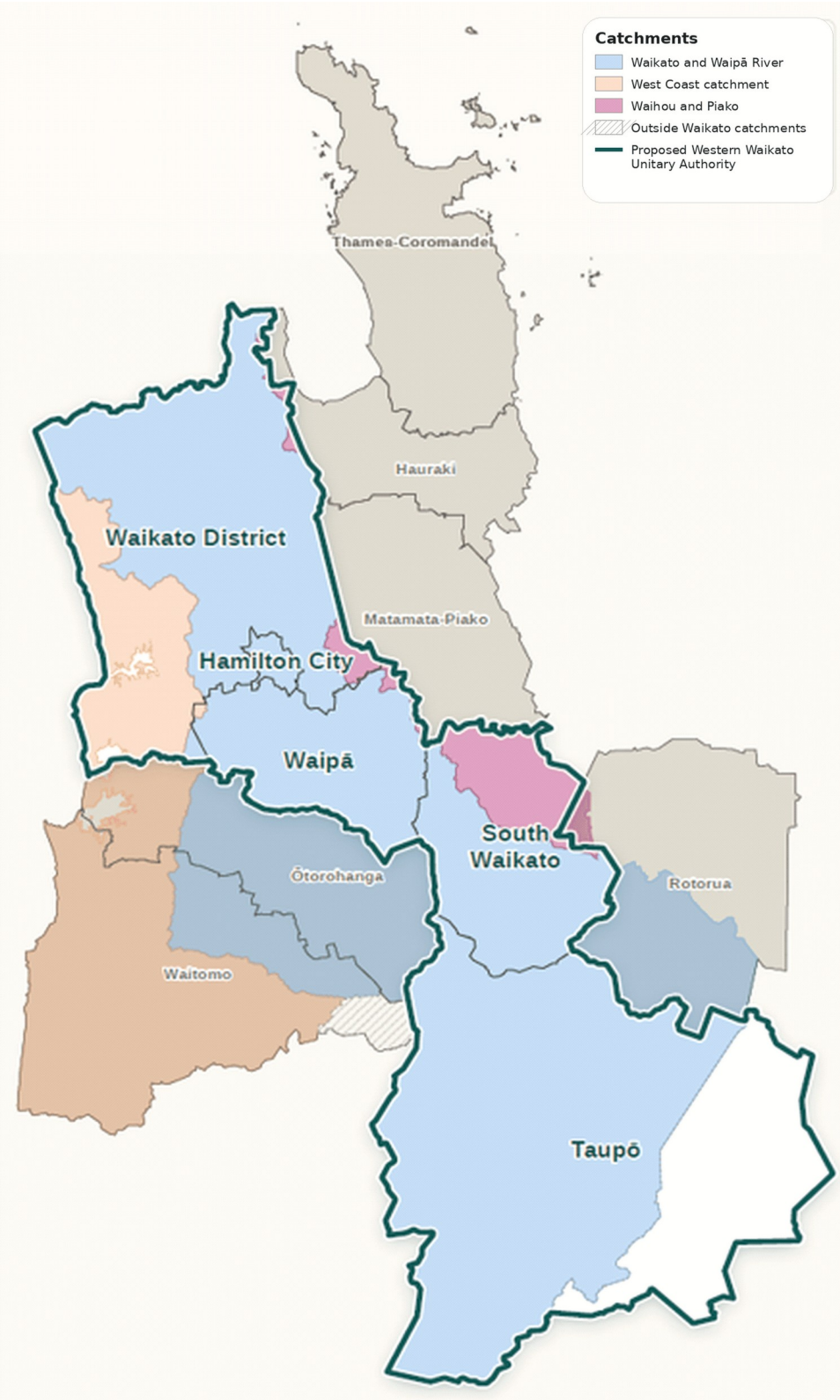
HEAD START PATHWAY – PROPOSAL

A strong Western Waikato Unitary Authority

within a connected and resilient Waikato system



Establishing a Western Waikato Unitary Authority that combines territorial authority and regional council functions across the western Waikato catchments.

PREPARED BY

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Waipā District Council

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with guidance and input from

Waikato Regional Council

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1 A connected Waikato, designed for regional success

This proposal has been developed collaboratively by Waikato District Council, Waipā District Council and South Waikato District Council, with support from Waikato Regional Council. It has been informed by iwi partners, communities and key stakeholders and sets out a pathway for establishing a Western Waikato Unitary Authority.

The Waikato is one of New Zealand's most significant regions. Its environmental, economic and social systems extend beyond council boundaries, encompassing nationally important river, lake and catchment systems, major growth and freight corridors, significant and diverse economies, and enduring Treaty settlement arrangements underpinned by legislation. Central to these arrangements is Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato, the primary direction-setting document for the restoration and protection of the Waikato and Waipā rivers, which shapes governance, partnerships and stewardship across the catchment.

The proposed Western Waikato Unitary Authority brings local and regional decision-making together within a single organisation while maintaining strong local voice, democratic accountability and place-based leadership. Designed around the Waikato and Waipā catchments and the communities they connect, it provides the scale, capability and integration needed to respond to future challenges and opportunities. The proposal stands on its own merits and responds to the communities, catchments, growth patterns and economic connections of the western Waikato.

A complementary Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel unitary proposal for the eastern catchments has been developed by Matamata-Piako, Hauraki and Thames-Coromandel District Councils. While developed independently, the two authorities would work together on regional spatial planning and matters of regional significance affecting the wider Waikato, while maintaining strong local leadership within a connected regional system.

