



Community Waterways Partnership

Progress Report for 2025: Three-Year Action Plan

Ko te wai te ora ngā mea katoa
Water is the life-giver of all things



Contents

Executive summary	3
Action Plan	4
Progress snapshot	5
Key achievements in 2025	6
Protect our wai.....	7
Protect our wai: Case studies	10
Stronger together	12
CWP Contestable Fund 2025 recipients	17
Community empowerment	18
Community empowerment: Case studies	23
Amplify change	25
Challenges and risks	27
Lessons learned	27
2026 priorities.....	28

Executive summary

The Community Waterways Partnership (CWP) has been an integral part of the waterways landscape in Ōtautahi since its inception in 2021. Four years and over 50 partners later, we are making meaningful progress in engaging communities and strengthening the recognition of our city's ngā awa.

In 2025, we set out to more clearly define our purpose, goals, and ways of working. This work aimed to further formalise our partnership, guide our direction, and ensure we remain focused and accountable. This process culminated in a Three-Year Action Plan – a timeframe designed to establish strong foundations and support us to scale delivery.

This report provides a concise update on progress made towards each action during 2025. We acknowledge that it is not a full account of all work, but a high-level capture of key areas of advancement towards our goals. It also reflects on some early outcomes and key constraints. While there is still much to do, preparing this has been a heartening reminder of how much we are achieving together.

At our core, we are a collective shaped by the incredible mahi of our partners. Their passion and knowledge are unmatched, and it has been a privilege to develop and implement this Action Plan alongside them. We hope that, as we progress this plan, our partners feel increasingly supported and connected to advance their mahi and lift the health and recognition of our precious waterways in Ōtautahi.

Nga mihi,

Georgina St John-Ives and Eilish Maddock



Georgina and Eilish representing the Community Waterways Partnership at the Estuary Fest.

Community Waterways Partnership: Action Plan

The Community Waterways Partnership’s three-year (mid-2025 to mid-2028) Action Plan sets out our shared goals and practical actions to progress them. Guided by the desired outcomes in our Charter, the Action Plan is a road map to supporting healthy, connected waterways and communities.



