



Fab Feathy Survey Results 2022

Summary of Key Themes

Produced by the Fab Feathy Steering Group

Feature Photo: Pete Monk Photography



Introduction

Between 2016 and 2017 a series of community engagement activities were undertaken by Fab Feathy and its precursor, The Featherston Community Network. The aim was to better understand the community's visions and aspirations, and to detail a series of actions that could be taken to achieve these. This mahi is captured in the "[Our Future Featherston 1.0](#)" report.

Five years on, Fab Feathy is reaching the end of its Community Led Development (CLD) partnership with the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA). With a lot of work having taken place over the last few years, and questions surfacing about the future of Fab Feathy, now is the right time to refresh our understanding of what is working well and what should come next.

In May 2022 this process was kicked off with an online survey. This report summarises the findings of that survey. It is intended for people that would like a deeper understanding of the survey results (e.g., Fab Feathy Steering Group, DIA). Those who just need the key points should read the Executive Summary and Theme Summary Table over the next two pages, or the Canva presentation prepared for presentation to the Featherston Community.

Happy reading!

Executive Summary

In May 2022, fifty-one members of the Featherston community completed a survey run by Fab Feathy. The survey aimed to give Fab Feathy a sense of what was working well in the community, and what should come next.

Analysis of the responses identified twelve key themes (see: table 1.). The first set of themes captured what is great about living in Featherston. It seems that the people, the groups, and the community set Featherston apart. To top it off, it is close enough to Wellington to reap the benefits of urban living, but far enough away to stay connected with nature. It is also small enough to maintain a small-town feel.

The second set of themes captures what is working well in Featherston. Community groups, community-led facilities, and community activities are a real strength. This is no surprise given how frequently community members spoke of Featherston's helpful and supportive community. Local news and events also appear well communicated, and there is a sense that retail and hospitality is a boon for the town.

The final set of themes captures what would make Featherston an even better place to live. Infrastructure, amenities, and services top the list, with people wanting to see improvements in the likes of water, electricity, footpaths, green spaces, and public transport. These desires were closely followed by hopes that both the look and function of the main street could be improved. There were many ideas about how this could be done, but the general sense was that the main strip needs to be tidied up, and that spaces need to be better utilised. In addition to these two major themes, respondents also wanted better collaboration with the council and the other South Wairarapa towns, and to see even more activities run in Featherston.

To close the survey, residents were asked what Fab Feathy should do next. For those that answered this question from the perspective of "should Fab Feathy continue?" the mandate is clear: Fab Feathy's mahi should continue. Others in the community answered this question from the perspective of "what actions should Fab Feathy pursue?". These ideas are summarised in Table 5. at the end of this report.

Though the future of Fab Feathy is not yet decided, the feedback provided by the community provides plenty of direction; both for Fab Feathy's next ten months, as well as if its mahi continues beyond 2023.

Table 1.

High-level themes extracted from the Fab Feathy 2022 Survey.

Key Question	Idea	Theme Name & Number	Number of Mentions
Featherston is great because?	Its people and feel are unique	1. Unique Character	42
	It is easy to access urban and natural spaces	2. Proximity to Natural & Urban Environments	32
	It's small enough to have a country vibe	3. Small-town Feel	17
What is working well?	Community groups and community facilities.	4. Community Resources	35
	Active concern for one another and a willingness to act.	5. Help & Support	14
	There is plenty on in the community	6. Community Activities	10
	Local news is shared well – particularly through the Pheonix	7. Communication	9
	Shops and Cafés encourage people to stop	8. Boutique Retail & Hospitality	8
What would make Featherston even better?	Improving the quality of basic infrastructure (e.g., water), services (e.g., public transport), and amenities (e.g., green spaces).	9. Infrastructure, Services, & Amenities	19
	Improving the utility and appeal of the main street	10. Main Street	18
	Running more activities, of diverse types, at different times	11. Activities	14
	Better cooperation between councils and townships	12. Cooperation in South Wairarapa	6

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Survey Design

The survey asked residents of Featherston to answer eight questions about life in Featherston. Responses to seven of the eight questions were provided in free form using text boxes. One question was multi-choice. The questions asked were:

- 1) Why do you think Featherston is a great place to live, work and play?
- 2) What is working well in our community?
- 3) The below themes came from our previous community survey. Which of these are the most important to you today? (please select your top three)
- 4) What made you choose those themes as your top three?
- 5) What would make Featherston an even better place to live, work and play?
- 6) What do you think are doable next steps for Fab Feathy?
- 7) How would you like to be involved?
- 8) Do you think anything is missing from the above list of themes?

