

Strategy and Policy Committee

17 September 2026

waikatoregion.govt.nz

Biodiversity Strategy

Presenter: Judy van Rossem

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Phase 2 engagement

Council endorsed the draft strategy for public feedback in May 2026

Phase 2 engagement: 29 May to 20 July

<https://yourvoicematters.waikatoregion.govt.nz/waikato-biodiversity-strategy>

How much feedback did we receive?

180 survey responses	7 emailed responses	330+ individual comments
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The survey was anonymous but some respondents identified themselves:

Environment Centres / Beef & Lamb NZ / Environmental NGOs /
Iwi / Territorial authorities / Farmers / Predator Free Groups



Te mauri o te taiao

**A biodiversity strategy
for the Waikato region
2026-2050**

Draft May 2026

Strategy Outcomes and Pou: What we heard

Outcome 1	Ecosystems across the region flourish, <i>ki uta ki tai</i>		
Outcome 2	Indigenous/taonga species and their habitats are recovering		
Outcome 3	Communities are informed, supported and motivated to restore and champion biodiversity		
Outcome 4	Māori leadership, mātauranga Māori and kaitiakitanga guide biodiversity restoration		
Outcome 5	People and nature prosper together in the Waikato region		
Pou 1 Protecting and restoring what matters	Pou 2 Empowering landowners and communities	Pou 3 Partnering with tangata whenua	Pou 4 Strengthening data, policy and investment
Strategic Focus Areas			

Feedback was generally constructive – focusing on strengthening the strategy rather than changing its direction

Respondents particularly liked:

- ✧ Strong focus on ecological connectivity between fragmented habitats and *ki uta ki tai* (mountains to sea)
- ✧ Emphasis on landscape-scale restoration and coordinated regional action - moving beyond isolated projects
- ✧ Recognition of biodiversity as essential natural infrastructure, supporting community wellbeing and economic prosperity
- ✧ Focus on community involvement, stewardship and locally led action
- ✧ Prioritisation of protecting and restoring threatened ecosystems, habitats and species

Key feedback themes and strategy amendments

What we heard	What changed
 Clearer targets, indicators and reporting are needed	Clearer information - monitoring, indicators and reporting (<i>Section 3</i>); targets to be developed through implementation plan
 Action needs to happen sooner	Clarification and review of timing of strategic focus areas (<i>Section 3</i>)
 Protecting existing biodiversity as well as prioritising rare and threatened biodiversity	Greater emphasis on maintaining and protecting existing biodiversity (<i>Outcome 1 / Pou 1</i>)
 Aim for biodiversity recovery and gain, not just no net loss	Stronger biodiversity improvement and enhancement focus (<i>Pou 4</i>)
 More funding, incentives and practical support are needed	More explicit reference to investment and support pathways
 Better recognition and support for people already doing the work	Greater recognition of stewardship and community action, without the need for new entities (<i>Pou 2</i>)
 Greater emphasis on animal pest and weed control	Increased focus on invasive species management (<i>Pou 1</i>)
 Landscape-scale restoration and ecological connectivity should remain central	Stronger ki uta ki tai and landscape-scale restoration approach (<i>Outcome 1 & 2 / Pou 1</i>)
 Mixed views on Māori leadership, but support for partnership and combining knowledge systems	Clearer partnership-based language and stronger integration of mātauranga Māori (<i>Outcome 4 / Pou 3</i>)
 Strategy needs to remain relevant despite future legislative and governance change	Reviewed wording that could be interpreted as pre-determining future statutory policy (<i>Pou 4</i>)

Significance and Engagement Policy review

Presenter: Jane Apperley and Toby McIntyre

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Significance and Engagement Policy (SEP) review

- The LGA requires all councils to have a current SEP.
- The Policy covers:
 - Council's approach to determining 'significance',
 - The criteria or process for assessing matters and proposals,
 - Council's response to community preferences about engagement, and
 - how Council will engage with communities.
- The SEP is reviewed every three years and consulted on with the community
- Review has been undertaken, and 6 minor changes recommended
- Consultation will occur prior to LTP to enable the updated policy to be applied to LTP matters

Significance and Engagement Policy (SEP) review

- Staff presented the draft policy to the Committee at the 18 June meeting.
- Councillors provided feedback on several of the proposed changes and requested staff bring the Policy back with amendments.
- These amendments are addressed in the report and summarised on the following slides.
- Public consultation is planned to take place in October/November.

