

Strategy, Planning and Development Committee

Supplementary Agenda

Date: Thursday, 17 July, 2025

Time: 9:00 am

Location: Civic Centre, Te Iwitihi, 9 Rust Avenue

Elected Members: Cr Ken Couper (Chairperson)
Cr Scott McKenzie (Deputy Chairperson)
His Worship the Mayor Vince Cocurullo
Cr Gavin Benney
Cr Nicholas Connop
Cr Jayne Golightly
Cr Phil Halse
Cr Deborah Harding
Cr Patrick Holmes
Cr Marie Olsen
Cr Carol Peters
Cr Simon Reid
Cr Phoenix Ruka
Cr Paul Yovich

For any queries regarding this meeting please contact the Whangarei District Council on (09) 430-4200.

4. Decision Reports / Whakatau Rīpoata

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Strategy, Planning and Development Committee – Terms of Reference

Membership

Chairperson	Councillor Ken Couper
Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Scott McKenzie
Members	His Worship the Mayor Vince Cocurullo Councillors Gavin Benney, Nicholas Connop, Jayne Golightly, Phil Halse, Deborah Harding, Patrick Holmes, Marie Olsen, Carol Peters, Simon Reid, Phoenix Ruka and Paul Yovich

Meetings Monthly

Quorum 7

Purpose

To oversee planning, monitoring, education and enforcement activities, and guide the economic and physical development and growth of Whangarei District.

Key responsibilities

- Regulatory and compliance
 - Environmental health
 - General bylaw administration
 - Animal (dog and stock control)
 - Hazardous substances and new organism control
 - Parking enforcement (vehicles registrations and warrant of fitness)
 - Noise control
 - Food Act
- Building Control
 - Property Information and Land Information Memoranda
 - Consents and inspections
 - Monitoring and compliance
- Resource Consents
 - Subdivision, land use and development control
 - Development contributions
 - Monitoring and compliance
- District Plan
 - Plan changes
 - District Plan administration

- Strategic Planning
 - Place based strategies (city centre), functional strategies (climate change)
 - Climate Adaptation
 - Growth planning
 - Urban design
 - Strategic alignment of infrastructure
 - Reporting strategic trends and analysis
- Economic Development
 - District marketing and promotions
 - Developer engagement
- Marinas
- Airport
- Forestry
- Operational accountability of performance including:
 - Health and Safety
 - Regular reporting on service delivery
 - Compliance
 - Sustainability
 - Finance
- Reporting on capital projects.
- Operational reporting for the Strategy and Democracy and Planning and Development groups within Council where their functions are not covered by other Committees.
- Procurement – general procurement relating to the areas of business of this committee, within delegations.
- Shared Services – investigate opportunities for Shared Services for recommendation to council.
- Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs) – monitoring the financial and non-financial performance of CCOs whose functions would otherwise fall under the scope of this committee. Includes trading CCOs (CCTOs) and those CCOs exempted under the LGA. Responsibilities include:
 - advising on the content of annual Statement of Expectations to CCOs
 - agreement of the Statement of Intent
 - monitoring against the Statement of Intent
 - for exempted CCOs, monitoring and reporting as agreed between Council and the organisation
 - quarterly reporting on performance

CCO accountable to this committee:

- Whangarei District Airport – CCO

Delegations

- (i) All powers necessary to perform the committee's responsibilities, including, but not limited to:
 - a) the approval of expenditure of less than \$5 million plus GST.
 - b) approval of a submission to an external body.
 - c) establishment of working parties or steering groups.
 - d) adoption of strategies and policies relating to the key responsibilities of this committee (except for those that cannot be delegated by Council under Clause 32(1)(f) of Schedule 7 of the LGA).
 - e) the power to adopt the Special Consultative Procedure provided for in Section 83 to 88 of the LGA in respect of matters under its jurisdiction (this allows for setting of fees and bylaw making processes up to but not including adoption).
 - f) the power to delegate any of its powers to any joint committee established for any relevant purpose under clause 32, Schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 2002.