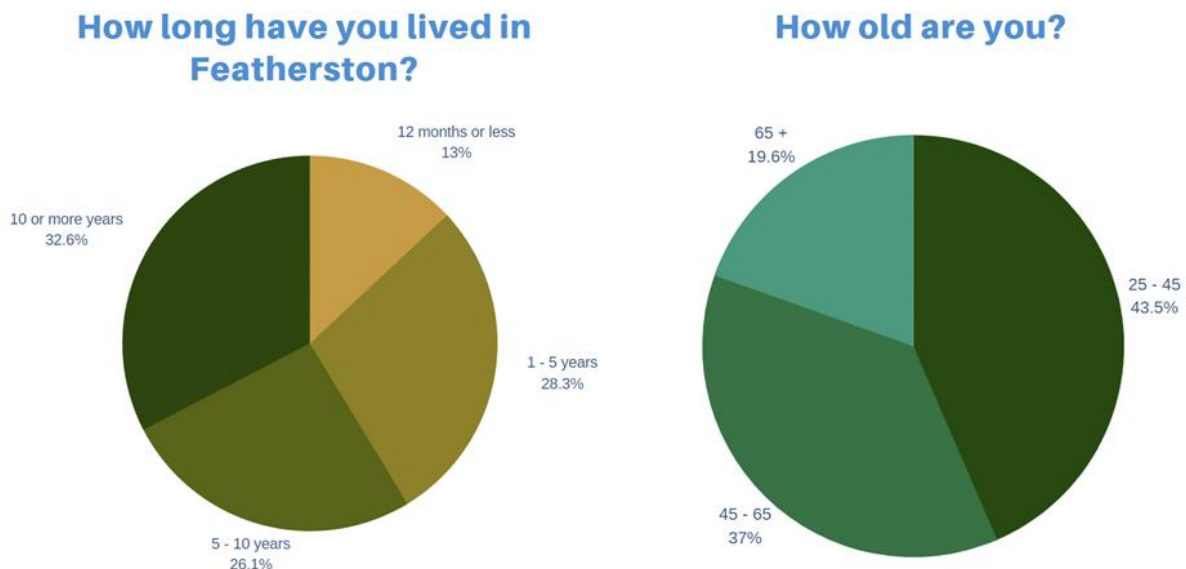
People also provided demographic information and contact details.

Who Completed the Survey?

A total of fifty-one people completed the survey. Only two demographic questions were included: age and time lived in Featherston. The percentage of each is presented below in figure 1:

Figure 1.

Survey respondent age and time in Featherston

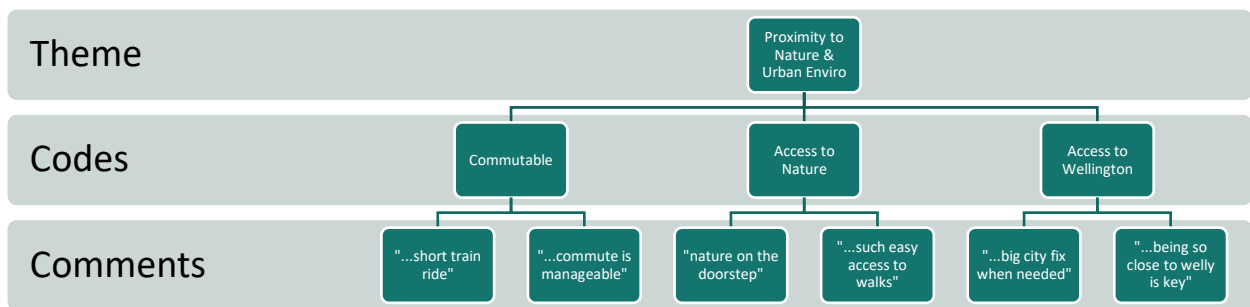


While the respondents appear to come from a reasonable cross-section of Featherston, the survey was not completed by anyone under the age of 25. Further work will need to be done to understand the views of this group.

Similarly, although all fifty-one responses were gratefully received, the low response rate relative to community size does limit the generalisability of the findings to the broader Featherston community. Further work will be required to fully understand the views of the Featherston community.

How was the Data Analysed?