Proposed changes

- Proposed change 1 (unchanged from June): Update Resource Management Act 1991 to 'resource management legislation.'
- Proposed change 2 (revised from June): Remove the definition of 'significant activity', and include a revised criteria based on levels of service.

Proposed Changes

- Proposed change 3 (revised from June): Add an additional paragraph to the Assessment of significance section (4) as follows:
“Assessing the level of significance of a decision or proposal will be a matter of Council’s judgment. All the above criteria will be considered holistically but, depending on the circumstances, some criteria may be more relevant than others. The outcome of the assessment will be High, Medium or Low.”, and
- Include *“..., on a case-by-case basis,...”* to part 1, and
- Include a definition for Materiality/Material to the Rārangi whakamārama | Definitions section, as follows:
“A statement, omission, fact, or item of such a nature or amount that its disclosure, or the method of treating it, given full consideration of the circumstances applying at the time the financial and performance information is completed, could reasonably be expected to influence readers’ overall understanding of the financial statements and performance information in making decisions or assessments.”

Proposed changes

- Proposed change 4 (unchanged from June): Amend bullet point 6 under 'Assessment of Significance' in the SEP, to reference levels of service instead of significant activities.
- Proposed change 5 (revised from June): Include the following, revised, new criterion:

“Whether Council has already made a commitment to consult with the community on a specific matter.”
- Proposed change 6 (unchanged from June): Make minor changes to the example tools listed in the engagement tools table.

