



OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2016-2019

TĀ TĀTOU RAUTAKI
WHAKAMUA



This document sets out Waikato Regional Council's part in making our place, the mighty Waikato, the best it can be. It shows the large number of things we will continue to do for our community. It also identifies what the council's long term aims are for the region and what it will prioritise in order to make a real difference over the next three years.

This is our place. This is your place.

The mighty Waikato – the beating heart of New Zealand.



VISION FOR THE REGION

THE WAIKATO CARES LOCALLY, COMPETES GLOBALLY

WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL'S MISSION

Working together to build a Waikato region that has a healthy environment, a strong economy and vibrant communities

PRIORITIES

Support communities to take action on agreed outcomes

Forge and strengthen partnerships to achieve positive outcomes for the region

Positively influence future land use choices to ensure long term sustainability

Manage freshwater more effectively to maximise regional benefit.

Increase communities' understanding of risks and resilience to change

Enhance the values of the region's coasts and marine area

Shape the development of the region so it enhances our quality of life

EVERYTHING WE DO

COMMUNITY AND SERVICES

RESOURCE USE

FLOOD AND PROTECTION CONTROL WORKS

SCIENCE AND STRATEGY

EMERGENCY AND HAZARD MANAGEMENT

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

WHAT DO WE WANT THE REGION'S FUTURE TO LOOK LIKE?

Waikato Regional Council's work aims to achieve a number of long term outcomes over the upcoming decades that contribute to a sustainable future for our region.

These outcomes are connected to one another, so success in one area cannot be at the expense of another. As a result, Waikato Regional Council seeks to make decisions that provide multiple benefits for the community now and in the future.



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

1. Land use is sustainable.
2. It is safe to swim and take kai from all fresh water.
3. The Waikato has become predator free, in line with the New Zealand 2050 target, without compromising indigenous biodiversity.
4. The full range of ecosystem types, including land, water and coastal and marine ecosystems, is in a healthy and functional state.
5. All soil quality indicators are trending positive.

STRONG ECONOMY

1. By 2034, household median incomes are above the New Zealand average (Waikato Means Business).
2. By 2034, value added per capita will grow by 2.8 per cent per annum so that the Waikato region is in the upper third of regions in New Zealand for economic performance (Waikato Means Business).
3. Economic growth ensures natural capital and ecosystem services are maintained.
4. The Waikato region is moving towards a low carbon economy.
5. We are achieving the best use of the region's fresh water.
6. New investment is attracted to the region through improved reputation and partnerships.
7. The Waikato economy benefits from having Auckland as our neighbour.

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

1. Our diverse communities feel like a valued part of the Waikato and take pride in the region.
2. Communities are empowered and supported to take action on agreed outcomes.
3. Communities are less vulnerable and more resilient to natural hazards, the effects of climate change and changes to society and the economy.
4. People and communities are well connected to each other, to services (including health and other essential services), and to opportunities including recreation, education and jobs.
5. There is increased benefit from the use and protection of our amenity and recreational features and values.
6. Significant reduction in boating fatalities and road related fatalities and serious injuries.
7. We support all parts of the Waikato to be as successful as they can be.
8. Co-governance with iwi is meaningful and effective.

VISION FOR THE REGION: THE WAIKATO CARES LOCALLY, COMPETES GLOBALLY

Caring for each other, our environment and our economy gives us a great quality of life in the Waikato and helps the region make an important contribution nationally.

Caring locally means the region can have a sustainable future where we are resilient to changes facing the region and can take advantage of global economic opportunities.

WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL'S MISSION: WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD A WAIKATO REGION THAT HAS A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT, A STRONG ECONOMY AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Waikato Regional Council is helping to build a sustainable future for our region - one where our environment, our economy and our communities thrive. We know we can't do this alone. Working together is at the heart of everything we do. It's these partnerships and support for our community that are key to forging an exciting future for the Waikato.



PRIORITIES FOR 2016-2019

Waikato Regional Council has identified seven priorities for the next three years. These are areas in which the council wants to prioritise effort so it can make real progress.

These seven priorities respond to the drivers for change facing the region and what we want the region's future to look like. The priorities build on the success of previous strategic directions of Waikato Regional Council.

While we know many of the actions that will be needed to make a positive difference, we also want to be able to make the most of opportunities as they arise.

