

Council workshop, 3 February 2026

Information considered in the public part of the workshop.

2026/27 Annual Plan

Council Workshop
03 February 2026

Agenda

The purpose of our session today is to:

- recap the feedback given by Council in 2025 into the draft 2026/27 Annual Plan;
- outline the rates impacts and draft budget;
- present the additional information requested from the Environment Group;
- outline the Sky Stadium solar proposal;
- outline the **inform** and **engage** approach for the proposed 2026/27 Annual Plan; and
- highlight the next steps for the 2026/27 Annual Plan process.

2026/27 Annual Plan

Summary of process so far

- Early planning initiated by the Executive Leadership Team in June 2025.
- In-depth reviews of mahi planned for 2026/27 completed by Officers.
- Options and recommendations discussed with Councillors at two Council Workshops in late 2025.
- Feedback from Councillors incorporated into draft material presented for discussion today.



High level operational savings

Operational changes ELT have already included in the draft budget:

- **Vacancy management:** disestablishing some vacancies and reviewing staffing requirements across the organisation
- **Efficiencies:** reducing discretionary operating costs, including software, printing, travel, and other internal activities
- **Budget reductions:** Tightening budgets by reducing non-essential spending, aligning underspends, and scaling back lower-priority initiatives
- **Timing shifts:** deferring non-essential upgrades and lower-priority project phases to later years
- **Stopping/pausing programmes:** Pausing or scaling back selected programmes pending further review through the LTP and Annual Plan processes

Councillor Feedback – 11 December 2025 Workshop

Environment Group

Councillors provided feedback that they were not comfortable to progress 2 proposals:

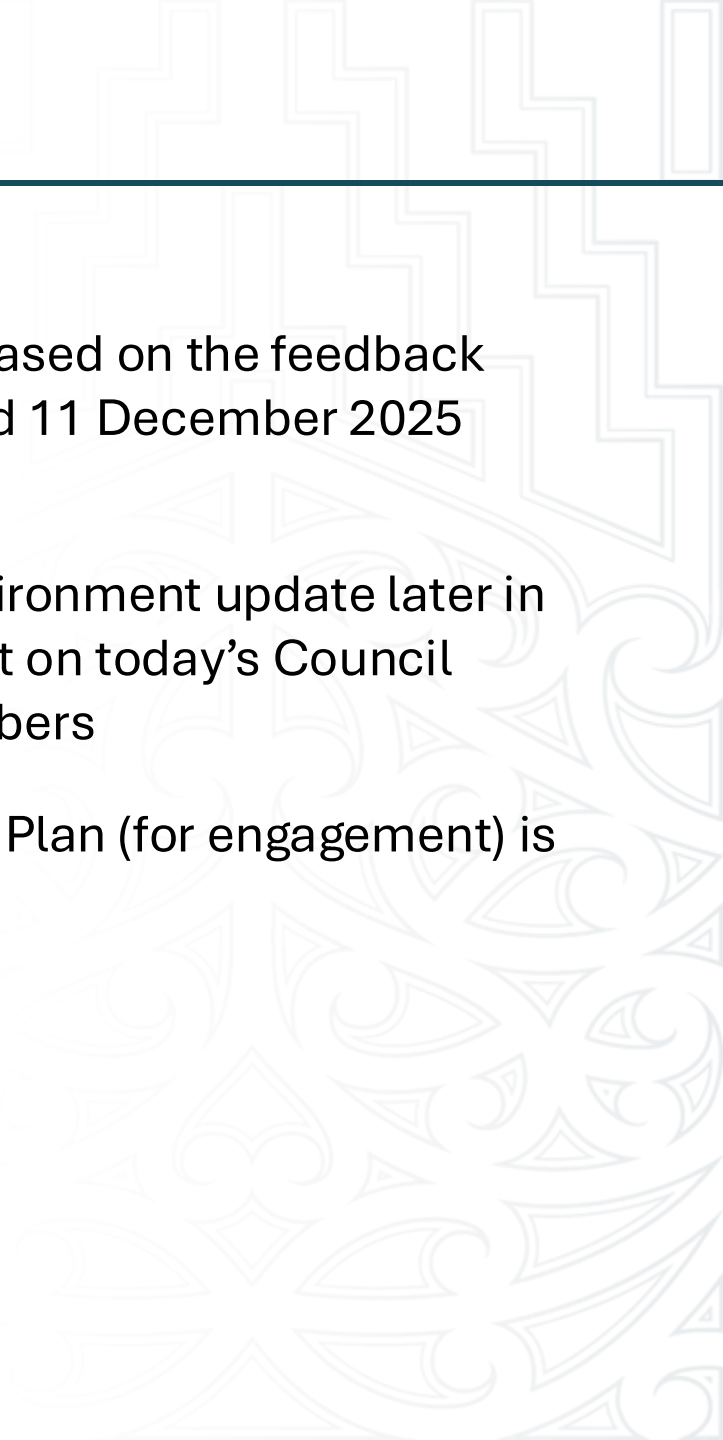
- Reduce delivery within Key Native Ecosystem sites
- Defer park development at Hiwinui Forest

Councillors asked for more information on:

- Increase in camping revenue across the Parks Network – additional options
- Reduce parks restoration budget
- Slow down in pest control work

Important Note

- The proposed Annual Plan rates in today's presentation are based on the feedback that was provided by Councillors during the 27 November and 11 December 2025 Council Workshops
- Any changes arising from the Councillor feedback on the Environment update later in this workshop, or from the Metlink fares review workshop next on today's Council Workshop agenda, will affect the proposed overall rates numbers
- There is very limited time to make changes before the Annual Plan (for engagement) is considered by Council on 12 March 2026.



ELT consolidated work programme changes

	Draft 2026/27 AP rates increase \$\$	Draft 2026/27 AP rates increase %
26/27 Draft Annual Plan – pre-savings programme	\$323.1m	17.2%
Rōpū Taiao changes post 11 Dec Workshop	-\$7.5m	-2.7%
Metlink excluding Farebox changes post 27 Nov Workshop	-\$2.5m	-0.9%
- Farebox changes -subject to council approval	-\$1.5m	-0.5%
Additional Savings Levers	-\$5.9m	-2.1%
Strategy	-\$0.8m	-0.3%
Finance & Risk	-\$1.3m	-0.5%
Corporate Services	-\$0.5m	-0.2%
Te Hunga Whiriwhiri	-\$0.5m	-0.2%
People & Culture	-\$0.2m	-0.1%
26/27 Draft Annual Plan -post-savings programme	\$302.4m	9.7%

Proposed rates increase

Context refresher

Group	Annual Plan 2025/26	Draft Annual Plan 2026/27	Forecasted 2027/28	Forecasted 2028/29
Total Regional Rates Increase - LTP	14.5%	13.3%	7.1%	6.7%
Total Regional Rates Increase – Draft AP	9.72%	9.7%	9-12%	6-9%

Proposed self-insurance fund

- Greater Wellington currently maintains \$61 million in contingency funds held in the Bulk Water Activity.
- Greater Wellington also holds a corresponding external debt to support this fund
- A proposal will be brought to council to use these contingency funds to establish a Greater Wellington Self-Insurance fund as part of an insurance strategy.

Proposed Rates – Residential

Proposed Residential Rates Increases

Residential, including GST	Average capital value	Increase in 2026/27	Increase per week	Rates 2026/27	Rates per week	% Increase
<i>Wellington city</i>	\$949,140	\$107	\$2.05	\$1,295	\$24.91	9.0%
<i>Hutt city</i>	\$739,535	\$39	\$0.75	\$1,230	\$23.66	3.3%
<i>Upper Hutt city</i>	\$737,411	\$98	\$1.88	\$1,088	\$20.93	9.9%
<i>Porirua city</i>	\$876,039	\$70	\$1.35	\$1,125	\$21.64	6.6%
<i>Kāpiti Coast district excl Ōtaki</i>	\$846,756	\$101	\$1.94	\$1,242	\$23.88	8.8%
<i>Ōtaki rating area</i>	\$602,988	\$60	\$1.14	\$672	\$12.93	9.7%
<i>Masterton district</i>	\$540,493	\$75	\$1.44	\$540	\$10.39	16.1%
<i>Carterton district</i>	\$606,525	\$77	\$1.47	\$618	\$11.88	14.2%
<i>South Wairarapa district</i>	\$720,957	\$78	\$1.49	\$718	\$13.81	12.1%

Factors driving rates variations from regional average increase of 9.7%

- Hutt City residential ECV's have fallen 2.8% compared with Regionwide residential decrease of 0.5%.
- Porirua is under the 9.7% average due to an above average increase in the number of properties
- Wairarapa residential ECV's have values have increased by 4.8% compared to the average of 0.5% decrease.

Residential Equalised Capital Values Millions

by Territorial Authority	ECV 2025/26	ECV 2026/27	% Increase
Wellington city	75,014	75,011	0.0%
Hutt city	30,764	29,906	-2.8%
Upper Hutt city	12,007	12,124	1.0%
Porirua city	16,278	16,118	-1.0%
Kāpiti Coast district excl Ōtaki	16,751	16,478	-1.6%
Kāpiti Coast district	2,181	2,137	-2.0%
Masterton district	4,647	4,957	6.7%
Carterton district	1,651	1,708	3.5%
South Wairarapa district	2,671	2,731	2.2%
	161,964	161,170	-0.5%

Proposed Rates - Rural

Proposed Rural Rates Increases

Rural, excluding GST	Average capital value	Increase in 2026/27	Increase per week	Rates 2026/27	Rates per week	% Increase
<i>Wellington city</i>	\$1,393,000	\$112	\$2.15	\$988	\$18.99	12.8%
<i>Hutt city</i>	\$1,102,000	\$23	\$0.44	\$1,074	\$20.64	2.2%
<i>Upper Hutt city</i>	\$1,150,000	\$39	\$0.75	\$933	\$17.95	4.3%
<i>Porirua city</i>	\$1,921,000	\$77	\$1.48	\$1,276	\$24.55	6.4%
<i>Kāpiti Coast district</i>	\$1,217,000	\$96	\$1.85	\$974	\$18.74	10.9%
<i>Masterton district</i>	\$1,186,000	\$121	\$2.33	\$829	\$15.94	17.1%
<i>Carterton district</i>	\$1,254,000	\$113	\$2.18	\$898	\$17.26	14.5%
<i>South Wairarapa district</i>	\$1,501,000	\$120	\$2.30	\$1,049	\$20.17	12.9%
<i>Tararua district</i>	\$1,858,000	\$107	\$2.05	\$980	\$18.84	12.2%

Factors driving rates variations from regional average increase of 9.7%

- Rural property not in the Wairarapa has dropped across the board compared to the regional rural 1.3% increase. Wellington City and Kapiti Coast do not follow this trend due to reductions in property numbers.
- Wairarapa rural ECV's values have increased by 4.2% compared to the regional rural average of 1.3% increase.

Rural Equalised Capital Values by Territorial Authority	Millions ECV 2025/26	Millions ECV 2026/27	% Increase
Wellington city	1,341.00	1,312.00	-2.2%
Hutt city	528.00	515.00	-2.5%
Upper Hutt city	1,723.00	1,597.00	-7.3%
Porirua city	1,265.00	1,234.00	-2.5%
Kāpiti Coast district	3,509.00	3,443.00	-1.9%
Masterton district	4,786.00	5,082.00	6.2%
Carterton district	2,896.00	3,023.00	4.4%
South Wairarapa district	5,091.00	5,202.00	2.2%
Tararua district	20.00	20.00	0.0%
	21,159.00	21,428.00	1.3%

Proposed Rates - Business

Proposed Business Rates Increases

Business, excluding GST	Average capital value	Increase in 2026/27	Increase per week	Rates 2026/27	Rates per week	% Increase
<i>Wellington city</i>	\$3,760,000	\$333	\$6.39	\$5,588	\$107.46	6.3%
<i>Wellington city - CBD</i>	\$3,431,000	\$1,436	\$27.62	\$17,212	\$331.00	9.1%
<i>Hutt city</i>	\$3,090,000	\$1,329	\$25.56	\$5,368	\$103.24	32.9%
<i>Upper Hutt city</i>	\$3,164,000	\$1,655	\$31.83	\$4,979	\$95.75	49.8%
<i>Porirua city</i>	\$2,001,000	\$193	\$3.71	\$2,792	\$53.69	7.4%
<i>Kāpiti Coast district</i>	\$1,667,000	\$170	\$3.27	\$2,618	\$50.34	6.9%
<i>Masterton district</i>	\$1,580,000	\$247	\$4.75	\$1,921	\$36.95	14.8%
<i>Carterton district</i>	\$868,000	\$118	\$2.28	\$1,074	\$20.66	12.4%
<i>South Wairarapa district</i>	\$1,270,000	\$148	\$2.84	\$1,551	\$29.83	10.5%

Factors driving rates variations from regional average increase of 9.7%

- Hutt City Council and Upper Hutt City have revalued drinking, storm and wastewater pipes upwards by approximately \$1.9 billion, a 132% increase in value. Since HCC and UHCC (from 1 July 2026, Tiaki Wai Metro Water) own the pipes, they will be most impacted by the GWRC rates increase while the remaining increase will be borne by the rest of the Business owners. (HCC 6.5%, UHCC 24%).