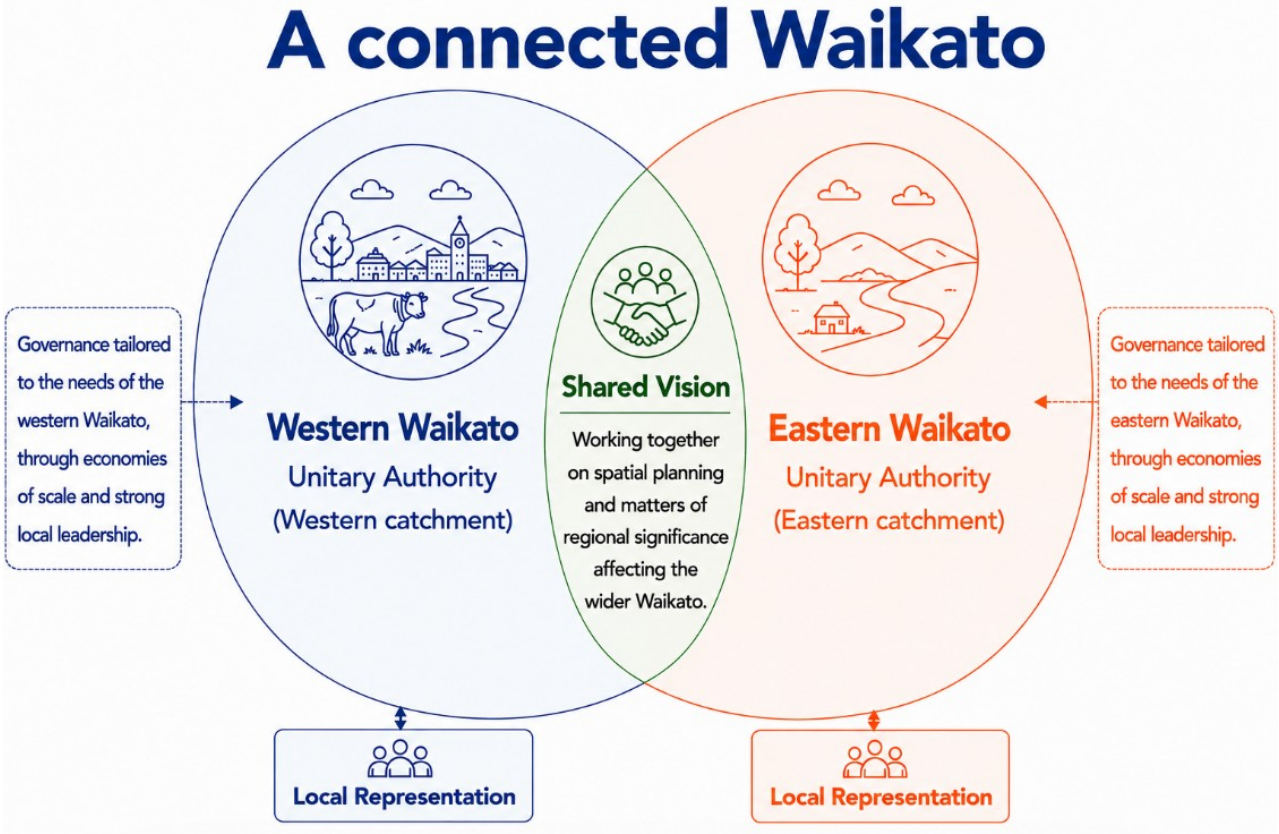
Councils recognise that Waitomo and Ōtorohanga have independently submitted a Head Start proposal. While Waitomo and Ōtorohanga are not participants in the Western Waikato Unitary Authority proposal, engagement and consideration of future participation will remain available through the detailed design phase, particularly to support effective catchment management and regional spatial planning.

Councils acknowledge that Taupō District Council does not support inclusion in the proposal and that Hamilton City Council has voted in favour of backstop. In developing the proposal, councils have sought to recognise and respond to a range of matters raised through the process and have provided for these issues to be further explored through the detailed design phase. Councils nevertheless consider that inclusion of the Taupō district and Hamilton City would support a more cohesive governance framework for the Waikato and Waipā river systems, recognising the interconnected nature of the rivers and the importance of integrated stewardship across the catchment.

The submission of these Head Start proposals by eight of ten councils demonstrates a strong willingness across the Waikato to engage constructively in shaping the future of local government and delivering arrangements that are more connected, capable and responsive to community need.

While focused on the western Waikato, regional collaboration will remain essential. Future authorities will need to work together through the detailed design and implementation stages on matters of shared interest, including delivery of the future resource management system. Opportunities for collaboration should remain available where these strengthen capability, improve outcomes and deliver greater value for communities.

This proposal provides a practical and achievable pathway for reform in the western Waikato. It strengthens local leadership and decision-making in the western Waikato, while supporting the success of the wider Waikato region and avoiding unnecessary fragmentation of the Waikato and Waipā river systems. The result is a governance model that combines local responsiveness with the scale and capability needed for the future.



2 Proposal overview

Councils across the Waikato have explored options through the Head Start process to create a local government system that is better equipped for the future. This proposal reflects the preferred direction of the participating western Waikato councils: establishing a strong Western Waikato Unitary Authority (WWUA) within a connected and resilient Waikato system.

The proposed authority covers the western catchments of the existing Waikato region, centred on the Waikato and Waipā river catchments from Taupō Moana to Port Waikato. It brings together Hamilton's metropolitan centre, productive rural land, significant environmental assets, and a

network of rural, provincial, coastal and lakes communities. Together these areas have distinct strengths, opportunities and challenges, but increasingly rely on one another to support long-term prosperity, environmental stewardship and community wellbeing.

