - Overcome barriers that make walking, cycling or horse riding on roads unsafe or unattractive by improving safety or finding alternative routes.

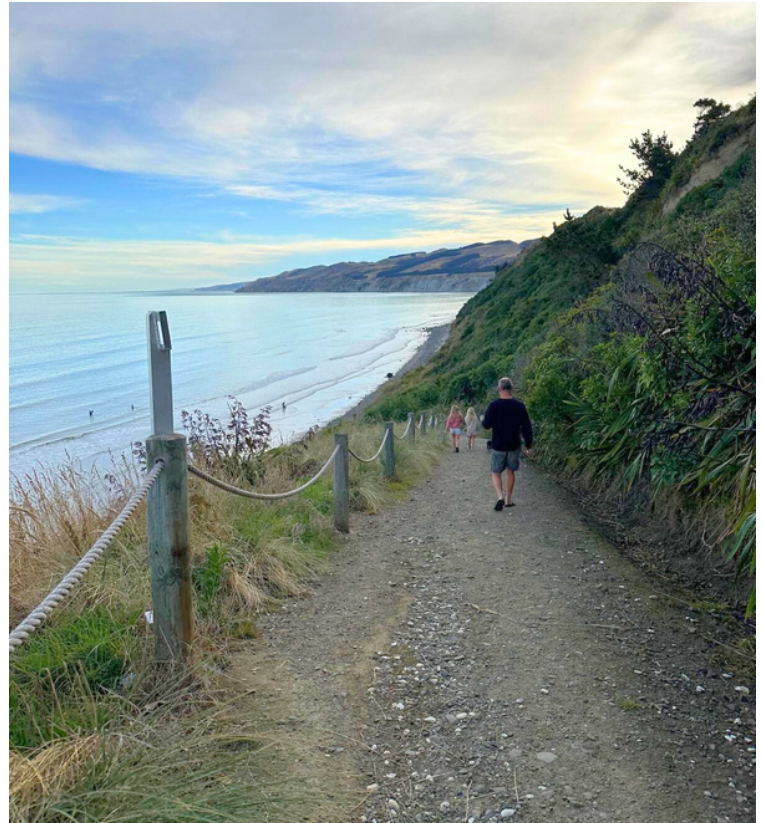


## MONITORING & REVIEW

It is expected that the Strategy will be reviewed every three years, in alignment with the review process of the LTP. This will ensure that the Strategy remains aligned with national and regional policy and allow Council to monitor the effectiveness of the projects delivered through the Strategy against its strategic Vision and Goals.

The progress of actions and projects outlined in the Strategy's associated Action Plan will be monitored; if any actions or projects become unfeasible they may be removed.

Progress and monitoring information will be reported as and when that information is available. A brief progress report on progress on the Strategy's implementation will be prepared as part of Council's overall annual reporting.



## ACTION PLAN

To implement the Strategy, Council has developed a separate Action Plan, which is aligned with the Strategy's Vision, Goals and Policies. Action Plans developed by stakeholders, such as the Hurunui Trails Trust and Hanmer Springs Track Networks Group will also contribute to the delivery of the Strategy.

The Hurunui Walking and Riding Strategy 2025 sets the strategic direction, defining the vision, goals, and policies, without specifying financial commitments. The Council's Action Plan prioritizes actions to turn the Strategy's vision into reality.

While most actions are the responsibility of Hurunui District Council, some will require collaboration with key partners and community groups.

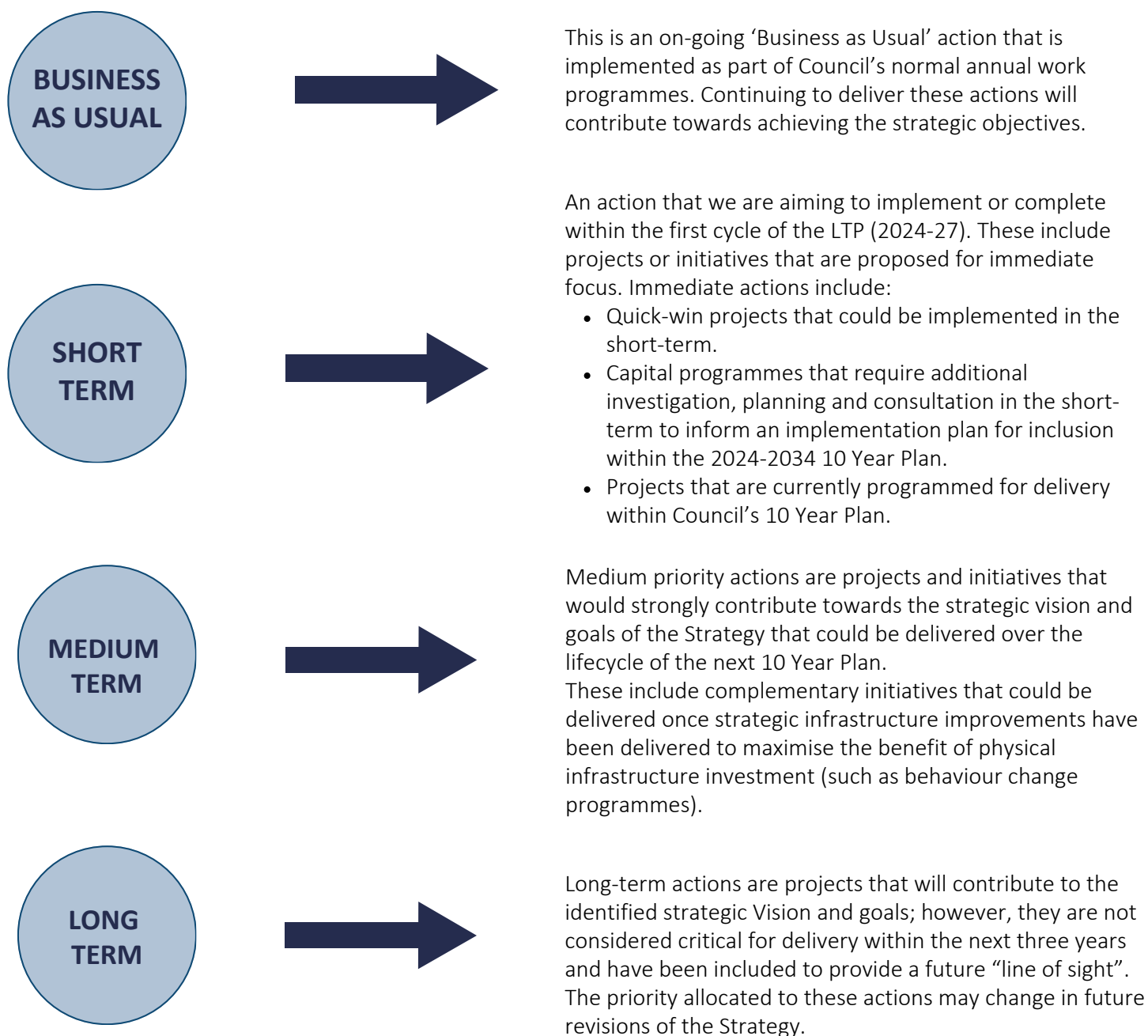
The Council's Long-Term Plan includes a 10-year funding programme to clarify how projects will be financed. The 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy provides broader funding forecasts. The implementation of infrastructure and programs depends on funding from the Council's capital budget (through rates) and other sources like NZTA or third-party contributions.



