

12 ISSUES, OBJECTIVES: Network Utilities

12.1 OVERVIEW OF NETWORK UTILITIES

The Resource Management Act 1991 defines "*network utility operators*" and "*requiring authorities*". In summary a network utility operator provides services involving energy (gas, petroleum, geothermal, electricity), telecommunications, radio communications, water, drainage, sewage, roads, railway and airports. A requiring authority is a Minister of the Crown, a local authority or a network utility operator approved as a requiring authority.

Where a provider of a network utility service has status as a requiring authority, the Act enables the authority to designate land for a *project or work (section 168(2))*. *Only a Minister or Local Authority may issue a notice of requirement for a designation for a public work (section 168(i) of the Act)*. Where an organisation does not have requiring authority status, land use consent may be required for any work.

Issues, Objectives and policies relating to roading networks are contained in Chapter 10: LAND TRANSPORT

12.2 SIGNIFICANT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES FOR UTILITIES

Issue 28: The maintenance and development of an efficient utility network to serve the needs of the community.

Issue 29: The potentially adverse effects of some network utilities on the environment.

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Network utilities are a necessary and essential component of community infrastructure. They are essential life lines, contributing to the social, cultural and economic well-being of the community. It is important that essential utilities are able to establish and operate effectively.

OBJECTIVE 22: The efficient and effective operation maintenance and development of network utilities within the District.

POLICY 22.1: Enable the establishment, operation, and maintenance of essential network utilities.

Explanation and Principal Reasons

The Plan is instrumental in facilitating the establishment and operation of essential network utilities. The Plan will endeavour to set clear and reasonable requirements to enable them to operate effectively.

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METHODS FOR ISSUE 28 AND OBJECTIVE 22

District Plan

- The Plan will permit certain essential network utilities. Resource consents will be required for sites in areas identified as being heritage, natural or landscape significance or for network utilities that do not comply with standards.

[Network utilities that are considered to have minor effects on the environment will be permitted activities. The provisions largely continue the transitional provisions of the Resource Management Act.]

- Designated network utilities and sites will be identified on the planning maps.
- Resource Consents may also be required from Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council for activities that use the beds of rivers and lakes.

Annual and Strategic Plan

- The annual and strategic plan will prioritise the network infrastructure that is managed by Council.

Issue 29: The potentially adverse effects of some network utilities on the environment.

Some network utilities can create adverse effects on the environment depending upon the size and location of any structures. Effects can include visual impacts of structures and lines, and environmental health and safety impacts. Structures associated with a network utility operation can be very visible in the environment. The size, form, and location of structures can, though, be designed to be compatible with the landscape. Some aspects associated with network utilities have only minor environmental effects.

It is important to note that network utilities are often constrained in the selection of sites on which they can locate, particularly when they are part of a national or regional distribution network. It is important to recognise the locational constraints in considering the overall impact of the environmental effects of network utilities.

OBJECTIVE 23: Avoidance, remediation, or mitigation of any adverse effects on the environment resulting from the location or operation of network utilities.

POLICY 23.1: Encourage network utility operators to locate within the existing roading network and co-locate utilities so as to minimise cumulative environmental effects.

POLICY 23.2: Ensure that network utilities are located underground. In new urban roads or wherever practicable in other circumstances.

POLICY 23.3: Avoid, remedy, or mitigate the adverse effects of network utility services on heritage features, outstanding landscapes and natural features, cultural features and natural habitats of indigenous species.

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Explanation and Principal Reasons

There is a need to ensure that effects on the environment are considered when deciding on the location of new facilities. The location of telecommunication, gas, electricity, water and sewage lines along existing roads will help achieve minimal disruption to the environment. In addition visual obtrusion will be reduced by the placement of lines below ground in urban areas although recognition needs to be given to situations where this may not be practical for example, because of the risk from natural hazards. There will be certain sensitive areas where the location of network utility operations may cause particular effects for example in areas identified as having significant natural values.

METHODS FOR ISSUE 29 AND OBJECTIVE 23

District Plan

- Performance standards will be set for network utilities in each zone including:
 - Undergrounding all pipes, lines and cables in urban areas and their location within existing roading networks wherever possible to minimise visual intrusion and other effects on the environment;
 - Landscaping and site screening where appropriate;
 - Co-location of network utilities wherever practicable.
- Resource consents will be required for network utility operations which do not comply with performance standards and for heritage features, outstanding landscape and natural features and Significant Natural Areas.
- Resource consents may also be required from Manawatu-Wanganui Regional council for activities that may, as an example, use the beds of rivers and lakes.

Resource consents are necessary and appropriate to consider impacts of network utilities that are more than minor or that are located in sensitive areas.

- The Plan will specify the information required for a requirement for a designation. Conditions may be recommended by Council for certain requirements for designations dependent upon the circumstances of the case.

The Act requires certain information from those requiring authorities who choose to use the designation process. In addition the Plan will require more detailed information in order for Council to adequately assess the effects on the environment that may be created by a designation.

12.3 ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

The outcomes for network utility services which are anticipated to result from the combined implementation of the above policies and methods are as follows:

- An efficient and effective network of utility services capable of meeting the needs of the District's residents.
- A high standard of amenity in the design and construction of network utility structures.