

# Thames Pool replacement

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**TO** Thames-Coromandel District Council  
**FROM** Scott Summerfield - Policy and Planning Manager  
**DATE** 1 May 2018  
**SUBJECT** **Thames Pool replacement**

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## **1 Purpose of Report**

This is one of a series of reports which presents submissions received on the 2018-2028 Long Term Plan, staff analysis and recommendations for Council consideration. The focus of this report is on the replacement of the Thames Centennial Pool.

## **2 Background**

Consultation on the TCDC 2018-2028 Long Term Plan ran from 16 March to 16 April 2018. 774 submissions were received within that timeframe, with an additional 11 late submissions accepted by Council. 128 submitters spoke to their submissions at Council hearings in Whitianga and Thames from 1-3 May.

620 members of the public attended 19 public, ratepayer and school board of trustee meetings from 27 February to 11 April. Staff also attended market days in Thames, Coromandel, Whitianga, Coroglen and Whangamata to speak with submitters.

Regular polls on the major consultation proposals were run on Facebook throughout the consultation period, receiving 745 votes on the polls and 101 comments received on the posts. The greatest reach of any post was 6,583 people with all other posts ranging between 1,000 - 6500 people reached.

Advertising and promotion of the Long Term Plan and opportunities to speak with staff ran on all major radio stations, and in all district wide and local newspapers leading up to and during the consultation. A rates demand insert was delivered to over 17,000 ratepayers' homes, with an email attachment included for another 1,000 or so. Billboards promoting the Long Term Plan consultation period were erected on major transport routes around the district. Promoted online ads for the LTP were targeted to Thames-Coromandel based users through Metservice, Google, Facebook and NZ Herald.

473 submissions were received on the Thames pool replacement.

## **3 Issue**

Council decisions are required on the proposals included in the consultation document and on the matters raised by submitters.

## **4 Discussion**

### **Sub-regional Pool Submissions**

Council consulted on the building of a sub-regional aquatic facility for the district as part of the LTP 2018-28.

Key points described in the document were that:

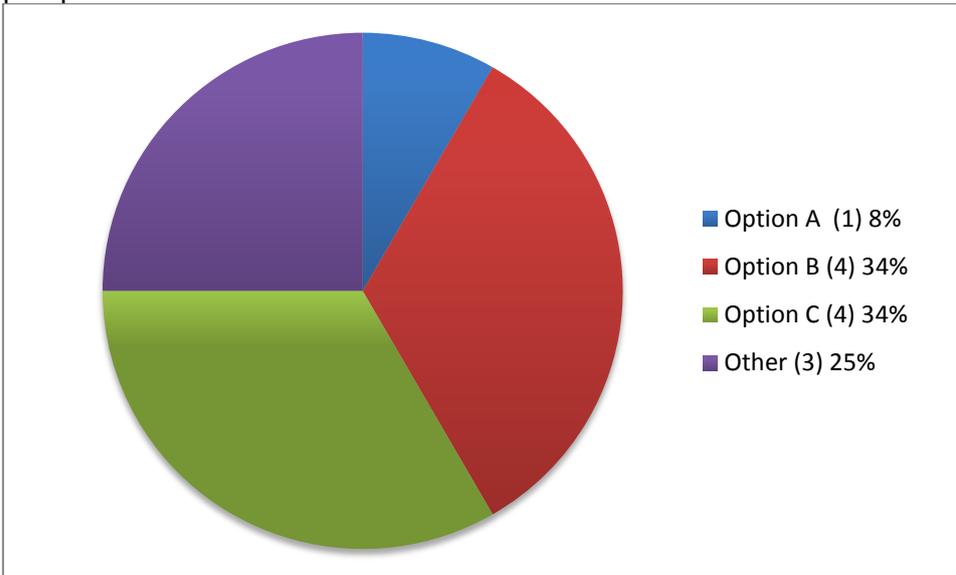
- The current Thames 25m swimming pool is due for replacement by 2027, which also aligns with the long-held desire by Ngāti Maru for Council to vacate the site given it covers an urupā/burial ground.
- The current Thames pool is well used by swimmers throughout our district, neighbouring districts like Hauraki and from as far away as Pukekohe. With increasing visitor numbers to the district and a projected ageing population, there is an opportunity to provide a major new facility which increases Council's services at the pool for many groups of users.
- Since 2017 Council has investigated what an expanded aquatic facility might look like, the services it might offer, and possible locations. The proposal included a 25m pool and a hydrotherapy pool within a permanent building, expanded changing facilities, and could include features like hydro slides, spa pools, a gym and sauna, café and spectator facilities. - Possible locations for the new facility are still being investigated however a site near Thames is likely given its centralised location within the East Waikato sub region.
- This project will be loan funded which will increase the Council's debt levels. The Council has capacity for this debt and will remain within debt limits. The loan for the proposed option will be repaid through district wide rating.