Goals	Objectives	Actions	Desired Outcomes
1. Protect Our Wai Reduce stormwater pollution and enhance the holistic health of our waterways.	1.1 Collaborate on waterways projects and support partner initiatives: Drive collective action through the CWP and strengthen partner-led efforts.	1.1.1 Compile a comprehensive overview of partners’ visions, goals, projects and activities to improve coordination, visibility, and align direction.	Develop research to evaluate outcomes and improvements in our knowledge of best practice community interventions (8).
		1.1.2 Collaborate on selected projects under the CWP.	
		1.1.3 Identify opportunities to support and amplify partners’ initiatives that align with the CWP’s goals.	
	1.2 Implement a behaviour change programme: Promote sustainable practices that reduce pollution at the source and protect waterways.	1.2.1 Integrate behaviour change strategies to address source control and waterway pollution.	Establish, facilitate or support projects to deliver these outcomes (9).
		1.2.2 Encourage improved industry practices, including source control and best practice site management.	
		1.2.3 Promote accessible, practical source control solutions for homeowners and property managers to reduce everyday pollution in our waterways.	
2. Stronger Together Establish and maintain a supportive and collaborative partnership.	2.1 Strengthen active partnership: Build and nurture meaningful and active engagement with iwi, community groups, businesses, researchers, the education sector, and local, regional and central government.	2.1.1 Strengthen relationship with and seek guidance from mana whenua.	Establish a strong, collaborative partnership between community groups, businesses, researchers, and local, regional and central government (1).
		2.1.2 Promote the partnership to attract new members and enhance its reputation.	
		2.1.3 Foster strong, individual relationships with all partner groups to support collaboration and a working relationship.	
	2.2 Develop and implement a partnership model and strategic framework: Establish structure, strategic direction, and operational plans to ensure sustainable partnership success.	2.2.1 Formalise the role and responsibilities of the Steering Group to provide oversight.	Establish and facilitate a network of water care champions and kaitiaki (6).
		2.2.2 Define Christchurch City Council’s role, responsibilities, and ongoing involvement within the CWP as the coordinating body.	
		2.2.3 Identify and align with relevant guiding documents and policies to help inform and direct the CWP.	
		2.2.4 Develop a comprehensive Action Plan to establish and implement goals, objectives, and actions that support the outcomes of the Charter.	
	2.3 Act as a central hub to connect and support partners: Coordinate resources, communication, and research to strengthen collective waterways efforts.	2.3.1 Manage and sustain the CWP fund to support the work of the partnership and advise partners about relevant funding opportunities.	Advocate for resources to sustain the partnership and deliver these outcomes (10).
		2.3.2 Develop a shared resource directory for partner use.	
		2.3.3 Support and explore research and studies that inform and enhance partner efforts.	
		2.3.4 Evaluate the effectiveness of community-led interventions to inform best practice.	
		2.3.5 Develop and implement a CWP communications plan to strengthen engagement, enhance connectivity, and amplify the impact of the partnership’s work.	
		2.3.6 Launch and maintain a dedicated partnership website as a central information hub.	
3. Community Empowerment Engage, educate and encourage the community to connect with and protect our waterways.	3.1 Develop shared messaging and engagement tools: Align public engagement through shared messaging.	3.1.1 Develop and implement a unified set of key messages that reflect the partnership’s shared values and goals.	Achieve consensus on messaging interwoven with appropriate cultural narrative, and market these with an innovative package of shared and consistent material suitable for a variety of audiences (2).
	3.2 Provide an umbrella framework for waterways education: Support waterways education that builds community knowledge and capacity.	3.2.1 Identify and promote educational programmes, activities and resources that empower schools and the community to learn about their local waterways and stormwater, and to take meaningful action.	Develop a network of trained people to deliver the key messages professionally and consistently (3).
		3.2.2 Support schools in building long-term engagement with and guardianship of their local waterways.	
	3.3 Build and promote community capacity to protect urban waterways: Use events, collaboration, and shared planning to raise public awareness and celebrate the partnership.	3.3.1 Co-organise, support, and participate in waterways-related events.	Design and implement stormwater, habitat and water conservation educational resources to supplement existing resources for use in schools and community events (4).
		3.3.2 Identify and pursue new opportunities to further broaden community engagement with urban waterways.	
		3.3.3 Host an annual get-together conference to strengthen collaboration and highlight partners’ work and achievements.	
		3.3.4 Empower partners with access to the latest water quality information to support informed action and engagement.	
		3.3.5 Foster relationship building amongst partners, through social and networking opportunities.	
		3.3.6 Identify, promote and facilitate workshops and field trips to upskill and support partners (aim for at least two annually).	
		3.3.7 Establish a calendar of annual CWP-led activities that reinforce partnership goals.	
4. Amplify Change Advocate for resources and rules to improve our waterways.	4.1 Support the partners to drive legislative and systemic change: Aid community-led action and engagement to improve waterway health through policy influence.	3.3.8 Actively contribute to the Community Goal in the Christchurch City Council’s Stormwater Management Plans.	Advocate for incentives that enable community implementation of positive stormwater, habitat and water conservation actions and solutions (5).
		4.1.1 Promote the partnership and its partners’ initiatives to enhance visibility and influence, particularly among key decision-makers and stakeholders.	
		4.1.2 Strengthen partner advocacy by facilitating public submission opportunities and capacity-building workshops and identify incentives that inspire sustained action.	
			Advocate for national legislative change to better address stormwater contaminants (7).

Progress snapshot

- Significant progress has been made with actions largely on track and some early outcomes becoming apparent.
- Work is underway but further time, resourcing, or refinement is required to achieve outcomes.
- Limited progress to date, with key actions yet to be meaningfully advanced.