Business Equalised Capital Values	Millions	Millions	% Increase
by Territorial Authority	ECV 2025/26	ECV 2026/27	
Wellington city – CBD	11,172.00	11,222.00	0.4%
Wellington city	7,657.00	7,657.00	0.0%
Hutt city	6,323.00	7,885.00	24.7%
Upper Hutt city	1,946.00	2,651.00	36.2%
Porirua city	1,726.00	1,737.00	0.6%
Kāpiti Coast district	2,258.00	2,204.00	-2.4%
Masterton district	928.00	979.00	5.5%
Carterton district	203.00	210.00	3.4%
South Wairarapa district	408.00	416.00	2.0%
	32,621.00	34,961.00	7.2%

Pātai?



Rōpū Taiao additional info

- **Recap of Councillor feedback so far**
- **Provide additional information on three proposals as requested**
- **Seek feedback on those proposals**

Recap of Councillor Feedback so far

Recap: 11 December 2025 Council Workshop

At a Council Workshop on 11 December 2025 we discussed Rōpū Taiao savings proposals

We sought feedback on two proposals:

- Increase in camping revenue across the Parks Network
- Slow down the increase in flood maintenance

Higher risk proposals were also discussed:

- Defer Marine Biosecurity role
- Reduce parks restoration budget
- Slow down in pest control work
- Reduce delivery within Key Native Ecosystem sites
- Reduction in Catchment OPEX and engagement budgets
- Reduce restoration work (Wairarapa Moana)
- Defer park development at Hiwinui Forest
- Reduce community focused funding
- Removal of planned new funding for Fresh Water Farm Plan implementation
- QEP – Coastal Retreat Dune Reshaping



Recap: What you told us in December

Councillor feedback indicated they did not support two of the proposals, and requested additional information on three proposals

Councillor feedback indicated that they were not comfortable to progress 2 proposals:

- Reduce delivery within Key Native Ecosystem sites
- Defer park development at Hiwinui Forest

Councillors asked for more information on:

- Increase in camping revenue across the Parks Network - additional options
- Reduce parks restoration budget
- Slow down in pest control work

Recap: Impact of feedback received so far

Feedback indicating Councillors did not support progressing two of the savings proposals has only marginally impacted savings

Councillor Feedback so far	
Removal of Key Native Ecosystem proposal	+ \$170k
Removal of Hiwinui Forest savings	+ \$7k
Environment Group total savings	-\$7.5m

Additional information on remaining proposals

1. Increase of camping revenue across the Parks network

11 December proposal: ~\$160k savings

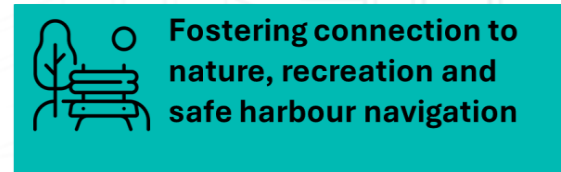
Original savings proposal

- Increase camping fees across the Parks network from December 2026

	Current price	December 2026
Adult	\$8	\$12
Child	\$4	\$6

Risk/impact assessment

- Camping fees have not increased since 2020.
- The fee increases may result in community opposition considering the cost-of-living crisis, however the increases are reasonable considering the services provided and comparison with similar services (e.g DOC campgrounds).
- Consultation with our communities may be required, subject to Legal advice



Key risk areas

Community & stakeholder

Health & safety

Council request (11 Dec): Investigate increasing camping fees further

1. Increase of camping revenue across the Parks network

Additional information for Council

Alternative options to consider

		Current		Proposed				
Increase		0%	25%	50%	62%	75%	87%	100%
Savings		0	\$80k	\$160k	\$200k	\$240	\$280k	\$320k
Powered sites	Adult	\$16.00	\$20.00	\$24.00	\$26.00	\$28.00	\$30.00	\$32.00
	Child	\$8.00	\$10.00	\$12.00	\$13.00	\$14.00	\$15.00	\$16.00
Unpowered sites	Adult	\$8.00	\$10.00	\$12.00	\$13.00	\$14.00	\$15.00	\$16.00
	Child	\$4.00	\$5.00	\$6.50	\$7.00	\$7.50	\$8.00	\$8.50

1. Increase of camping revenue across the Parks network

Additional information for Council

Risks / Impact of increasing further

1. **Increased expectation for services:** Higher fees could raise expectations for facilities beyond what our parks currently offer.
2. **Reduced accessibility:** Further increases may deter lower-income visitors and reduce equitable access.
3. **Reputational risk:** Significant fee hikes could damage Greater Wellington's reputation during a cost-of-living crisis.
4. **Minimal rates impact:** Extra revenue from increased fees is small and may be less if visitor numbers drop.

Proposed Next Steps:

- Consultation is proposed on the increase of camping fees.

Feedback sought: What options do you want for increased camping fees?

2. Reduce parks restoration budget


Original proposal: \$250k savings

Savings proposal


- 20% reduction (\$250k) to the parks restoration budget

Risk/impact assessment


- Climate change targets
- Reputational and partnership risk
- Grazing vs restoration within our Parks network
- Biodiversity and ecosystem health



Safeguarding and restoring ecosystems and natural environments across our rohe



Fostering connection to nature, recreation and safe harbour navigation



Strengthening regional resilience and supporting our communities

Key risk areas

Treaty of Waitangi

Environment

Community & stakeholder

Council request (11 Dec): Provide more detail on the impact of this proposal on our full restoration programme

2. Reduce parks restoration budget

Additional information for Council

Current investment & impact

Activities	Current commitments & value	Impact of 20% reduction
Planting across parks network	<p>This programme delivers biodiversity, climate change mitigation, and community partnership.</p> <p>Next year we have committed to planting 200,000 native plants across 4 regional parks.</p>	<p>40,000 fewer plants planted between all parks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reputational risks (particularly in Belmont and QEP)• Fire risks (and possible increased operational costs for mowing)• Climate targets (reduced ability to be Climate Positive by 2045)
Belmont Restoration	<p>We have committed to an accelerated pace of grazing retirement and restoration next year, with a commitment to actively restore 20% of the area of Belmont that is retired each year.</p>	<p>Retiring pace would continue, but planting would be reduced by approx. 5-10k plants annually</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reputational risks (of not meeting our committed 20%)• Fire and pest risks (and possible increased operational costs for mowing)
Wetland restoration	<p>We are committed to restoring 8 ephemeral wetland catchments within QEP over the coming years, with consent granted in February 2025. This provides improved biodiversity and health in our parks.</p>	<p>Slowing the pace of wetland restoration and shifting a portion of the work into the next financial year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potentially increased future costs (due to weed re-growth)• Reduced environmental outcomes of restoration

2. Reduce parks restoration budget

Alternative options to consider

Options	Savings 26/27	Risks / impact
20% Reduction (proposed)	\$250k savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 40,000 fewer plants planted across parks network (incl. approx 5-10k less in Belmont)- Slower pace of QEP wetland restoration- Risk of not meeting Climate Positive 2045 goal- Higher fire and weed risk- Reputational risk with mana whenua and community
14% reduction (alternative)	\$175k savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 30,000 fewer plants planted across parks network. No impact on Belmont.- Slower pace of QEP wetland restoration- Climate Positive 2045 goal still possible, but more challenging- Fire and weed riskd
7% reduction (alternative)	\$87.5k savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 15,000 fewer plants planted across parks network. No impact on Belmont.- Climate Positive goal still possible.- Fire risk lowest of all options.

Feedback sought: What options for parks restoration reduction do you want to see?

3. Slow down in pest animal control work

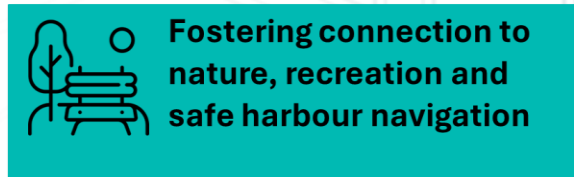
Original proposal: \$100k savings

Savings proposal

- One off reduction in pest control services in the Wainuiomata Orongorongo Water Catchment Zero Ungulates Programme (WOWCAZUP)

Risk/impact assessment

- Environmental impacts: delayed achievement of zero ungulates, increased pest populations, and potential harm to biodiversity.
- Still likely to comply with our Regional Pest Management Plan and therefore Biosecurity Act as this programme is additional to our legal requirements.



Key risk areas

- Continuity of service
- Financial
- Community & stakeholder
- Treaty of Waitangi
- Environment
- Regulatory & Compliance
- Our people

Council request (11 Dec): Show the full picture of investment for the pest control space.

3. Slow down in pest animal control work

Additional information for Council

Key pest control work	Previous investment	Budget in 26/27	Value (why we do this)	Proposed reduction
Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP)	\$2.2m / year	\$2.2m	This is species specific work covering exclusion, eradication, progressive containment and sustained control of pests. This programme improves the native biodiversity, social and economic wellbeing of our region and ensuring a regionally coordinated approach.	No savings proposed
Regional Predator Control Programme	\$2.0m / year	\$2.0m	This programme maintains or enhances indigenous biodiversity through control of possums and other predators in areas outside of Key native Ecosystems.	No savings proposed
WOWCAZUP (Wainuiomata Water catchment Zero Ungulates Programme)	\$150k in 2025/26 <i>This was the first year of this programme being funded</i>	\$500k	This programme is about protecting our high biodiversity value places and delivers to the RPMP. It will support forest regeneration and safeguard water quality by controlling the impact of feral deer, pigs and goats.	A one-off reduction is proposed that slows programme delivery, however basic levels of service are still able to be delivered and commitments to DOC are delivered on.

3. Slow down in pest animal control work

Additional information for Council

Key pest control work	Previous investment	Budget in 26/27	Value (why we do this)	Proposed reduction
Predator Free Wellington	<p>2023-2028 funding agreement is based on \$500K adjusted for inflation.</p> <p><i>This increased from the 2019-2023 funding agreement of \$250K average per year.</i></p>	<p>\$580K (<i>GW contribution</i>)</p> <p><i>There is a \$3.0M total operational budget</i></p>	<p>This programme aims to eliminate mustelids, possums and rats from Wellington City, creating the world's first predator free city and paving the way for Predator Free 2050 NZ.</p> <p>Predator Free Wellington is a project funded by GW, Wellington City Council, Predator Free 2050 and the NEXT Foundation and other smaller funders/sponsors.</p>	No savings proposed
Capital Kiwi	<p>Funding of \$230K per year was committed in the LTP from 2025/26 onwards.</p> <p><i>This programme had not previously received funding from GW.</i></p>	<p>\$230K (<i>GW contribution</i>)</p>	<p>This project is restoring a large-scale wild kiwi population to Wellington. It was funded for the first time in 2025/26, it also received funding from Wellington City Council (\$230K annually) as well as others.</p>	No savings proposed

Feedback sought: Are you comfortable with the proposed WOWCAZUP savings proposal?

Summary of Feedback Sought

Confirming your feedback on these remaining proposals

Savings proposal	Proposed savings in 2026/27	Councillor Feedback Sought
Increase of camping revenue across the Parks network	\$160k	What options do you want for increased camping fees?
Reduce parks restoration budget	\$250k	What options for parks restoration reduction do you want to see?
Slow down in pest control work	\$100k	Are you comfortable with the proposed WOWCAZUP savings proposal?

Next steps:

- These proposals will be included in the draft budget that goes out to the community for feedback.

Pātai?



Stadium Solar Proposal

Stadium solar project proposal

- Council funds installation of solar panels on the Stadium roof and charges the Stadium for the electricity produced at an agreed rate at a minimum to cover debt and interest costs
- Council owns the system, and has an agreement with the Stadium on maintenance
- Capex required \$0.8M - 1.2M. Internal rate of return of 13% (excellent)
- Neutral or positive rates impact – funding surplus (~ 6 months between loan drawdown and income starting)
- Benefits: High profile project reduces electricity costs and emissions for the Stadium and GW as a whole
- Preliminary feasibility work completed and Stadium management supportive



System size TBC but does not significantly affect business case. 531 MW system assumed

Check-in point

Based on all our assumptions, and the feedback received from Councillors to date, the proposed average regional rates increase is sitting at approximately 9.7%

If Councillors would like to reduce the rates requirement further, what areas do you want to request officers to explore further?