The 3 options presented for feedback were:

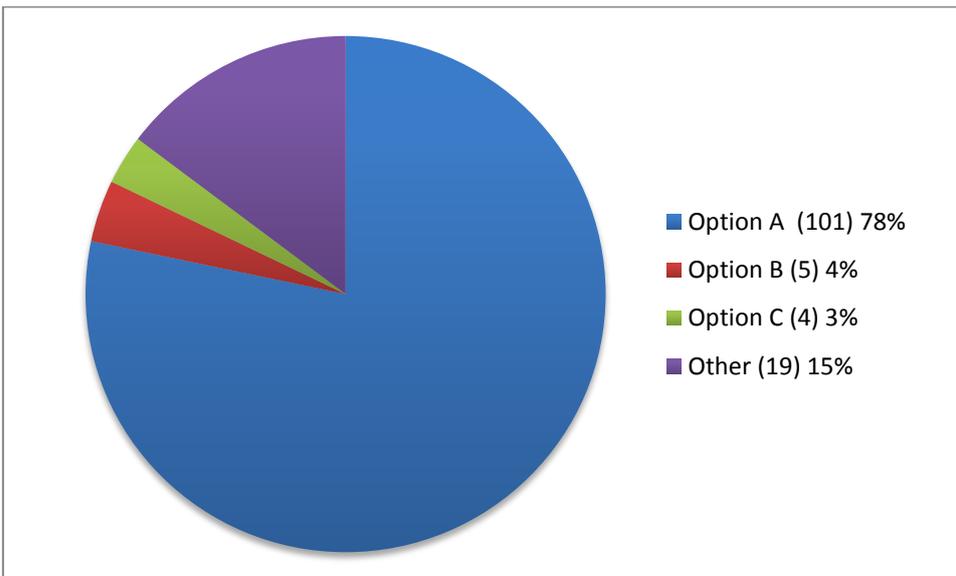
- A. \$21.1m to build a sub-regional aquatic centre in years 4-6 funded by the district, that includes; a 25m pool, a hydrotherapy pool, a permanent building and scope for hydro slides, spa pools, gym, sauna, cafe and spectator facilities, which with \$3m external funding would cost all district ratepayers \$130 per year following completion of the work.
- B. \$11.7m to build a 25m pool within a permanent building in years 4-6 funded by Thames Community Board area ratepayers only. This would provide the same level of service that we currently have and would cost the Thames ratepayer \$477 per year following completion of the work.
- C. \$21.1m to build a sub-regional aquatic centre in years 4-6 as in Option A funded from a share of district and local rating, with the first \$11.7m to cost the Thames ratepayer \$393, and the remaining \$9.4m to cost all district ratepayers \$68 per year following completion of the work.