Protect our wai	●	Making good progress towards increased partner connectedness and joint initiatives, though more work is needed to promote and measure behaviour change.
Stronger together	●	The CWP is made up of many influential and active groups, contributing well towards the progression of the partnership. A new Action Plan is helping guide the way forward.
Community empowerment	●	Community engagement, education, and information sharing is tracking well, with more progress needed toward messaging goals.
Amplify change	●	Opportunities for legislative engagement are being promoted, but refinement of this action and its outcomes is required.



© Joe Harrison

Key achievements in 2025

Action Plan guiding coordinated delivery

A Three-Year Action Plan was developed in 2025 and is now being implemented, providing a clearer sense of direction for collaboration, partner support, and progress towards shared waterways goals. Early outcomes indicate stronger alignment, improved coordination, and increased joint initiatives across the partnership.

CWP website established as a central hub

Launched in November 2025, the [CWP website](#) serves as a key platform for partners to share who we are and our stories, and to access information on funding, resources, events, and waterways projects. It is improving the visibility of partner activities and strengthening connection, collaboration, and information sharing across the network.

Wai Map tool enhances access to water quality data

The [Wai Map](#), launched by Christchurch City Council in November 2025, provides an interactive way for partners and the community to access up-to-date water quality information, supporting greater awareness, informed decision-making, and community action.

Stronger collaboration and partner-led delivery

The partnership has supported and amplified a range of initiatives, such as riparian planting, in-stream litter reduction, and community events focused on our waterways, resulting in increased community stewardship and new cross-partner connections.



© Joe Harrison

Protect our wai

Reduce stormwater pollution and enhance
the holistic health of our waterways.



Objective 1.1 Collaborate on waterways projects and support partner initiatives

Status:

What we set out to do

Progress

Compile an overview of partners’ goals and activities
Action 1.1.1

To be progressed in 2026–2027.

Collaborate on selected CWP projects
Action 1.1.2

Contributed to multiple community-led projects, including the delivery and funding of the Mother of All Clean Ups (previously funded by the Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust) and support for the newly formed Linwood Waterway Group’s activities.

As a result of a CWP-funded [wheelie bin latch trial](#) undertaken by the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network in 2024, bin latches became available at Council service centres in 2025 at a discounted rate.

Riparian planting across the city was supported by CWP partner and facilitating body Christchurch City Council, including funding for the Styx Living Laboratory Trust to plant 150 metres of Smacks Creek and 100 metres of Styx River.

Early outcome: Enhanced collaboration and co-delivery with partners, including joint projects and support for partner-led initiatives.

Identify and amplify aligned partner initiatives
Action 1.1.3

Highlighted and promoted multiple community-led projects, including the Linwood Waterways Celebration Day and the establishment of a Christchurch City Council-funded pest plant project with the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network.

Supported [Morphum Environmental’s adoption of Addington Brook](#), which includes quarterly litter collection, ecological observation recordings, and community waterways guardianship activities.

Key constraints

Coordination relies on partner capacity and responsiveness, which may impact the pace and continuity of collaborative work.

Maintaining up-to-date information across a large partner network is resource-intensive, affecting visibility of activities and opportunities.

Objective 1.2 Implement a behaviour change programme

Status: 

What we set out to do	Progress
Integrate behaviour change strategies to reduce waterways pollution at source Action 1.2.1	Promoted behaviour change and community stewardship initiatives, including the delivery of a behaviour change workshop for CWP groups on community-selected waterways issues as part of the National Science Challenge Behaviour Change Research Programme.
Encourage improved industry practices Action 1.2.2	Supported industry engagement and education initiatives to promote best practice environmental management. Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury partnered to host a shared stand at the CONZTRACT trade expo in October 2025 to educate industry on best practice erosion and sediment control.
Promote practical source control solutions for households Action 1.2.3	Partners actively promoted best practice at community events, identifying practical solutions for the community to implement. This included encouraging the public to report stormwater management issues or industry non-compliance through the Snap, Send, Solve app.