Significance and Engagement



Significance and engagement assessment

Requirements of the Local Government Act 2002

- Section 95A of the Local Government Act 2002 requires us to consult on an Annual Plan **only** if there are any **significant** or **material** differences from the corresponding year of the Long Term Plan (in this case Year 3 of the 2024-34 Long Term Plan).
- Significance and Materiality are determined through Council's Significance and Engagement Policy (required under Section 76AA of the Local Government Act 2002).

Significance and engagement assessment

Significance and Engagement Policy (SEP)

- The SEP explains how Greater Wellington decides whether a proposal or decision on an issue, asset or other matter is “significant”, considering the level of impact on the region’s wellbeing, affected people, and Council’s ability to operate.
- The SEP sets out **when** the Council will engage with the community, and **what method and level** of engagement is appropriate, based on the significance of a proposal or decision.
- A decision is considered significant if it involves transferring ownership/control of a Strategic Asset or is assessed as having high significance using the policy’s criteria.
- The policy also acknowledges mana whenua as key partners in engagement and outlines how their involvement is incorporated.

<https://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Documents/2021/08/Significance-and-Engagement-Policy.pdf>

Note: Proposals are assessed against the policy's seven criteria, each carrying equal weight.

A vertical photograph of a waterfall cascading over rocks, with lush green foliage on the left side. The waterfall is the central focus of the image, with water splashing and creating mist. The background is a light, patterned design with faint, repeating geometric shapes.

Updated Significance and Engagement Assessment

Assessment of significance and recommended engagement approach

In January 2026, Officers undertook an evaluation, of proposed changes for the 2026/27 Annual Plan, in line with Greater Wellington's Significance and Engagement Policy and determined that there were no changes in the proposed 2026/27 Annual Plan which triggered a legislative requirement to consult with our communities.

Based on this assessment, we advise an **Inform** and **Engage** approach – giving our community the opportunity to understand the key changes proposed and to provide general feedback to Council before the 2026/27 Annual Plan is adopted.

Proposed 'Inform and Engage' approach

Draft key messages

Keeping costs down

We're finding practical ways to keep costs down long term and deliver better value for money.

Focusing on our core responsibilities

We're prioritising delivery of our core services throughout the region; protecting the environment, providing reliable public transport, supporting our communities, and emergency management.

A changing environment

We're continuing to deliver services while adapting to change, including local government and resource management reform.

What this means for you

Find information about your rates and the projects we are working on in your area ([link to landing page](#)).



Proposed 'Inform and Engage' approach

Draft key topics

Rates

Updated information on the rates proposed for financial year 2026/27

Optimisation of flood investment

Reduce the speed of work while still maintaining our assets

Parks restoration

Temporarily slow mahi across our parks restoration programmes

Key native ecosystems (pest control)

Maintain basic services while slowing services in the Wainuiomata Orongorongo Water Catchment Zone

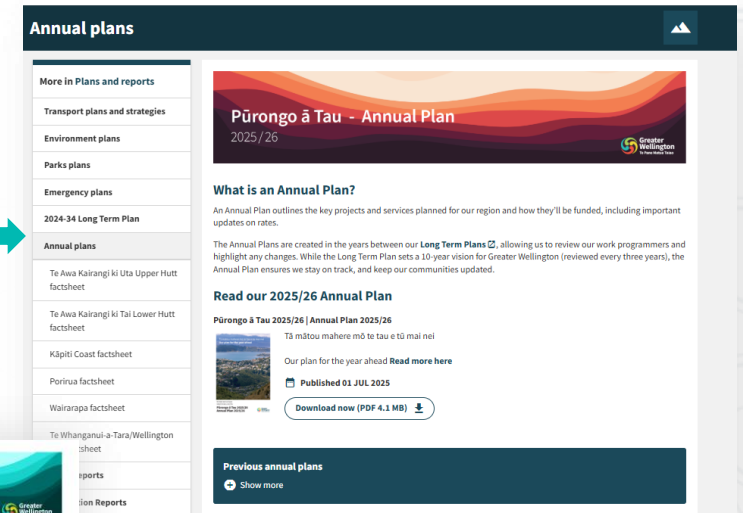
Rail Assets

Defer seismic strengthening activities for buildings under 67% NBS until there is greater certainty around the future of the buildings in question.

Proposed 'Inform and Engage' approach

How will we provide information to the public?

1. A landing page on the Greater Wellington website with high level information and all the relevant links to supporting documents. This will include a space to submit any feedback.



2. Six 'what you need to know for your area' documents. A4 double-sided print out and digital document for each constituency including accessible info on:

- What does GW look after
- About your rates
- Partnership with Mana Whenua
- Examples of projects planned in your area.



As a Regional Council, Greater Wellington is responsible for looking after health of our environment including our forests, rivers, waterways, and native ecosystems. We also look after the health of our community by providing accessible public transport and partnering across the Wellington Region to address climate change, promote economic development and provide emergency response.

Mō āu rēti About your rates
Your rates help fund essential services and projects under the 2024-34 Long Term Plan. While inflation and borrowing costs appear to be easing for 2025-26, we continue to face new challenges including reduced government funding and ongoing cost-of-living pressures. To balance essential services within a tight budget, we have reviewed our work programmes, and propose to either delay or scale back activities in certain areas. This would lower the average regional rates increase for 2025/26 from 14.5% to 9.72%. Learn more about the changes in our 'Proposed Annual Plan 2025/26 - What you need to know' document.

Te mahi tahi ki ngā mana whenua Partnership with mana whenua
Greater Wellington is committed to evolving our partnership with mana whenua. As trust and understanding grow, we recognise the need to shift from embedding to an Māori narrative to enabling mana whenua to lead. This approach will guide whaitua design, delivery, and evaluation, ensuring our work aligns with their priorities, and builds on over 30 years of partnership. Our focus will be ensuring that the work we do supports the intergenerational aspirations of us within their rohe.

The table below shows the average Kāpiti Coast rates, but your individual rates may vary based on local factors which means that your rates bill is likely to differ from that of the regional average and/or your neighbour's. For a personalised estimate, visit our rates calculator at rates.govt.nz

Kāpiti Coast Average Rates		Average Rates 2025/26	Average increase per annum	Average increase per week	Increase %
Residential (incl. GST)	Kāpiti Coast district	\$1,149.01	\$157.44	\$3.03	15.9%
	Ōtaki-rating area	\$633.28	\$79.75	\$1.53	14.8%
Business (incl. GST)	Kāpiti Coast District	\$2,475.34	\$303.92	\$9.84	14.0%
Rural (incl. GST)	Kāpiti Coast District	\$891.68	\$117.67	\$2.26	15.2%



3. An information document for more in-depth information about our proposed Annual Plan and funding for 2026/27.

All images are based on previous years and are indicative only

Proposed 'Inform and Engage' approach

How will we provide information to the public?

Facebook:

- General posts – directing the public to check out what we have planned for 2026/27
- Geo targeted posts – telling people what is planned in their specific area.

Coffee Chats – in person chat sessions where the public can discuss, in a more informal setting, with Councillors about what's happening in their area, held around the region.

Online discussion – where the public can tune in to find out more and ask questions.

Proactive media – media release and FAQs to make sure Greater Wellington is the source of truth.

Pātai on the proposed Inform and Engage approach?

Next Steps

- **12 March 2026:** Council Meeting to endorse the inform and engage content
- **17 March – 16 April 2026:** Public Engagement period
- **14 May 2026:** Return to Council with summary of engagement feedback

Submission on the Simplifying Local Government proposal

Council workshop, Tuesday 3 February 2026

Session purpose

- Seek Council feedback on the draft submission regarding the Government's Simplifying Local Government proposal
- Inform Council of next steps for this submission process

Reminder of what is proposed

- Removal of regional councillors
- Establishment of Combined Territories Boards (CTBs), formed of Mayors from across the region, to:
 - pick up all regional councillor roles including governance of Greater Wellington functions
 - develop a regional reorganisation plan (RRP)
 - be the decision-making body for the new spatial plan and natural environment chapters (RM reform), with ministerial right to appoint one member to the CTB.
- Before RRP are required, the government will review the functions of regional councils to see if any should be reallocated to another agency or delivery model (e.g. where national consistency is needed) or are no longer necessary. The results of this review will guide future decisions and help CTBs prepare their regional plans

Key positions in our submission

1. Local Government requires reform
2. We do not support Stage One – Combined Territories Boards (CTBs)
3. We therefore do not support CTBs as a decision-making body for a region-wide spatial plan chapter and natural environment plan chapter
4. We recommend proceeding directly with Stage Two – regional re-organisation plans
5. Māori rights and interests, Treaty partnerships and Māori representation must be protected and strengthened
6. The Government's signaled review of regional council functions needs to draw on the experience and expertise of the local government sector and consider the appropriate scale for delivery of services
7. The Government's wider reform programme needs to be integrated



Spotlight: Upholding Te Tiriti including settlements

High risk of implementing breaches of Te Tiriti and settlements in the region

Recommended responses:

1. Advocate through RMA/Simplifying local government reforms for the above, and:
 - the Crown to retain its responsibility to renegotiate settlement redress
 - build a planning system that settlements can connect to and have equivalent effect, switched on region by region
 - retention of Māori constituency seats
2. Design reorganisation plan in partnership with hapū and iwi from the outset, to:
 - Protect and strengthen Māori representation and Treaty based partnerships
 - Seek to ensure the equivalent effect of redress is upheld through any proposed new structure/s including Te Ūpoko Taiao, Wairarapa Moana Statutory Board

Submission Approach

- Use DIA response form to maximise impact for Ai analysis, with clear, succinct statements of position
- Support this with other material as required (ie letter, media release)
- Input and link to regional sector and LGNZ submissions and coordinate with Wellington region council submissions
- Share draft content with mana whenua

Next steps

Key milestones

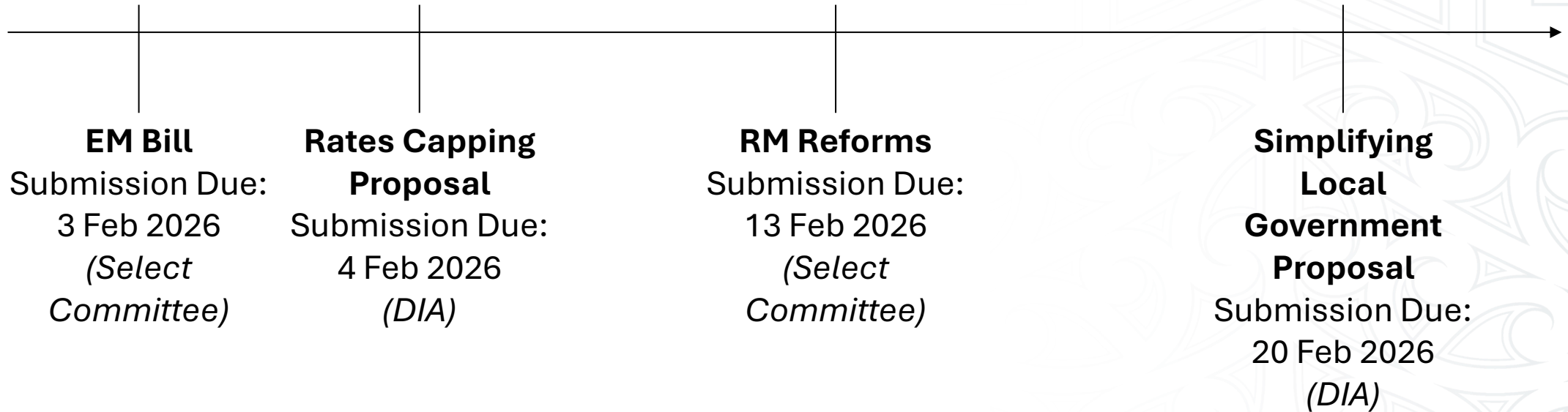
- Mana ki te mana governance hui's about the future of local government (date TBC)
- Council approval 19 February 2026
- DIA submission 20 February 2026.
- Council decision 19 February 2026 includes:
 - mandating the Chair to progress regional reorganisation discussions with the Mayoral Forum;
 - Agreeing to Greater Wellington officers joining a regional joint working group to develop next steps;
 - and agreeing to a set of principles that will guide this work

Discussion



APPENDIX: Submissions timeline

February 2026




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Attachment 1 - DRAFT Submission on the 'Simplification of Local Government' proposal

Proposal document - [Simplifying-Local-Government-a-draft-proposal-27-November-2025.pdf](#)

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DIA question	GW response				
BACKGROUND					
1. Do you agree there is a need to simplify local government?	Strongly agree	Agree 	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. What do you think of the proposed approach overall?	<p>Local Government requires reform</p> <p>We, and all the councils within the Greater Wellington region, agree there is a need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the local government system. The current local government system is complex, fragmented, and under increasing pressure from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the significant costs and complexity of adapting to climate change, • the costs of managing growth including core infrastructure, • emergency responses and recovery needs, • increasing regulatory compliance costs, • funding constraints and a lack of funding sources, and • workforce shortages. <p>We support the intent of this proposal to reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and be responsive to local needs. Multiple reviews of governance and delivery structures in the Wellington region¹²³ have identified that improvements are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarify roles across local, regional and national levels, • strengthen regional coordination, • improve sustainability of funding, and • strengthen consistency with Treaty of Waitangi obligations including Māori representation 				

¹ PriceWaterhouseCooper (2010) Wellington Region Council Governance Review

² Working Party on Local Government Reform (2013) [Realising the potential of the Wellington region](#)

³ Local Government Commission (2014) [Draft Proposal for Reorganisation of Local Government in Wellington](#)

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We do not support Stage One Combined Territories Boards (CTBs)

Regional councillors are elected with a clear democratic mandate to govern regional functions such as public transport services, flood protection, biosecurity, environmental management, regional spatial and transport planning, emergency management and climate adaptation. These functions are complex in nature, different to those of Territorial Authorities and require continuity, specialist understanding, and long-term accountability.