2027-2037 LTP update

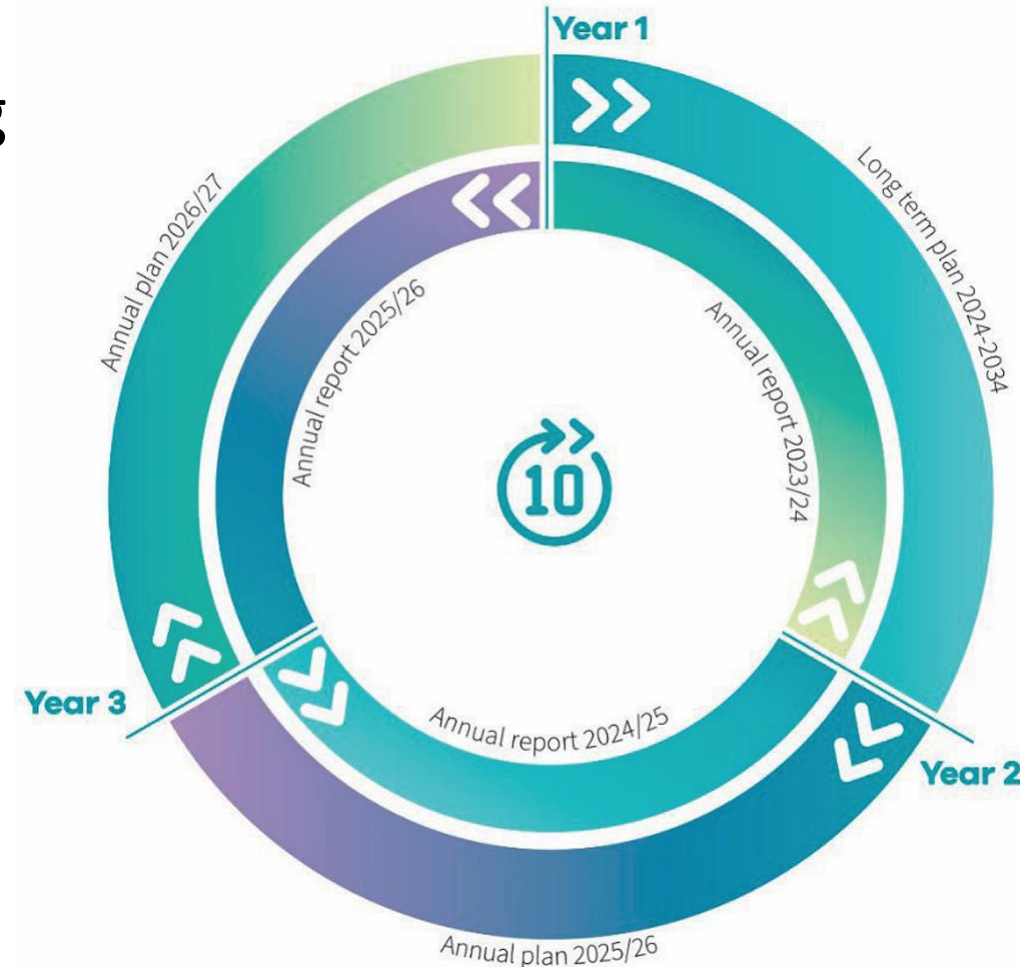
Presenter: Jane Apperley

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2027-2037 LTP

Planning and development

- 10 year plan, updated every three years
- Must be adopted by 30 June 2027, following community consultation
- In a high-change environment the LTP must:
 - Support future transition arrangements
 - Maintain clear assumptions
 - Consider, and plan to include, legislative change
 - Be flexible with adjustments made as required
 - Streamline processes where practical
 - Remain LGA and audit compliant



Progress

- Workshop held on 3 September, presented:
 - Status of 2024-2034 Business cases.
 - Levels of Service Strategic Investment Proposals (SIPs) for elected member feedback.
- Workshop held on 16 September, presented:
 - Discretionary and Education SIPs and updates.
 - Draft Significant forecasting assumptions.

