

# Recycled water could be used to flush Akaroa's public toilets, irrigate pasture

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Last updated 16:16, April 3 2017



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The Christchurch City Council is proposing to irrigate land with treated wastewater in either Robinsons Bay, Takamatua, or Pompeys Pillar in Akaroa Harbour.

Treated wastewater could be used to flush Akaroa's public toilets and keep the town's parks and reserves green all summer.

The Christchurch City Council is considering constructing a "purple pipe" to recycle water from the town's new \$33 million wastewater treatment plant and reduce demand on its drinking water supply.

The \$1.7m scheme would use about a quarter of the town's treated wastewater, so the council would need to decide how to dispose of the remaining wastewater – an issue it has been wrestling with for some years.



JOSEPH JOHNSON/FAIRFAX NZ

Robinsons Bay residents are opposing a plan to dump Akaroa's treated wastewater on to properties and build a storage pond.

The council's existing consent to discharge into Akaroa Harbour expires in 2020. Plans to continue the practice via a longer pipeline were scuppered by Environment Canterbury, which declined the consent due to opposition from Ngai Tahu.

Four other options to dispose of the wastewater have been identified by the council, including the "purple pipe", and public feedback is being sought. If approved, the pipe scheme could be expanded to allow residents to use it to flush their toilets, water their gardens and wash their cars.

The harbour pipeline has been listed as an option, despite consent being declined. The pipeline, which was one of the cheapest options at \$7.4m, would extend 2.5km into the harbour. The existing pipeline extends 100m.

Three areas – Robinsons Bay, Takamatua and Pompeys Pillar, 9.5km east of Akaroa – have been highlighted as possible locations to spread treated wastewater onto pasture or kanuka trees. The proposals involve building wastewater storage ponds.

Residents in Robinsons Bay and Takamatua have been fighting the proposals and some have joined a working party set up by the Banks Peninsula Community Board to work through community concerns.

A Robinsons Bay scheme would cost \$6.6m to irrigate to trees and \$7.7m to irrigate to pasture.

The council consultation document said there was enough land in Robinsons Bay for the scheme and fewer land owners to negotiate with compared to Takamatua. Robinsons Bay had the most favourable soil type, but was close to residents.

There would also be an increased risk of stream banks becoming unstable near the irrigation area and the valley was prone to flooding, but this could be taken into account in the design of the irrigation area and pond, the document said.

Pompey's Pillar was the most expensive option at \$11.9m for tree irrigation or \$13.7m for pasture. There was one land owner at the site and no residential homes nearby, but the wastewater would need to be pumped through a 10km pipeline over a 620 metre-high hill.

There was not enough suitable land at Takamatua for the entire project so it would need to be used in combination with another area. This would cost between \$8.4m and \$11.8m when combined with land in Robinsons Bay.

The working party agreed irrigating trees on the upper southern slopes of Robinsons Bay was more acceptable than closer to homes on the valley floor. It also preferred irrigating pasture rather than trees at Pompeys Pillar so farming could continue.

Submissions to council close on April 30. A hearing would be held on May 29 before the council decided on June 22 which option to pursue.

- Stuff