SUPPORT COMMUNITIES TO TAKE ACTION ON AGREED OUTCOMES

Why it's a priority

As the drivers for change show, there are a number of major challenges expected over the next three years and beyond that will impact on our environment and lifestyle.

Waikato Regional Council does a lot of good work to support everyone's quality of life, including clean heat programmes, road safety and navigation safety, civil defence and emergency management, hazard management, catchment management, climate change adaptation and managing biosecurity risks.

Waikato Regional Council provides these and other services because an issue needs to be managed at a regional scale or because we have the expertise. But, in some cases, local communities know their own issues best and are best placed to do something about them. The most useful way for Waikato Regional Council to achieve agreed outcomes in these situations is to support communities to take action.

Our community is the region's greatest asset with 40 per cent of us involved in community work.

What will we do?

- Our data and information is more readily accessible so communities can use it to make good decisions.
- Communities are more empowered and supported to achieve their aims by us providing information, skills, funding or materials or by working in partnership with a community group.
- Increased focus on community engagement and partnerships, understanding communities and their needs, now and into the future.

FORGE AND STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR THE REGION

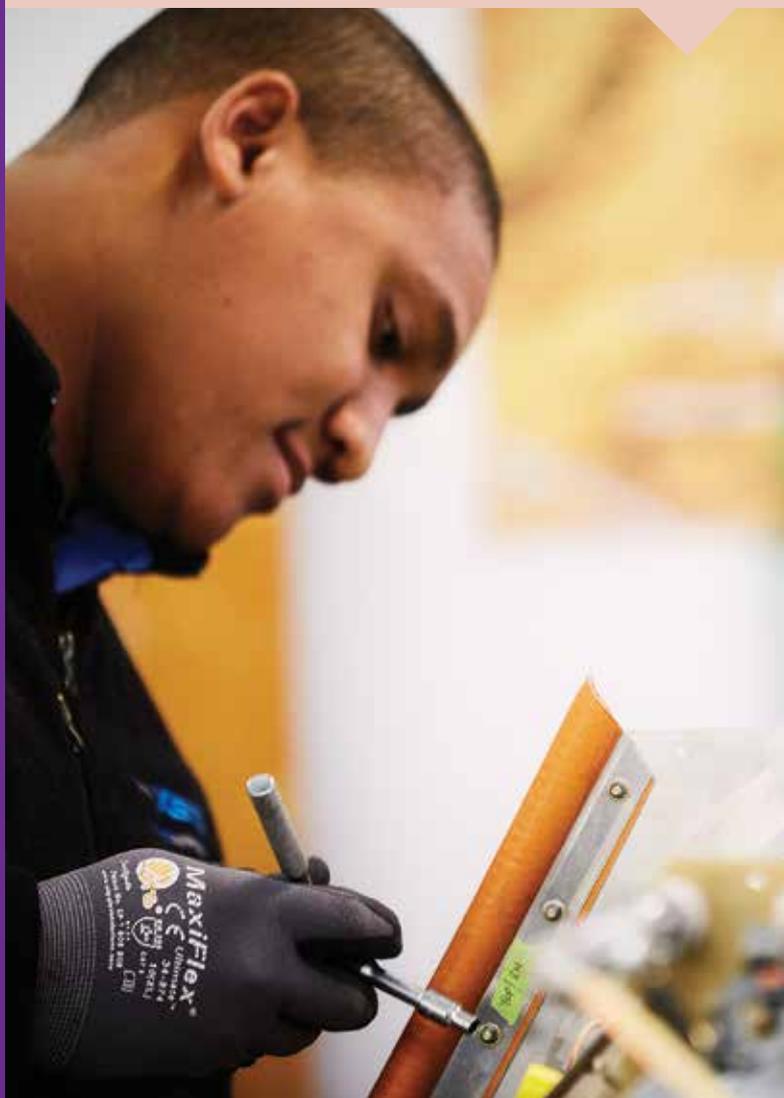
Why it's a priority

Waikato Regional Council values and will continue to sustain its Treaty-based relationship with iwi. However, we need to keep looking for the best way to get the job done, mahia te mahi. Whilst that means some things should continue as usual, we also need to actively look for opportunities to create significant change so the region meets its potential.

Partnerships with iwi Māori, community and business organisations are vital to achieve positive economic, environmental and social outcomes. By doing so, we can make the results of our efforts greater than the sum of the parts.

What will we do?