The Committee does not have:

- i. The power to establish sub-committees.
- ii. The powers Council is expressly prohibited from delegating as outlined in Clause 32(1)(a)-(h) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 2002; being:
 - the power to make a rate
 - the power to make a bylaw
 - the power to borrow money, or purchase or dispose of assets, other than in accordance with the long-term plan
 - the power to adopt a long-term plan, annual plan or annual report
 - the power to appoint a chief executive the power to adopt policies required to be adopted and consulted on under the Local Government 2002 in association with the long-term plan or developed for the purpose of the local governance statement
 - the power to adopt a remuneration and employment policy.

4.5 Delegation for Submission on Updates to National Policy Statements and National Environmental Standards

Meeting: Strategy, Planning and Development Committee
Date of meeting: 17 July 2025
Reporting officer: Robert Burgoyne, Kaiārahi Pūkenga - Planner

1 Purpose / Te Kaupapa

To seek approval to prepare a submission under delegation on the Central Government's proposed updates to national policy statements and national environmental standards.

2 Recommendations / Whakataunga

That the Committee:

1. Directs staff to develop a submission to Central Government on current proposals for updates and additions to the Resource Management Act 1991 national policy statements and national environmental standards.
2. Authorises the Chair plus any two members approve the submission on behalf of Council.

3 Background / Horopaki

On 29 May 2025 Central Government opened consultation on updates to national policy statements and national environmental standards under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). The submission period closes on 27 July 2025.

At a Council briefing on 10 July 2025, Elected Members were provided with an overview of the proposals (Agenda included as Attachment 1). This included comments on the key aspects of the proposals that may impact Council, and the Whangārei District should Elected Members be minded toward making a submission.

At the 10 July 2025 Council Briefing, Elected Members indicated a strong interest in making a submission and provided feedback on some of the key matters that should be included in a submission.

The Delegations Register requires approval of the Strategy, Planning and Development Committee to lodge submissions on proposed national policy statements or national environmental standards.

Due to the short timeframes to prepare a submission, it will not be possible to seek approval from the Strategy, Planning and Development Committee. This report therefore seeks to approval for a submission to be lodged.

This is in line with delegations already in place for submissions on other matters of relevance to the Committee (i.e. for changes to legislation).

4 Discussion / Whakawhiti kōrero

Based on the feedback received from Elected Members at the 10 July 2025 Council Briefing, it is proposed that a Council submission provides high-level feedback from a local government perspective with focus on matters of strategic relevance to the Whangārei District (those set out in section 3.3.3 of the 10 July 2025 Council Briefing report). In addition, feedback was received from Elected Members that the following matters should be raised in a submission:

- If local decision making is reduced by introducing more national direction, then Council's should not be burdened with unfunded mandates or additional risks.
- Major reform programmes are more likely to succeed when they are developed cohesively and have bipartisan political support. The sector and public needs certainty that transcends political cycles.
- While we support the intention to be more enabling of opportunities (i.e. opportunities for development and growth and proposals such as the Papakāinga and Granny Flats) this needs to be a balanced against the protection of important resources and the environment. The current system is not effectively achieving either, but it is not clear how the proposals seek to better balance these outcomes.
- Given the scale and pace of current reforms, there is a real risk that local government, the planning sector, iwi and hapū, stakeholders, and the general public will not have sufficient capacity to engage as effectively or constructively as desired. By way of example we should indicate that Council has not had time to adequately engage Te Kārearea, stressing the importance of our partnership with hapū through the Committee.
- Where possible we should provide insights to Central Government on the practical challenges and implications of the proposals, providing examples of successful implementation of comparable kaupapa within Northland (i.e. the Papakāinga and Natural Hazards chapters).

The full submission will not be prepared in time to be approved by the Strategy, Planning and Development Committee, in accordance with delegation reference 949 of the Whangārei District Council Delegations Register. While a general delegation exists for submissions on behalf of Council the specific delegation relating to National Policy Statements and National Environmental Standards is to the Committee only. Unlike other comparable delegations it does allow not allow for sign off by the "Chair plus any two members" where there are time constraints. Given the time constraints associated with any submission this report seeks a comparable approval process for any submission. In doing so it is noted that discussions have already been had between the Chair and His Worship the Mayor, with it being understood that the sign off of the submission will be through the Chair and Deputy Chair of Strategy, Planning and Development Committee and His Worship the Mayor.