The area is distinguished by Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnerships, enduring iwi and hapū relationships, nationally significant Treaty settlement arrangements, Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato, and the presence of Te Kīngitanga. Together, these foundations provide a distinctive platform for partnership, stewardship and long-term prosperity, and must be fully recognised, maintained and given ongoing effect through any future governance arrangements, without reduction in their status, role or practical effect. Opportunities to strengthen these arrangements should be considered in partnership with the relevant iwi and Post Settlement Governance Entities (PSGEs).

The WWUA would combine the statutory responsibilities, functions, assets and liabilities of the proposed territorial authorities with the regional council functions for the western catchments, creating a single organisation responsible for strategic planning, infrastructure, regulation, environmental stewardship and community outcomes.

Together, the proposed council areas serve approximately 414,100 people across 14,137 km^2. The proposal creates a single, accountable organisation with the scale, capability and resilience to meet future challenges while preserving meaningful local representation and democratic decision-making.

This proposal establishes the preferred strategic direction and high-level governance model. Detailed matters, including governance arrangements, local representation, transition planning, Treaty settlement implementation, financial arrangements and organisational design, would be developed collaboratively during the detailed design phase with councils, iwi and hapū partners, communities, business and central government.

Affected Council	Population	Land area
Waikato District	91,100	4,404 km^2
Waipā District	62,200	1,470 km^2
South Waikato District	26,000	1,819 km^2
Hamilton City	192,100	110 km^2
Taupō District	42,700	6,333 km^2
Total	**414,100**	**14,137 km^2 ***

Waikato Regional Council is also an affected council through the transfer of regional council functions within the proposed Western Waikato area.

** Note: Population and land area figures are rounded to the nearest whole number. As a result, totals may not precisely equal the sum of individual values*

Eligibility

This proposal has been developed and supported by three of the five affected territorial authorities, making it an eligible proposal:

- Waikato District Council
- Waipā District Council
- South Waikato District Council

with guidance and input from Waikato Regional Council.

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL

- Creates a strong unitary authority for the western Waikato, bringing regional and territorial functions together within one organisation.
- Aligns governance with the Waikato and Waipā river catchments while recognising the wider Waikato as an interconnected regional system.
- Recognises the interconnected nature of the Waikato and Waipā river catchments, renewable energy generation and strategic infrastructure, supporting coordinated long-term planning and investment.
- Supports integrated planning across land use, infrastructure, transport, water, natural hazards and environmental management.
- Provides greater organisational scale, capability and resilience to support future growth and infrastructure investment.
- Strengthens coordination across one of New Zealand's fastest-growing metropolitan areas while recognising the importance of rural, provincial, coastal and lakes communities.
- Maintains meaningful local representation through future local governance arrangements, ensuring a balanced voice for the diverse communities and places that make up the area.
- Provides a stronger platform for partnership with iwi, hapū and central government by aligning governance and decision-making with the primacy of the Waikato awa and the objectives of Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato.
- Supports implementation of the Government's resource management reforms.
- Simplifies governance and improves accountability by bringing regional and territorial responsibilities together.
- Provides a practical and achievable pathway for transition while maintaining continuity of services.

3 A stronger Western Waikato, within a connected Waikato system

The proposed Western Waikato Unitary Authority brings together one of New Zealand's fastest-growing metropolitan areas with productive rural landscapes, nationally significant river catchments, renewable energy generation, strategic freight corridors and thriving rural, provincial, coastal and lakes communities. Together these characteristics create a coherent environmental, economic and social system with the scale and capability to support long-term prosperity while remaining part of a connected Waikato.

Natural systems and long-term stewardship

The western Waikato is defined by interconnected natural systems that extend well beyond existing district boundaries. The Waikato-Waipā river catchments underpin much of the area's economy, environment and communities, including a complex energy generation system.

The stewardship of the Waikato's rivers, lakes, catchments and natural resources is underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnerships, enduring iwi and hapū relationships, Treaty settlement arrangements, Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato and the presence of Te Kīngitanga. Together, these foundations support kaitiakitanga and provide a framework for the restoration, protection and long-term stewardship of the region's natural systems, contributing to the long-term prosperity, wellbeing, resilience and social cohesion of the region.

Managing these systems requires integrated planning across land use, freshwater, biodiversity, flood protection, infrastructure, energy generation and climate adaptation. These systems involve significant infrastructure and assets, operate over long planning horizons, and require sustained investment and complex operational functions that extend beyond individual council boundaries now and in the future.

Metropolitan and regional success go hand in hand

The western Waikato spans one of New Zealand's fastest-growing metropolitan areas centred on Hamilton and a diverse network of rural, provincial, coastal and lakes communities. While growth, change and development are occurring across the catchment, the scale and nature of these pressures vary significantly between communities. The priorities and challenges facing a rapidly growing metropolitan centre differ from those of rural areas, provincial towns and smaller communities.

The prosperity and success of the metropolitan area and the wider western Waikato are deeply intertwined. The region's strength comes from the complementary roles played by communities across the catchment. Hamilton's growth is supported by the wider catchment's productive economy, strategic infrastructure, natural resources and skilled workforce, while communities across the region benefit from a strong metropolitan centre that provides employment, education, healthcare, business investment, innovation and regional connectivity.

Housing markets, labour markets, transport networks, infrastructure investment, environmental systems and economic activity increasingly operate across existing council boundaries. Growth pressures, infrastructure planning and environmental stewardship are therefore shared challenges that benefit from coordinated approaches and integrated decision-making.