All survey responses were deidentified and analysed using qualitative research software (nVivo). Every comment made by respondents read and assigned one or more codes based on its content and general meaning. These codes were then reviewed and linked together based on their similarity. These clusters of codes were used to create overarching themes that explained the essence of the comments made by respondents. A visual representation of this structure is provided below to illustrate the concept.



One of the benefits of this structure is that it provides a crude measure of the importance of certain concepts. More codes in a theme suggest that more community members made a comment related to the underlying concept or idea. Assessing the frequency with which an idea is referenced is no guarantee of its actual importance, but it does give a general idea of how common certain concepts are across the community. For the remainder of the report, the number of codes is referred to in tables as “number of mentions” for simplicity’s sake.

Findings

What makes Featherston a great place to work, live, and play?

The survey suggests that there is plenty to like about living in Featherston. People seemed to particularly appreciate Featherston's:

- ▶ Unique Character,
- ▶ Proximity to Natural & Urban Environments; and
- ▶ Small-town feel.

Less commonly mentioned, but still popular factors included Featherston's:

- ▶ People,
- ▶ Groups,
- ▶ Affordability, and
- ▶ History.

The next section describes the top three themes with examples. All themes for this question are then summarised in table 2, along with the 'number of mentions' as described in the analysis section.

Theme One: Featherston's Unique Character

People spoke a lot about what makes Featherston different. Mostly, these comments related to the type of people that live in Featherston. Overwhelmingly people talked about how friendly, caring, and supportive residents are. They also spoke about Featherston as a place that attracts creative, quirky, and diverse people.

People also made several comments about Featherston's 'vibe.' People talked about a powerful sense of community and belongingness that is not found in other towns. They also spoke about how quiet, relaxed, and safe Featherston is. There was a general sense that Featherston is a down to earth place where people can be free to be themselves.

"The way this community joins together to solve issues, overcome adversity, and provide for each other is incredible"

"People are generous and friendly"

"It's quirky...it's always itself"

Theme Two: Proximity to Natural & Urban Environments

In addition to Featherston’s unique style and feel, people talked about the benefits of its location. There is a sense that Featherston is ‘just-right’ in terms of its access to natural and urban environments. People appreciated being able to access attractions like the rail trail, Wairarapa Moana, rivers, and forest walks. There was a sense that this contributed to their hauora (wellbeing). People equally appreciated the accessibility of Wellington. It seemed to be a key source of employment and provided the opportunity for a “big city fix” when needed. Featherston provides the right balance between country and city living. Public transport appears to be important to this balance, with a number mentioning that the train service makes the Wellington commute much more enjoyable.

“...Being near the Wairarapa has made our down time from work all the more enjoyable, as we are close to 'holiday destinations' that we can enjoy in our weekends or after work”

“Feathy is a great place to live work and play for me because of its proximity nature and an urban centre”

“It’s close enough to Wellington to find a good job”

“Also... the public transport (train) option is a massive contributor”