Key constraints

Limited ability for the community to influence or address industry practices.

Takes time to demonstrate the impact of behaviour change, making high-frequency reporting challenging.

Protect our wai: Case study

Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network bin latch trial

"This is an example of how the community, the Council and the Community Waterways Partnership can make it all work to make it happen for the river."

Malcolm Long, Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network

In response to high winds toppling bins and sending rubbish to our waterways, the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network (ŌHRN) conducted a [wheelie bin latch trial](#) in 2024. The latches hold bin lids closed until they are inverted by collection trucks.

In 2025, based on the ŌHRN's promising findings with 97% of users finding the latches effective, the Christchurch City Council approved the purchase of 25,000 latches which are [available for residents to purchase](#) at a discounted rate.



Protect our wai: Case study

Morphum Environmental adopts a stream

"Morphum's involvement with Addington Brook and the Community Waterways Partnership is one way we are strengthening our connection with the Christchurch community, and together, we can all create a sustainable future and leave legacy we can be proud of."

Kate Macintosh, Morphum Environmental

Business partner Morphum Environmental has adopted Addington Brook, a heavily polluted urban stream that flows into the Ōtākaro-Avon River. Since 2025, the Morphum team has visited the stream quarterly to remove litter and gather valuable on-the-ground insights about the ecosystem and waterway health.

In 2025, the team collected five bags of rubbish from the waterway, totalling approximately 150 kilograms. Multiple native fish sightings were recorded, however this appeared to reduce with time. This may be linked to recent disturbances associated with naturalisation works and it is hoped that fish populations will recover as the habitat stabilises.



© Joe Harrison

Stronger together

Establish and maintain a supportive and collaborative partnership.



Objective 2.1 Strengthen active partnership

Status: 

What we set out to do	Progress
Strengthen relationships with mana whenua <i>Action 2.1.1</i>	Mana whenua perspectives were a central focus of the CWP Annual Hui in November 2025. Kirsty Ameriks, Project Delivery & Operations Manager for Te Kura Taka Pini, Ngāi Tahu, highlighted the challenges that short government funding cycles create for long-term relationship building and spoke about the importance of rangatiratanga for Ngāi Tahu in shaping and leading outcomes for waterways. Presentation of the CWP's activities to Mahaanui Kurataiao at the Comprehensive Stormwater Network Discharge Consent annual meeting in September 2025. Growing engagement with Ngāti Wheke has helped identify opportunities grounded in tikanga and shared aspirations for healthy waterways. Ngāti Wheke has provided valuable guidance to community partners working within their takiwā. Erosion control planting projects around Whakaraupō have been an important area of focus, undertaken in partnership with Ngāti Wheke and aligned with the strategic direction of Whaka-Ora.
Promote the partnership to attract new members <i>Action 2.1.2</i>	The CWP hosted an information stall at multiple waterways events during 2025 to promote the partnership to the wider community. Social media content was provided to partnership groups to promote the CWP Annual Hui. The CWP's website and accessible newsletter build credibility, encouraging wider involvement. Early outcome: Four new groups signed up as partners in 2025 – three community groups, and one business.
Build strong relationships with all partner groups <i>Action 2.1.3</i>	Maintained regular engagement through email/website updates to all partners, regular Steering Group meetings, and informal check-ins with individual groups when required. Early outcome: The annual hui was well attended by a wide range of partnership groups, with strong engagement throughout the day's programme, reflecting a strong sense of connection between individual groups and the CWP as a whole.

Key constraints

Capacity constraints and competing priorities affect both relationship-building and partner participation across the partnership.