A unitary model provides an opportunity to better align governance, planning and service delivery across these interconnected systems, while recognising the different opportunities, challenges and aspirations that exist across the western Waikato catchment.

National significance

The western Waikato forms part of one of New Zealand's most significant regional economies. It plays a nationally important role in freight and logistics, food production, renewable (and other) energy generation and advanced manufacturing, while contributing to approximately 9% of New Zealand's gross domestic product.

A stronger Western Waikato does not diminish the wider Waikato, it strengthens it. Together, the complementary western and eastern proposals provide governance arrangements that better reflect the region's major catchments while maintaining collaboration on matters of regional significance. This creates capable, more locally relevant organisations with the scale, resilience and partnerships needed to support the Waikato's future contribution to New Zealand's prosperity.

Table 1: Whole-of-Waikato region nationally significant strengths

National strength	Waikato's position	Selected evidence
Freight and logistics	**1st in New Zealand** for share of freight movements	Around **40% of New Zealand's freight movements** pass through or originate within the Waikato, reflecting its strategic location in the Upper North Island.
Primary production	**1st in New Zealand** for share of primary production	Approximately **18% of New Zealand's primary production**, including farming, horticulture, forestry, fishing and aquaculture.
Renewable energy	**1st in New Zealand** for electricity generation capacity	Approximately **37% of New Zealand's electricity generation capacity**, including nationally significant hydroelectric and geothermal generation.
Food manufacturing	**2nd equal in New Zealand**	Approximately **16% of New Zealand's food manufacturing**, equal with Canterbury.
Population and economic growth	**Among New Zealand's fastest-growing urban regions**	The Hamilton–Waikato metropolitan area is one of the country's fastest-growing urban areas, driving demand for housing, infrastructure and transport investment.
Māori economy	**1st equal in New Zealand** for Māori asset base	Approximately **$21.5 billion Māori asset base (2023)**, equal with Tāmaki Makaurau.

National strength	Waikato's position	Selected evidence
Advanced and export manufacturing	**Nationally significant** manufacturing base	Manufacturing is identified as a **major opportunity**, with a focus on growing export and advanced manufacturing into higher-value products and markets.
Economic contribution	**4th largest regional economy in New Zealand**	Contributes approximately **9% of New Zealand's GDP**, making Waikato one of the country's largest regional economies.

Source: Waikato Regional Economic Development Strategy, June 2026.

4 Strategic alignment with a whole-of-government approach

Many of New Zealand's key priorities, including housing, infrastructure, transport, economic growth, environmental restoration and climate resilience, require coordinated action between local government, central government and iwi.

The Waikato sits at the centre of many of these priorities. As a major growth region, critical freight and transport corridor, food production powerhouse, renewable energy hub, and home to nationally significant environmental assets, the region plays an important role in New Zealand's future prosperity, resilience and wellbeing. It also forms a key part of New Zealand's Golden Triangle, where Auckland, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty collectively generate more than half of the country's economic activity. Decisions made in the Waikato therefore have implications well beyond the region's boundaries and strongly influence the performance of the national economy.

The WWUA would provide central government with a more effective strategic and delivery partner. By aligning planning, regulatory, infrastructure and growth functions, a WWUA would be better positioned to attract co-investment, leverage Crown funding, coordinate major programmes and support the delivery of reforms and investments at a scale that reflects the strategic importance of the Waikato. This would improve delivery certainty, reduce fragmentation and strengthen the value achieved from public investment.

Achieving better outcomes is not solely a matter of institutional design. The greatest benefits will be realised where local government reform is matched by a corresponding commitment from central government to genuine partnership, integrated planning and long-term co-investment. By working together through shared priorities, aligned investment and coordinated delivery, central government, local government and iwi can achieve outcomes that are nationally significant, regionally responsive and greater than any one institution could deliver alone.

5 Summary of options considered

Participating councils considered a range of structural design options through the Head Start process. Options were evaluated against the Government's eligibility and assessment criteria, informed by multi-criteria analysis, governance and technical advice, engagement with iwi and central government, and feedback gathered through consultation and engagement activities undertaken by participating councils.

The options and supporting analysis are available through reports and workshop materials published on individual council websites.

Preferred option

Following consideration of the options, councils determined a Western Waikato Unitary Authority provides the strongest basis for future local government arrangements in the Waikato region. This is supported by the complementary Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel unitary proposal developed by Matamata-Piako, Hauraki and Thames-Coromandel District Councils.

The preferred approach delivers the benefits of integrated unitary governance while recognising the distinct characteristics of the region's major catchments and communities. It provides a practical pathway for reform that balances strategic ambition with the realities of implementation.

In reaching this view, councils recognised that enduring reform requires both a compelling strategic rationale and a realistic prospect of successful delivery. Community feedback consistently highlighted the importance of maintaining strong local voice and connections, ensuring future arrangements remain responsive to the needs and aspirations of diverse communities across the region.

Engagement with iwi reinforced the importance of recognising the interconnected nature of the Waikato and Waipā river systems and avoiding arrangements that unnecessarily fragment stewardship of the awa. The preferred option aligns with these catchment-based relationships while supporting continued collaboration and enduring partnerships across the wider Waikato region.

6 Proposed structure and governance arrangements

The detailed governance model will be developed during the detailed design phase. At this stage, participating councils have not confirmed a preferred governance structure. However, there is broad agreement that future arrangements must balance effective region-wide decision-making with strong local voice, democratic accountability and recognition of the diverse communities that make up the western Waikato.