- Existing partnerships are strengthened and new partnerships are forged with iwi Māori, community and business organisations to achieve step change for our environment, economy and communities.
- The Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River is advanced by delivering on the Healthy Rivers Wai Ora plan change and catchment services.
- We continue to support Treaty negotiations and deliver on co-management and co-governance requirements.



POSITIVELY INFLUENCE FUTURE LAND USE CHOICES TO ENSURE LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Why it's a priority

Waikato Regional Council and many others are doing a lot of positive work so we have good water quality, mahinga kai, soil versatility and healthy biodiversity (eg catchment management work, the Healthy Rivers Wai Ora plan change which is setting a new regulatory direction for nearly half our region, FutureProof).

We need to think about how we want to use our land best, by considering all the potential impacts, benefits and needs, including iwi Māori values and aspirations, to ensure our natural resources can support our economy and communities in the long term and so that land uses can be supported by efficient and effective infrastructure.

The scale of change that is needed to meet our community's expectations means we need to work on a bigger scale than we have been to date to get results.

What will we do?

- We plan and make decisions on land use based on multiple values and benefits, including economic and non-economic.
- We advocate more strongly to protect high quality soils from inappropriate development.
- We advocate more strongly for coastal development to take into account natural hazards and predicted impacts of climate change.
- We are delivering on the Healthy Rivers Wai Ora plan change.
- Pests are managed in a more integrated way so that vegetation is healthy.
- If shown to be feasible, we create an entity in partnership with others to buy land, enter into joint ventures and incentivise good land use practices so land use can be changed to better suit the land's long term sustainability.

MANAGE FRESHWATER MORE EFFECTIVELY TO MAXIMISE REGIONAL BENEFIT

Why it's a priority

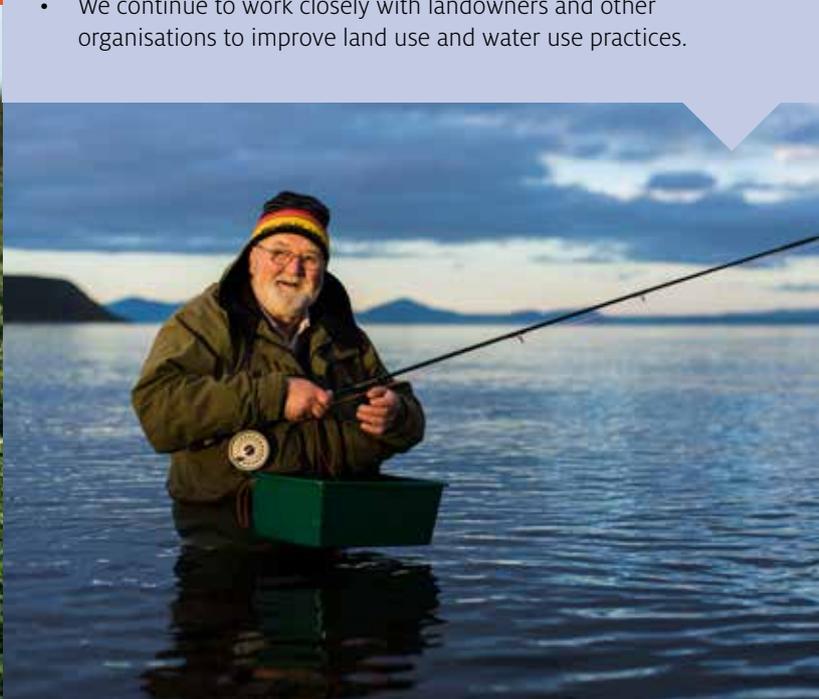
Water is simply essential to our economic and social wellbeing. What's more, it's clean water we value the most, and a healthy environment depends on it. The fresh water we have available is nearly fully allocated in some parts of the region in summer and demand is growing all the time. Unless something changes, in the future, there may not be enough water to go around.

More and more users are now competing for the 'right' to access and use fresh water. But the framework we must work within is simply not flexible enough to deal with a range of users competing for a finite resource. The regulatory system by which water is managed has also grown more complex and cannot respond quickly or cost-effectively to changing conditions.

The way we allocate water also needs to change. Under existing rules, allocations are not based on making the best use of water for regional or national benefit. Instead, allocation decisions are determined on a 'first-in, first-served' basis, favouring users with historical access rights, and potentially denying access to others. Some allocations are not fully utilised, leaving less water available for others. It means we are not using fresh water in ways that enable and encourage economic growth and meet other aspirations.

