

# Local Water

Marketing, Communications  
and Engagement overview



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## Pre-Engagement (Early Jan-Mid Feb 2025)

It was important we ran an education campaign ahead of such a major consultation. Many people believed water reform had ended with the last Government, so we needed to bring people up to speed ahead of asking them for their feedback. We completed the following:

- Sent a flyer to all ratepayers in February rates bill
- Handed out flyers at community events over summer
- Launched a website hub about Local Water Done Well, the history, and a deep dive into Palmy's water assets
- Hosted tours for the public at our Wastewater Treatment Plant (150 people attended)
- Newspaper and radio advertising encouraging people to learn more ahead of consultation
- Ran an education campaign on social media focusing on our water assets and that soon we'd be needing feedback on who should manage water in the future
- Had a display at our Customer Service Centre for people to learn more
- Media releases and interviews
- Engagement with local iwi
- Face-to-face discussions with staff, intranet information and FAQs.



**Your water, YOUR SAY!**

In the coming weeks, we want you to give feedback on one of the biggest decisions our city will face in generations!

We're asking for your feedback on who and how your water should be managed in the future.

**Government reforms are driving this.**

For the past decade, successive governments have talked about the need to change the way water services are delivered. Why? Cost, climate change, growth, and changing standards. The Government's Local Water Done Well legislation requires us to create a plan for the future that is financially sustainable for our community.

**Scale is everything.**

The Government is keen to see councils working together to deliver water services. We've spent a few years figuring out the best options for Palmerston North. In the coming weeks, we'll explain the options and costs to you.

Make sure you have your say.



Who should manage **Palmy's Water** in the future?

Palmy, soon you'll be making the biggest decision that affects our city for generations.

The Government is requiring all councils to consult on how water should be managed in the future. This can include collaborating with other councils. From mid-February to late-March, we will be giving you some options and getting your feedback.

For more information and to sign up for updates, visit [pncc.govt.nz/localwater](http://pncc.govt.nz/localwater)

**Palmerston North City Council**  
Published by Madi Dhillon  
January 23

Ever wondered what happens when you flush the toilet or run the shower? 🤔  
Now you don't have to! On Tuesday, for the last week of the school holidays, we're holding tours of our wastewater treatment plant. 💧

Why are we doing tours? Well in the next few weeks, we're going to ask you to have your say on who should manage our city's water services in the future. The Government's 'local water done well' programme requires us to look at affordable options for managing the city's water in the future. We'll have the different options, pros and cons and costs on our website soon.

👉 Learn more and register for the tours at [www.pncc.govt.nz/localwater](http://www.pncc.govt.nz/localwater)

See insights and ads

Boost post

Kāpiti Coast District Council and 57 others 24 comments 7 shares

**Local Water Done Well**

Have your say on Palmy's water services in 2025.

**About Local Water Done Well**

Local Water Done Well will determine how Palmerston North's water services are managed in the future. Find out what it's all about, and how you can have your say.

**Keeping Palmy flowing: A look into our water services**

This page dives into each water service we provide - from drinking water to wastewater and stormwater.

[Register for a tour of Palmy's wastewater treatment plant](#) +



# Consultation (February 27- March 30 2025)

## Attended events

### Massey University Orientation



### Esplanade Day:

This event was the first weekend of consultation, and while the kids were playing on our water related activities, we spoke to their parents and caregivers about the consultation, and encouraged people to keep an eye out for a booklet that they'd get in their letterbox the next week. We spoke to thousands of people during the day. Key themes were: why is water costing more, does it affect rural people, people wanting to know how it would work for renters and who would pay a water bill. Most people we talked to in depth said our proposals make sense.



## Rural Games:

Rural games was a great opportunity for us to talk to a wide range of our community, including our rural residents. Our Palmy tent and staff were at the event all three days talking about our consultation, and some other Council topics too. Key queries/themes were: People have pride in our local ownership of the water, some don't like the idea of joint ownership and a query over whether we could keep in-house, understanding cost and Government reform is the driver, queries over how billing would work, will water meters be coming in (evenly split views on don't want them/install them now), where Nature Calls fits in and what the latest on that was. They also seemed to be aware that there was little choice though due to affordability.