## PRIORITIES

Council has an ever-increasing range of responsibilities and an ever-expanding list of new projects in order to support the economic, cultural, social and environmental wellbeing of our community. Funding is always a concern, especially where cost and affordability form a part of many discussions.

The Action Plan's immediate priorities will be to focus on delivering projects identified as Business as Usual and as Short-term priorities (see below), with projects and actions that are medium or long term priorities requiring further investigation, feasibility and costing before they are programmed for inclusion within the next LTP (2027-2037).



## STAKEHOLDERS AND KEY AGENCIES

Implementation of the Strategy are is not just a matters for the Hurunui Council; it not only requires co-ordination and collaboration across Council's operations activities (roading and recreation), strategy and community activities (District and Strategic Planning and Community Development), but also key funding agencies, developers and the community, including those community groups involved in walking cycling and horse-riding, such as the Hurunui Trails Trust, the St James Walkway Trust and the Hanmer Springs Track Network Group.

Working collaboratively with developers also provides the opportunity to complete segments of the walking and cycling infrastructure, particularly in urban areas, and will enable Council to connect segments within a reasonable timeframe.



## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

**The successful implementation of the Hurunui Walking and Riding Strategy 2025 relies on the collaboration of several key stakeholders, each with distinct roles and responsibilities:**

Many of these groups are made up of volunteers, whose contributions are vital to the success of our community-driven approach to the planning and delivery of walking and riding projects. It is anticipated that these volunteers, together with the stakeholders described below, will continue to collaborate to implement the Walking and Riding Strategy, improve the walking and riding network, and enhance outdoor recreation in Hurunui.

**1. Hurunui District Council (HDC):** HDC plays a leadership and coordination role, ensuring alignment between stakeholders and contributing to the planning, funding, and development of infrastructure on Council-owned land. It supports the implementation of the strategy through regulatory functions, facilitation, funding, and advocacy for walking and cycling initiatives at local, regional, and national levels.

The Council works with community organizations and clubs, like the Hurunui Trails Trust, Hanmer Springs Track Network Group, and St James Trail Trust to deliver on the Strategy's Vision, Goals and Policies.

The HDC will undertake to liaise with each group and assist them where they can, including through clear communications, and ensuring that all groups can work alongside each other to achieve their individual goals efficiently and also the wider vision of the Hurunui Walking and Riding Strategy.

**2. Hurunui Trails Trust (HTT, the Trust):** Established in 2009, HTT coordinates walking and cycling trail development across the district. The Trust provides support, guidance, and practical assistance to local community groups on how to plan, fund, build, maintain, and promote trails in the Hurunui.

HTT's strategic plan aligns with the Hurunui Walking and Riding Strategy and seeks to increase trail use and enhance and promote the district's network, ultimately connecting up certain trails in the region.

The Trust has helped build and promote the Hurunui Heartland Cycle Trail, The Waipara Valley Trail and the Amberley Network. It was previously involved in governing the St James Trail but this has been recently separated to be governed by its own entity.

**3. Hanmer Springs Track Network Group (HSTNG):** Comprising local track users, landowners, and various organizations (including the Council), HSTNG oversees the management and maintenance of the Hanmer Basin trail network.

The HSTNG governs future trail development and ensures all projects meet community and environmental standards. The group works to enhance Hanmer Springs as a mountain biking and walking, hiking and horse riding destination and ensures sustainable trail use.

**4. St James Trail Trust (SJTT):** The SJTT manages the St James Trail, focusing on its maintenance and sustainability.

The SJTT works alongside the Department of Conservation, Council and other stakeholders to improve infrastructure and raise awareness of the trail's importance within the region.

**Together, these groups collaborate to implement the strategy, improve the walking and riding network, and enhance outdoor recreation in Hurunui.**

