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Timaru council works with iwi to solve Arowhenua sewerage issues

Marae meetings and wide and ongoing consultation with iwi by the Timaru District Council has been praised by the Arowhenua community as it sees the inception of a new sewage disposal system that does away with the need for septic tanks.

The Arowhenua community, which includes the Arowhenua School and Marae, is now connected directly to Temuka's sewerage system after the council listened to community concerns, won a 50 per cent government subsidy and carried out the considerable earthworks required through its contractors Fulton Hogan.

Replacing the septic tanks is a \$1.3 million household pump-based reticulation system that provides a solution to an area suffering from a lack of natural pipeline fall and needing to pipe sewage across the Temuka River to sewer mains connections on the other side.

Work is almost complete on the installation of the household pump systems and construction of the main pump station opposite the Marae, which collects all the sewage and pumps it to Temuka.

Council drainage and water manager Grant Hall said the new system was operating well.

The Arowhenua community, located between the Temuka and Opihi Rivers to the south of Temuka, had experienced wastewater disposal problems for some time, he said.

"An extensive programme of consultation providing for iwi feedback on a range of potential solutions began in 2003 and the Water and Sanitary Services Assessment carried out by council in 2005 confirmed the desire of the Arowhenua community to have a community sewerage scheme.

"Although the community initially wished to have a conventional 'flush and forget' gravity system, this was not practical," Mr Hall said.

"Instead, a small diameter pressure system, where each property has a small pump chamber was selected, at significantly lower cost."

The council is responsible for the maintenance of the household pumps, Mr Hall said.

Funding was sourced from the Ministry of Health through the Sanitary Works Subsidy Scheme, which eventually provided 50 per cent of the cost. Funds were also provided by the Ministry of Education, the Department of Internal Affairs and Te Puni Kokiri. The council provided funding by covering the cost of a proportion of the scheme for future connections, which may be recovered over time as additional houses connect to the scheme.

Mr Hall said the project showed the value of councils working closely with communities, holding public meetings and listening to concerns, rather than rushing in with a design and build “this is what you are getting approach”.

“This has seen the successful implementation of a community sewerage scheme at reasonable cost that will make significant improvements to the lives of the community members and the environment,” Mr Hall said.

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