Objective 2.2 Develop and implement a partnership model and strategic framework

Status: 

What we set out to do	Progress
Formalise governance <i>Action 2.2.1</i>	Confirmed the governance structure and role of the Steering Group through the development of Terms of Reference and Ways of Working.
Clarify Christchurch City Council's roles and responsibilities <i>Action 2.2.2</i>	The Christchurch City Council's role in branding and communications was established, with CWP branding developed and communications support provided to enhance engagement alongside the launch of the website.
Align with key strategies, policies, and plans <i>Action 2.2.3</i>	To be progressed in 2026-2027.
Develop and implement an Action Plan <i>Action 2.2.4</i>	A Three-Year Action Plan was developed and is being implemented, guiding the CWP's direction through to 2027. Early outcome: Progress has been made toward most action items during the first year of implementation.
<i>Develop a strategic framework to operate within</i> <i>Action 2.2.5</i>	To be progressed in 2026-2027.

Key constraints

Implementation of the Three-Year Action Plan may be constrained by partner capacity and resourcing, affecting delivery timeframes.

While the role of the Steering Group has been formally agreed, there may be opportunities to strengthen its application in practice.

Objective 2.3 Act as a central hub to connect and support partners

Status: 

What we set out to do	Progress
Manage and promote access to funding opportunities <i>Action 2.3.1</i>	Increased funding through the CWP contestable fund and expanded eligibility to include individuals, schools, and research organisations, strengthening support for community-led waterway initiatives.
Develop shared resource directory <i>Action 2.3.2</i>	Established a shared resource repository on the CWP website, including tools, guides, and partner materials, designed to be expanded over time.
Support research to enhance partner efforts <i>Action 2.3.3</i>	To be progressed in 2026–2027.
Evaluate community-led interventions <i>Action 2.3.4</i>	To be progressed in 2026–2027.
<i>Develop communications plan and channels</i> <i>Action 2.3.5</i>	Delivered consistent communications across channels, including newsletters, email updates, and partner communications. Early outcome: Open rates for CWP newsletters are strong when compared with general rates in New Zealand and Australia, suggesting a well-engaged audience.
<i>Establish and maintain a partnership website</i> <i>Action 2.3.6</i>	Developed and launched the CWP website in November 2025 as a central information and partnership hub. Early outcome: Since its launch, the CWP website has had between 200 and 1300 views per month. Our most-read stories are about finding kākahi in the Ōtākaro-Avon River, and our Annual Hui wrap.
Key constraints Ongoing difficulty in consistently sourcing timely updates on partner activities, limiting the CWP’s ability to communicate current, comprehensive, and engaging information.	

Ngāti Wheke erosion control planting

4.7 hectares

35 traps

21,800 plants



Tiaki Taiao, an environmental team dedicated to field mahi that reflects the aspirations of Te Hapū o Ngāti Wheke, undertook native planting at two sites in Whakaraupō in 2025 to reduce sedimentation and contamination in the harbour. The work was funded by CWP partner and facilitating body, Christchurch City Council.

7600 natives, such as kānuka, tōtara, māhoe, and harakeke were planted at Ōtūherekio near Pony Point, and 14,200 at Wreck Bay near Purau. Pest traps were also installed to give the plants the best chance to thrive.

The work at Wreck Bay follows some great mahi funded by Whaka-Ora in 2024, which saw the coastal margin and two gullies in the area fenced off to exclude grazing animals.



CWP Contestable Fund 2025 recipients

Christchurch Envirohub for **Te Tuna Tāone**, a hands-on education programme teaching tamariki how to be kaitiaki of their local environment with a focus on tuna, a taonga species.

Riccarton Rotary Charitable Trust for the **Huritini-Halswell River Citizen Science Project**, where volunteers gather monthly data from the Halswell River to build understanding of the health of the awa.

Climate Action Campus for their work connecting schools with the cultural, ecological and recreational values of the Ōtākaro-Avon River.

Living Springs Trust for **eDNA monitoring**, to be carried out in three streams flowing into Whakaraupō to help inform restoration efforts.

Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network for their work undertaking ecological surveys in important tributaries to the Heathcote River, improving residents' understanding of how they can protect waterways.

Styx Living Laboratory Trust for a **Programme Delivery and Support Officer** to provide waterways education and coordinate volunteers to bring the group's vision to life.