Introducing a temporary CTB would create material risk, including

- loss of democratic legitimacy, trust and institutional knowledge
- inconsistency with Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi including impacts on settlements
- high transition costs, workforce and governance capacity pressures, and operational risk

We therefore do not support the use of CTBs as a decision-making body for a region-wide spatial plan chapter and natural environment plan chapter under the resource management reforms.

As per our feedback on the Natural Environment Bill and Planning Bill, we recommend that the new resource management legislation:

- Outlines the minimum requirements for memberships on Spatial Plan Committees to include balanced representation from regional councils, territorial authorities, iwi and hapū, and central government agencies where relevant. This helps ensure that regional priorities, mana whenua representation including what is provided for through binding Treaty settlements, and local needs are appropriately reflected in the strategic direction of growth and environmental planning.
- Specifically allows for alternative structures agreed with mana whenua to fulfil the Spatial Planning Committee Role in order to uphold the equivalent effect of settlements until such time as the Crown renegotiates the redress with willing partners. These may include but are not limited to leveraging existing partnerships such as Te Ūpoko Taiao or Urban Growth Partnerships (for example the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee).

We recommend proceeding directly with the Stage Two regional re-organisation plans

We recommend that local government reorganisation is delivered through a single, well-designed Stage Two model. This would involve moving directly to the development of regional reorganisation plans, led by democratically elected territorial and regional authority members working in partnership with mana whenua. Regional councillors

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must be kept in place until a new permanent governance structure is established through a regional reorganisation plan.

The Wellington region has already begun a process, led through the Wellington Regional Mayoral Forum, to develop and assess options for regional reorganisation.

We support the use of criteria to assess reorganisation plans if they are strengthened

We recommend the Government's proposed assessment criteria are strengthened through the inclusion of:

- upholding Te Tiriti including but not limited to Treaty settlements and partnership obligations,
- appropriate scale and function fit,
- efficiency and effectiveness,
- democratic accountability,
- evidence based assessment, including of transition costs & operational continuity,
- alignment with existing local government processes,
- alignment with wider reforms, and
- workforce capability and capacity

Māori rights and interests, Treaty partnerships and Māori representation must be protected and strengthened

The proposal is not Te Tiriti consistent and is expected to limit the ability of our partners to achieve their priorities for their taiao, people and communities and create considerable Treaty and legal risk for the Crown. This will result in costs, complexity and uncertainty for our partners and for local government. We recommend that the proposal, including the process for regional reorganisation plans, is strengthened to align with Tribunal findings and Te Tiriti/the Treaty. The proposal should:

- be designed in partnership with whānau, hapū, iwi and interested Māori groups, to:
 - protect and strengthen Māori representation and Treaty based arrangements
 - ensure that the equivalent effect of settlement redress is fully upheld
- retain Māori constituency seats

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The Government’s signaled review of regional council functions needs to draw on the experience and expertise of the local government sector and consider the appropriate scale for delivery of services

Regional Councils currently perform important functions for their communities including public transport services, flood protection, biosecurity, environmental management, regional spatial and transport planning, emergency management, climate adaptation, maritime navigation and regional parks and recreation facilities. Reviews have demonstrated that the most effective scale for delivery of many of these activities is regional.

The Government’s upcoming review of the delivery model for these functions needs to consider communities of interest, the need for local variability of outcomes, capability, efficiency and accountability⁴. Assessments must draw on the expertise of regional councils and sector-wide experts to establish system settings that will provide the best outcomes for our communities. Without drawing on this knowledge base, the review risks overlooking critical insights about what works, what doesn’t, and what communities genuinely need.

The Government’s wider reform program needs to be integrated

The Government’s various legislative reforms need to be designed alongside each other to achieve integration, clarity and improved outcomes for communities. Misalignment across the reform program could lead to significant risks including:

- Treaty breaches and associated litigation risk (as detailed above and in question 11)
- delays to reform implementation and desired outcomes (e.g. the volume of change will impact local government’s ability to implement the reforms).
- new legislation requiring re-work as a result of subsequent legislative and system changes (e.g. the resource management reform bills create specific roles and responsibilities for regional councils. These roles will need to be reassigned through local government reorganisation)
- wider system issues unresolved by reform (e.g. financial impacts of stranded assets, outstanding funding issues within the transport system).

SIMPLIFYING REGIONAL GOVERNANCE					
3. Do you agree with replacing regional councillors with a CTB?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree not disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. What do you like or dislike about the proposal to	We do not support replacing regional councillors with a Combined Territories Board (CTB).				

⁴ Castalia (2025) [Functions of Regional and Unitary Authorities in New Zealand, Report to Te Uru Kahika](#)

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replace regional councillors with a CTB?

Regional councillors are elected with a clear democratic mandate to govern regional functions such as public transport, flood protection, biosecurity, environmental management, regional spatial and transport planning, emergency management and climate adaptation. These functions are complex in nature, different to those of Territorial Authorities and require continuity, specialist understanding, and long-term accountability.

Introducing a temporary CTB would create material risk, including:

1. Loss of democratic legitimacy, trust, and institutional knowledge

The proposed reform timeline is not aligned with democratic cycles. The Councilors are elected for three-year terms and replacing them mid-term with unelected CTB members undermines public trust and democratic accountability. The Productivity Commission's inquiry into local government funding and financing highlighted the importance of predictable, transparent decision-making frameworks and warned against institutional churn that erodes public trust. Evidence from Castalia (2025), the Productivity Commission and the Auditor General all point to the same conclusion: regional governance should be stable, enduring, and democratically grounded. Replacement with a short-term transitional body will undermine these outcomes.

A lot of detail would need to be worked through to ensure a regional perspective is maintained across the various bodies that regional council has involvement in and consideration given to how the regional council voice is able to be taken account of in the decision-making process. For example, established statutory committee arrangements (i.e. the Regional Transport Committee and the Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group), council companies (e.g. WRC Holdings Limited) and other bodies (e.g. the Wellington Regional Stadium Trust).

Mayors on CTBs face conflicts of interest because their declaration on assuming office requires them to prioritise their own districts, not regional outcomes. Mayors participating in a CTB would need to make a separate declaration that they are acting in the interests of the region and submit separate disclosures of interest.

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2. Inconsistency with Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi including impacts on settlements

As a regional council, we value our 30+ year partnerships with mana whenua and we also have a range of important Treaty settlement commitments. CTBs and the proposed approach to the regional reorganisation plans risk sidelining or destabilising these commitments and the partnership arrangements that were designed to be durable and enduring. CTBs could also undermine binding Treaty settlements in our region, for example, by assuming responsibility for spatial planning and natural environment decisions in a forum without Māori representation, where Te Ūpoko Taiao which was made permanent through the Kahungunu ki Wairarapa settlement provides for 50/50 Māori–Crown representation on planning matters.

Removing Māori constituency councillors risks undermining Māori political representation and may breach Treaty principles, as highlighted by the December 2025 Wai 1040 findings relating to local government.

3. High transition costs, workforce and governance capacity pressures, and operational risk

Temporary governance bodies create significant transition costs which are often underestimated. Past reforms, such as Auckland amalgamation in 2010, show that transitions require duplicated induction and training, and often fail to deliver promised efficiencies.

Mayors already have a very full workload and additional governance workload for regional council issues will be impractical and unworkable. There simply isn't enough capacity for mayors to govern all regional work programmes.

The local government sector already faces shortages in engineering, planning, environmental science and transport. Supporting a CTB while also responding to multiple reforms and maintaining core services would stretch capacity beyond safe operational limits.

Emergency management reviews, including those following the Canterbury and Kaikōura earthquakes and Cyclone Gabrielle, consistently emphasise the need for stable regional leadership. Introducing CTBs would divert attention from essential service delivery at a time when regional resilience and preparedness are increasingly critical.

We recommend that local government reorganisation is delivered through a single, well-designed Stage Two model. This would involve moving directly to the development of regional reorganisation plans, led by democratically elected territorial and regional authority members working in partnership with mana whenua, with regional

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	<p>councillors remaining in place until a new permanent governance structure is established. The Wellington region has already begun a process, led through the Wellington Regional Mayoral Forum, to develop and assess options for regional reorganisation.</p> <p>In conclusion, we do not support the introduction of a Combined Territories Board (the CTB). We recommend moving straight to stage two, with regional councillors continuing their existing role and functions and with a Tiriti consistent approach</p> <p>We have not answered question five because we do not support the establishment of CTBs.</p>				
<p>5. What level of Crown participation in regional decision-making do you prefer?</p>	<p>None – only mayors on the CTB</p>	<p>Crown Commissioner on CTB (non-voting)</p>	<p>Crown Commissioner on CTB (with veto power)</p>	<p>Crown Commissioner on CTB (with majority vote)</p>	<p>Crown Commissioners instead of a CTB</p>
<p>ALLOCATING VOTING POWER</p>					
<p>6. Do you agree that mayors on the CTB should have a proportional vote adjusted for effective representation?</p>	<p>Strongly agree</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Neither agree not disagree</p>	<p style="background-color: yellow;">Disagree</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p>	<p>Strongly disagree</p>
<p>7. What do you like or dislike about the voting proposal for the CTB?</p>	<p>As we do not support CTBs, we do not support their use as a decision-making body for a region-wide spatial plan chapter and natural environment plan chapter under the resource management reforms. As per our feedback on the Natural Environment Bill and Planning Bill, we recommend that the new resource management legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines the minimum requirements for memberships on Spatial Plan Committees to include balanced representation from regional councils, territorial authorities, iwi and hapū, and central government agencies where relevant. This helps ensure that regional priorities, mana whenua representation including what is provided for through binding Treaty settlements, and local needs, are appropriately reflected in the strategic direction of growth and environmental planning. • Specifically allows for alternative structures agreed with mana whenua to fulfil the Spatial Planning Committee Role in order to uphold the equivalent effect of settlements until such time as the Crown 				

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renegotiates the redress with willing partners. These may include but are not limited to leveraging existing partnerships such as Te Ūpoko Taiao or Urban Growth Partnerships (for example the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee)..

Proportional voting raises the following issues:

1. Weakens regional perspective

CTB members should be statutorily required to act in the interests of the region as a whole in exercising their decision-making responsibilities; weighted voting would work against that regional perspective.

2. It creates inequity between territorial authorities

Population based weighting risks marginalising smaller councils, even when they share equally in regional issues such as flood protection, public transport, climate adaptation and emergency management.

3. It is inconsistent with Te Tiriti/Treaty of Waitangi obligations

Weighted mayoral voting does not reflect the role of mana whenua as Treaty partners. In addition, removal of the Māori constituency seats constitutes a potential Treaty breach.

The voting proposal does not include Māori representation, even though CTBs would be making decisions in areas where settlement deeds and acts of Parliament have confirmed that Māori should have 50/50 representation on key decision-making bodies for planning matters. We also note that inserting spatial plans ‘over the top’ of regional planning instruments will undermine the intent of those arrangements (by reducing the discretion of the relevant decisions makers). Further, even if Māori representation is provided for, the proposed RMA replacement legislation constrains our ability to provide equivalency in the new system, including because it no longer prioritises te Tiriti.