## Central District Field Days

We know many people in our community attend Field Days so were keen to chat to them, but we're also conscious this event brings in people from a range of areas – including those we are proposing to work with. This meant we were able to talk to them about Palmy's water and provide reassurance.

Key themes: general support, how does Nature Calls fit in, install water meters, concerns that we haven't managed water well (which we were able to correct), what happens if MDC/KCDC don't want to partner with us, how realistic are the costs, Government should never have changed the reforms, and whether we should remove fluoride from our drinking water.



## Memorial Park pool party

We decided to make use of our water assets and host a 'pool party' at our free splashpad and paddling pool on a Friday evening. We spoke to people as they arrived at the park about the consultation, answered some questions and encouraged people to make submissions.



## Drop in sessions:

### Roslyn Library:



We spoke to 17 people during this drop in session. Questions and themes included: How would a CCO work, how good is our water, fluoride queries (x4), what streets are getting new water pipes this year, would we pipe water between different areas, water meters (some like, some don't), why is Government changing things, should have kept last reforms, will we have to pay for "their" water, we've done a good job, will the hospital be ok, climate change is important (x3), climate change isn't real (x2), how does stormwater work normally and under a new organisation, how would a new organisation create economies of scale, how do the regulators work, where does Nature Calls fit in, it's good that an organisation can borrow more money to keep doing this work, proposals make sense.

### Awapuni Library:

Just under 40 people attended this session. Questions included: role of Iwi, are the costs fixed or will they change, are they intergenerational costs, does our debt move to the entity, if we say scale matters how can some Councils do it themselves, what is Horizons role, what happens if KCDC/MDC don't want to be with us, role of Nature Calls, will scale also help on things like insurance costs (both for a water organisation, but also Council not having as much insurance for water), stormwater is important and needs to be managed well, we shouldn't encourage growth, please listen to ratepayers, we should encourage greywater tanks.

### Ashhurst Library:

Questions included: what if KCDC don't want to go with us, would we have water meters, explain the costs more/will rates go down, how will the organisation be managed, what happens to Councils water team staff, when will it actually happen, at what point in the thirty years do we see the big bills coming in. We also had a few people who had read the documents and just wanted to come in and have a chat and check their understanding was correct.

**Te Patikiki Library:**

We spoke to about half a dozen people at a drop-in session at Te Patikiki. They asked us if water meters are going to be installed and told us they are a fair way of allocating costs. They also asked how the new wastewater standards will affect Nature Calls, if the costs of that project was included in the modelling and if it might be possible to have the choice between town water supply and their own tank supply. They told us that 3 Waters should be kept close to the community, that they would prefer Palmy to go by ourselves if possible, that whatever we do needs to be affordable and that they opposed both import and export of bottled water.

Also asked how Iwi had been included in process.

**Central Library:**

Questions included whether this is another version of water reform. What we will do if KCDC/MDC do not want to go with us? Does this mean we will get water meters in the future and supportive of this (x 6 people). How and when would price harmonisation apply, fluoride, how do we influence decision making, impact of changing standards, will we have to pay more over time given the level of infrastructure deficit across the country, can we trust the other Councils we're proposing to work with, would it be ok if we have more medium density, how does price harmonisation work.

They also stressed that good stormwater management matters, and the environmental improvement potential is just as important as cost, other Councils should be forced into this and why aren't they listening to the Government direction, old 3 waters proposal was better.

## **Sector sessions and Reference Groups:**

### **Bunnythorpe Community Board meetings:**

We met with the board very early in consultation and had a thorough discussion.