Summit Road Society for the **Avoca Valley Stream Restoration Planting Project**, to enhance the health of the stream as part of a long-term restoration project.

Avon Ōtākaro Network for the final phase of the **In River Clean** which uses a boat to remove rubbish from the awa, monitor downstream impacts, and engage community.

Food Resilience Network for **24/7 Central City Stormwater Education**, an informative sign to educate visitors about the site's blue-green roof, swale, and stormwater retention systems.

Community empowerment

Engage, educate and encourage the community to connect with and protect our waterways.



Objective 3.1 Develop shared messaging and engagement tools

Status: ●

What we set out to do	Progress
Develop unified key messages for the partnership <i>Action 3.1.1</i>	Provided opportunities for partners to input into Environment Canterbury’s annual regional stormwater campaign by establishing a CWP stormwater campaign working group. Worked with partners to align communications, including reviewing and updating Stormwater Superhero Trailer content with Christchurch Envirohub to ensure consistency with Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury messaging, and supporting more effective delivery of key stormwater messages.

Key constraints

Difficulty maintaining consistent messaging across partners, who each use different communication channels, priorities, and styles, making alignment and unified delivery challenging.



Objective 3.2 Provide an umbrella framework for waterways education

Status: 

What we set out to do

Progress

Identify and promote education programmes and resources

Action 3.2.1

Six waterways education programmes and initiatives funded in 2024 were delivered in 2025.

The CWP website promotes multiple waterways education programmes and resources, highlighting initiatives and offerings from partners and local communities.

Funding was allocated in 2025 to support the following waterways education initiatives for delivery in 2026: waterways education at the Climate Action Campus; Styx Living Laboratory Trust; Te Tuna Tāone; the Ōtākaro in-river clean-up project working with schools; and stormwater education through signage at the Ōtākaro Orchard.

Support schools and community learning

Action 3.2.2

Developed guidance for schools around [what it means to be a partner](#), clarifying the shared expectations and two-way commitment within the partnership.

Supported collaboration and alignment across waterways education providers. For example, the Community Waterways Partnership coordinated involvement from Christchurch City Council, the University of Canterbury, and Environment Canterbury to support Ilam School in delivering inquiry-based learning about their local waterways.

Supported more than five schools in 2025 to establish and maintain waterways restoration sites through hands-on educational activities, such as native planting and ongoing site care, in collaboration with other waterways education providers.

Key constraints

The current partnership approach may not be fully aligned with school needs, creating barriers to meaningful and sustained involvement.

School engagement remains variable, with competing priorities and time constraints affecting their ability to participate consistently.

Objective 3.3 Build and promote community capacity to protect urban waterways

Status: 

What we set out to do	Progress
Support and participate in events <i>Action 3.3.1</i>	Coordination of and participation in community events such as Estuary Fest, Linwood Waterways Celebration Day, Summer in the Styx, World Rivers Day, and Mother of All Clean Ups. Since 2025, the CWP has become the funder of the Mother of All Clean Ups event.
Expand community engagement opportunities <i>Action 3.3.2</i>	The launch of the CWP website has contributed to improved community engagement by better promoting the collective work of the group and its individual partners, featuring stories of waterways mahi alongside a calendar of related events. A future development for the website, to be progressed during 2026–2027, is to highlight catchment-by-catchment opportunities for community involvement. The CWP's presence at multiple waterways events provided many opportunities to directly engage with the community and promote local waterways protection.
Host annual conference for partners to come together <i>Action 3.3.3</i>	The CWP Annual Hui working group planned and delivered a successful hui in November 2025 with a good turnout and high level of engagement.
Share water quality information <i>Action 3.3.4</i>	Christchurch City Council launched the Wai Map in November 2025, an interactive tool for accessing recent water quality data. Shared Christchurch City Council water quality data and insights to support community understanding and action at the Comprehensive Stormwater Network Discharge Consent presentation. Early outcome: High click-through rate in the CWP newsletter promoting the Wai Map, indicating good interest from partners.
Build on partner relationships through social networking <i>Action 3.3.5</i>	A social component was incorporated into the CWP Annual Hui in November 2025, attracting strong attendance from multiple groups and providing opportunities for meaningful relationship building. The CWP also actively promotes Green Drinks events, hosted by partner Christchurch Envirohub, as a way for partners to connect with others involved in waterways and wider environmental mahi.