We support the principles of democratic legitimacy, upholding the honour of the Crown in giving effect to Te Tiriti/the Treaty, effective representation, and effective governance, and recommend this is achieved through:

- Moving directly to Stage Two by developing regional reorganisation plans, while keeping regional councilors in place until the new permanent governance structure is established
- co-design with mana whenua – whānau, hapū, iwi and interested Māori groups

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- durable structures
- transparent accountability

In conclusion, we do not support the proposed CTB voting model. Weighted mayoral voting risks weakening the regional perspective, creating inequity between territorial authorities, and undermining Te Tiriti/Treaty obligations including settlements. We recommend that local government reorganisation is delivered through a single, well-designed Stage Two model. This would involve moving directly to the development of regional reorganisation plans, led by democratically elected territorial and regional authority members working in partnership with mana whenua, with regional councillors remaining in place until a new permanent governance structure is established. The Wellington region has already begun a process, led through the Wellington Region Mayoral Forum, to develop and assess options for regional reorganisation.

CROSS BOUNDARY ISSUES

8. What do you think about the ways that communities crossing regional boundaries could be represented?

We agree that communities do not always align neatly with regional and other administrative boundaries, and that representation arrangements must reflect how people live, travel, work and access services. However, the proposal's current approach, including through CTBs, does not provide a durable or effective way to represent cross boundary communities.

1. CTBs are not the right mechanism for cross boundary representation

CTBs are temporary, transitional bodies with unclear mandates and short timeframes. They are not well suited to representing communities whose interests span multiple regions because:

- their membership is not directly elected,
- their accountability is unclear,
- they would exist only briefly before being replaced, and
- communities would need to re-establish relationships twice.

This is inconsistent with the widely recognised need for long term, stable representation for cross boundary communities.

2. Regional councils already manage many cross boundary issues effectively

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Evidence from Castalia (2025) shows that many regional functions, such as public transport, flood protection, biosecurity, environmental science and emergency management, inherently operate across territorial boundaries. Regional councils already collaborate extensively with neighbouring regions, territorial authorities, and to varying extents hapū and iwi Māori, to manage these shared issues. Regional councils work collaboratively together through Te Uru Kahika and share best practice approaches. Strengthening these existing mechanisms is more effective than creating temporary new governance bodies without relevant expertise.

3. A well designed Stage Two model can better support cross boundary communities

We consider that the enduring Stage 2 governance model (as a result of regional reorganisation plans), not CTBs, is the appropriate place to address cross boundary representation. Flexible, durable and proven approaches include:

- joint committees or shared governance arrangements for specific cross boundary issues,
- shared services or CCOs (e.g., for public transport or hazard management),
- strengthened regional collaboration frameworks,
- formalised partnerships with mana whenua whose rohe span multiple regions.

4. Representation must align with how communities experience services


Communities crossing regional boundaries often share:

- transport networks,
- river catchments and hazard zones,
- economic and labour markets,
- hapū and iwi Māori relationships,
- environmental systems,
- emergency response and recovery outcomes, and
- built infrastructure.

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	<p>Many cross boundary communities are also linked through iwi rohe and Treaty settlement arrangements that guarantee Māori representation in planning and environmental governance. CTBs do not reflect these arrangements and would weaken Māori decision making rights in cross boundary decision-making. These are long term, structural realities. Representation arrangements must therefore be reflected in and/or alongside long term governance structures – not transitional bodies.</p> <p>In conclusion, the proposal does not provide a durable or effective approach to representing communities on issues that cross regional boundaries. We recommend that local government reorganisation be delivered through a single, well-designed Stage Two model. This would involve moving directly to the development of regional reorganisation plans, led by democratically elected territorial and regional authority members working in partnership with mana whenua, with regional councillors remaining in place until a new permanent governance structure is established. Regional re-organisation plans should consider proven mechanisms such as joint committees, shared services, CCOs and strengthened regional collaboration frameworks.</p>
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IMPROVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT					
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9. Do you support the proposal to require CTBs to develop regional reorganisation plans?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree not disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree 
10. What do you think about the criteria proposed for assessing regional reorganisation plans?	<p>We do not support the proposal to require CTBs to develop regional reorganisation plans because we do not support the establishment of CTBs. We recommend that local government reorganisation is achieved through a single, well-designed Stage Two model. This would involve moving directly to the development of regional reorganisation plans, led by democratically elected territorial and regional authority members working in partnership with mana whenua. Regional councillors must be kept in place until a new permanent governance structure is established through a regional reorganisation plan.</p> <p>The Wellington region has already begun a process, led through the Mayoral Forum, to develop and assess options for regional reorganisation.</p>				

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Our support for the criteria proposed for assessing regional reorganisation plans is conditional on them being strengthened by including:

- **Upholding Te Tiriti including but not limited to Treaty settlements and partnership obligations**
Reorganisation plans must explicitly protect and strengthen Tiriti/Treaty protections including Māori representation and decision-making rights, upholding Treaty settlements and existing partnership arrangements. Temporary bodies like CTBs, along with the proposed approach to regional reorganisations plans which only require consultation with Māori are not Tiriti consistent and raise legal and reputational risks for the Crown
- **Appropriate scale and function fit** consistent with Castalia’s findings that many critical services (flood protection, public transport, biosecurity, environmental science) are most effective when delivered regionally.
- **Efficiency and effectiveness** including the ability to adopt shared services or CCOs where appropriate.
- **Democratic accountability**
Reorganisaition must maintain clear mandates, transparent decision making and accountability.
- **Evidence based assessment, including of transition costs & operational continuity**
Past local government reforms show transition costs are often underestimated. Criteria should require realistic, independently tested costings. Criteria should require demonstration that essential services, especially flood protection, emergency management, public transport and climate adaptation, will not be disrupted. This aligns with lessons from emergency management reviews.
- **Alignment with existing local government processes**
Reorganisation plans must align with electoral cycles to strengthen democratic legitimacy and trust. Consideration must be given to Long Term Plan requirements. Introducing CTBs and then replacing them midcycle would require substantial rework of statutory plans, potentially twice. This would generate avoidable cost, confuse communities, and reduce transparency and investment certainty.
- **Alignment with wider reforms**
Reorganisation plans must align with other Government reform programmes and support their successful delivery, including

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resource Management reform• Local Water Done Well reform• Local Government Act amendments (including rates capping)• Civil Defence Emergency Management Act reforms• Proposed transport funding reforms. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workforce capability and capacity Plans must show how specialist skills will be retained and strengthened. Workforce shortages are a major constraint across the sector. <p>In conclusion, we support the use of criteria to assess reorganisation plans subject to the following inclusions: Upholding Te Tiriti including but not limited to Treaty settlements and partnership obligations, Regional scale and function fit, Efficiency and effectiveness, democratic accountability, evidence based assessment of transition costs & operational continuity, alignment with statutory planning cycles, alignment with wider reforms, and workforce capability and capacity.</p>
TREATY OF WAITANGI AND MĀORI REPRESENTATION	
11. What do you think about how the proposal provides for iwi/Māori interests and Treaty arrangements?	<p>The proposal does not adequately provide for iwi/Māori interests and Treaty arrangements. Māori rights and interests, Treaty partnerships and Māori representation must be protected and strengthened in the proposal.</p> <p>The proposal is not Tiriti consistent. It:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- removes democratically elected Māori constituency seats.- narrows consideration of a broader set of Māori rights and interests to upholding settlements. For example, it does not sufficiently provide for Māori participation in the design of the new local government system, or Māori representation in the new system.- requires CTBs to implement Treaty settlement redress agreed between the Crown and Māori in a new planning system that impacts on equivalency of that redress; and, <p>Read in conjunction with clause 10 of the proposed Planning Bill and clause 10 of the Natural Environment Bill, delegates to CTBs the responsibility to interpret the intent of Treaty settlement redress agreed between the Crown and Māori, assess its equivalency in the new planning system and then possibly substitute alternatives in regional reorganisation plans (without any requirement for agreement beyond consultation) until such time as the Crown concludes negotiations with willing PSGEs . The Crown is the party to a settlement not local government, and we question whether the Crown could or should delegate this.</p>

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Even if the proposals are changed such that equivalent Māori representation is assured, under the proposed RMA reforms cultural considerations are not given the same weight as under the RMA. In addition, there are no clear cultural or environmental bottom lines. This means that CTBs, or Te Ūpoko Taiao will not have the scope and discretion to protect the environment and cultural values to the extent that they currently can. There may be limited value for Māori in being represented on decision-making bodies that cannot legally apply Māori priorities and deliver desired outcomes. This means local government may be required to implement potential Treaty breaches.

Taken together, we consider the above factors:

- limit the ability for our partners to achieve their aspirations for their people,
- diminish decades of progress developing partnerships to recognise the customary rights of whanau, hapu and iwi
- impact on the mātauranga of whānau, hapū and iwi and the skills and time vested to ensure that they can provide the right level of advice and engagement with local government
- fail to recognise and incorporate customary lore and the responsibilities of kaitiaki, as expressed through the principle of kaitiakitanga, and
- create considerable Treaty and legal risk for the Crown, which will create costs, complexity and uncertainty for our partners and for local government in implementing reforms.

The findings and recommendations of the Wai 1040 Paparahi o Te Raki Stage 2 Inquiry issued on 17 December 2025 are instructive. The Tribunal has found that failing to provide for Māori representation in local government in Northland constitutes a breach of the Treaty and these findings have broader relevance. Accordingly, the Tribunal findings confirm that any process to simplify local government should therefore:

- Be designed in partnership with mana whenua and interested Māori groups
- Ensure that the equivalent effect of settlement redress is fully upheld
- Protect and strengthen Māori representation and Treaty based arrangements

The Paparahi findings build on relevant findings in our region in the Wai 863 Wairarapa ki Tararua Report (Vol 3). The Wairarapa Tribunal found that through the LGA 2002, the Crown delegated its Treaty responsibilities to local government without the corresponding obligations (e.g. to provide for Māori participation in decision-making), in breach of Te Tiriti/the Treaty. The Tribunal recommended the concentration of functions in fewer local authorities to

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lessen the relationship burden for hapū and iwi, in addition to other recommendations including providing for iwi representation on all authorities and sharing power and delegation in all appropriate circumstances.⁵

The reorganisation of local government should recognise Māori rights as broader than ‘upholding settlements’ or a right to be consulted, and retain Māori constituency councillors. We recommend that the Crown takes a Tiriti-consistent approach to designing and implementing the Simplifying Local Government proposal which would involve the Crown alongside local government, having conversations with hapū, iwi and interested Māori groups around how they wish to: 1) be involved in the design of any new system and 2) represented within or alongside that new system

⁵ Wai 863 Wairarapa ki Tararua Tribunal Report, Vol.3, p. 1062.

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Attachment 1 - DRAFT Submission on the 'Simplification of Local Government' proposal

Proposal document - [Simplifying-Local-Government-a-draft-proposal-27-November-2025.pdf](#)