4.1 Financial/budget considerations

There is no financial impact on making a submission or not. There will be a minor additional staff resource reallocated to preparing the submission. However, much of the necessary time has already been spent in reviewing Government's proposals and preparing the 10 July 2025 Council Briefing. This time was required to remain informed of the reform proposals and how they would likely impact current and planned work programmes.

The proposals and the Resource Management Reform programme more broadly will have financial impacts on Council through implementation. It is unknown what these costs will be, however by submitting, Council can highlight concerns around potential cost impacts, so that the Government is aware of them before instilling further requirements on Council.

4.2 Options

The Committee's options are to approve the development of a submission, and to authorise the final submission sign off, or to not make a submission.

Due to the timeframes is not an option to seek approval from the Strategy, Planning and Development Committee for the final submission.

It is recommended to approve the delegation of the approval of the final submission as this will allow Council to participate in the consultation process and express support and concerns related to the proposals.

The alternative option is not to provide this delegation, meaning that Council will not be able to make a submission within the prescribed timeframes

4.3 Risks

There are no risks associated with lodging a submission, so long as the submission is targeted, high level and aligns to work already undertaken on the proposed changes.

As indicated within the Briefing there is not adequate resourcing to undertake a more substantive submission. If this is sought by Council, then other work will need to be reprioritised.

If Council does not lodge a submission, then there is a risk that matters specific to Whangarei District Council and the Whangārei District will not be considered or addressed through the further development of the National Direction instruments.

5 Significance and engagement / Te Hira me te Arawhiti

The decisions or matters of this report do not trigger the significance criteria outlined in Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, and the public will be informed via agenda publication on the website.

6 Attachments / Ngā Tāpiritanga

Attachment 1: 10 July 2025 Briefing Agenda

Resource Management Reform – Central Government Consultation on National Direction Packages

Meeting: Council Briefing

Date of meeting: 10 July 2025

Reporting officer: Yvonne Masefield, Manager - District Plan
 Rob Burgoyne, Kaiārahi Pūkenga - Planner
 Philip Waters, Senior Planner – District Plan

1 Purpose / Te Kaupapa

This report provides an update to Elected Members on the Resource Management Reforms (RM Reforms), with a specific focus on the recently announced National Direction packages and what this means for the work of Council.

2 Background / Horopaki

The current Central Government RM Reforms seek to replace the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) with a more efficient and effective planning system. Work toward this outcome is being undertaken in three phases by the Central Government:

- **Phase One** - Repeal the Natural and Built Environment Act and Spatial Planning Act.
- **Phase Two** - Targeted changes within the current resource management system to improve its performance, including:
 - Fast-track Approvals Act 2024;
 - Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024;
 - Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill (submissions closed February 2025);
 - Programme of changes to National Direction instruments (**this package**).
- **Phase Three** - Replacement of the RMA (expected late 2025, to be enacted mid 2026).

Phase 1 was completed in December 2023 and Phase 2 is progressing with the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 and Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024 now law. The Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill is currently making its way through the legislative process. Consultation on proposed changes to National Direction instruments opened on 29 May 2025, closely followed by a second announcement, “Going for Housing Growth – Providing for Urban Development in the new Resource Management System”, that sets out proposals relating to the replacement RMA.

Phase 2 and 3 reforms have wide-reaching implications for Council business processes, particularly in the resource consents, compliance monitoring, and District Plan areas of Council. The full extent of impacts is not yet known, with detailed announcements on the replacement RMA yet to come and the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill yet to be brought into law.

There is a more immediate need to ensure alignment of the District Plan work programme with recently announced changes to National Direction. The proposed new and amended National Direction instruments will also have impacts on strategic planning (including planning for infrastructure) and will influence decision making on resource consent applications, and the preparation of local plans and a spatial plan under the new planning system in the future.

As the RM Reforms have significant implications for the work of Council, Elected Members have been continually updated on the RM Reforms since early 2024 through Operational Reports to the Strategy, Planning and Development Committee and more specific project briefings to Council. Central Government announcements to date have been actively followed to ensure alignment of the current District Plan work programme, reporting and feedback to elected members.