What will we do?

- A Regional Freshwater Strategy is developed and findings implemented.
- A broader range of tools is developed to protect our waterways, allocate what is available and do it more quickly, simply and cost-effectively.
- Water quality and water quantity are connected in decision making.
- Te Waioira, Joint Institute for Freshwater Management and research initiatives to address freshwater issues are supported.
- Iwi rights and interests in fresh water agreed with central government are recognised and provided for.
- We are delivering on the Healthy Rivers Wai Ora plan change.
- We continue to work closely with landowners and other organisations to improve land use and water use practices.



INCREASE COMMUNITIES' UNDERSTANDING OF RISKS AND RESILIENCE TO CHANGE

Why it's a priority

As identified in the drivers for change, there are a number of changes expected in the Waikato over the next three years and beyond that will impact on our communities and their quality of life. These changes range across declining and ageing populations in some areas, access to essential services for some people, the changing nature of work for others and regional impacts of climate change and natural hazards.

Waikato Regional Council provides civil defence and emergency management and is already providing regional responses to understand risk, particularly risks associated with natural hazards and impacts of climate change. Waikato Regional Council is also helping communities understand and adapt to change of various sorts. However more needs to be done so people and communities can react well to shocks and adapt to changes to technology, society and the economy.

What will we do?

- We play an active role in delivering on the priorities of the Waikato Plan.
- The region works together better to deliver on Waikato Means Business.
- We are all better informed of risks and drivers for change affecting communities.
- We more actively reduce long term risks to communities from storm damage and weather-related natural hazards; and long term risks of sea level rise to settlements and infrastructure.
- There is increased planting for carbon storage within estuaries, riparian zones and marginal land.

ENHANCE THE VALUES OF THE REGION'S COASTS AND MARINE AREA

Why it's a priority

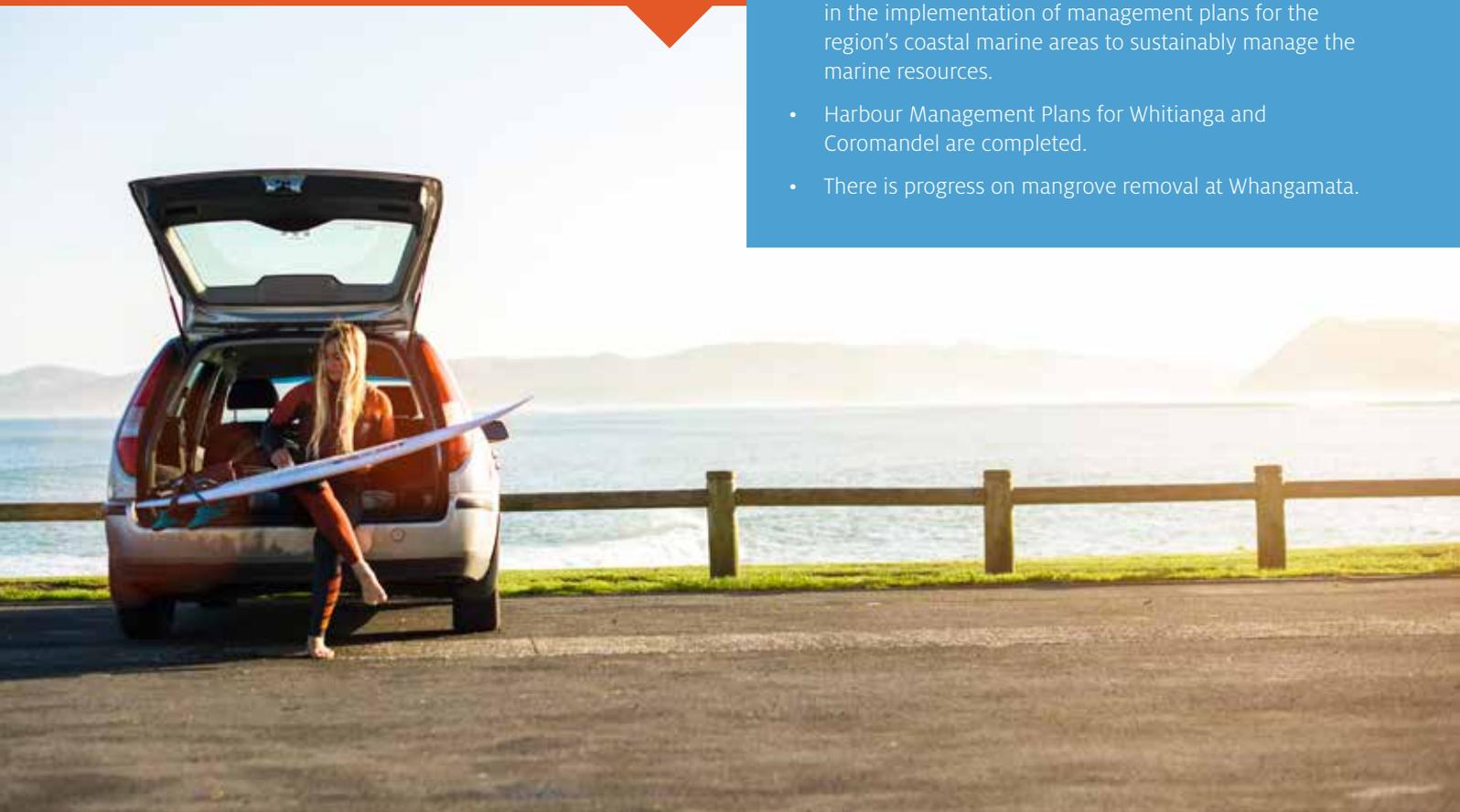
Much of the coastal area is public space which is highly valued for its amenity, recreation and ecological values. At the same time, the coast is an actively developing commercial frontier with large potential for increased tourism, fish and shell-fish farming, mining of minerals, energy developments and so on. There is therefore increasing potential for conflicts between uses and values.