Annual Fares Review

CURRENT AND FUTURE FARE CHANGES

3 FEBRUARY 2026 - COUNCIL WORKSHOP

Tim Shackleton – Senior Manager Strategy and Investments

Anske Janssen – Manager Fares and Ticketing



Purpose

To present fare change options and impacts for the Financial Year 26/27

To provide an update on EMV and NTS fare initiatives

AGENDA

1. Our current fares in context
2. Annual Fares Review, including fares increase options
3. EMV & NTS fare changes



Strategic objectives fares

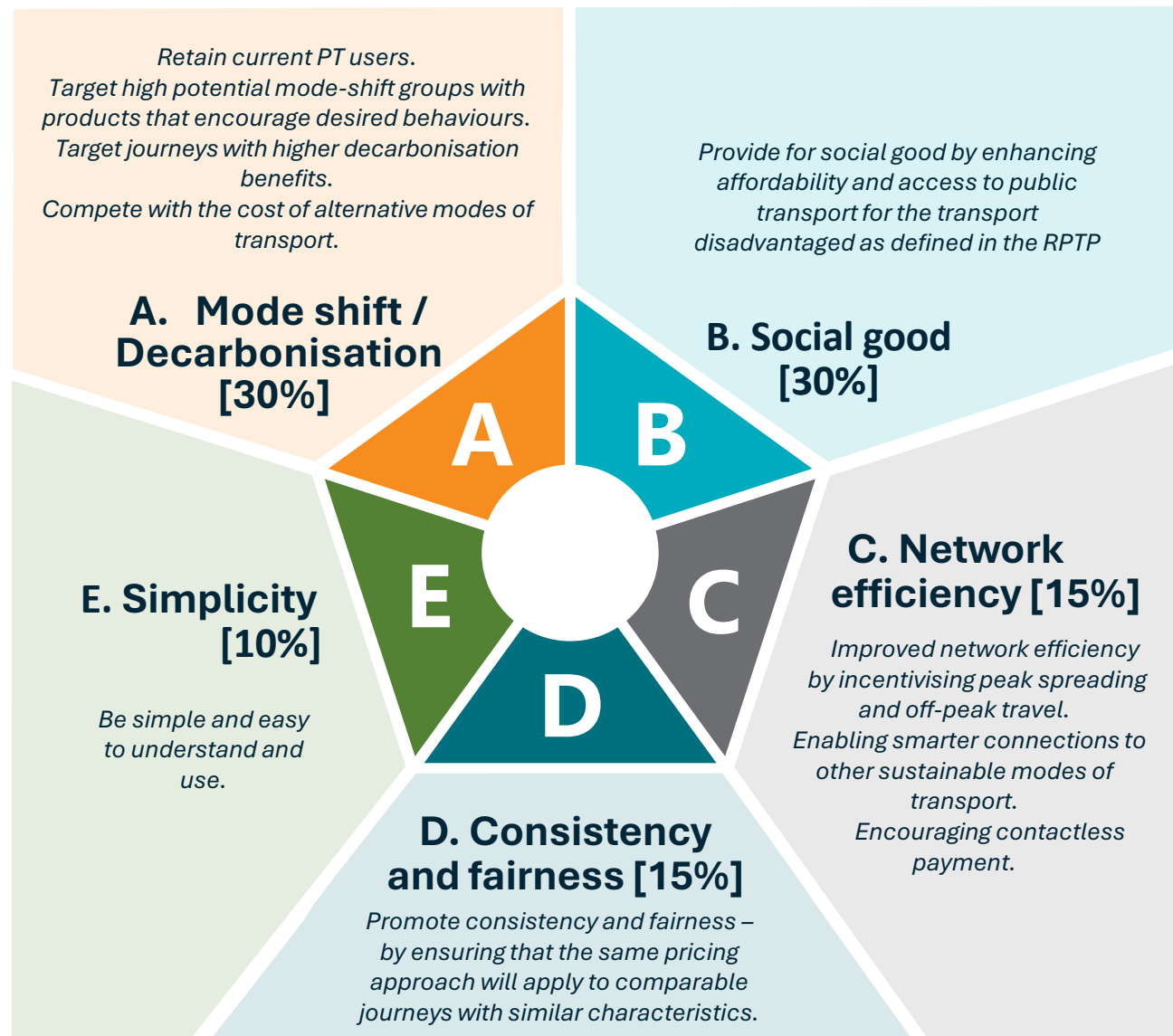
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES SETTING was agreed by Council on 25 November 2021, and included in the in RPTP 2025.

OUTCOMES:

- Provide affordability to those that need it the most (e.g. concessions)
- Encourage greater PT use through value passes and incentives (e.g. fare capping / integrated fares)
- Provide a level of fairness in pricing that considers distance travelled and levels of service
- Encourage travel that drives more efficient use of our network (e.g. off-peak travel, rail corridors)
- Try and make it easy to understand for customers

Many of the desired outcomes will compete e.g. the flat fare system currently used in Christchurch may not be considered fair for those taking shorter distance journeys, but it would provide simplicity. As a whole our fares scheme relatively complex on a national and international level.

COUNCIL AGREED FARES STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Affordability: International Perspective

New Zealand public transport is relatively affordable when compared to a number of other cities around the world.

The NineSquared report determines affordability by the number of minutes a person needs to work to afford a public transport fare

Cheapest Single Trip Fare (NZD equivalent)

Transport for London (Tube)	\$5.90 (£2.80 × 2.10)
New York (Subway and Bus)	\$4.80 (US\$2.90 × 1.65)
Sydney (Bus and Light Rail)	\$3.60 (A\$3.30 × 1.10)
Brisbane (network-wide)	\$0.55 (A\$0.50 × 1.10)
Tallinn, Estonia (residents)	\$0.00
Metlink	\$2.06 NZD

FX rates: 1 USD ≈ 1.65 NZD; 1 GBP ≈ 2.10 NZD; 1 AUD ≈ 1.10 NZD; 1 EUR ≈ 2.03 NZD)

Reference: NineSquared Fares Benchmarking 2025

Using wage rates allows for the consistent comparison between different fares for public transport services. However minimum or average wages do not necessarily represent public transport users across all income brackets and ages. Wages also do not reflect household income or costs – a factor that is important in considering the overall affordability of transportation especially in the current economic environment.

Minutes of work required to afford a fare for a 15km journey

City	Minimum Wage (Minutes)	Rank	Average Wage (Minutes)	Rank
Brisbane	1.2	1	0.6	1
Beijing (Bus)	2.3	2	0.6	1
Hobart	3.3	3	1.8	4
Delhi (Bus)	5.2	4	3.8	13
Wellington	5.3	5	2.9	8
Taipei	6.3	6	4.3	20
Los Angeles	6.4	7	2.2	7
Singapore	6.5	8	2.0	5
Jakarta (BRT)	6.7	9	6.3	30
Beijing (Metro)	6.8	10	1.7	3
Auckland	7.1	11	3.9	16
Darwin	7.2	12	3.8	13
Perth	7.6	13	3.5	9
Sydney (Bus)	7.9	14	4.0	18
Canberra	8.0	15	3.7	11
London (Bus)	8.6	16	5.8	25
Chicago (Bus)	9.0	17	3.5	9
Vancouver	9.1	18	4.9	22
Tokyo	9.2	19	5.8	25
Seoul	9.3	20	4.1	19
Chicago (Rail)	10.0	21	3.9	16
Osaka	10.2	22	6.2	29

Annual Fares Review

Fare change options and impacts analysis for 2026/27

Policy Context and Historical Increases

- Aims to balance user contribution with rates and NZTA funding
- Required under RPTP and timing is aligned with annual or long-term planning cycles
- Policy preference for regular, rather than infrequent and substantial adjustments
- Policy recommends limiting annual fare increases with inflation – noting that Council has discretion for a fare change outside the current policy range
- **Policy has now been somewhat superseded by rates affordability and NZTA private share targets**



FARE CHANGES SINCE 2018 *(relative to inflation and PT indexation)*

- From July last year, fares increased by 2.2% and off-peak discount reduced from 50% to 30%
- In real terms fares are still affordable relative to 2018 levels (~6% lower for peak and ~12% lower for off-peak)

	2018 <i>(15 Jul)</i>	2019	2020	2021 <i>(1 Feb)</i>	2022	2023 <i>(1 Apr)</i>	2024 <i>(1 Jul)</i>	2025 <i>(1 Jul)</i>	Change c.f. 2018
Fare increase	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%	6.0%	10.0%	2.2%	24.6%
Inflation (NZ June Quarter)	1.5%	1.7%	1.5%	3.3%	7.3%	6.0%	3.3%	2.7%	30.6%
PT indexation (Diesel bus June Quarter)	4.0%	3.2%	-1.1%	4.1%	11.1%	-0.1%	6.7%	1.2%	32.2%
PT indexation (EV bus June Quarter)	1.6%	3.3%	3.3%	2.0%	4.2%	6.1%	3.5%	3.3%	30.7%

Fare change options

Estimated revenue impact of fare change options for FY 2026/27

Each \$1m additional above 3m indicated target will reduce rates by approx. 0.18%

Range initially indicated during Annual Plan discussions (~\$ 3m)

Fare increase	OFF-PEAK DISCOUNT						
	30% (current)	25%	20%	15%	10%	5%	0%
0%	-\$1.2 m	-\$0.1 m	+\$1.0 m	+\$2.0 m	+\$3.0 m	+\$4.0 m	+\$5.0 m
2% (budget)	+\$0.0 m	+\$1.1 m	+\$2.2 m	+\$3.2 m	+\$4.2 m	+\$5.3 m	+\$6.2 m
3%	+\$0.6 m	+\$1.7 m	+\$2.8 m	+\$3.8 m	+\$4.8 m	+\$5.9 m	+\$6.9 m
4%	+\$1.1 m	+\$2.3 m	+\$3.3 m	+\$4.4 m	+\$5.4 m	+\$6.5 m	+\$7.5 m
5%	+\$1.7 m	+\$2.8 m	+\$3.9 m	+\$5.0 m	+\$6.0 m	+\$7.1 m	+\$8.1 m
6%	+\$2.3 m	+\$3.4 m	+\$4.5 m	+\$5.6 m	+\$6.6 m	+\$7.7 m	+\$8.7 m
8%	+\$3.4 m	+\$4.6 m	+\$5.7 m	+\$6.8 m	+\$7.8 m	+\$8.9 m	+\$9.9 m
10%	+\$4.5 m	+\$5.7 m	+\$6.8 m	+\$7.9 m	+\$9.0 m	+\$10.1 m	+\$11.1 m

PATRONAGE CHANGE KEY
(budget = 2.6%)

> +1%

+1% to -1%

-1% to -3%

< -3%

Estimates are relative to total forecast revenue (\$93m) and patronage (36.5m) for FY 2026/27

EMV & NTS update

Snapper EMV Update

Following Council decision on 18 September 2025, works have been underway to introduce EMV capability through the existing Snapper ticketing hardware

OVERVIEW

- EMV (Europay, Mastercard, Visa) is the global standard for secure payment cards, using embedded microchip (rather than conventional magnetic stripes)
- This enables contactless payment for full fare adults on Snapper bus and rail validators using debit or credit cards including those loaded onto smartphones and watches
- The solution will provide for only full paying adult fares (around 80% of total revenue / half of all customers) However no concessions or integrated fares which require significant additional complexity to develop
- 1.5% surcharge, which is aligned with the Snapper top-up surcharge when using a credit card
- CRC have noticed a reduction in cash fares use as a direct result of their implementation

OBJECTIVES OF EMV

- Provide a seamless payment method for customers as ticketing systems are swapped out
- Reduce revenue loss during ticketing systems transition when customer don't have the right card
- Drive behaviour changes towards EMV usage ahead of NTS (EMV uptake is a primary goal of NTS)
- Support potential removal of cash on board train and bus services



Update on the National Ticketing Solution

Auckland Transport (AT) enabled contactless payments via credit/debit cards and mobile wallets (Apple Pay, Google Pay, etc.) across all modes—buses, trains, ferries—on 17 Nov 2024.



AT is currently planning Early Integration where customers some Motu Move functions on Hop equipment

AT is also commencing design for full transition to NTS - date to be determined

EMV was successfully rolled out on the 10th Nov 2025 and has seen a significant increase in the use of the EMV system. Uptake 100,000 taps, circa 25% of adult fare customers

SuperGold and Community Connect Concessions on EMV will be available for customer rollout by early Feb 2026.

CRC carrying out detailed transition planning for full implementation in 2026



GW is implementing EMV for full fare adult customers as an early step to NTS



A detailed full transition plan for NTS is under development, due for completion in March 2026

Current planning shows GW commencing implementation of NTS in early 2027 and finishing around October. Current Snapper EMV implementation is being planned for late March/Mid April (To be Confirmed)