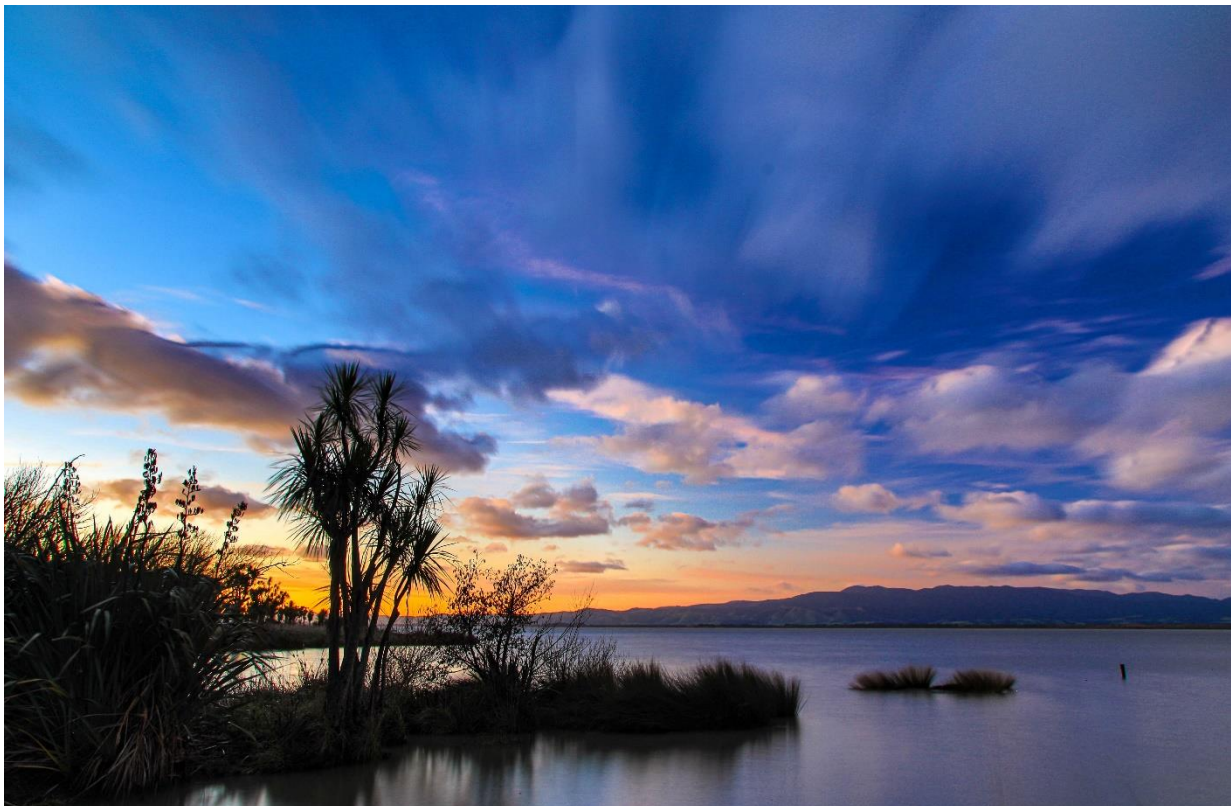


Photo: [Pete Monk Photography](#)

Theme Three: Small Town Feel

Like its location, people talked about Featherston as ‘just-right’ in terms of size. There was a sense that it was small enough to have a “village feel” but big enough to have everything you needed day-to-day. People particularly liked the relaxed feel, small town vibe and rural values that Featherston’s small size seems to enable. People also appreciate that Featherston is small enough to walk most places.

“...It’s small enough to have a friendly village feel”

“It’s a small, safe town with such a good vibe”

“It’s a compact place. Most things you need are easy to find in our fab little town.”

Table 2.

Themes & weighting for the question: “what makes Featherston a great place to work, live, and play?”

Theme	Featherston is great because?	Number of Mentions
Unique Character	Its people and feel are unique	42
Proximity to Natural & Urban Environments	It is easy to access urban and natural spaces	32
Small-town Feel	It’s small enough to have a country vibe	17
People	He tangata, he tangata, he tangata – it is the people that make Featherston great	5
Affordability	It is/was relatively affordable	4
Groups	There are plenty of groups and clubs	3

What is working well?

Based on survey respondents, Featherston has a lot going for it. Responses to the question: “what is working well in our community” centred around five core themes:

- ▶ Community Resources
- ▶ Help & Support
- ▶ Activities
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Business & Tourism

Each of these themes is explored below and is summarised in table 3.

Theme Four: Community Resources

People spoke frequently about how well certain community groups and community facilities were working. There was a sense that Featherston's community groups were active, engaged, hard-working, and interconnected. People also seemed to think that community-led facilities were working well, with Ā Mua, the Sports Hub, Community Centre, and Dog Park receiving frequent praise. Council owned facilities like the library and parks were also mentioned. Overall, Featherston's community groups and facilities are working well.

“Committed people are doing lots of good things e.g., all the initiatives like the sports hub, book town, Ā Mua , and the museums.”

“There are good community spaces - for example, the dog park has been a great place for us to meet others in the community, and having Kiwi Hall and the community centre close by has been great for bringing in events”

“There seem to be lots of things that give a good sense of community like the Community Centre and the activities run there (e.g., Food Pantry).”

“Organisations are putting in the mahi for the benefit for all.”

Theme Five: Help & Support

It was clear through people's comments that one of Featherston's strengths is the way that people help and support one another. There was a sense that the community looked out for each other and helped where they could. People mentioned a clear desire to act and make a difference in their community. Featherston residents show an active concern for one another.

“People are genuinely interested in each other and help each other when needed.”

“We all pitch in and help when we need to”

“[There's a] desire to make it better. People'd like to make a difference.”

