

Ka huri te ao i tō tātou nukuaō

Our valley is changing

Our river, Te Awa Kairangi – Hutt River, once ran through a valley covered in dense kahikatea forest, flowing into a vast estuary before entering Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington Harbour.

The river was abundant in fish and the surrounding forest had amazing birds, forest fruits and tall timber – earning Te Awa Kairangi its name, which means “the river full of good food” and “the source of life”.

Māori mainly settled along the estuary and most of the pā and kāinga up the valley were located close to Te Awa Kairangi or along its main tributaries. The first European immigrants settled in Pito-one (Petone) in 1840, close to the pā of Hōniana Te Puni, the paramount Te Āti Awa chief.

A massive earthquake struck the region in 1855 causing the estuary to uplift and raising the riverbed, and a major flood followed in 1858, in which several people lost their lives.

Over time, Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt changed.

The population grew from 2,000 people in 1840, to 20,000 in 1940, and reached a population of 111,800 in 2020. By 2048, the population has the potential to nearly double in size.

The valley's forests were milled for timber to make way for farming and market gardening. Then forests were cleared to provide land for housing and industry despite revegetation of the hills. The wetlands were drained to turn swampy land into a more suitable area for a settlement.

Throughout the world, similar transformations have occurred. Human development has altered the natural environment, with devastating effects on ecosystems, biodiversity and our earth's climate.

We now face even more change, as the earth continues to warm.

Lower Hutt today

 **38,000**
hectares
of land in
Lower Hutt

 **13,337**
hectares of
regenerating
natives

 **111,800**
population

 **37,161**
households

Valuable natural resources

 **Remutaka**
Remutaka Ranges

 East Harbour
Regional Park

 **Pareraho**
Belmont Hills

 **Muritai**
Eastbourne Hills

 **Mātiu**
Somes Island

 **Ōrua-Pouanui**
Baring Head

 **Te Awa Kairangi**
Hutt River

 **Te Whanganui-a-Tara**
Wellington Harbour