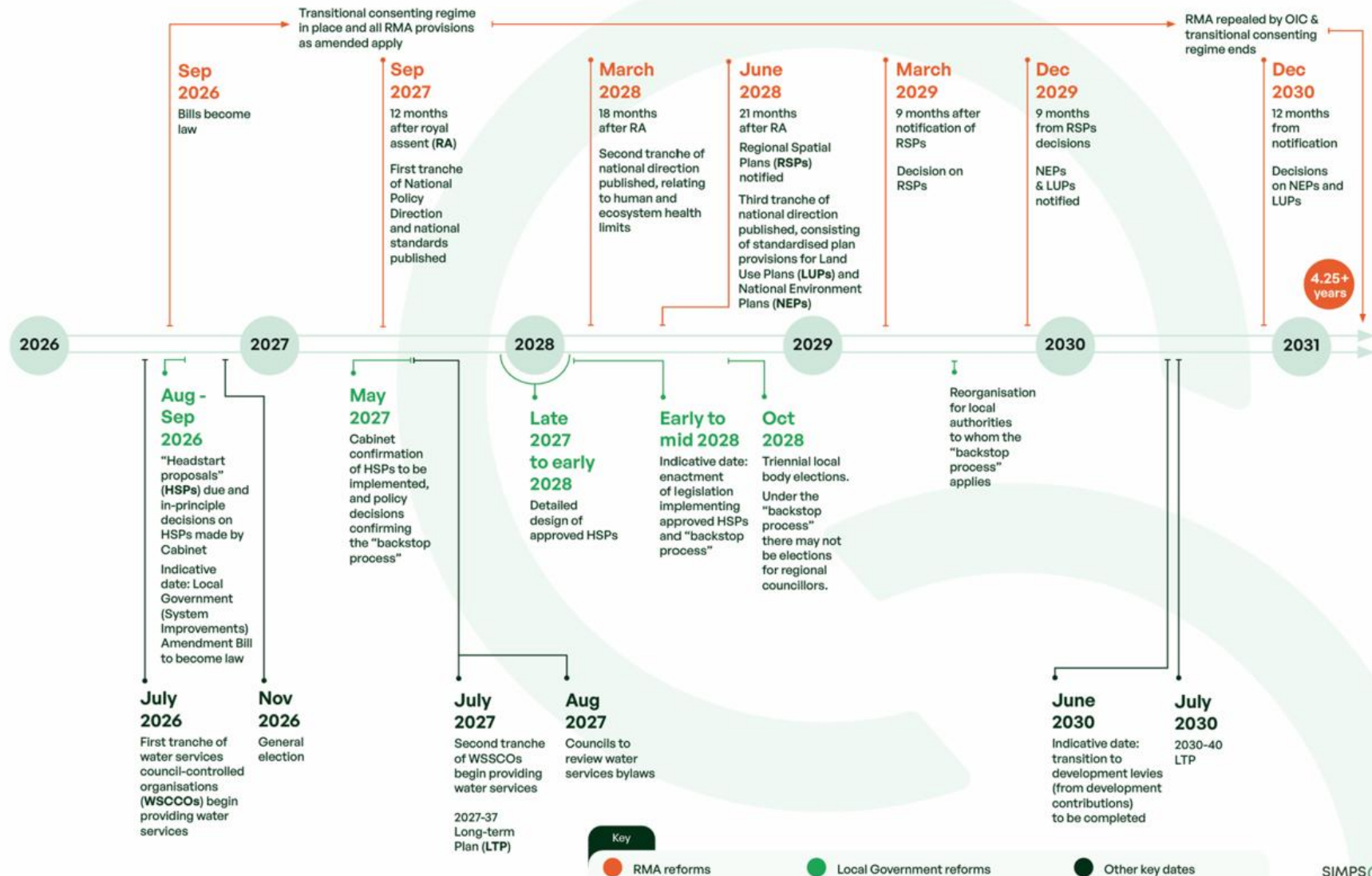
Next steps

- Staff are developing SIPs into full Investment Cases, where directed by Council.
- Others are progressing to the budgeting stage, for the first stage to be presented in December.
- Strategies and policies associated with the LTP will be presented as per the attached timeline.

Project timeline

Date	Type	Time	Time slot	LTP Proposed Agenda Items for discussion
16/09/2026	Workshop	09:30-16:00	TBA	Complete review of information provided for 3 September, including Council direction on additional areas of review; present key planning assumptions
29/09/2026	Workshop	13:00-16:00	3 hours	Infrastructure Strategy (Key assumptions)
12/10/2026	Workshop	09:30-12:30	3 hours	Review of Investment Fund Strategy
27/10/2026	Workshop	13:00-16:00	1.5 hours	Financial Strategy & Financial Policies (Revenue & Financing Policy and Rates Remissions)
1/12/2026	Workshop	13:00-16:00	3 hours	Draft Infrastructure Strategy
15/12/2026	Workshop	09:30-16:00	TBA	Draft budget overview
25/01/2027	Meeting	1 week		Draft LTP incorporating Draft Budget, approved Investment Cases, Financial Strategy / Infrastructure Strategy / Performance Framework & Measures / Activity Statements
4/02/2027	Workshop	09:30-16:00	TBA	To be determined
25/02/2027	Meeting	13:00-16:00	TBA	Draft Consultation Document / Revised Draft LTP / Draft Budget
25/03/2027	Meeting	09:30-16:00	TBA	Final Consultation Document approved
17/05/2027	Meeting	4 days		LTP Hearings (incl. 1 reserve day)
25/05/2027	Meeting	4 days		LTP Deliberations
15/06/2027	Workshop	09:30-12:30	TBA	To be determined
24/06/2027	Meeting	09:30-16:00		LTP Adoption