Questions/themes included: Bunnythorpe paid for their water through a fixed rate around 12 years ago, don't want to have to pay for others, what does it mean for rural residents, if meters come into effect who pays for them, what role does Horizons have and will they influence projects with a water organisation, who fixes leaks in the future and what happens in an emergency, how does pricing work with a range of different communities, concerns for increasing costs for older people, we shouldn't have to pay for other waters, if scale matters we should consider talking to even more Councils, how do we prevent massive price escalations, iwi involvement, how does billing work, could we encourage people to install tanks, what water work do developers pay over Council, how do we have influence in decision making by a water organisation, are the assets still owned by Council.

### **Seniors Reference Group**

We were lucky to spend two hours with our reference group chatting about local water done well and answering questions. The group will be making a submission.

Questions/themes included: What happens if Government changes, how would a board be appointed, would all communities pay the same, can't have water being privatised, we need to think about the environment too, who pays- the renter or landlord, Iwi has always had an involvement and needs too, potentially option 1 may be better for Iwi due to catchment and relationships, have we considered a catchment based option, how confident are we in the other Councils and what their assets are actually like.

### **Youth Council**

We presented to the Youth Council and answered their questions about the project. They'll be making a submission on this project. Questions included water meters, Iwi involvement, ensuring water cannot be privatised, the environment matters, who makes decisions, why should young people care.

## **Pasifika Reference Group:**



We presented to our Pasifika reference group and then took questions. They included: will I no longer pay Council for water, will I get two bills, affordability matters, environmental protection matters equally, what happens if there is a change in Government, privatisation and role of Iwi.

### **Community sector**

We only had a small number attend this session, but we were able to have a long thorough chat about water, growth and the city. Questions and themes included: can see why there needs to be change, prices come down in 30 years but will they really, affordability matters especially for older people, a transition needs to be staged slowly, stormwater is an important focus, who takes on Nature Calls, what role does the treaty play and what is the role of Iwi, would the water staff at Council move to the new organisation, in-house water crew is important as we get a good fast response and contractors can't be trusted to care as much as local employees, we need to attract more people to the city to help pay for these costs, can we have a PNCC standalone, what happens if we don't want to be in the water organisation anymore.

Number attended: 7 people

### **Environment sector**

Concerned about the loss of control, would meters be introduced, what happens with a change in Government, explain the role of foundational documents like Statement of Expectations and Constitution, what is the role of the board and how are they appointed, why no PNCC standalone CCO option, sought clarity on Nature Calls funding through IFF vs LGFA, can water be privatised, timing of harmonisation, landlord vs renters- who pays?

Number attended: 15 people

## Water customers/businesses

Questions asked: How would governance work, how big would the board be, how will it be monitored and KPI's set, will Councils actually have oversight, there are operational efficiencies - how soon do they get achieved, what happens if MDC and KDCDC are out – how could we encourage their engagement and support? Seeking explainer on ring-fencing effect on an in-house option, is this the start of a wider amalgamation discussion across other Councils and their activities, what happens if we have no dance partners, have Iwi been involved and what is Councils position, how will stormwater be treated, what if there is a change in Government.

Number attended: 10 people

### Tours at Wastewater Treatment Plant:



During consultation, we hosted tours at our treatment plant, seeing just under 100 people through the doors. We spent time discussing local water done well and our consultation with each tour group. Key questions/themes: will I get a water meter - do I pay for that? Does it affect rural people, Iwi need to be involved, will my rent come down if I pay for water as it won't be in rates anymore, why is the Government doing this to us, the options make sense, we trust you to make the right decisions for us.

## St Peters Geography classes



We worked with a year 11 Geography class at St Peters to discuss the future of water. The class learnt about our three different waters, and then we did an exercise with them that ended up being their submission! We gave them a range of different stakeholder groups and asked them to pretend to be the water organisation and consider all of the things each group cares about when it comes to water and what they need from a water organisation. We then discussed how when a water organisation is being established, they need to consider all of these different groups and make sure they all feel informed and involved. They helped come up with ideas for how the water organisation could look.