Theme Six: Community Activities

People appear to be happy with the range of events run in Featherston. Activities run at the Community Centre were seen positively, as were regular events like the Saturday market, sports nights crop swap, and Book Town. As one respondent put it: “there’s plenty to do if you are wanting to get involved.”

“Sport is humming here for the kids. Lots of options”

“Good activities at the community centre”

“Saturday morning market, activities at Fareham House, Nature playgroup”

Theme Seven: Communication

People appeared to be happy with the way that community news was shared. People were particularly happy with the Featherston Phoenix. It was frequently mentioned as a good way to find out what is going on in the community. Others were happy with community run Facebook groups and community centre communications.

“Local news going through the Phoenix is good”

“There are a few Facebook pages which make it easy to find out what's going on.”

Theme Eight: Boutique Retail & Hospitality

Several people mentioned local shops and cafes as working well for the community. Bookshops were frequently mentioned as were Brac & Bow, Everest, C'est Cheese, the Baker, and Monsieur Fox. There was a sense that these businesses drew people to the town or encouraged them to stop on their way through.

Table 3.

Themes & weighting for the question: “what is working well in our community?”

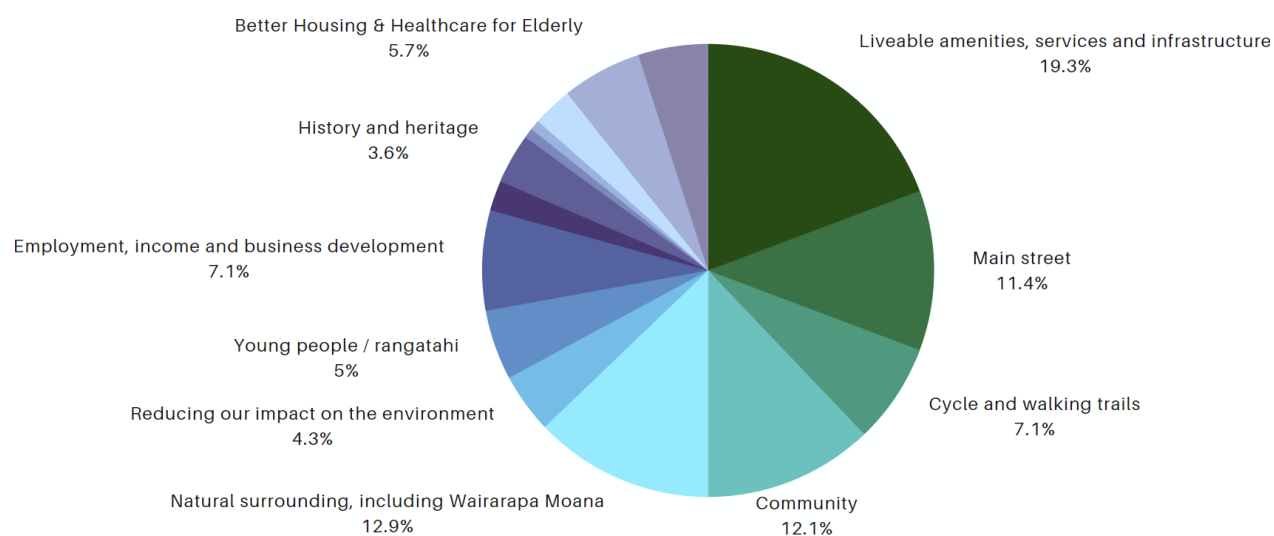
Theme	What is working well?	Number of Mentions
Community Resources	Community groups and community facilities.	35
Help & Support	Active concern for one another and a willingness to take action.	14
Community Activities	There is plenty on in the community	10
Communication	Local news is shared well – particularly through the Pheonix	9
Boutique Retail & Hospitality	Shops and Cafés encourage people to stop	8

What themes are most important to our community?

Community members were asked to select the three most important themes for the community out of a list of fifteen themes from the Our Future Featherston 1.0 report. As per figure 1. below, Liveable Amenities, Services, and Infrastructure accounted for 19.3% of the 141 total responses. The Main Street, Natural Surroundings, and Community themes were roughly second equal, each accounting for 12-13% of the responses. Combined, these four themes account for 55.7% of responses. Including Cycling & Walking Tracks and Employment elevates this to 69.9%. Though all fifteen themes were in someone’s top three at least once, the fact that six themes received close to 70% of the votes suggests some clear areas of alignment across the community.

Figure 2.