### Overall support for options

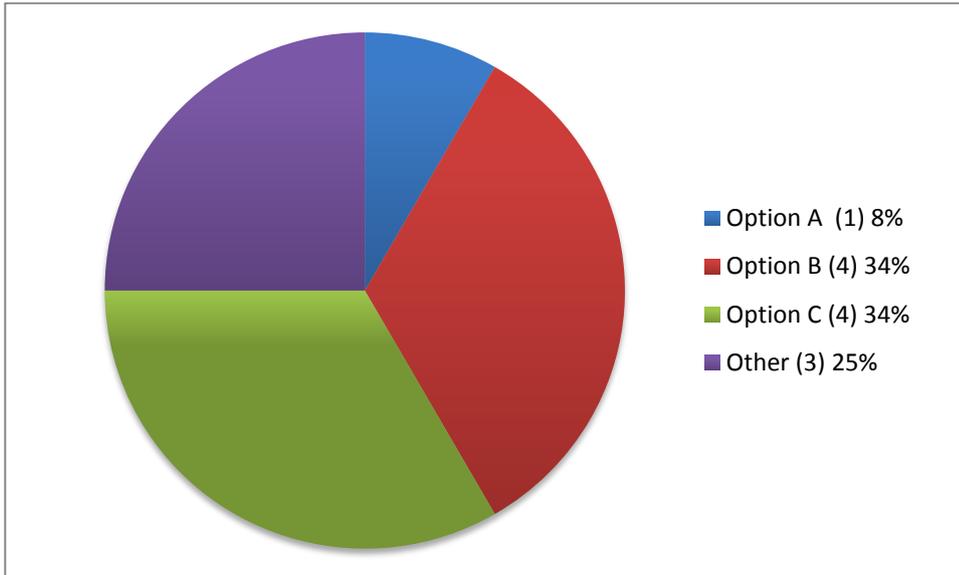
The following chart shows the overall support for each of the options from a district wide perspective:



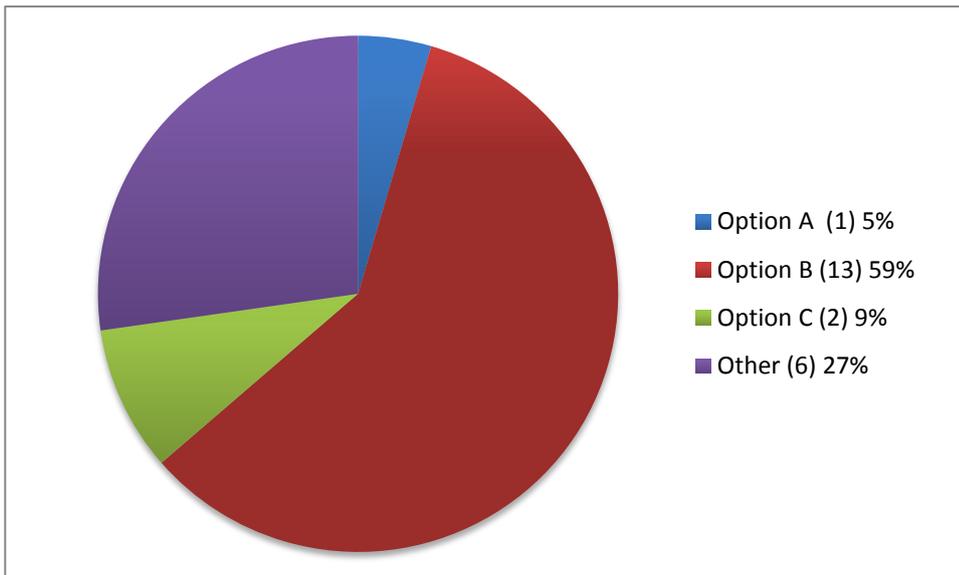
The following chart shows support for each option from Thames submitters:



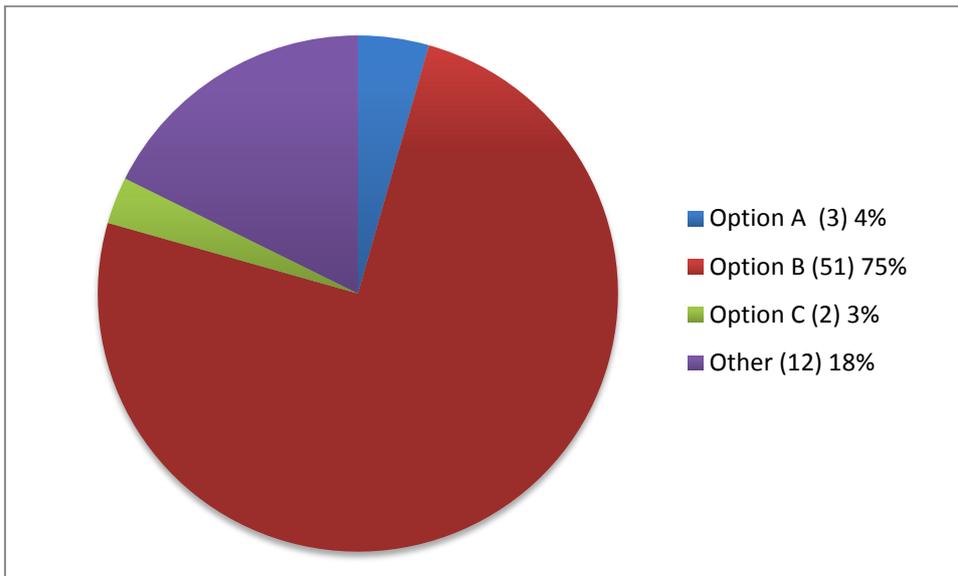
The following chart shows support for each option from Coromandel Colville Submitters:



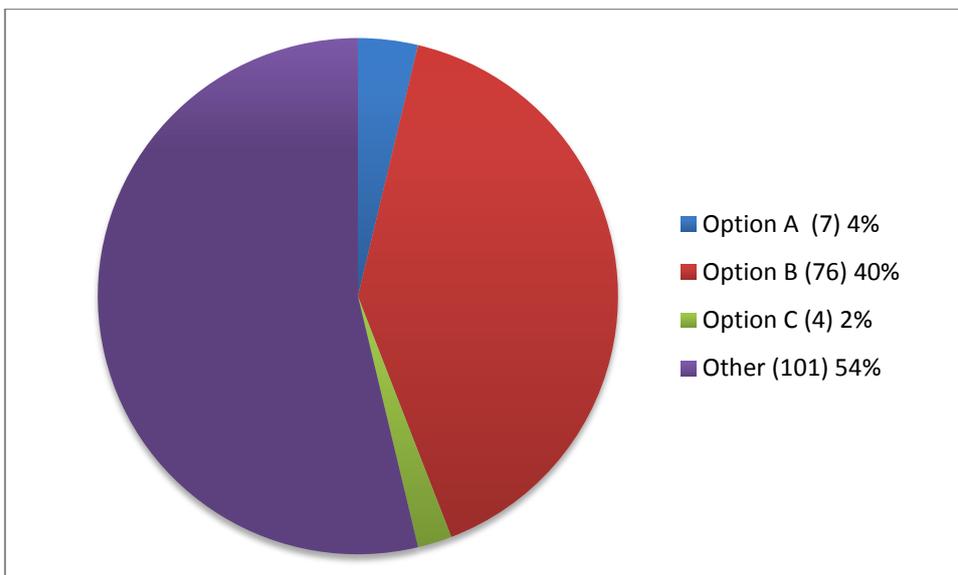
The following chart shows support for each option from Tairua/Pauanui submitters:



The following chart shows support for each option from Whangamata submitters:



The following chart shows support for each option from Mercury Bay submitters:



Of those who ticked "other" without specifying an Option:

- 38 supported a new pool for both Thames and Whitianga as per Option B in both locations
- 20 supported Option B for Thames specifically
- 1 supported a downscaled version of Option A
- 2 supported Option A
- 5 raised concerns about coastal hazard implications for a Thames site