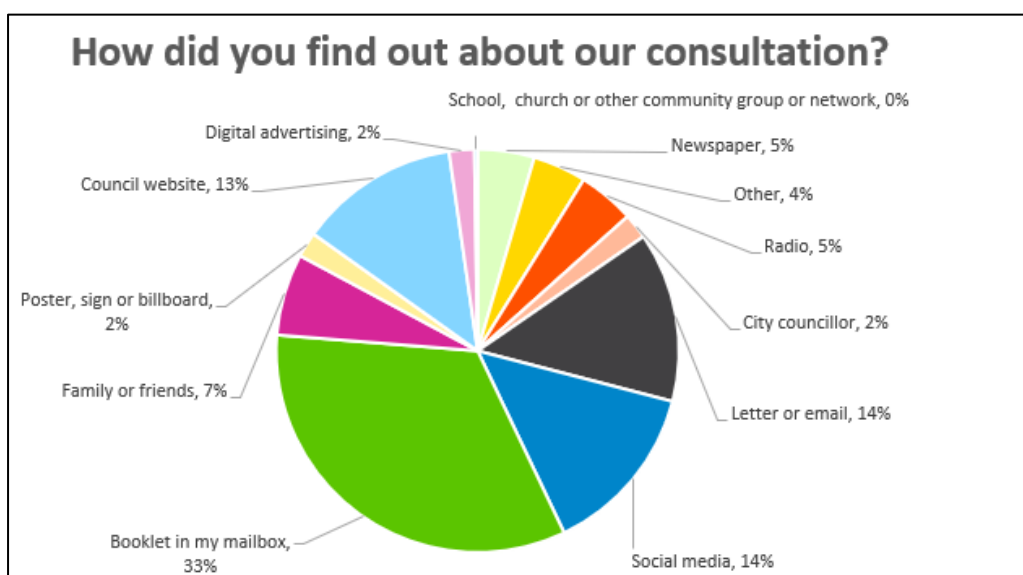
## Marketing and Communications overview

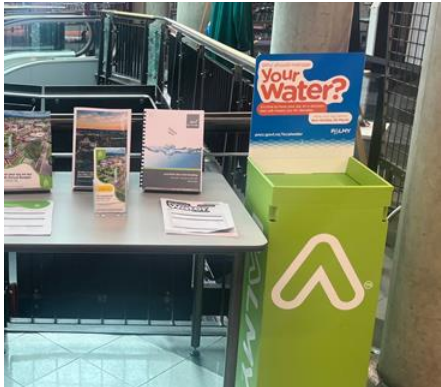
We wanted to make sure everyone knew about the consultation and had an ability to have their say.

We:

- Sent a booklet to homes across the city
- Had a website hub – data below
- Posters around the city
- Displays including submission forms and consultation material at all libraries and our customer service centre
- Media releases and interviews
- Wide range of social media posts and adverts, promoting key info but also promoting opportunities to speak with our Elected Members and Council officers
- Stakeholder communications – eg: water customers, trade waste customers, all sector leads/Council funding recipients/community centre, real estate industry, CCOs
- Radio advertisements on local radio stations
- A call to action video with Mayor Grant Smith
- Billboards and bus shelter advertising
- Newspaper advertising
- Email signatures
- I-site digital billboard.

Our online submission form asked people how they heard about the consultation.





It's time to have your say on a decision that will impact you for decades.  
**Who should manage your water?**

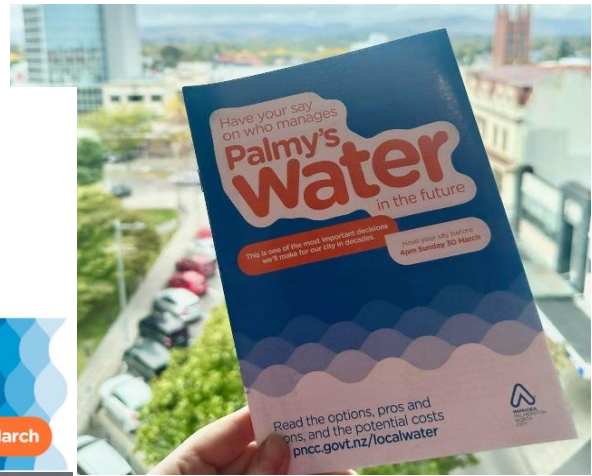
The government is introducing strict changes to how water services are managed, and the status quo won't meet the new rules. We're proposing a joint water organisation with other councils to keep costs affordable for you.