Percentage of responses allocated to each theme (of 141 total responses)



What would make Featherston an even better place to work, live, and play?

Featherston residents had a lot of ideas about what would improve life here. There was considerable diversity in the solutions put forward. Though the exact nature of the solutions varied, they could generally be classified as relating to:

- ▶ Infrastructure,
- ▶ The main street,
- ▶ Activities, and
- ▶ Cooperation in South Wairarapa.

Each of these themes is discussed below and summarised in table 4.

Theme Nine: Infrastructure, Services, & Amenities

The most common set of suggestions related to Featherston's infrastructure, services, & amenities. Many highlighted the need to improve local infrastructure. Improvements to footpaths, stormwater, drinking water, electricity, and lighting seemed to be particularly important to the community. In terms of amenities and services, people suggested that the greenspaces in Featherston could be improved, either in volume (e.g., more parks) or quality (e.g., fixing floodlights, modernising the playground, planting trees/gardens) and that public transport could be improved through more regular services.

"There could be improvements with pavements and being able to walk round the town e.g., Brandon Street"

"[We need] an IMPROVED train service to Wairarapa at the weekends"

"The lights at Card Reserve need urgent attention"

"Playground needs some updating - put some tyres under the see saws at least!"

Theme Ten: Main Street

The main street was the second most mentioned area for improvement. There was a clear desire to beautify the main street as well as improve its utility. In terms of beautification, this ranged from simple ideas like adding planters and updating tired entry signs, through to more challenging initiatives like addressing derelict buildings. In terms of the street's utility, ideas ranged from the utilisation of empty retail spaces (e.g., pop-up shops) through to much more intensive undertakings like the creation of a traffic bypass. In any case, the sentiment was clear: the main street needs attention in terms of both 'look-and-feel' and utility. There was a sense that this attention would not only improve resident satisfaction but would also benefit Featherston businesses through increased tourism.

“More focus on developing the main road could mean more interest in exploring our own town in the weekends”

“We would love to see main street with planters. The only flowers seem to be outside the library”

“There are some empty buildings on the Main Street that could be filled with something new”

“All three towns have great heritage value, lets capitalise on it”



Photo: [Pete Monk Photography](#)

Theme Eleven: Activities

The community had a clear appetite for a broader range of activities. People noted a lack of child and youth focused activities. Some ideas to resolve this included painting street art for kids and running more pre-school focused events. There also appeared to be a desire for more community events in general, and events at times that cater better to working people. The general sentiment was that the activities in Featherston are good, but that more is better.

“I'd really like it if there were more things to do with preschool children”

“As a fairly new resident, it's been hard to break in and meet people. Many community centre things are run during work hours, where a few other times would be helpful.”

“We need more things that bring the community together”

Theme Twelve: Cooperation in South Wairarapa

Several commenters highlighted areas for improvement that were South Wairarapa wide. Some felt that life in Featherston would be improved if the council were more transparent and high performing, and if rates were lower. Others mentioned that Featherston would see improvements if it cooperated more with its neighbours (e.g., Martinborough), and if SWDC did the same with the other Wairarapa councils (e.g., Carterton).

“Perhaps more cooperation between the Councils of Wairarapa”

“A better connection with our neighbours in Greytown, Martinborough, Carterton and Masterton.”

“Lower rates. More transparency from council.”

Table 4.

Themes & weighting for the question: “What would make Featherston an even better place to live, work, and play?”

Theme	What would make Featherston even better?	Number of Mentions
Infrastructure, Services, & Amenities	Improving the quality of basic infrastructure (e.g., water), services (e.g., public transport), and amenities (e.g., green spaces).	19
Main Street	Improving the utility and appeal of the main street	18
Activities	Running more activities, of diverse types, at different times	14
South Wairarapa Cooperation	Better cooperation between councils and townships	6

What should Fab Feathy do next?

In answering this question, some people focused on what Fab Feathy should do beyond the Department of Internal Affairs’ funding period. Comments of this type reflected a desire for Fab Feathy to extend beyond the five-year funding period. Regardless of whether that was possible, there was a sense that Fab Feathy should “finish with a bang” either with a large project, or a series of quick wins. It was hoped that this would help the community to see what Fab Feathy had achieved and what is possible when we all work together.

Others answered this question from the perspective of actionable next steps. Each of these has been organised by its area of focus and is summarised in table 5. below.

Table 5.