Objective 3.3 Continued

What we set out to do	Progress
<i>Provide training, workshops, and networking opportunities</i> <i>Action 3.3.6</i>	The CWP delivered a workshop as part of its annual hui to map activities, insights, visions, and values for Christchurch's waterway catchments. Partners' and community-led waterways initiatives and networking opportunities were promoted, including the City to Sea project through the Red Zone, hosted by the Christchurch branch of the New Zealand Association for Environmental Education in partnership with Christchurch City Council, which several CWP partners attended.
<i>Establish CWP-led activity calendar</i> <i>Action 3.3.7</i>	In 2025, the CWP funded or supported seven events and began funding the Mother of All Clean Ups. As funding and capacity allow, additional activities will be added to the calendar to further progress CWP goals.
<i>Advance community goal in Stormwater Management Plans</i> <i>Action 3.3.8</i>	Many of these goals are being met through the broader CWP and partner activities, though greater focus will be placed on shaping these more meaningfully during 2026 and 2027.

Key constraints

Maintaining sustained community engagement over time, particularly beyond one-off events, and translating interest into measurable behaviour change and on-the-ground impact.

Reaching and engaging diverse or underrepresented communities, including those less connected to existing environmental networks.

Community empowerment: Case study

CWP Annual Hui

"I really felt the significance of the CWP partnership at this hui. It clicked for me. I have since its inception understood its importance and the need to be involved but I think it is maturing extremely well. Very satisfying to see this."

Colleen Philip, Sustainable Ōtautahi Christchurch

Over 50 people attended the Community Waterways Partnership Annual Hui in November 2025.

Our annual hui is an important occasion to connect and reflect. Keynote speakers included Kirsty Ameriks (Ngāi Tahu) and Vicky Southworth (former Environment Canterbury Councillor), and time was spent sharing and discussing catchment-specific successes and challenges. The day concluded with a guided walk along the Ōtākaro-Avon River.



© Joe Harrison

Community empowerment: Case study

Avon-Ōtākaro Network In-River Clean-Up

"The river is really looking better in so many places."

Avon-Ōtākaro Network

Beginning in 2022, the Avon-Ōtākaro Network and Healthy Rivers NZ, both CWP partners, launched the In-River Clean-Up project to remove litter from the Avon River. The CWP granted funding for the project to continue during 2025.

The project involves monthly rubbish collection from the riverbed and banks using a purpose-built, low-impact boat. Collected litter is sorted with the help of local schools and community groups, and weight, type and location data recorded. In November 2025, a boom was installed to intercept floating litter.

Around ten tonnes of rubbish was collected from the river in 2025, bringing the project's cumulative total to 24 tonnes. Half of this has been diverted from landfill. The final phase of the project, to be undertaken during 2026, has received further funding from the CWP contestable fund.



Amplify change

Advocate for resources and rules to improve our waterways.



Objective 4.1 Support partners to drive legislative and systemic change

Status: 

What we set out to do	Progress
Promote partner initiatives to decision-makers <i>Action 4.1.1</i>	Presented an overview of the CWP to Environment Canterbury's Strategy & Policy Committee.
Support partner advocacy and submissions <i>Action 4.1.2</i>	CWP partners continued to contribute to system-level change through advocacy and submissions. This included Avon-Ōtākaro Network supporting community submissions to Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury, Styx Living Laboratory Trust providing input into Annual Plan and bylaw processes, and Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust advocating for improved climate adaptation and estuary management through formal submissions. These activities support stronger community influence on decision-making and contribute to improved planning and resourcing for waterways. Through newsletters and group emails, the CWP promoted four submission opportunities for partners to have their say in local and central government decisions. The CWP's support for building advocacy capability will be further progressed in 2026–2027.