Recent RM Reform announcements relating to the National Direction packages including those of relevance to the “Going for Housing Growth” proposals have provided greater detail of the proposed RM Reform. This has enabled further analysis by Staff about what these proposals would mean for the work of Council, and ultimately for our community. The analysis has identified some matters of strategic relevance to the Whangārei District and is on-going, particularly in relation to the announcements relating to the “Going for Housing Growth” programme.

As reported previously we have very limited resourcing to dedicate to submissions, with a more substantive submission likely coming at the expense of other work programmes. Given the scale and pace of the reform programme, and the breadth of submissions that are likely to be received across the sector, the impact of a submission from Council may also be limited. As such the staff review has predominantly been driven by ensuring that there is a robust understanding of the reform programme in order to:

- Provide sound advice to Elected Members.
- Prioritise work programmes.
- Ensure that we are in the best possible position to respond for our community.

However, staff are acutely aware of the broader implications of the reform programme, and the fact that there may be a desire from Elected Members to participate through submissions. Should Elected Members be minded toward making a submission it is suggested that the submission provides high-level feedback from a local government perspective with focus on matters of strategic relevance to the Whangārei District that will ultimately impact on our community, rather than technical matters or matters that would have impact across New Zealand, which will likely be addressed through a range of sector submissions.

3 Discussion / Whakawhiti kōrero

Announcements on National Direction packages are the focus of this Agenda, rather than the RM Reform generally. However, detail of the broader RM Reform is included as relevant to context setting for the National Direction packages.

Attachment 1 includes a detailed analysis of new and amended National Direction with a summary of this analysis provided in the discussion below.

3.1 Phase 3 – Replacement RMA

Earlier this year the Central Government announced that the RMA will be replaced with two new acts in Phase 3 of the Resource Management Reforms: The Planning Act and the Natural Environment Act.

A Planning Act is proposed to focus on land-use planning and regulation, enabling urban and infrastructure development in alignment with the Government’s Going for Housing Growth plan and the 30-year National Infrastructure Plan. The proposals aim to create well-

functioning urban and rural areas. For the Whangarei District Council, a local plan (to be housed within one plan for the Region) will need to be prepared to replace the current District Plan under this proposed legislation.

A Natural Environment Act is proposed to concentrate on the use, protection, and enhancement of natural resources, including land, air, freshwater, coastal and marine water, and other natural resources. The dual act approach is proposed to reduce duplication and overlap between different laws and regulations, providing a clearer framework for managing effects on the natural environment. Preparation of a plan under the Natural Environment Act (to be housed within one plan for the Region) will be the responsibility of the Regional Council.

The new system as proposed under Phase 3 of the RM Reform would:

- Set environmental limits to protect natural resources and provide more certainty around where development can and should be enabled.
- Narrow the scope of the resource management system to make clear what the system manages and what regulation is covered by other legislation.
- Include greater standardisation, including standardised land use zones and overlays.
- Require regional spatial planning to ensure a clear and consistent framework for managing land use and natural resources whilst balancing development needs with environmental protection.

The details of the Replacement RMA legislation are expected to be introduced as a Bill in parliament later this year. Specific details of what this replacement legislation will mean for the business of council will not be known until the bill is introduced.

3.2 Going for Housing Growth Programme

Alongside the RM reforms Central Government have a “Going for Housing Growth” programme that is looking at ways to address ongoing housing shortages. This programme is structured around three pillars, with the objective of improving housing affordability by significantly increasing the supply of developable land for housing, both inside and at the edge of our urban areas. These are:

- **Pillar 1:** Freeing up land for urban development, including removing unnecessary planning barriers.
- **Pillar 2:** Improving infrastructure funding and financing to support urban growth.
- **Pillar 3:** Providing incentives for communities and councils to support growth.

System changes as part of the RM Reforms form part of achieving Pillar 1.

The recently released consultation document “Going for Housing Growth – Providing for Urban Development in the new Resource Management System”, seeks views on proposals relating to the replacement RMA that fall within Pillar 1. This consultation also confirms that Government will not amend the National Policy Statement on Urban Development in advance of the RM reforms, as had previously been planned. This is to minimise the need for costly and time-consuming changes to council plans under the current system.