NTS Fare Changes

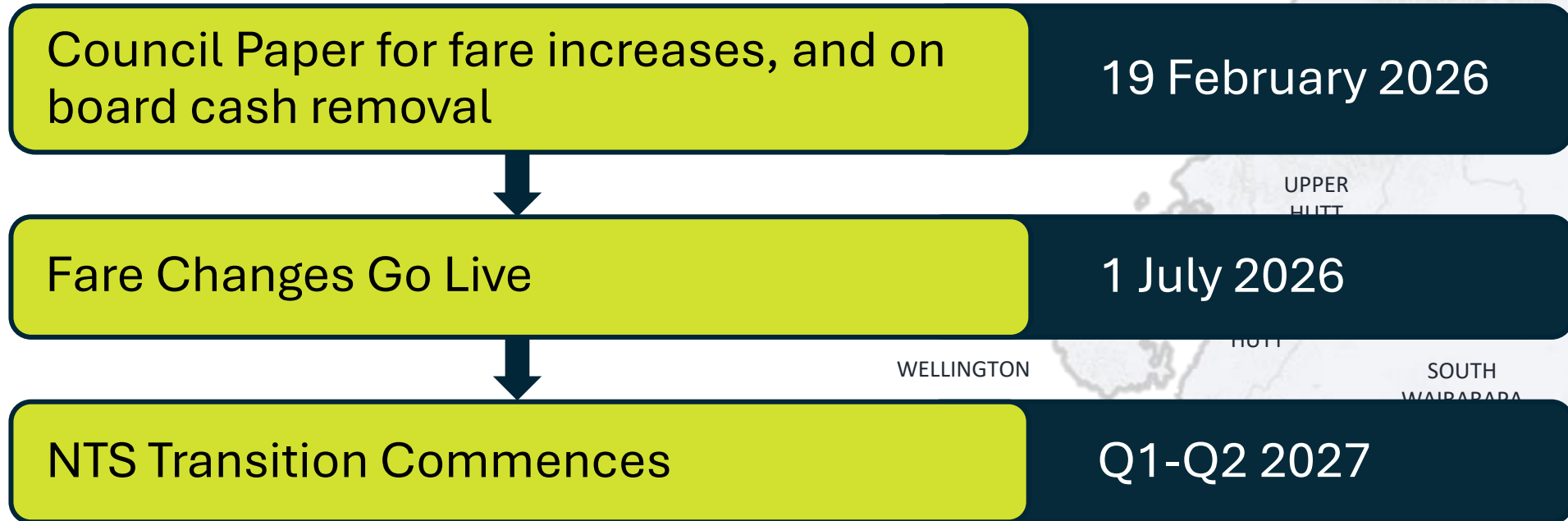
Fare product	Current offering	Available with the start of NTS	Improved form at later stages
Integrated journey fares <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unlimited trips across all modes within 4 hours - Transfers within 60 minutes – upgrade from current 30 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only for journeys involving connections between Buses or between trains • Separate fares when journey requires transfers between bus, rail, ferry or AX 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated zonal fares across bus and rail network • More zones due to addition of rail and bus journeys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully integrated fares across all buses, trains and ferry based on distance travelled • Explore moving to distance-based fare pricing
Fare capping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage frequent and off-peak travel - Widely and consistently accessible to all - Provide for a range of travel patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No fare capping exists • 30-Day passes and Day passes offer similar benefits but with higher upfront cost , less flexibility and no certainty that better value will be achieved (if not required) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interim period passes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7-Day passes (zonal) • Day passes (zonal) • Interim zonal value-based capping option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey-based 7-Day and daily fare capping replacing all period passes
Cash payment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safety concerns - Cost saving - Use diminishing (< 3%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-trip paper tickets on buses and trains • All ferry and Express bus services no longer accept cash 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progressive phase out of on-board cash – to confirm strategy to phase out within 12 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target to going cashless on the network as a whole is 2-3 years
Concessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School based eligibility • SuperGold visual ID 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age based eligibility (5-18yo) • SuperGold registration 	
Integrated event ticketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event ticket visual ID 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scannable event tickets for PT 	

Any Questions?


DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?



Next Steps



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DIA question	GW response				
BACKGROUND					
1. Do you agree there is a need to simplify local government?	Strongly agree	Agree 	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. What do you think of the proposed approach overall?	<p>Local Government requires reform</p> <p>We, and all the councils within the Greater Wellington region, agree there is a need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the local government system. The current local government system is complex, fragmented, and under increasing pressure from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the significant costs and complexity of adapting to climate change, • the costs of managing growth including core infrastructure, • emergency responses and recovery needs, • increasing regulatory compliance costs, • funding constraints and a lack of funding sources, and • workforce shortages. <p>We support the intent of this proposal to reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and be responsive to local needs. Multiple reviews of governance and delivery structures in the Wellington region¹²³ have identified that improvements are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarify roles across local, regional and national levels, • strengthen regional coordination, • improve sustainability of funding, and • strengthen consistency with Treaty of Waitangi obligations including Māori representation 				

¹ PriceWaterhouseCooper (2010) Wellington Region Council Governance Review

² Working Party on Local Government Reform (2013) [Realising the potential of the Wellington region](#)

³ Local Government Commission (2014) [Draft Proposal for Reorganisation of Local Government in Wellington](#)

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We do not support Stage One Combined Territories Boards (CTBs)

Regional councillors are elected with a clear democratic mandate to govern regional functions such as public transport services, flood protection, biosecurity, environmental management, regional spatial and transport planning, emergency management and climate adaptation. These functions are complex in nature, different to those of Territorial Authorities and require continuity, specialist understanding, and long-term accountability.

Introducing a temporary CTB would create material risk, including

- loss of democratic legitimacy, trust and institutional knowledge
- inconsistency with Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi including impacts on settlements
- high transition costs, workforce and governance capacity pressures, and operational risk

We therefore do not support the use of CTBs as a decision-making body for a region-wide spatial plan chapter and natural environment plan chapter under the resource management reforms.

As per our feedback on the Natural Environment Bill and Planning Bill, we recommend that the new resource management legislation:

- Outlines the minimum requirements for memberships on Spatial Plan Committees to include balanced representation from regional councils, territorial authorities, iwi and hapū, and central government agencies where relevant. This helps ensure that regional priorities, mana whenua representation including what is provided for through binding Treaty settlements, and local needs are appropriately reflected in the strategic direction of growth and environmental planning.
- Specifically allows for alternative structures agreed with mana whenua to fulfil the Spatial Planning Committee Role in order to uphold the equivalent effect of settlements until such time as the Crown renegotiates the redress with willing partners. These may include but are not limited to leveraging existing partnerships such as Te Ūpoko Taiao or Urban Growth Partnerships (for example the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee).

We recommend proceeding directly with the Stage Two regional re-organisation plans

We recommend that local government reorganisation is delivered through a single, well-designed Stage Two model. This would involve moving directly to the development of regional reorganisation plans, led by democratically elected territorial and regional authority members working in partnership with mana whenua. Regional councillors

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must be kept in place until a new permanent governance structure is established through a regional reorganisation plan.

The Wellington region has already begun a process, led through the Wellington Regional Mayoral Forum, to develop and assess options for regional reorganisation.

We support the use of criteria to assess reorganisation plans if they are strengthened

We recommend the Government's proposed assessment criteria are strengthened through the inclusion of:

- upholding Te Tiriti including but not limited to Treaty settlements and partnership obligations,
- appropriate scale and function fit,
- efficiency and effectiveness,
- democratic accountability,
- evidence based assessment, including of transition costs & operational continuity,
- alignment with existing local government processes,
- alignment with wider reforms, and
- workforce capability and capacity

Māori rights and interests, Treaty partnerships and Māori representation must be protected and strengthened

The proposal is not Te Tiriti consistent and is expected to limit the ability of our partners to achieve their priorities for their taiao, people and communities and create considerable Treaty and legal risk for the Crown. This will result in costs, complexity and uncertainty for our partners and for local government. We recommend that the proposal, including the process for regional reorganisation plans, is strengthened to align with Tribunal findings and Te Tiriti/the Treaty. The proposal should:

- be designed in partnership with whānau, hapū, iwi and interested Māori groups, to:
 - protect and strengthen Māori representation and Treaty based arrangements
 - ensure that the equivalent effect of settlement redress is fully upheld
- retain Māori constituency seats

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The Government’s signaled review of regional council functions needs to draw on the experience and expertise of the local government sector and consider the appropriate scale for delivery of services

Regional Councils currently perform important functions for their communities including public transport services, flood protection, biosecurity, environmental management, regional spatial and transport planning, emergency management, climate adaptation, maritime navigation and regional parks and recreation facilities. Reviews have demonstrated that the most effective scale for delivery of many of these activities is regional.

The Government’s upcoming review of the delivery model for these functions needs to consider communities of interest, the need for local variability of outcomes, capability, efficiency and accountability⁴. Assessments must draw on the expertise of regional councils and sector-wide experts to establish system settings that will provide the best outcomes for our communities. Without drawing on this knowledge base, the review risks overlooking critical insights about what works, what doesn’t, and what communities genuinely need.

The Government’s wider reform program needs to be integrated

The Government’s various legislative reforms need to be designed alongside each other to achieve integration, clarity and improved outcomes for communities. Misalignment across the reform program could lead to significant risks including:

- Treaty breaches and associated litigation risk (as detailed above and in question 11)
- delays to reform implementation and desired outcomes (e.g. the volume of change will impact local government’s ability to implement the reforms).
- new legislation requiring re-work as a result of subsequent legislative and system changes (e.g. the resource management reform bills create specific roles and responsibilities for regional councils. These roles will need to be reassigned through local government reorganisation)
- wider system issues unresolved by reform (e.g. financial impacts of stranded assets, outstanding funding issues within the transport system).

SIMPLIFYING REGIONAL GOVERNANCE					
3. Do you agree with replacing regional councillors with a CTB?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree not disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. What do you like or dislike about the proposal to	We do not support replacing regional councillors with a Combined Territories Board (CTB).				

⁴ Castalia (2025) [Functions of Regional and Unitary Authorities in New Zealand, Report to Te Uru Kahika](#)

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replace regional councillors with a CTB?

Regional councillors are elected with a clear democratic mandate to govern regional functions such as public transport, flood protection, biosecurity, environmental management, regional spatial and transport planning, emergency management and climate adaptation. These functions are complex in nature, different to those of Territorial Authorities and require continuity, specialist understanding, and long-term accountability.

Introducing a temporary CTB would create material risk, including:

1. Loss of democratic legitimacy, trust, and institutional knowledge

The proposed reform timeline is not aligned with democratic cycles. The Councilors are elected for three-year terms and replacing them mid-term with unelected CTB members undermines public trust and democratic accountability. The Productivity Commission's inquiry into local government funding and financing highlighted the importance of predictable, transparent decision-making frameworks and warned against institutional churn that erodes public trust. Evidence from Castalia (2025), the Productivity Commission and the Auditor General all point to the same conclusion: regional governance should be stable, enduring, and democratically grounded. Replacement with a short-term transitional body will undermine these outcomes.

A lot of detail would need to be worked through to ensure a regional perspective is maintained across the various bodies that regional council has involvement in and consideration given to how the regional council voice is able to be taken account of in the decision-making process. For example, established statutory committee arrangements (i.e. the Regional Transport Committee and the Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group), council companies (e.g. WRC Holdings Limited) and other bodies (e.g. the Wellington Regional Stadium Trust).

Mayors on CTBs face conflicts of interest because their declaration on assuming office requires them to prioritise their own districts, not regional outcomes. Mayors participating in a CTB would need to make a separate declaration that they are acting in the interests of the region and submit separate disclosures of interest.

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2. Inconsistency with Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi including impacts on settlements

As a regional council, we value our 30+ year partnerships with mana whenua and we also have a range of important Treaty settlement commitments. CTBs and the proposed approach to the regional reorganisation plans risk sidelining or destabilising these commitments and the partnership arrangements that were designed to be durable and enduring. CTBs could also undermine binding Treaty settlements in our region, for example, by assuming responsibility for spatial planning and natural environment decisions in a forum without Māori representation, where Te Ūpoko Taiao which was made permanent through the Kahungunu ki Wairarapa settlement provides for 50/50 Māori–Crown representation on planning matters.

Removing Māori constituency councillors risks undermining Māori political representation and may breach Treaty principles, as highlighted by the December 2025 Wai 1040 findings relating to local government.

3. High transition costs, workforce and governance capacity pressures, and operational risk

Temporary governance bodies create significant transition costs which are often underestimated. Past reforms, such as Auckland amalgamation in 2010, show that transitions require duplicated induction and training, and often fail to deliver promised efficiencies.

Mayors already have a very full workload and additional governance workload for regional council issues will be impractical and unworkable. There simply isn't enough capacity for mayors to govern all regional work programmes.

The local government sector already faces shortages in engineering, planning, environmental science and transport. Supporting a CTB while also responding to multiple reforms and maintaining core services would stretch capacity beyond safe operational limits.

Emergency management reviews, including those following the Canterbury and Kaikōura earthquakes and Cyclone Gabrielle, consistently emphasise the need for stable regional leadership. Introducing CTBs would divert attention from essential service delivery at a time when regional resilience and preparedness are increasingly critical.

We recommend that local government reorganisation is delivered through a single, well-designed Stage Two model. This would involve moving directly to the development of regional reorganisation plans, led by democratically elected territorial and regional authority members working in partnership with mana whenua, with regional

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	<p>councillors remaining in place until a new permanent governance structure is established. The Wellington region has already begun a process, led through the Wellington Regional Mayoral Forum, to develop and assess options for regional reorganisation.</p> <p>In conclusion, we do not support the introduction of a Combined Territories Board (the CTB). We recommend moving straight to stage two, with regional councillors continuing their existing role and functions and with a Tiriti consistent approach</p> <p>We have not answered question five because we do not support the establishment of CTBs.</p>				
<p>5. What level of Crown participation in regional decision-making do you prefer?</p>	<p>None – only mayors on the CTB</p>	<p>Crown Commissioner on CTB (non-voting)</p>	<p>Crown Commissioner on CTB (with veto power)</p>	<p>Crown Commissioner on CTB (with majority vote)</p>	<p>Crown Commissioners instead of a CTB</p>
ALLOCATING VOTING POWER					
<p>6. Do you agree that mayors on the CTB should have a proportional vote adjusted for effective representation?</p>	<p>Strongly agree</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Neither agree not disagree</p>	<p style="background-color: yellow;">Disagree</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p>	<p>Strongly disagree</p>
<p>7. What do you like or dislike about the voting proposal for the CTB?</p>	<p>As we do not support CTBs, we do not support their use as a decision-making body for a region-wide spatial plan chapter and natural environment plan chapter under the resource management reforms. As per our feedback on the Natural Environment Bill and Planning Bill, we recommend that the new resource management legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines the minimum requirements for memberships on Spatial Plan Committees to include balanced representation from regional councils, territorial authorities, iwi and hapū, and central government agencies where relevant. This helps ensure that regional priorities, mana whenua representation including what is provided for through binding Treaty settlements, and local needs, are appropriately reflected in the strategic direction of growth and environmental planning. • Specifically allows for alternative structures agreed with mana whenua to fulfil the Spatial Planning Committee Role in order to uphold the equivalent effect of settlements until such time as the Crown 				

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renegotiates the redress with willing partners. These may include but are not limited to leveraging existing partnerships such as Te Ūpoko Taiao or Urban Growth Partnerships (for example the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee)..