Community perspective on Fab Feathy’s next steps

Focus Area	Ideas
Main Street & Beautification	<p>Pursue Wifi on the main street so that people can work from cafés sometimes.</p> <p>Advocate for the refurbishment and tenancing of vacant properties on the main strip</p> <p>Do something with the gravel pit. For example, install wind protection in the form of trees or fences and use it for the Saturday market.</p> <p>Survey residents about ways to increase the appeal of the main street.</p> <p>Encourage the council to sweep the streets to avoid mud build up (e.g., Skippage Grove).</p> <p>Tidy up the entrances to make Featherston Pae Tu Mokai look more welcoming and prosperous.</p> <p>Get rid of the Tui sign by the rail line.</p> <p>Tidy up shop frontages.</p>

Branding	<p>Think about a theme for the town like the fell engine and use that around town.</p> <p>Consider a new name (x2)</p>
Communication	<p>Advertise events wider, for people not on Facebook (x2)</p> <p>Advertise for more volunteers</p> <p>Provide more feedback to the community</p> <p>Get out into the community and talk to people face to face (x2).</p> <p>Promote the mahi more, as much of it has not been seen by the general community (x3). Of note, five respondents did not know what Fab Feathy does.</p>
Gardens & Planting	<p>Establish a community garden (x3)</p> <p>Establish a beautification group for Featherston’s gardens.</p> <p>Connect the Wairarapa biodiversity groups.</p> <p>Establish an agreement with DOC to maintain some trap lines</p> <p>Connect with South Wairarapa Biodiversity Group to plant and restore public or private land.</p> <p>Plant one side of every street end-to-end with the same distinctive tree to create a unifying feature for the town.</p> <p>Support residents to apply for funding for planting.</p> <p>Planting more street trees,</p>
Facilities	<p>Make the skatepark a safe enjoyable space for kids.</p> <p>Support the Featherston sports hub to provide night-time facilities</p>
Local Business	<p>Run business sessions.</p> <p>Help businesses, charities, and anyone with a vested interested in Featherston to develop short and long-term business plans.</p> <p>Invest in people, jobs, and leaders. Especially heavy vehicle license holders.</p> <p>Invest in something that makes money. For example, something like Ka Pai soup, or some kind of social enterprise that is community-based at A Mua or the Community Centre</p> <p>Work to develop Featherston as a tourist destination</p> <p>Raise the profile of the small businesses and organisations that are doing great stuff.</p>
Events	<p>Run more community events (x2).</p> <p>Celebrate local events to generate community support (e.g., Matariki, Booktown)</p>
Advocacy	<p>Find out what the council is prepared to do for Featherston as we too can be a boutique town rather than just a drive through.</p> <p>Establish a voice at the council table so that Featherston is treated the same as Martinborough and Greytown.</p>

	<p>Advocate for more weekend trains.</p> <p>Access better funding to assist with minimum standards for record keeping, finance tracking etc.</p>
Wairarapa Moana	<p>Create the cycle trail towards the lake (x2).</p> <p>Improve the lake side for leisure activities.</p> <p>Run water events at the lake (with local nature in mind).</p> <p>Help create a sense of Kaitiaki/Stewardship with the Moana</p>
Continue to	<p>Progress the cycle track so we have a pump track.</p> <p>Support local initiatives that benefit our community (e.g., bike trails, tidying up skate park).</p> <p>Develop and learn</p> <p>Consult with and support Featherston groups.</p> <p>Operate from the Community Centre as this enables a "front door" to one and all that have the Community, as a whole, at heart.</p> <p>Maintain a degree of separation from politics, as this achieves the best result.</p>
Local Groups	<p>Support Featherston's community groups become more self-reliant and resourceful. For example, help them to apply for funding and to become well-structured and governed groups.</p> <p>Develop a shared understanding of how to access funding as well as how to access instruction on small group governance (e.g., establishing/revising constitutions, running meaningful AGMs).</p> <p>Facilitate collaborations between different groups.</p>

Closing & Contacts

That ends the first pass at refreshing our understanding of the Featherston community's priorities and ideas. The Fab Feathy Steering Committee and the wonderful Fab Feathy facilitators thank all respondents for their time and effort completing the survey. If you have any thoughts on the survey, would like to provide more information, or would like to get involved, we welcome it. For any of the above, please contact our Facilitators/kaiwhakarato:

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Waiho i te toipoto, kaua i te toiroa
Let us keep close together, not far apart



*That's all folks...thanks for
reading!*