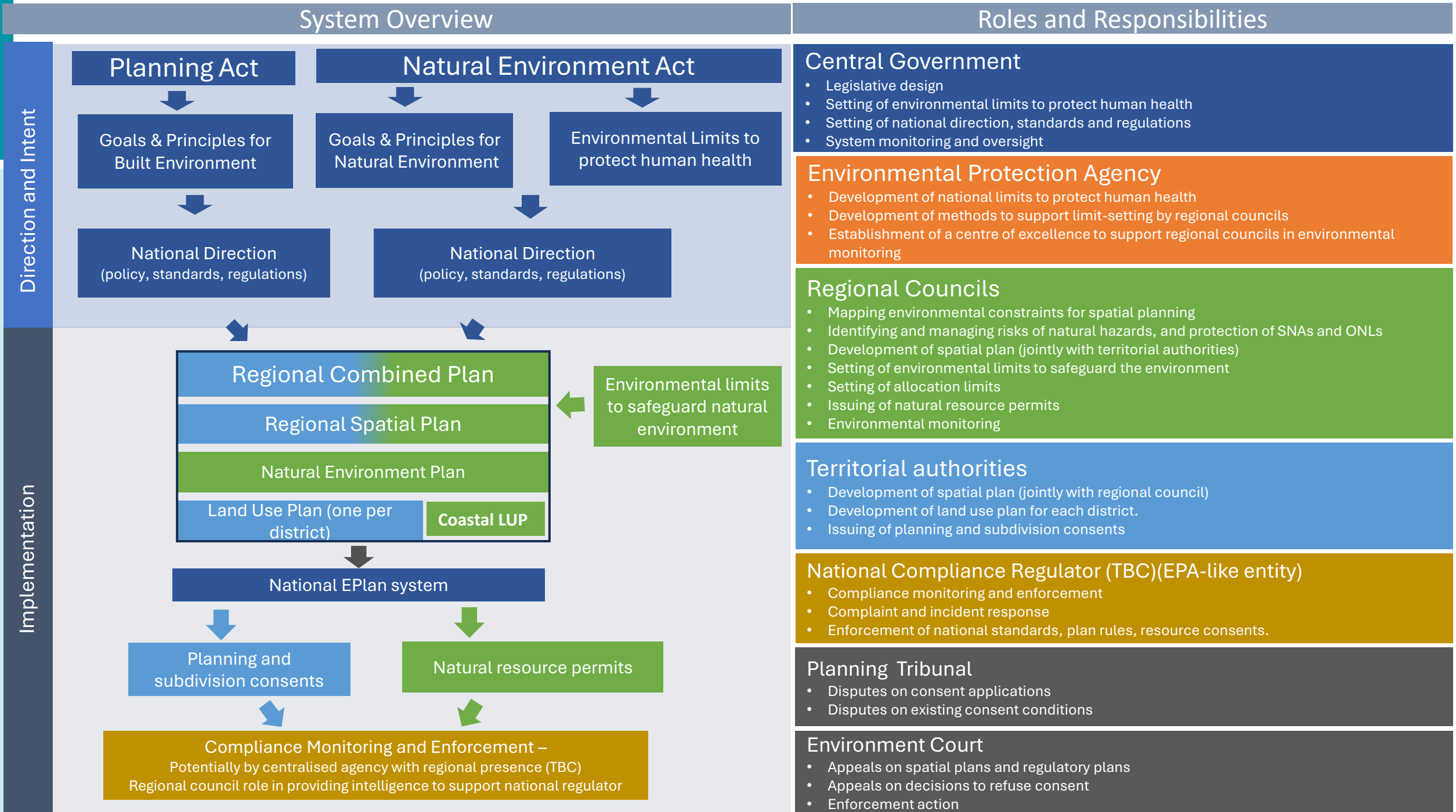
Legislative change



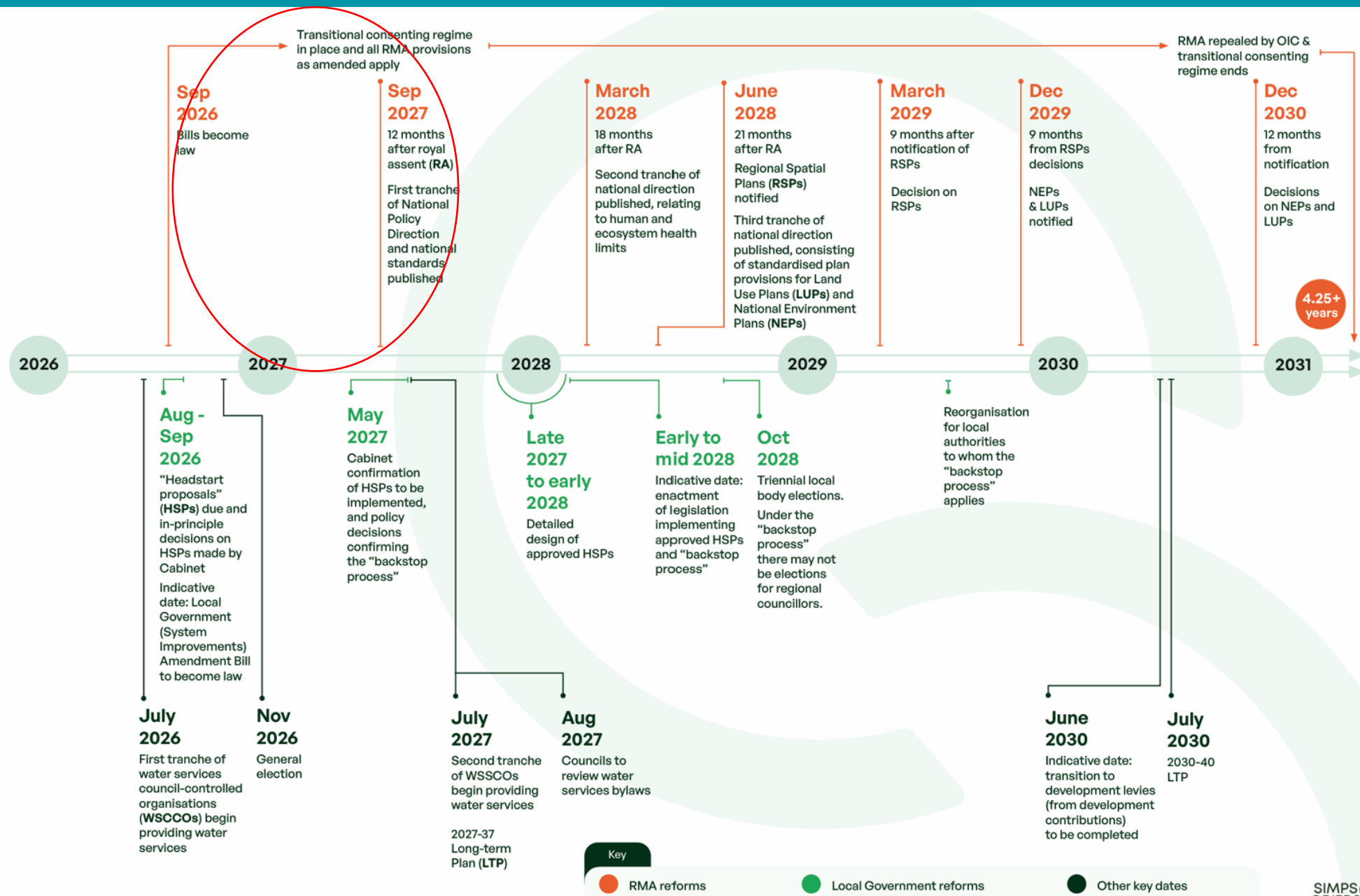
Government reforms update

Presenter: Lisette Balsom and Bruce McAuliffe

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Timeline



What's changed in the Bills

- stronger central direction through national policy and standards
- restructuring environmental-limits regime
- removal of resource-use caps as primary mechanism
- narrower indigenous biodiversity goal focused on protecting significant biodiversity
- detailed Treaty-settlement and Te Ture Whaimana provisions
- new iwi participation agreements
- expanded national-standard and ministerial oversight powers
- transition and eventual repeal machinery for RMA
- independent urban-land statutory officer
- direct transitional changes affecting Waikato Proposed Plan Change 1 (PC1).

What does this mean for WRC

- Ongoing appeal processes (Plan Change 1 and Regional Coastal Plan) remain unaffected
- What becomes operative at the end of these processes will be impacted by legislation that is current at the time
- Processes underway for regional spatial planning, and planning framework requirements (LTP implications)
- PC1 implementation approach, transition provisions related to consents, and consent renewal programme (LTP implications)

He taiao mauriora

Healthy environment

He ōhanga pakari

Strong economy

He hapori hihiri

Vibrant communities

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