### Submission Points

1. 115 submitters requested an all year pool for Whitianga; and strongly opposed district funding of a Thames pool citing the following reasons:
  - That Whitianga has a growing population
  - The current community pool is insufficient as it is not available during school hours and unusable during winter

- The distance and cost to travel to Thames means Whitianga residents will not use it (and therefore shouldn't pay for it)
  - Children need a pool to learn to swim
  - An all year pool is important for surf lifesaving training
  - Thames population is declining so a pool is unnecessary
  - A local facility should be locally funded
  - To cater for competitive swimming and Mercury Bay Amateur Swimming Club
  - Will be used by areas closest to Thames - in particular Hauraki District. They should contribute.
  - Would benefit the elderly for hydrotherapy and fitness
  - Query what happened to the previous proposal for an Olympic pool
  - Requested splitting the \$21m into two and building a 25m pool for Thames and one also for Mercury Bay.
  - Dive Zone submitted that a year round facility in Whitianga would greatly increase their ability to offer PADI free dive training. Currently travel to Thames; but it being closed every Saturday stops them offering weekend courses. Would require a longer pool to enable doing 400m and 800m swim tests and temperatures above 20 degrees.
  - Suggest Lions Club could help fundraise for a pool in Whitianga
  - Reserves contributions as part of development contributions should have gone towards a swimming pool rather than boat ramps
2. 11 submitters requested an upgrade to the existing Whitianga Community Pool. Mercury Bay Community Swimming Pool Trust request extra funding to cover proposed extended opening hours of the current pool. During the next 12 months request (approx. \$50K undertaken in Whitianga to determine whether an aquatic facility can be built and suggest looking at Moewai Sports Ground, land surrounding Lost Spring and Hilton Park. In the following year ask that the site be narrowed down and possibly allocate a further \$50K for associated costs. Question the feasibility of a sub-regional pool.
  3. Some suggested deferring to next LTP as too many financial uncertainties around partnerships and funding streams. Suggested a simple plan for a 25m pool covered with changing rooms, toilets and room for a temporary grandstand area with the same plan/layout for Thames, Whitianga and Tairua.
  4. Mercury Bay Community Board request no rating impact on Mercury Bay ward of Thames Pool. Tairua-Pauanui reserve judgement. Whangamata CB support Option B. Any additional Whangamata aquatic rate should be spent in Whangamata rather than Thames.
  5. Three submitters requested funding for an appropriate pool in Tairua, Hikuai and Whenuakite) as Tairua is the breakeven point to a lot of the eastern Coromandel. One suggested an upgrade to Tairua School Pool.
  6. 12 submitters requests money should go towards the local Whangamata pool for reroofing, heating and covering. Whangamata Ratepayers Association asks that Whangamata Pool be upgraded to extend its use throughout the year. Whangamata Community Swimming Pool Inc request further Council funding to upgrade and maintain their facility.
  7. Strong opposition from all community board ratepayers outside of Thames. A clear preference from these submitters for Option B - and that the pool be locally funded; with contributions from Hauraki District Council; Matamata Piako District Council and other funding sources. Two submitters requested no pool and no upgrade. Some concerns raised by Thames Ratepayers in relation to cost.

Support for each of the pool options was mixed with supporters having the following comments:

- Downscale the project - simple pools are best. One submitter cited Osborn, Waterhole, Northcote College, Helen Swim School and Steve Lindsay Swim School. Recommends talking to Steve Lindsay.
  - Good for youth
  - Needs the development to make it an attractive area
  - Needs to be financial commitment from Hauraki and Matamata-Piako district Councils
  - Funding is needed from external sources
  - All weather blinds on sides so can open to a outdoor pool in summer
  - One submitter said any proposed café should be privately operated and the space for this leased from the facility if available
  - One submitter suggested a sprung building option
  - Thames Sport and Education Trust support Option A but question appropriateness of scope; including justification of non-core facilities; initial capital cost, ongoing operational cost; and additional funding streams to lessen ratepayer impact
  - Make the pool 50m with spas and saunas
  - Position at the Northern End of Thames so more accessible to other district ratepayers
  - Suggested Burke St site. Moanataiari School support this site
  - Staggered user pays system
  - Transition Town Thames - use sustainable systems eg water reduction technologies, renewable/solar electricity generation plus 1
  - TUGPRA funding should have been used
  - Thames Rugby and Sports Club Users Group support Option A.
  - One submitter queried whether council have considered the amount of accidents caused by hydroslides and needing two staff to operate it - meaning more expenditure.
  - Thames Hospital physiotherapy team support a hydrotherapy pool at a new aquatic centre
  - Option B is the only one Thames can afford and will not attract outside visitors
  - Support Option A on the Totara/Kopu side of town n; possibly Denby Field
  - Concerned about low lying build and future coastal hazards
  - Work into Rhodes Park grandstand rebuild
  - Ngāti Tamaterā support closure of current swimming pool and recognition of the area as a Ngāti Maru urupā.
  - No business case for a subregional facility including sustainability or financial commitment from other districts that would use it.
8. TCB support Option A to meet the needs of the broader community; due to the close geographical proximity to Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga and Hauraki, and the identification of Thames being an ideal site in the Sport Waikato report of November 2017.
9. Sport Waikato support investigation of a sub-regional aquatic facility to replace the current Thames Centennial Pool in a new location in 2021/22-2023/24 at \$21m (capex) and \$77.6m (opex). Supports the investigation of subregional and partner concepts for this facility in line with the recommendations of the Regional Sports Facilities Plan.

## **Analysis**

There is strong support across the district for an increased level of service for swimming in more areas than just Thames. The current pool grants can be considered by staff to look to increase the level of services provided in each board area as part of a larger pools investigation.

Thames is the only board area suitable for a sub-regional facility as it central and accessible to the Thames-Coromandel district as well as neighbouring districts. This means it would be eligible for external grant funds and possibly support from neighbouring councils if it is district funded. If the pool is only locally funded it will not meet a level of service high enough to be considered a sub-regional facility and therefore not eligible for other funding sources. The replacement costs for the Thames pool in Options B and C are both prohibitive for Thames ratepayers and effort needs to be made by staff to reduce the rating impact of the pool through lower capital costs or by identifying alternative funding sources to rates.

The Thames pool is due for replacement within ten years and also must move from its current site. Further investigation into the options of both sub-regional and like for like replacement as well as suitable locations is required. Consultation would be undertaken following more detailed investigations and details being available.

Strong support was expressed for a Council provided pool in Whitianga, and some support also noted for a Council provided pool in Whangamata. This would be a significant new level of service in each area requiring dedicated consultation. Staff consider that investigation into how Council can best support swimming facilities in these two towns needs to be undertaken as part of the district wide view of what need there is around swimming facilities. However, given the existing pools in both towns and community organisations established to run these, staff think that Council should seek to support the existing community facility, locally funded, to a greater level, than to establish new facilities which Council would be required to run.

## **Recommendation**

That over the next two years Council continue investigations into a replacement of the Thames Centennial Pool and more broadly consider delivery and funding for public pool facilities in other parts of the district, looking at the following scenarios:

- A district funded sub-regional aquatic facility as proposed
- A sub-regional aquatic facility with majority funding from Thames, and lower funding levels from other ward areas
- Council considers further support for the existing Whitianga community pool
- Council considers further support for the existing Whangamata community pool

## **5 Suggested resolution(s)**

That the Thames-Coromandel District Council:

1. Receives the 'Thames Pool replacement' report, dated 1 May 2018.
2. Continue investigations into a replacement of the Thames Centennial Pool and more broadly consider delivery and funding for public pool facilities in other parts of the district, looking at the following scenarios:
  - A district funded sub-regional aquatic facility as proposed
  - A sub-regional aquatic facility with majority funding from Thames, and lower funding levels from other ward areas
  - Council considers further support for the existing Whitianga community pool
  - Council considers further support for the existing Whangamata community pool