Proportional voting raises the following issues:

1. Weakens regional perspective

CTB members should be statutorily required to act in the interests of the region as a whole in exercising their decision-making responsibilities; weighted voting would work against that regional perspective.

2. It creates inequity between territorial authorities

Population based weighting risks marginalising smaller councils, even when they share equally in regional issues such as flood protection, public transport, climate adaptation and emergency management.

3. It is inconsistent with Te Tiriti/Treaty of Waitangi obligations

Weighted mayoral voting does not reflect the role of mana whenua as Treaty partners. In addition, removal of the Māori constituency seats constitutes a potential Treaty breach.

The voting proposal does not include Māori representation, even though CTBs would be making decisions in areas where settlement deeds and acts of Parliament have confirmed that Māori should have 50/50 representation on key decision-making bodies for planning matters. We also note that inserting spatial plans ‘over the top’ of regional planning instruments will undermine the intent of those arrangements (by reducing the discretion of the relevant decisions makers). Further, even if Māori representation is provided for, the proposed RMA replacement legislation constrains our ability to provide equivalency in the new system, including because it no longer prioritises te Tiriti.

We support the principles of democratic legitimacy, upholding the honour of the Crown in giving effect to Te Tiriti/the Treaty, effective representation, and effective governance, and recommend this is achieved through:

- Moving directly to Stage Two by developing regional reorganisation plans, while keeping regional councilors in place until the new permanent governance structure is established
- co-design with mana whenua – whānau, hapū, iwi and interested Māori groups

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- durable structures
- transparent accountability

In conclusion, we do not support the proposed CTB voting model. Weighted mayoral voting risks weakening the regional perspective, creating inequity between territorial authorities, and undermining Te Tiriti/Treaty obligations including settlements. We recommend that local government reorganisation is delivered through a single, well-designed Stage Two model. This would involve moving directly to the development of regional reorganisation plans, led by democratically elected territorial and regional authority members working in partnership with mana whenua, with regional councillors remaining in place until a new permanent governance structure is established. The Wellington region has already begun a process, led through the Wellington Region Mayoral Forum, to develop and assess options for regional reorganisation.

CROSS BOUNDARY ISSUES

8. What do you think about the ways that communities crossing regional boundaries could be represented?

We agree that communities do not always align neatly with regional and other administrative boundaries, and that representation arrangements must reflect how people live, travel, work and access services. However, the proposal's current approach, including through CTBs, does not provide a durable or effective way to represent cross boundary communities.

1. CTBs are not the right mechanism for cross boundary representation

CTBs are temporary, transitional bodies with unclear mandates and short timeframes. They are not well suited to representing communities whose interests span multiple regions because:

- their membership is not directly elected,
- their accountability is unclear,
- they would exist only briefly before being replaced, and
- communities would need to re-establish relationships twice.

This is inconsistent with the widely recognised need for long term, stable representation for cross boundary communities.

2. Regional councils already manage many cross boundary issues effectively

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Evidence from Castalia (2025) shows that many regional functions, such as public transport, flood protection, biosecurity, environmental science and emergency management, inherently operate across territorial boundaries. Regional councils already collaborate extensively with neighbouring regions, territorial authorities, and to varying extents hapū and iwi Māori, to manage these shared issues. Regional councils work collaboratively together through Te Uru Kahika and share best practice approaches. Strengthening these existing mechanisms is more effective than creating temporary new governance bodies without relevant expertise.

3. A well designed Stage Two model can better support cross boundary communities

We consider that the enduring Stage 2 governance model (as a result of regional reorganisation plans), not CTBs, is the appropriate place to address cross boundary representation. Flexible, durable and proven approaches include:

- joint committees or shared governance arrangements for specific cross boundary issues,
- shared services or CCOs (e.g., for public transport or hazard management),
- strengthened regional collaboration frameworks,
- formalised partnerships with mana whenua whose rohe span multiple regions.

4. Representation must align with how communities experience services


Communities crossing regional boundaries often share:

- transport networks,
- river catchments and hazard zones,
- economic and labour markets,
- hapū and iwi Māori relationships,
- environmental systems,
- emergency response and recovery outcomes, and
- built infrastructure.

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	<p>Many cross boundary communities are also linked through iwi rohe and Treaty settlement arrangements that guarantee Māori representation in planning and environmental governance. CTBs do not reflect these arrangements and would weaken Māori decision making rights in cross boundary decision-making. These are long term, structural realities. Representation arrangements must therefore be reflected in and/or alongside long term governance structures – not transitional bodies.</p> <p>In conclusion, the proposal does not provide a durable or effective approach to representing communities on issues that cross regional boundaries. We recommend that local government reorganisation be delivered through a single, well-designed Stage Two model. This would involve moving directly to the development of regional reorganisation plans, led by democratically elected territorial and regional authority members working in partnership with mana whenua, with regional councillors remaining in place until a new permanent governance structure is established. Regional re-organisation plans should consider proven mechanisms such as joint committees, shared services, CCOs and strengthened regional collaboration frameworks.</p>
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IMPROVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT					
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9. Do you support the proposal to require CTBs to develop regional reorganisation plans?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree not disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree 
10. What do you think about the criteria proposed for assessing regional reorganisation plans?	<p>We do not support the proposal to require CTBs to develop regional reorganisation plans because we do not support the establishment of CTBs. We recommend that local government reorganisation is achieved through a single, well-designed Stage Two model. This would involve moving directly to the development of regional reorganisation plans, led by democratically elected territorial and regional authority members working in partnership with mana whenua. Regional councillors must be kept in place until a new permanent governance structure is established through a regional reorganisation plan.</p> <p>The Wellington region has already begun a process, led through the Mayoral Forum, to develop and assess options for regional reorganisation.</p>				

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Our support for the criteria proposed for assessing regional reorganisation plans is conditional on them being strengthened by including:

- **Upholding Te Tiriti including but not limited to Treaty settlements and partnership obligations**
Reorganisation plans must explicitly protect and strengthen Tiriti/Treaty protections including Māori representation and decision-making rights, upholding Treaty settlements and existing partnership arrangements. Temporary bodies like CTBs, along with the proposed approach to regional reorganisations plans which only require consultation with Māori are not Tiriti consistent and raise legal and reputational risks for the Crown
- **Appropriate scale and function fit** consistent with Castalia’s findings that many critical services (flood protection, public transport, biosecurity, environmental science) are most effective when delivered regionally.
- **Efficiency and effectiveness** including the ability to adopt shared services or CCOs where appropriate.
- **Democratic accountability**
Reorganisaition must maintain clear mandates, transparent decision making and accountability.
- **Evidence based assessment, including of transition costs & operational continuity**
Past local government reforms show transition costs are often underestimated. Criteria should require realistic, independently tested costings. Criteria should require demonstration that essential services, especially flood protection, emergency management, public transport and climate adaptation, will not be disrupted. This aligns with lessons from emergency management reviews.
- **Alignment with existing local government processes**
Reorganisation plans must align with electoral cycles to strengthen democratic legitimacy and trust. Consideration must be given to Long Term Plan requirements. Introducing CTBs and then replacing them midcycle would require substantial rework of statutory plans, potentially twice. This would generate avoidable cost, confuse communities, and reduce transparency and investment certainty.
- **Alignment with wider reforms**
Reorganisation plans must align with other Government reform programmes and support their successful delivery, including

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Management reform • Local Water Done Well reform • Local Government Act amendments (including rates capping) • Civil Defence Emergency Management Act reforms • Proposed transport funding reforms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce capability and capacity Plans must show how specialist skills will be retained and strengthened. Workforce shortages are a major constraint across the sector. <p>In conclusion, we support the use of criteria to assess reorganisation plans subject to the following inclusions: Upholding Te Tiriti including but not limited to Treaty settlements and partnership obligations, Regional scale and function fit, Efficiency and effectiveness, democratic accountability, evidence based assessment of transition costs & operational continuity, alignment with statutory planning cycles, alignment with wider reforms, and workforce capability and capacity.</p>
TREATY OF WAITANGI AND MĀORI REPRESENTATION	
<p>11. What do you think about how the proposal provides for iwi/Māori interests and Treaty arrangements?</p>	<p>The proposal does not adequately provide for iwi/Māori interests and Treaty arrangements. Māori rights and interests, Treaty partnerships and Māori representation must be protected and strengthened in the proposal.</p> <p>The proposal is not Tiriti consistent. It:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - removes democratically elected Māori constituency seats. - narrows consideration of a broader set of Māori rights and interests to upholding settlements. For example, it does not sufficiently provide for Māori participation in the design of the new local government system, or Māori representation in the new system. - requires CTBs to implement Treaty settlement redress agreed between the Crown and Māori in a new planning system that impacts on equivalency of that redress; and, <p>Read in conjunction with clause 10 of the proposed Planning Bill and clause 10 of the Natural Environment Bill, delegates to CTBs the responsibility to interpret the intent of Treaty settlement redress agreed between the Crown and Māori, assess its equivalency in the new planning system and then possibly substitute alternatives in regional reorganisation plans (without any requirement for agreement beyond consultation) until such time as the Crown concludes negotiations with willing PSGEs . The Crown is the party to a settlement not local government, and we question whether the Crown could or should delegate this.</p>

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Even if the proposals are changed such that equivalent Māori representation is assured, under the proposed RMA reforms cultural considerations are not given the same weight as under the RMA. In addition, there are no clear cultural or environmental bottom lines. This means that CTBs, or Te Ūpoko Taiao will not have the scope and discretion to protect the environment and cultural values to the extent that they currently can. There may be limited value for Māori in being represented on decision-making bodies that cannot legally apply Māori priorities and deliver desired outcomes. This means local government may be required to implement potential Treaty breaches.

Taken together, we consider the above factors:

- limit the ability for our partners to achieve their aspirations for their people,
- diminish decades of progress developing partnerships to recognise the customary rights of whanau, hapu and iwi
- impact on the mātauranga of whānau, hapū and iwi and the skills and time vested to ensure that they can provide the right level of advice and engagement with local government
- fail to recognise and incorporate customary lore and the responsibilities of kaitiaki, as expressed through the principle of kaitiakitanga, and
- create considerable Treaty and legal risk for the Crown, which will create costs, complexity and uncertainty for our partners and for local government in implementing reforms.

The findings and recommendations of the Wai 1040 Paparahi o Te Raki Stage 2 Inquiry issued on 17 December 2025 are instructive. The Tribunal has found that failing to provide for Māori representation in local government in Northland constitutes a breach of the Treaty and these findings have broader relevance. Accordingly, the Tribunal findings confirm that any process to simplify local government should therefore:

- Be designed in partnership with mana whenua and interested Māori groups
- Ensure that the equivalent effect of settlement redress is fully upheld
- Protect and strengthen Māori representation and Treaty based arrangements

The Paparahi findings build on relevant findings in our region in the Wai 863 Wairarapa ki Tararua Report (Vol 3). The Wairarapa Tribunal found that through the LGA 2002, the Crown delegated its Treaty responsibilities to local government without the corresponding obligations (e.g. to provide for Māori participation in decision-making), in breach of Te Tiriti/the Treaty. The Tribunal recommended the concentration of functions in fewer local authorities to

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lessen the relationship burden for hapū and iwi, in addition to other recommendations including providing for iwi representation on all authorities and sharing power and delegation in all appropriate circumstances.⁵

The reorganisation of local government should recognise Māori rights as broader than ‘upholding settlements’ or a right to be consulted, and retain Māori constituency councillors. We recommend that the Crown takes a Tiriti-consistent approach to designing and implementing the Simplifying Local Government proposal which would involve the Crown alongside local government, having conversations with hapū, iwi and interested Māori groups around how they wish to: 1) be involved in the design of any new system and 2) represented within or alongside that new system

⁵ Wai 863 Wairarapa ki Tararua Tribunal Report, Vol.3, p. 1062.