The establishment of a new authority presents a unique opportunity to design a best-practice governance framework with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. Governance arrangements should ensure decisions are made at the most appropriate level and are supported by the delegations, resources and funding necessary to give effect to those decisions.

Governance design principles

The governance design will be informed by the following principles:

- Strong local voice and representation
- Better value for ratepayers and communities
- Long-term economic, social and environmental wellbeing
- Effective regional coordination on issues that cross boundaries
- Clear, transparent and democratically accountable decision-making
- Recognition of the different needs, priorities and aspirations of communities across the western Waikato
- Strong Treaty partnership and alignment with, and delivery of existing statutory arrangements
- Governance arrangements that acknowledge and enable different communities of interest and sub-regional perspectives.
- Strong governance capability, leadership and accountability.
- Decisions being made at the most appropriate level, supported by meaningful authority, resources and funding.

Potential governance framework

While the final governance model remains subject to detailed design, it is anticipated that any future arrangement would include at least two governance tiers.

Governing body

The governing body would be responsible for authority-wide strategy, planning, funding, infrastructure investment and other regionally significant functions.

Representation would need to appropriately reflect population, geography, communities of interest, rural and urban perspectives, and Māori participation in decision-making. The governing body would provide strategic leadership across the authority while ensuring that local perspectives and place-based priorities continue to inform regional decision-making.

Local governance

A second tier of local governance could comprise local boards, enhanced community boards, community committees or other place-based arrangements.

A core objective of the governance design will be ensuring communities retain a strong voice within a larger unitary authority. This is particularly important across the western Waikato, which includes a diverse mix of rural communities, towns, villages, coastal settlements and urban areas, each with distinct identities, priorities and service needs.

Local governance arrangements should provide communities with meaningful influence over local decision-making and ensure decisions continue to be made as close as practicable to the communities affected by them. Detailed design will need to consider how local governance

arrangements can appropriately reflect differing communities of interest and support local leadership across both metropolitan and non-metropolitan parts of the authority.

To be effective, local governance bodies would require:

- Clearly defined roles, responsibilities and areas of influence.
- Meaningful delegated decision-making authority.
- Appropriate funding and resources to give effect to local decisions.
- Authority over matters that directly affect local communities and places.
- The ability to shape local priorities, service levels and place-based outcomes.
- Strong connections and accountability to the communities they represent.
- Mechanisms to ensure rural, provincial, township, coastal and other local perspectives are reflected in decision-making.

A key consideration during detailed design will be ensuring local governance arrangements have sufficient authority, resources and financial delegation to be effective. Experience from previous local government reforms demonstrates that local governance mechanisms are most successful when responsibilities, decision-making powers and funding are aligned.

The detailed design phase should also consider whether different forms of local governance are appropriate for different parts of the western Waikato, recognising that the needs and expectations of growing urban areas may differ from those of rural communities, towns, villages and coastal settlements.

Metropolitan governance and growth management

The proposed authority recognises that the wider Hamilton metropolitan area functions differently from many other parts of the western Waikato and faces a unique set of growth, housing, transport and infrastructure challenges.

The detailed design phase should consider whether specific arrangements are required to provide focused attention on metropolitan growth management and infrastructure coordination. This could include dedicated planning and investment mechanisms, advisory structures, delegated committees or other governance arrangements focused on:

- Growth management and urban development.
- Infrastructure sequencing and investment.
- Housing supply and urban form.
- Transport integration and network planning.
- Economic development and regional competitiveness.

Any metropolitan arrangements would need to operate within a wider governance framework that equally recognises the importance of rural communities, towns, villages, coastal settlements and distinct communities of interest across the western Waikato.

The objective is not to privilege one part of the authority over another, but to ensure governance arrangements are responsive to the different characteristics, opportunities and challenges of

different places while maintaining a cohesive and effective unitary authority for the benefit of the region as a whole.

7 Assessment against government criteria

7.1 Supports the new planning system

At the time of preparing this proposal, the Government's planning reforms remain under development. Accordingly, this assessment focuses on the broad direction and objectives of reform rather than specific legislative provisions.

The proposed Western Waikato Unitary Authority strongly aligns with the intent of the reforms by:

- Creating a single organisation responsible for local and regional functions, reducing fragmentation and enabling more integrated decision-making across the Waikato and Waipā catchments.
- Aligning planning, infrastructure, environmental management and service delivery to support more coordinated growth, investment and community outcomes.
- Supporting whole-of-catchment stewardship and long-term resilience through integrated governance, delivery and partnerships with iwi, communities and stakeholders.
- Reducing organisational complexity by embedding coordination within the structure of local government rather than relying on multiple councils to align decisions.
- Providing a stronger platform for planning reform, infrastructure investment, economic development and long-term regional success.
- Providing greater certainty and clearer accountability for communities, iwi, developers, infrastructure providers, investors and central government.

Examples include:

- Integrating regional and territorial planning functions, creating a stronger foundation for future spatial planning and growth management.
- Aligning transport planning, network management and public transport investment with land use and infrastructure planning.
- Integrating emergency management, flood protection, drainage, recovery and resilience functions through a catchment-based approach to hazard and risk management.
- Integrating biodiversity, biosecurity, river management and environmental stewardship activities across interconnected catchments and landscapes.
- Coordinating waterway access, recreational infrastructure, harbourmaster services and maritime safety functions to provide consistent management of river, lake and coastal environments.
- Strengthening investment prioritisation and infrastructure delivery across interconnected housing, transport, economic and environmental systems.