Limited details of the Pillar 1 proposals, and their implications for Council, are discussed further in Section 3.3 below. However, in the coming weeks Staff will review the proposals in more detail and provide a separate briefing to Council if deemed necessary ahead of the close of consultation on 17 August 2025.

Pillar 2 includes a package of reforms to improve infrastructure funding and financing, including:

- Replacing the development contributions regime with a development levy system
- Changing the Infrastructure Funding and Financing Act 2020
- Improving the flexibility of targeted rates for growth infrastructure

Pillar 3 focuses on providing incentives for councils and communities to support growth.

3.3 Phase 2 – New and Amended National Direction

As part of Phase 2 of the RM Reforms the Central Government opened consultation on a comprehensive series of updates to RMA National Direction on 29 May 2025. The updates are divided into three packages, each addressing different aspects of resource management as follows:

- **Package 1 – Infrastructure and Development** – proposes four new National Direction instruments (for infrastructure, granny flats (minor residential units), papakāinga, and natural hazards) and amendments to four existing National Direction instruments (for renewable electricity generation, electricity transmission, distribution and associated activities, telecommunication facilities).
- **Package 2 – Primary Sector** – proposes amendments to eight existing National Direction instruments (for marine aquaculture, commercial forestry, highly productive land, stock exclusion regulations and the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement).
- **Package 3 – Freshwater** – Identifies issues with some of the current National Direction instruments for freshwater and seeks feedback on potential options to address the issues. It is anticipated that Government will undertake a second round of consultation on Package 3 once more detailed proposals are drafted.

This was followed by the “Going for Housing Growth – Providing for Urban Development in the new Resource Management System” consultation. Whilst this was billed as **Package 4**, it is distinct in that the proposals do not relate to Phase 2 of the RM reforms.

3.3.1 How does National Direction Fit in the Resource Management System?

National Direction plays a pivotal role in the planning system, providing a framework for consistent and effective resource management across the country. It encompasses various policies and regulations that guide local authorities in their planning and decision-making processes. The role of National Direction in the replacement RMA is expected to be similar.

National Direction includes the following:

- **National Policy Statements (NPSs):** Instruments issued by the Central Government to set out objectives and policies for matters of national significance. They provide direction on specific issues such as freshwater management, urban development, and renewable energy. Local authorities must give effect to NPSs in their regional and district plans, ensuring that national priorities are integrated into local planning.
- **National Environmental Standards (NESs):** These are regulations that prescribe technical standards, methods, or requirements for environmental matters. NESs ensure that there is a consistent approach to managing environmental issues across the country. Local authorities must ensure subdivision and development complies with NESs, which often mean the rules of an NES will override/ replace rules in district and regional plans.
- **National Planning Standards:** These standards aim to improve the consistency and efficiency of planning documents across New Zealand. They set out requirements for the structure, format, and content of regional policy statements, regional plans, and district plans. The goal is to make planning documents easier to understand and use, and to ensure that they align with national priorities.
- **Regulations under Section 360 of the RMA:** These generally deal with implementation detail and technical matters. They provide the practical framework for applying and enforcing the broader principles and policies outlined in the RMA.

3.3.2 Proposed New and Amended National Direction Instruments

Details of the Central Government proposals for new and amended National Direction instruments currently being consulted on are provided in Attachment 1 and summarised in Table 1 below.

Any changes made to National Direction instruments are expected to have legal effect in the current planning system (once gazetted) and carry through to the new planning system. New and amended National Direction instruments proposed as part of the 'Infrastructure and Development' and 'Primary Sector' packages are expected to be finalised ahead of changes under the 'Freshwater Package'.