Estuaries are among the most productive environments on earth and can contain one of the highest ranges of biodiversity. Better management of these areas will provide future generations with healthy harbours, improved biodiversity, increased marine productivity and economic returns from sustainable fishing practices and eco-tourism.

Some coastal areas, particularly estuaries and harbours, are impacted by upstream discharges, including sediment and pathogens. Increasing intensification of land use is exacerbating the problem.

What will we do?

- We play an active role in implementing SeaChange.
- We develop a more integrated approach to managing coastal issues.
- Governance of the Hauraki Gulf better supports good management of the coast.
- We improve our understanding of coastal land use and resource use trends and pressure.
- A more effective regulatory response is developed to manage coastal development pressures.
- There is increased, meaningful community participation in the implementation of management plans for the region's coastal marine areas to sustainably manage the marine resources.
- Harbour Management Plans for Whitianga and Coromandel are completed.
- There is progress on mangrove removal at Whangamata.



SHAPE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION SO IT ENHANCES OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

Why it's a priority

The development of the Waikato is a priority as the region is lagging behind on a number of social and economic measures. Among other things, that means action is needed to help lift investment in the region, create jobs, lift education rates, cater for our ageing population, ensure everyone has access to essential services and maintain economic and social connections for everyone.

It is important that we make sure that all of the region is as strong as it can be and that development occurs within environmental limits so that it remains strong in the long term and does not happen at the expense of other aspects of our quality of life.

The Waikato Plan and Waikato Means Business set out priorities and actions required to meet collective goals for the region. As an organisation with a regional interest, Waikato Regional Council can play an active role facilitating, taking action, funding and advocating for these and other initiatives as well as undertaking its own activities to help make the region successful.

As well as focusing on the action in the Waikato, we know New Zealand benefits from Auckland being successful. The region's proximity to Auckland means that the Waikato can support Auckland's growth and benefit from it being successful by making sure the impacts of Auckland's growth on land use, infrastructure, natural resources, recreation areas, amenities and so on are well co-ordinated.

What will we do?

- We play an active role in delivering on the priorities of the Waikato Plan.
- The region works together better to deliver on Waikato Means Business.
- We work with other local and central government agencies to take a more co-ordinated approach to managing the impacts of the growth of Auckland on the Waikato.
- We advocate more strongly for and are involved with regional economic development that delivers positive environmental and social outcomes across the region.
- Increased funding to reduce road fatalities and serious crashes (intersections, blackspot road areas, etc).
- We are facilitating action to ensure people have access to essential services, such as by improving regional transport and broadband connections.