The proposal provides a strong foundation for implementing New Zealand's future planning system by bringing planning, infrastructure and environmental management functions together within a single authority. Existing collaborative initiatives, such as Future Proof, demonstrate the value of

regional coordination, but also highlight the time, effort and governance complexity required to align decisions across multiple organisations.

Two important considerations will require ongoing attention as reform progresses.

- Strategic coordination will be required across the wider Waikato region, recognising that environmental, economic, cultural and infrastructure systems extend beyond administrative boundaries.
- Implementation of local government reform needs to be aligned with the Government's planning reforms to minimise duplication, reduce transition costs and complexity, and provide greater certainty for communities, iwi, infrastructure providers, investors and central government.

Overall, the proposed Western Waikato Unitary Authority provides a practical and resilient platform for implementing planning reform by embedding integration, strengthening accountability and supporting coordinated decision-making across the catchment. It would create a stronger foundation for growth, investment and long-term stewardship while maintaining the flexibility to collaborate across the wider Waikato where this delivers better outcomes.

Note: Detailed implementation considerations, trade-offs and matters for further design are provided in Appendix A.

7.2 Simplifies local governance

Provides simpler governance and clearer accountability

The objective of reform is not simply to reduce the number of councils. It is to create governance arrangements that are easier to navigate, provide clearer accountability and reduce the transaction costs associated with delivering regional outcomes.

The proposed Western Waikato Unitary Authority would support this objective by:

- Bringing regional and territorial functions together within a single democratically accountable organisation.
- Creating a single point of accountability for growth, infrastructure, environmental stewardship, planning and service delivery across the Waikato and Waipā catchments.
- Reducing governance complexity by decreasing the number of organisations, committees and governance interfaces required to align decisions and priorities.
- Supporting a unified strategic direction for planning, investment and long-term development across the western Waikato.
- Providing clearer pathways for engagement with communities, iwi, businesses, investors, infrastructure providers and central government.
- Reducing duplication and transaction costs associated with coordinating decisions across multiple organisations and jurisdictions.
- Supporting more timely and integrated decision-making by embedding coordination within the structure of local government itself.
- Providing a more consistent and coordinated interface with central government, iwi and strategic partners on matters of regional significance.

Strategic coordination would continue across the wider Waikato where environmental, economic, cultural and infrastructure systems extend beyond administrative boundaries. However, these relationships would occur between a smaller number of larger and more capable organisations, simplifying governance arrangements while maintaining a whole-of-region perspective.

Note: Detailed implementation considerations, trade-offs and matters for further design are provided in Appendix A.

7.3 Economies of scale

Overall, the greatest benefit of scale is not short-term savings. It is the creation of a more capable, resilient and future-focused organisation that can attract and retain specialist expertise, deliver complex infrastructure and environmental programmes, partner effectively with iwi, central government and investors, and provide better long-term value for the communities of the western Waikato. Combined with strong governance and leadership, these benefits would create a stronger foundation for regional prosperity, environmental stewardship and community wellbeing.

The proposed Western Waikato Unitary Authority would support this objective by:

- Combining resources, expertise and functions currently distributed across multiple organisations.
- Strengthening organisational capability through larger, more resilient specialist teams and reduced reliance on external consultants.
- Improving the ability to attract, retain and develop talent, particularly in areas such as planning, engineering, infrastructure delivery, environmental management, climate adaptation and Treaty partnership.
- Reducing duplication through the consolidation of corporate and support functions, systems and processes where this improves outcomes.
- Supporting more coordinated infrastructure planning and investment across the western Waikato catchment.
- Strengthening procurement and contract management capability, creating opportunities for greater efficiency and consistency.
- Improving data, technology and information management, supporting better decision-making and service delivery.
- Creating a stronger financial platform through a broader revenue base, consolidated treasury management and enhanced risk management capability.
- Providing a more capable partner for iwi, central government, infrastructure providers, investors and key stakeholders on issues of regional and national significance.

Areas likely to benefit from greater scale include finance, human resources, legal and governance services, information technology, procurement, planning and regulatory functions, policy development, data and reporting, and specialist technical services.

Scale would be particularly valuable in relation to infrastructure and asset management. A larger organisation would have a more integrated view of growth pressures, infrastructure demand, asset performance and investment priorities across the catchment. This would support more coordinated

capital investment, improved sequencing of infrastructure alongside growth, stronger asset management practices, and more effective engagement with funding and delivery partners.

Greater scale would also strengthen organisational and financial resilience. A broader revenue base, larger balance sheet and consolidated treasury functions would improve the organisation's ability to manage economic, infrastructure and environmental risks, respond to unforeseen events and plan for long-term investment needs.

A key consideration for the detailed design phase will be how existing assets, liabilities and future financial commitments are treated as part of any transition. Participating councils recognise the importance of ensuring communities are not unfairly disadvantaged by historical decisions made elsewhere, while also ensuring communities receive the benefit of investments and opportunities generated within their area for future placemaking in that same area. This includes considering how existing debt, infrastructure commitments, development contributions, strategic assets, future revenue streams and capital opportunities are managed through transition.

The detailed design phase will need to consider whether specific transition arrangements are required to appropriately recognise both the benefits and obligations arising from historic decisions. This could include mechanisms that preserve a clear relationship between decisions, benefits and liabilities within the communities where they originated. Any such arrangements would need to balance fairness, transparency, accountability and long-term financial sustainability.

