

Discussion sheet – low-pressure wastewater system

Urenui and Onaero Wastewater Project

Failing septic tanks from properties in Urenui and Onaero towns have been a problem for years, with human waste contaminating groundwater and the Urenui Awa (River). We want residents and visitors to be able to eat from and swim in our awa without putting their health at risk.

The most effective way to achieve this is to replace these urban septic tanks with a piped wastewater system that removes the communities' sewage for treatment.

The proposed new wastewater system

Because of the hilly nature of the towns, we're proposing what's known as a 'low-pressure wastewater system' for homes and business. This is used throughout New Zealand and in some areas of Ōākura and New Plymouth.

This system would see an individual pump and storage tank located on each property in the towns with sewage pumped into the public pipes. The pumps, tanks and pipes are all underground.



What the tank looks like installed, with just the lid visible at ground level.

All you will be able to see of the pump and tank is the chamber lid, at grass-level.

The electric pump would operate automatically and be connected to the property's power supply.

To allow for power outages or repairs, the tanks can store up to 800 litres, or enough for about 24-hours use for most houses.



A cutaway image of the underground storage tank with a pump inside.

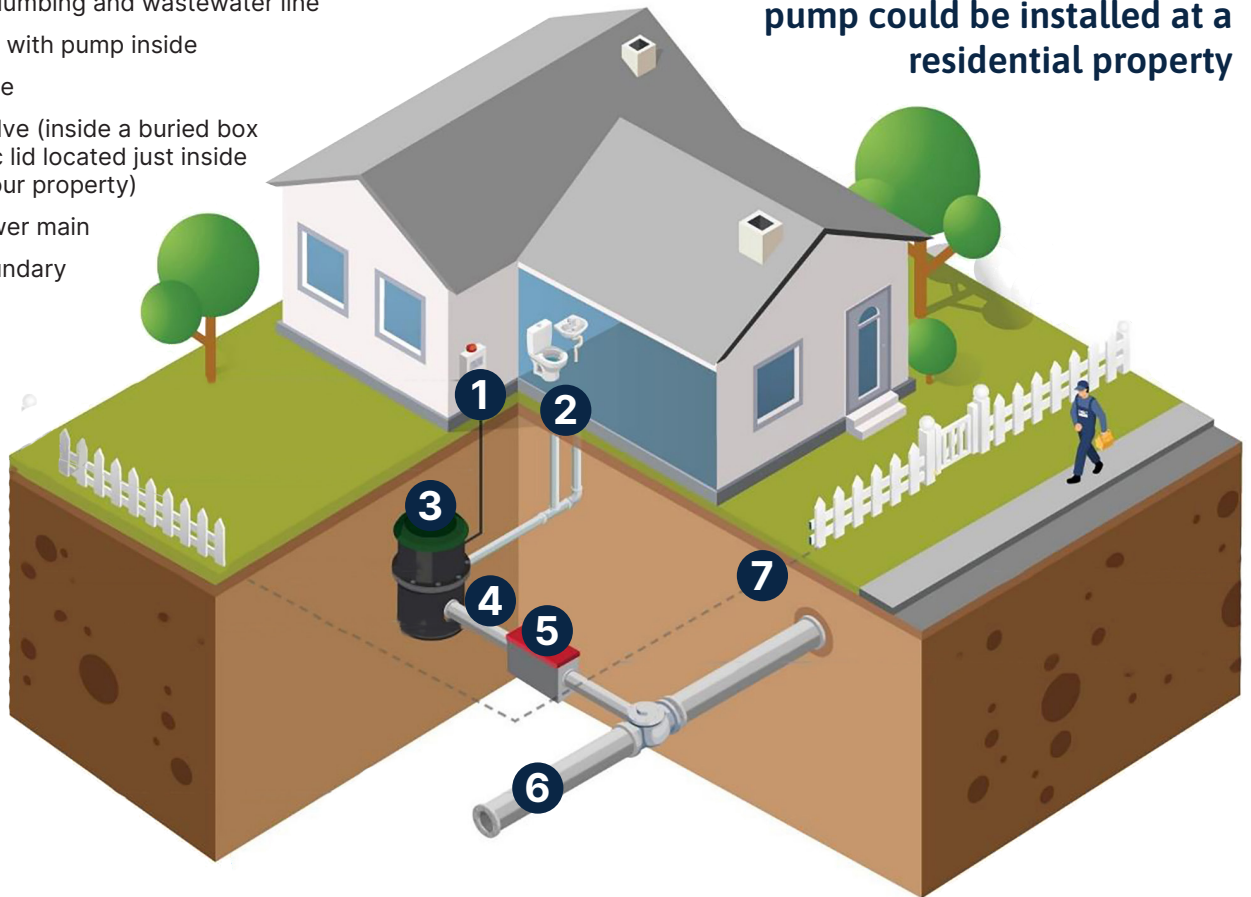
Why we're recommending a low-pressure system

We looked at both a gravity system and a low-pressure system, and found that:

- A gravity system would require large public pump stations in the coastal hazard zone, which is already at risk of erosion and flooding.
- With a gravity system we would need to dig very deep to allow for pipes and manholes. This is a difficult process and not considered practical.
- A low-pressure system is a lot cheaper to build; preliminary cost estimates show the gravity option would be more than 50 per cent more expensive.

- 1 Control box
- 2 Household plumbing and wastewater line
- 3 Storage tank with pump inside
- 4 Discharge line
- 5 Boundary valve (inside a buried box with a plastic lid located just inside or outside your property)
- 6 Pressure sewer main
- 7 Property boundary

Example of how the tank and pump could be installed at a residential property



Ownership and costs

Currently in other parts of New Plymouth District, private tanks and pumps are owned by the property owner. This could be an option for Urenui and Onaero, or we could follow what happens in some other parts of New Zealand and have NPDC own them. If NPDC owns the pumps and tanks, then we would need access to the property for maintenance.

The owner of the pumps and tanks will be responsible for installation, maintenance and repairs. The cost of installing a property's pump tank and connecting pipe will depend on each site's situation but it could be around \$16,000 for a residential property.

It is not practical to provide a separate power supply to every pump so for a low-pressure system, the pumps are powered by the home's power supply.

Connecting to the system

To ensure we fix the issue of contamination of our awa, it's recommended that every property in the Urenui and Onaero towns connects to the new system. We would love to hear your thoughts.

Come to the drop-in session for a chat!

There's a lot to discuss: how the low-pressure wastewater system works, whether connection should be optional or not, ownership and costs, decommissioning of septic tanks, construction timeframes and more. We want to know what's important to you and if you have any questions. It's important to understand that no decisions have been made on any of these options yet.

Further consultation will take place in stages in 2025 and 2026. This drop-in session is a chance for an informal chat on anything about the project that interests you.

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You can also read more information about the Urenui and Onaero Wastewater Project at npdc.govt.nz/UrenuiOnaeroWWTP.