Attend a drop-in session to ask questions and find out more.

For more information, to see drop-in session location and times and to make a submission visit our libraries or our website.  
[pncc.govt.nz/localwater](http://pncc.govt.nz/localwater)



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PALMLED02 Go Media 2025-03-27 07:11:27



PALMLED04 Go Media 2025-03-28 07:00:31



PALMLED01 Go Media 2025-03-30 06:59:57



## Social media themes

We posted about Local Water Done well extensively on our channels during consultation. Across our platforms our posts and ads were seen **214,787** times and engaged with (e.g. commented, reacted, shared) **28,818** times.

Many people were worried about how much water might cost in the future and how it could increase so much from what it is currently. There were questions about what moving from paying for water through rates to being billed directly by a new organisation might mean for people and if the organisation would be for profit. There was also a lot of discussion around the possibility of water metering in the future and whether it would be a good or bad thing.

There was some concern that Council had already decided on an outcome and feedback wouldn't be considered. These feelings appear to have come from people's feelings from past projects and consultations. These feelings also seem to have come from Option 3 being consulted on, as it doesn't meet legal requirements.

We saw an increase in comments that contained false or misleading information compared to our posts on other topics. Some comments came from genuine confusion or concern, while others seemed to steer the conversation away from fact-based discussion. A great example of this was repeated discussions around fluoride in the water.

The image shows a Facebook post from Palmerston North City Council. The post text reads: "For generations, we've provided Palmy with some of the best water services in New Zealand, but the future of water delivery is changing. The government has strict new rules for how water needs to be managed in the future, and they're keen to see councils collaborate to do this. We have three options to consider: Option 1 - A water organisation jointly owned by Palmerston North City Council, Horowhenua, Manawatu, and Kapiti Coast District Councils. The most affordable option. It would see water cost around \$2,100 per year in ten years - this is what we projected in our Long-Term Plan. Option 2 - A water organisation jointly owned by Palmerston North City Council and one or more other councils within the Horizons Regional Council boundary. Depending on the combination of councils, residents could be paying up to \$2700 in ten years. Option 3 - Status quo with changes (not financially sustainable and therefore it's not legally compliant). Within ten years, residential ratepayers could pay \$3,800 per year for water under this option. We know cost is important, but there are other factors to consider, too! Read more about the different options on our website: www.pncc.govt.nz/LocalWater This decision will affect your water services for generations, so make sure to have your say. You've got until 4pm, 30 March, to tell us what you think." Below the text is a photo of a waterfall with the caption "And we're proud of our safe, resilient water infrastructure. PALMY". The post has 120 comments and 10 shares. To the right of the post is a promotional graphic for the consultation. The graphic has a blue background and says "Have your say on who manages Palmy's Water in the future". It lists consultation events: Roslyn Library (12 March, 1.30-2.30pm), Awapuni Library (13 March, 10-11am), Ashhurst Library (20 March, 5-6pm), Central Library (22 March, 2-3pm), Te Pātikitiki Library (25 March, 10-11am), Memorial Park Pool Party (14 March, 5-7pm), and Central District Field Days (13-15 March). It asks for input by 4pm on 30 March and provides a link to the online form and information about paper submissions.

**Palmerston North City Council** ✓  
 Published by Jessica Papple  
 March 4 at 1:13 PM · 🌐


For generations, we've provided Palmy with some of the best water services in New Zealand. We're proud of our safe, resilient water infrastructure.

But the future of water delivery is changing. The government has strict new rules for how water needs to be managed in the future- and they're keen to see councils collaborate to do this.

A small number of councils will be able to keep doing what they're doing- but for big cities like ours, it's not that simple. The cost of staying the same would be unaffordable for you.

We have three options to consider, and we need your feedback. Please make sure you read the options and come along to one of our many events to ask questions.