Key constraints

Restrictions associated with facilitator roles within Christchurch City Council may reduce the ability to deliver on advocacy-related actions and fully support partner-led advocacy.

Challenges and risks

Key challenges and risks identified through the CWP's work in 2025.

Capacity constraints across the partnership

Delivery of many actions relies on partner capacity, which varies across organisations and is often constrained by competing priorities. This affects the pace of collaboration, consistency of engagement, and ability to move from coordination to joint delivery.

Transitioning from coordination to impact

While progress has been made in building connections and aligning activity, it remains challenging to translate this into sustained, coordinated action and measurable outcomes across multiple partners.

Engagement challenges with key groups (e.g. schools, industry)

Some partner groups face practical barriers to participation. For example, schools have limited time and competing priorities, and current partnership approaches are not always well tailored to their needs. There is also uncertainty around the most effective ways to engage and utilise private sector partners. Influencing industry practices can also be challenging, as this often sits beyond the direct control of community-led initiatives.

Limited evidence and evaluation frameworks

There are currently no consistent approaches to assessing the effectiveness of community-led interventions or behaviour change, making it difficult to demonstrate impact and inform future investment.

Capturing collective impact

As the partnership evolves, defining the scope of reporting remains an ongoing challenge, including how to meaningfully capture the collective impact of CWP activities while acknowledging the contributions of individual partners and avoiding any duplication.

Lessons learned

Key lessons and insights from the CWP's work in 2025.

Investing in relationships enables delivery

Strong relationships and regular engagement are critical foundations for collaboration. Time spent connecting partners and building trust is essential for enabling future joint projects.

Partners need clear value to stay engaged

Engagement is strongest where partners see tangible benefits (e.g. funding access, promotion, connections, tools). The role of CWP as a connector and amplifier is a key strength to build on.

Targeted approaches are needed for different audiences

A one-size-fits-all partnership model does not work. Tailored approaches are needed to better support schools, community groups, and industry participants.

Start simple and build over time

Establishing systems such as the website, shared resources, and communications channels takes time. Early implementation should prioritise usability and relevance, with ongoing refinement based on partner feedback.

2026 priorities

Building on lessons learned from 2025, the following priorities will guide delivery in 2026 as the partnership continues to build momentum and focus on measurable impact.

Goal 1: Protect our wai	Increase the visibility of our partners' mahi to identify collaboration opportunities and align direction, using our 2026 Partner's Overview survey as a starting point. Identify and fill education gaps to promote best practice behaviour change, starting with our recently funded research project looking at residents' baseline understanding of stormwater.
Goal 2: Stronger together	Strengthen relationships with mana whenua to form a genuine partnership that guides mahi meaningful to us all. Begin to build a strategic framework around the CWP's governance structure, including identification of guiding documentation. Support research to add value to or guide partners' work, including establishing a means of measuring the effectiveness of community-led interventions to enhance future outcomes.
Goal 3: Community empowerment	Develop targeted and flexible engagement approaches for schools, community groups, industry, and diverse communities to better align with their needs, support sustained participation, and ensure two-way value. Further the profile of the CWP through increased community engagement, both on-the-ground and online.
Goal 4: Amplify change	Further promote the partnership and its value with key decision-makers who could influence support.

The next Community Waterways Partnership Action Plan report, which will provide a final wrap-up of the Three-Year Plan, will be delivered in 2028 in alignment with Christchurch City Council's Comprehensive Stormwater Network Discharge bi-annual reporting cycle.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa, kia kaha tātou ki te tiaki i ngā wai o Ōtautahi

Georgina St John-Ives and Eilish Maddock
Community Waterways Partnership Facilitators
Christchurch City Council