Table 1: Summary of proposals for new and amended National Direction

Topic	National Direction Instrument	Proposal
Infrastructure	NPS Infrastructure (NPS-I)	New NPS to enable infrastructure by recognising benefits, operational and functional needs, and strategic plans.
	NPS Renewable Electricity Generation (NPS-REG)	Replaces NPS-REG 2011 to give greater weight to renewable energy generation benefits and locational needs and support emissions targets.
	NPS Electricity Networks (NPS-EN)	Replaces NPS on Electricity Transmission 2008 and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expands scope of the NPS to include distribution lines. ▪ Sets a lenient regime for network upgrading, including intensification of existing infrastructure. ▪ Brings all ancillary electricity network activities under one regime (e.g. tree trimming).
	NES Electricity Network Activities (NES-ENA)	Replaces NES for Electricity Transmission Activities 2009 and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expands scope of the NPS to enable more activities by default (e.g. stormwater, EV chargers, river works). ▪ Introduces a buffer corridor and setbacks for subdivision and land use.
	NES Telecommunication Facilities (NES-TF)	Updates NES-TF 2016, expanding the permitted activities (pole heights, temporary installations, heritage connections) to meet coverage demand.
Granny flats (minor residential units)	NES Granny Flat (NES-GF)	New NES-GF to provide a permitted pathway for one 70m ² residential unit per site in specified zones (subject to compliance with specific setback and building coverage rules and the district-wide planning rules (e.g. rules for natural hazards)).
Papakāinga	NES Papakāinga (NES-P)	New NES-P to provide an enabling framework for up to 10 residential units on ancestral Māori land in rural, residential and Māori purpose zones, subject to compliance with specific

		development controls and existing rules in District Plans.
Natural Hazards	NPS Natural Hazards (NPS-NH)	New NPS-NH to establish nationally consistent objectives and policies for managing natural hazard risks.
Marine Aquaculture	NES Marine Aquaculture (NES-MA)	Amendments to the NES-MA 2020 to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove some restrictions that apply when reconsenting marine aquaculture activities. Set out a more lenient activity status for certain changes to consent conditions for existing marine aquaculture consents. Make the rules for research and trial activities for aquaculture more permissive.
Commercial Forestry	NES Commercial Forestry (NES-CF)	Amendments to the NES-CF 2023 to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify when councils can impose stricter rules than the NES. Remove councils' broad discretion to have more stringent rules. Introduce a slash management risk assessment approach. Removing the requirement for afforestation and replanting plans.
Highly Productive Land	NPS Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL)	Amendments to the NPS-HPL 2022 to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the classes of land that are classified as highly productive. Change highly productive land mapping criteria. Extend or suspend the timeframes for regional councils to map highly productive land.
Mining and Quarrying	NPS Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS-IB) NPS Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL) NES Freshwater (NES-F) NPS Freshwater Management (NPS-FM)	Amendments to National Direction instruments to make the provisions within these instruments more enabling and more consistent for quarrying and mining activities and essential ancillary activities.
Freshwater	NPS Freshwater Management (NPS-FM)	Amendments to NPS-FM 2020 to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebalance the policy for all water users. Provide greater flexibility for councils to decide on environmental limits and bottom lines. Simplify wetland regulation. Better enable the continued domestic supply of fresh vegetables.

	NES Freshwater (NES-F)	Amendments to NES-F to simplify requirements around fish passage, nitrogen fertiliser, wetlands, and culverts.
	Resource Management (Stock Exclusion) Regulations 2020	Amendment to the regulations to remove the requirement to exclude grazed beef cattle and deer in low intensify farm systems from wetlands.
Coastal Environment	New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (NZCPS)	Amendments to the NZCPS to provide a more enabling framework for specified infrastructure, renewable electricity generation, electricity transmission, aquaculture and resource extraction within the coastal environment.
Housing	NPS Urban Development (NPS-UD)	Government has announced that no amendments will be made to the NPS-UD ahead of the replacement to the RMA. However, Government is consulting on matters that are currently addressed in the NPS-UD to inform the RMA replacement bills.

3.3.3 What do the National Direction proposals mean for Council?

Whilst some of the proposals can at a high level be supported or generally align with outcomes provided for in the Operative District Plan, the National Direction package forms part of a wider package of reforms that collectively could have wide reaching implications for planning at a local level. As the proposals on National Direction have been announced in absence of a replacement RMA it is difficult to understand at this stage the full extent of what this might mean for Council. However, it is of note that:

- Whilst National Direction supports efficiency within the system by providing for consistency in matters of national importance, some of the proposals within the package stray into areas that traditionally have been of local concern (e.g. Granny Flats), where local policy responses have previously been applied to ensure alignment with community aspirations.
- The National Direction package, when considered in the context of wider reform proposals, will likely result in some substantive changes in the way we plan for growth, manage land use and development, and deliver infrastructure. This will ultimately result in cost to ratepayers associated with infrastructure funding and business process changes required to deliver the requirements of a new RM system.