This is a critical decision for the future. Your water, your city, your future. Make sure you have your say



PNCC.GOV.T.NZ  
**Local Water Done Well** Learn more  
 Have your say on Palmy's water services in 20...

3 1 1

Water costs will continue to rise over the next decade. 💧 📈

Across the country, the cost of providing water services is going up, and Palmerston North is no exception.

What's driving up costs?

- 📌 Stricter national water rules – New national rules for drinking water and wastewater require us to invest more to meet stricter safety and environmental standards.
- 🌧️ Climate change – More extreme weather means more investment is needed in flood protection and stormwater systems.
- 🔧 Aging infrastructure – Many of our pipes and treatment plants need replacing or upgrading to keep water safe and reliable.
- 👥 Population & industrial growth – More people and businesses mean greater demand on our water networks, requiring bigger and better systems.

The Government's Local Water Done Well legislation has strict requirements for managing water in the future, including charging for water and borrowing for water projects.

- 📖 Have you received your booklet in your letterbox yet? They're arriving this week.
- 📖 The booklet outlines how we're proposing to manage water services in the future under the new legislation.
- 👉 At the moment, you pay just under \$1000 for water services as part of your rates. In the next 10 years, this could range between \$2100 and \$3800.
- 👉 The most affordable option would see us create a jointly owned council-controlled water organisation. You still own the assets, and they'd make the day-to-day decisions. What you currently pay will come off rates and instead be charged by this organisation.

Regardless of who manages water in the future, the Commerce Commission will now monitor the cost of water to ensure it's fully user pays, affordable and that all the charges you pay have to be reinvested back into water. Over the next year, this new regulator will cost our ratepayers \$100,000. That is on top of the \$400,000 we are now being required to pay Taumata Arowai, who monitors the quality of the water. This cost was previously covered by the government but has been passed back to councils to pay.

This decision will affect water services for generations, so we need your feedback!

Read more about the different options and have your say online, at our libraries and our Customer Service Centre.

🗨️ Let us know what you think before 30 March!  
[www.pncc.govt.nz/localwater](http://www.pncc.govt.nz/localwater)



Have your say on who manages **Palmy's Water** in the future

This is the one of the most important decisions we'll make for our city in decades.

Have your say before **4pm Sunday 30 March**

Upper Hutt City Council and 16 others 56 3

## Website hub

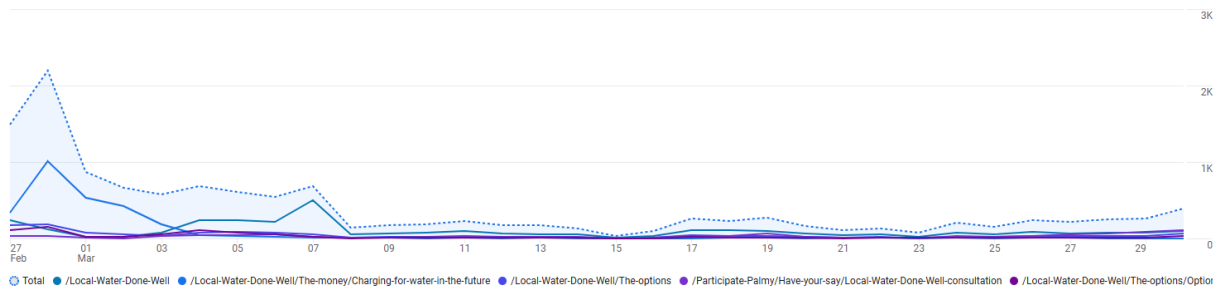
Our website was the electronic home to all things Local Water Done Well, as well as where people could make online submissions and download the consultation document (264 people downloaded the file).