Importantly, economies of scale should not be interpreted as immediate cost savings, nor does this proposal assume immediate reductions in rates. Any efficiencies arising from procurement, systems integration and organisational consolidation would be realised progressively over time and would need to be balanced against transition costs, debt harmonisation considerations and implementation requirements.

Realising the benefits of scale will depend on effective governance, leadership and organisational design. Economies of scale create opportunities for improved capability, efficiency and resilience, but outcomes will ultimately be determined by how effectively those opportunities are translated into better services, stronger infrastructure outcomes and greater value for ratepayers.

Note: Detailed implementation considerations, trade-offs and matters for further design are provided in Appendix A.

7.4 Maintains local voice

Balances regional governance and local voice

Maintaining meaningful local voice is fundamental to the success of any future Western Waikato Unitary Authority. The proposal recognises that effective regional leadership and strong local democracy are complementary rather than competing objectives.

The Waikato is not a single homogeneous community. It includes metropolitan, provincial, rural, coastal and lakes communities with distinct identities, priorities and relationships. A successful

governance model must therefore provide the capability to make integrated regional decisions while ensuring communities continue to influence the decisions that affect their local places.

Accordingly, the proposed governance model seeks to balance strong regional coordination with meaningful local representation and decision-making.

Supports Māori participation and local relationships

Māori participation should be embedded throughout the regional and local governance model. This includes elected Māori representation, enduring partnership arrangements and place-based mechanisms reflecting the distinct relationships of iwi and hapū across the Waikato.

The proposal recognises that there is not a single Māori community or view across the region. Iwi and hapū have distinct rohe, histories, settlement arrangements, aspirations and relationships with particular places and natural systems. The local governance framework should therefore retain space for locally appropriate relationships and participation alongside regional representation.

Treaty settlement continuity and wider partnership arrangements are addressed further in Section 8.

Provides for representation that reflects Waikato's diversity

Representation arrangements would need to reflect both population and communities of interest. Population would remain an important basis for democratic representation, but it would not be the only consideration. Geography, rurality, economic relationships, iwi interests, local identity and access to decision-makers would also need to inform the final model.

This would help ensure that metropolitan, rural, provincial, coastal and lakes communities are all effectively represented. It would provide for population growth and metropolitan issues to be appropriately reflected, while ensuring that rural, provincial, coastal and more geographically dispersed communities continue to have a strong and effective voice. At a high level, the model is expected to include:

- a directly elected regional governing body;
- geographic and Māori wards or constituencies;
- representation that balances population and communities of interest; and
- separately elected statutory local governance bodies.

The final number of representatives, boundaries and electoral arrangements would be determined during detailed design and the subsequent representation process.

Strengthens local representation with real authority

Meaningful local voice depends on more than representation alone. Local governance is most effective where local bodies have clearly defined responsibilities, genuine delegated authority, and appropriate resources. Advisory bodies without the ability to make decisions or prioritise local investment may provide representation but often have limited practical influence.

The proposed model anticipates strengthened local governance arrangements, potentially including local boards, community boards or a combination of both. Subject to the detailed design phase, these local governance bodies could have responsibility for matters such as:

- local parks and community facilities;
- placemaking and town-centre priorities;
- local community grants and initiatives;
- local service priorities;
- input into relevant local policy and regulatory;
- community events and wellbeing programmes;
- input into local infrastructure and transport priorities; and
- local advocacy and engagement.

The detailed design phase may also consider how local governance arrangements can support placemaking and community development initiatives through access to investment opportunities and benefits arising from historical investment within local areas.

Regional strategy, major infrastructure, environmental regulation, regional transport and other matters requiring region-wide consistency would remain with the authority-wide governing body.

The principle of subsidiarity would guide this allocation of responsibilities between local and authority-wide decisions, noting decisions should be made at the lowest practical level, provided there is clear accountability and sufficient capability and funding.

While delegated authority will be an important component of any future model, councils recognise that local voice should not be solely dependent on governance arrangements that can be altered over time. During the detailed design phased, strong consideration should be given as to whether certain local governance functions, responsibilities or decision-making powers require more enduring forms of protection such as statutory embedding.

Provides local presence and access

Meaningful local voice also depends on practical access to representatives, staff and services. A region-wide authority would need to retain a strong local presence through measures such as:

- locally based elected representatives;
- local governance offices and service centres;
- regular meetings within communities;
- accessible digital and in-person engagement;
- locally based operational and relationship staff; and
- clear processes for communities to influence priorities and decisions.

The objective would be to improve regional coordination without making local government feel more distant.

Balances equity of access with local flexibility

Maintaining local voice also requires recognising that equitable treatment does not always mean identical services. Communities should have fair access to core services, but some service levels and local priorities may appropriately vary according to geography, population, affordability, risk and community preference. The governance model would therefore need to balance regional consistency with deliberate and transparent local flexibility.

Note: Detailed implementation considerations, trade-offs and matters for further design are provided in Appendix A.

7.5 Deliverability

A practical and achievable implementation pathway

The WWUA provides a more practical and achievable pathway for reform than larger scale alternatives. It maintains many of the advantages of integrated unitary governance while reducing implementation complexity, supporting stronger stakeholder alignment and providing a more manageable transition programme.

The WWUA is considered deliverable within the Government's proposed implementation timeframe, subject to enabling legislation, appropriate transition support, and a structured implementation programme. While detailed implementation planning would follow any Government decision to proceed, there is a clear pathway from legislative establishment through to commencement of the new authority.