Some of the changes proposed in the National Direction package present a major shift in policy settings. While some of these policy shifts are supported, others are not yet fully understood (due to the proposals being announced in isolation) and/or could result in unintentional outcomes for Whangārei. Some of the key changes are summarised below:

- Infrastructure

The proposed NPS for Infrastructure promotes a fundamental shift in assessing and approving infrastructure – ensuring that economic benefits and value for money are among the highest considerations. While the NPS-I does have benefits, including strengthening the role of spatial and strategic planning in decision-making, this shift comes with some challenges and uncertainties, particularly in relation to funding. What is uncertain under the proposed NPS-I is the process for Council's to manage the cost of infrastructure delivery and maintenance. This is because there is companion reform (i.e.

changes to Development Contributions via a Development Levy system) not yet a Government Policy – happening separately.

- *Highly Productive Land*

Changes to the NPS for Highly Productive Land could significantly impact the Council's ability to implement planning provisions or spatial planning mechanisms to protect land for primary production activities, particularly when viewed in the context of the "Going for Housing Growth" proposals which suggest that greenfield development should be encouraged/ supported. This could significantly compromise the availability of most of our productive soils for food and fibre production. While addressing the housing crisis is important, there is the risk that this could come at the expense of protecting – and restoring – land for primary production. Since both urban development and primary production require similar land characteristics – such as low slope, good soil conditions, and proximity to key transport routes and infrastructure – the NPS-HPL should offer clear and strong guidance to balance these competing land uses appropriately.

- *Natural Hazards*

The proposed NPS for Natural Hazards provides useful national direction to local authorities on how to assess and manage natural hazard risk. The proposed definitions, objectives, and policies are supported as they represent an appropriate approach for managing natural hazard risks that aligns with Whangārei District Council's Plan Change 1: Natural Hazards. Having national direction on these matters ensures clarity and consistency.

- *Freshwater*

The NPS-FW proposals fundamentally shift the approach to freshwater management, potentially reducing the priority given to the health and well-being of freshwater and shifting the focus to economic opportunities and community expectations. While these changes may not have a direct impact on Whangārei District Council's functions and responsibilities, they could have significant impacts on environmental, cultural, and social outcomes in the district, particularly considering the value that our communities place on the natural assets of the Whangārei District.

The Papakāinga and Granny Flat proposals will have some influence on land use and development in the District. At a high level these proposals generally align with enabling provisions in the Operative Direct Plan. In summary:

- *Papakāinga*

The proposed NES for Papakāinga would take precedence over the Papakāinga provisions in the District Plan where the Plan rules are more restrictive. However, the District Plan may still include rules that are more enabling than those in the NES-P. While the existing Papakāinga provisions in the District Plan are broadly aligned with the NES-P, the NES-P would permit development of up to 10 dwellings plus ancillary activities per site. This may enable a limited degree of additional density on smaller sites. Additionally, the NES-P may apply to a small number of sites that the District Plan's Papakāinga provisions do not apply to, potentially creating opportunities for Papakāinga development in additional locations.

- *Granny Flats*

The proposed NES for Granny Flats would take precedence over the District Plan provisions where the Plan rules are more restrictive, though more lenient rules may still be retained. While the District Plan provides a reasonably enabling framework for minor residential units with many zones allowing for minor residential units subject to permitted rule criteria (e.g. setbacks), many of the existing District Plan provisions relating to minor residential units, such as those controlling building and major structure coverage, outdoor

living courts, setbacks, sunlight access, and privacy would no longer be applicable. This potentially risks poor outcomes in the District.

The proposals for new and amended National Direction instruments have wide-reaching implications for district plan making processes. Some of these changes may not be required to be implemented until the new planning system is enforced, and others may impact the current work program of the District Plan Department. Full details of these impacts are outlined in Attachment 1 with a summary provided in Attachment 2. In summary:

- At this stage it is expected that new and amended National Direction that has an influence on current plan reviews (i.e. renewable energy, network utilities and indigenous biodiversity) will be gazetted in late 2025/ early 2026. This timing would enable notification of associated plan changes through 2026. As district plans have been signaled to 'act' as transitional plans in the new system for a number of years following enactment of the replacement RMA, it is recommended that these plan changes be progressed sooner rather than later to ensure that the Whangārei District Plan is as up to date as possible and provides for aligned and sustainable outcomes for the District through this transitional phase.