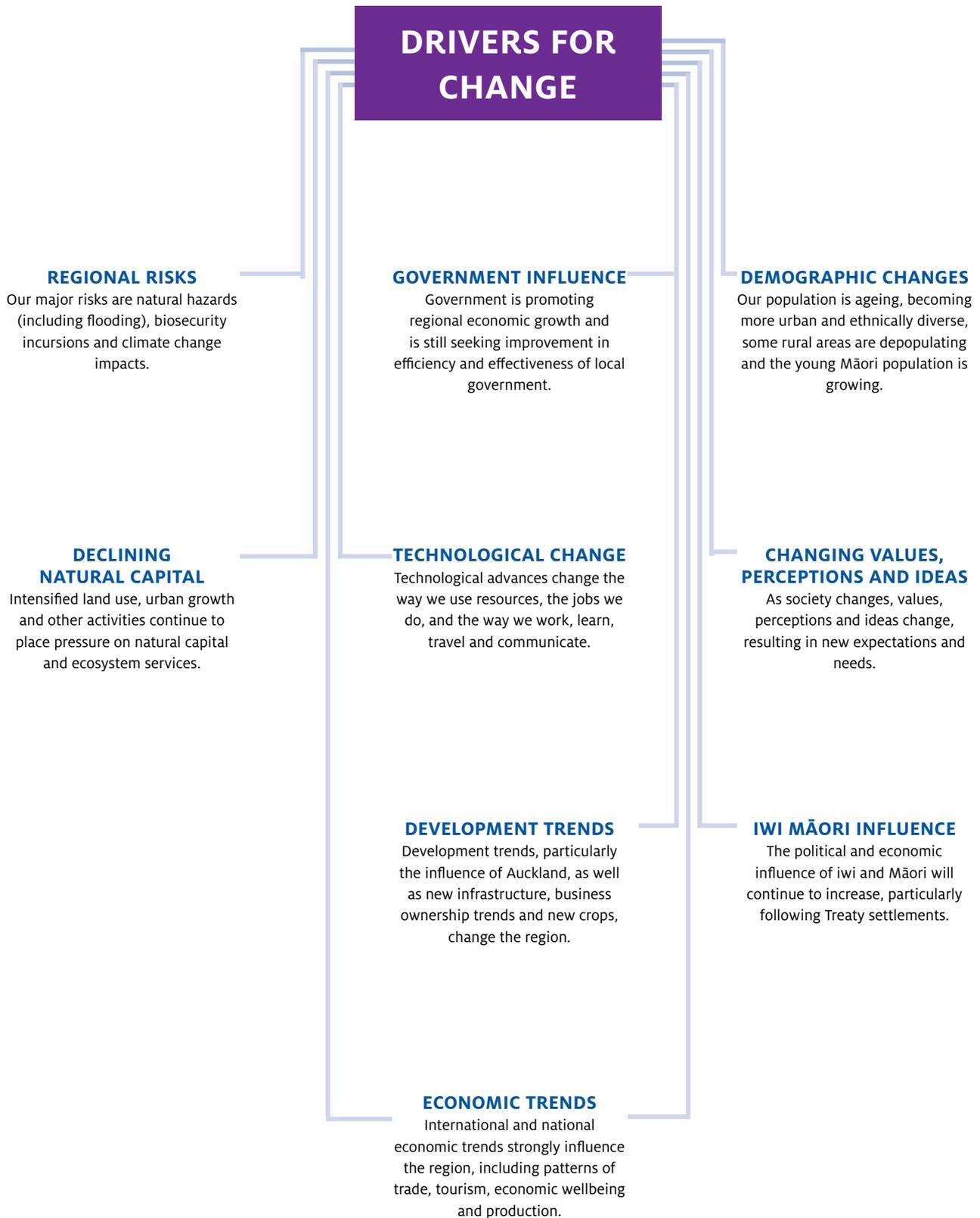


DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

The Waikato region is our home. It's where we live, work, study and play – and it's also important to New Zealand.

There are a number of major challenges expected over the next three years and beyond that will impact on our environment and lifestyle. Waikato Regional Council has thought about these as it identifies what it will focus on in order to make a real difference in the longer term for our region. Waikato Regional Council will work with others to understand the drivers for change, and to turn these challenges into opportunities.

We're doing this to secure a future for our communities that can be enjoyed for generations to come, in a region we're proud to call home.





HE TAIAO MAURIORA

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

HE ŌHANGA PAKARI

STRONG ECONOMY

HE HAPORI HIHIRI

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

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Printed June 2017
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