The screenshot shows the 'Local Water Done Well' website hub. At the top, there is a breadcrumb trail 'Home / Local Water Done Well'. The main heading is 'Local Water Done Well'. Below this, a paragraph states: 'Have your say on who manages Palmy's water in the future. This is one of the most important decisions we'll make for our city in decades.' A dark button with white text says 'Have your say before 4pm Sunday 30 March >'. Below that is another dark button with white text: 'A message from the Mayor' with a plus sign on the right. A link with a PDF icon says 'Read our consultation document (PDF, 2MB)'. There are three main content blocks, each with an image and a title: 1. 'Our proposal' with an image of a river and trees, and text: 'We're proposing to create a water organisation jointly owned with other councils.' 2. 'The options' with an image of a person in a blue jacket and orange hat walking in a park, and text: 'We've got three options for you to consider. Learn more about each one, including the potential pros and cons.' 3. 'The money' with an image of a winding river through a forest, and text: 'Read about our water situation today, the big projects on the horizon, how we charge for water now, and how it could be charged in the future.' Below these are four more sections, each with a heading and a short paragraph: 'Impacts on other communities', 'Some other points for you to consider', 'Keeping Palmy flowing: A look into our water services', and 'Background to water reforms'.

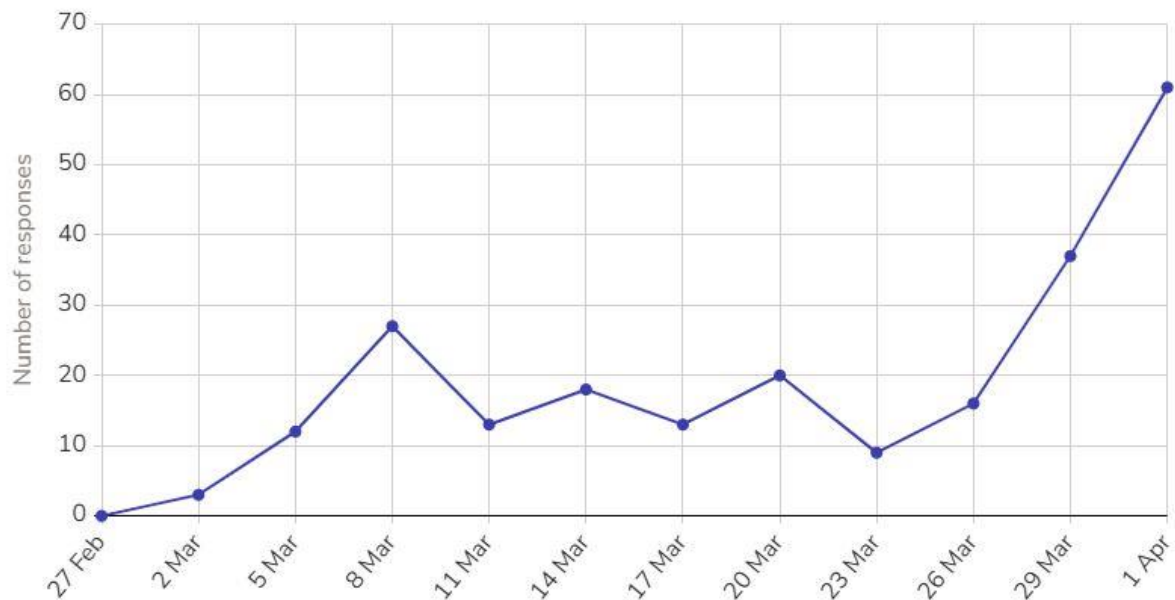
The hub landing page (pictured) was the sixth most visited page on our website during the consultation period.

During consultation, 5,378 people visited the hub 12,623 times. The most popular pages were the options, charging for water in the future, and have your say page (the page that includes the online submission form).

Visits peaked in the opening week of the consultation, with the only noticeable spike on the opening weekend.



The online form tells a different story: 229 people submitted through the form. This peaked on the final few days of the consultation.



Conversion rate: The have your say page had an exceptional conversion rate – more than 30%. Just 700 people visited this page but 229 of them completed the online form.

Acquisition: The majority of people came to our website from Google organic search (“water pricing” was a common search term). Direct traffic was responsible for a smaller (but not insignificant) number of visits, especially to the landing page. An easy to type shortlink to this page was provided in all our promo material.