As noted above, the proposals will have some influence on many Council business processes including decision-making processes relating to resource consent applications. Details of these impacts are outlined in Attachment 1, noting that at the time this agenda was being prepared all impacts across departments may not have yet been identified or fully understood.

4 Proposed Next Steps

4.1 Making a Submission

Submissions on the National Direction Packages 1-3 close on 27 July 2025.

Noting that staff time and resourcing to make a submission is limited, should Elected Members be minded toward making a submission it is suggested that the submission provides high-level feedback from a local government perspective with focus on matters of strategic relevance to the Whangārei District (those set out above in relation to infrastructure, highly productive land, and natural hazards), rather than technical matters or matters that would have impact across New Zealand, as these matters will in the likely case be addressed in sector submissions.

Over the coming weeks the District Plan Department will continue discussions with other Council departments to identify any other impacts on Council business and projects. If, over the coming weeks, additional issues of strategic relevance to the Whangārei District are identified these will be considered for inclusion in any Council submission.

However, the timeframes for any submission are extremely tight, with it being questionable whether it will be possible to get a submission to the Strategy Planning and Development Committee prior to the due date. As indicated above, a more substantive submission would also only be possible at the expense of other work programmes.

4.2 Other RM Reform Briefings

The following additional briefings around the RM reforms are currently planned.

- The Central Governments "Going for Housing Growth" (package 4) consultation document will be presented to Elected Members at the 23 July 2025 Council briefing alongside recommendations relating to the preparation of a submission.
- Staff are presenting to Te Huinga on the National Direction packages 1 – 4 on 21 July 2025.
- The National Direction packages will be presented by Staff at the 7 August Te Kārearea Committee meeting.

We will continue providing RM reform updates through the operational report and via Council briefings where more substantive announcements are made.

5 Financial/budget considerations / Ngā pānga pūtea/tahua

Any District Plan related work resulting from the RM Reforms will be resource by staff time and the operational District Plan budgets (as required), with the work being prioritised within the budget and staff resourcing limitations, based on the direction of Council.

6 Significance and engagement / Te Hira me te Arawhiti

The decisions or matters of this Agenda do not trigger the significance criteria outlined in Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, and the public will be informed via agenda publication on the website.

7 Attachments / Ngā Tāpiritanga

Attachment 1: Review of the National Direction consultation package 2025

Attachment 2: Influence of the National Direction package announcements on District Plan Making (summary table)

RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC

That the public be excluded from the following parts of proceedings of this meeting.

The general subject of each matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter, and the specific grounds under Section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:

1.	The making available of information would be likely to unreasonably prejudice the commercial position of persons who are the subject of the information. {Section 7(2)(c)}
2.	To enable the council (the committee) to carry on without prejudice or disadvantage commercial negotiations. {(Section 7(2)(i))}.
3.	To protect the privacy of natural persons. {Section 7(2)(a)}.
4.	Publicity prior to successful prosecution of the individuals named would be contrary to the laws of natural justice and may constitute contempt of court. {Section 48(1)(b)}.
5.	To protect information which is the subject to an obligation of confidence, the publication of such information would be likely to prejudice the supply of information from the same source and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied. {Section 7(2)(c)(i)}.
6.	In order to maintain legal professional privilege. {Section 2(g)}.
7.	To enable the council to carry on without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations {Section 7(2)(i)}.

Resolution to allow members of the public to remain

If the council/committee wishes members of the public to remain during discussion of confidential items the following additional recommendation will need to be passed:

Move/Second

"That _____ be permitted to remain at this meeting, after the public has been excluded, because of his/her/their knowledge of Item _____.

This knowledge, which will be of assistance in relation to the matter to be discussed, is relevant to that matter because _____.

Note:

Every resolution to exclude the public shall be put at a time when the meeting is open to the public.