Established relationships and collaborative delivery

The proposal builds on a long history of collaboration across the western Waikato and wider region. For decades, councils have worked together through established regional and sub-regional partnerships, shared services and joint initiatives, including the Waikato Mayoral Forum, Future Proof, Co-Lab, regional transport planning, and shared infrastructure planning and delivery. Recent examples include the North Waipā Southern Hamilton spatial study, the establishment of IAWAI and collaboration on major development and fast-track proposals.

These arrangements have created strong working relationships, established governance mechanisms, and practical experience in addressing issues that extend beyond individual council boundaries. This provides an important foundation for continued engagement, detailed design, and transition planning should the proposal progress.

While councils currently hold differing views on the proposal, the reform process remains at an early stage. The 9 August Head Start deadline represents a point in the process rather than the final determination of future arrangements. The Government's approach to councils that are not part of an initial proposal, including any future backstop or alternative processes, will be an important factor in shaping the final outcome. Existing regional relationships provide a constructive platform for further discussion and engagement as positions and arrangements continue to evolve.

A staged transition

Implementation would occur in a series of deliberate stages that balance early preparation with democratic oversight.

Initially, legislation would establish the new WWUA and provide for the appointment of an Establishment Board and Chief Executive to lead the transition programme. Working alongside councils, iwi, central government and other key stakeholders, the Establishment Chief Executive would develop the future operating model and prepare a draft Transition Plan.

The draft Transition Plan would address matters including organisational design, financial and rating arrangements, workforce transition, asset and liability transfer, and implementation sequencing. This would ensure the decisions required for the new authority to be fully funded and operational are made prior to commencement.

During the transition period, existing councils would continue to undertake their statutory responsibilities and deliver services to their communities under their existing governance and management arrangements. Detailed legislative and transition design would determine the specific governance, oversight and reporting arrangements required to support implementation while maintaining democratic accountability and business continuity.

Following the 2028 local elections, the inaugural Council would assume governance responsibility for the new authority and oversee implementation of the agreed Transition Plan. This would include the transfer and integration of staff, assets and liabilities, systems and services, together with the establishment of the governance, financial and operational arrangements required for commencement.

The detailed design phase would also determine the timing, structure and statutory responsibilities of any local governance bodies informed by community feedback, representation requirements and the final governance model adopted through the implementation process.

Maintaining service continuity

A fundamental objective throughout implementation would be maintaining uninterrupted service delivery and public confidence. Existing councils would continue operating until the formal commencement date, ensuring continuity of essential services, regulatory responsibilities and statutory obligations while transition activities are undertaken.

The proposal recognises that successful implementation requires more than organisational change. It also depends on strong programme governance, effective engagement with communities, ongoing partnership with iwi and central government, and clear communication throughout the transition period.

Democratic legitimacy

The proposed approach deliberately separates establishment from implementation. Significant preparatory work can occur before the 2028 local elections, while key decisions about the future

organisation remain the responsibility of the newly elected Council. This provides sufficient time to prepare for transition while ensuring the future organisation is shaped by a democratically elected governing body.

Indicative implementation milestones

Subject to Government decisions, the implementation pathway is expected to include:

- legislative establishment of the WWUA;
- appointment of an Establishment Board and Chief Executive and establishment of the transition programme;
- development of the future operating model and draft Transition Plan;
- election of the inaugural governing body in 2028;
- adoption of the Transition Plan by the new Council;
- progressive implementation of organisational, financial, technology and service integration;
- completion of transition and readiness assurance activities; and
- commencement of the WWUA.

Overall assessment

While significant detailed work would be required, the proposal is considered realistic and achievable within the proposed timeframe. By combining early legislative establishment, structured programme management, democratic oversight and a staged transition, the implementation approach provides a practical pathway to establish a WWUA while maintaining service continuity and public confidence.

Note: Detailed implementation considerations, trade-offs and matters for further design are provided in Appendix A.

8 Treaty settlement arrangements

Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a foundation for future governance

The Waikato occupies a unique place within Aotearoa New Zealand as the home of Te Kīngitanga, nationally significant Treaty settlement arrangements, Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato, a major Māori economy and enduring relationships between iwi, hapū, local government and the Crown. These relationships are fundamental to the governance, identity and long-term wellbeing of the region.

This proposal is founded on the principle that local government reorganisation should strengthen, not diminish, the relationships that have shaped the Waikato for generations. It therefore seeks both to protect existing commitments and to provide a platform for enduring partnership through future governance.

Protecting existing Treaty settlement arrangements

The Waikato contains one of New Zealand's most significant concentrations of Treaty settlement legislation and relationship arrangements. These include Treaty settlement obligations, statutory acknowledgements, Joint Management Agreements, Mana Whakahono ā Rohe agreements, co-governance and co-management arrangements, and a wide range of formal and informal partnership mechanisms developed over many years.

These arrangements represent far more than statutory compliance requirements. They are enduring relationship mechanisms that support shared governance, environmental management, planning, cultural stewardship and collaborative decision-making across the region. This includes initiatives to deliver the objectives of Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato such as the Waikato River Clean-up Trust, supported by long-term Crown funding commitments of $210 million for restoration and protection of the Waikato River, together with a further $10 million for the Upper Waipā River.

The proposal therefore adopts the principle that all existing Treaty settlement commitments, statutory obligations and partnership arrangements should continue with equivalent effect. Existing governance and relationship mechanisms should be maintained unless otherwise agreed by the affected parties, with any legislative or administrative transfer designed to preserve continuity, maintain confidence and provide certainty for iwi, councils and communities.

Current Te Tiriti settlement arrangements within the WWUA area include the following iwi/hapū:

- Ngāti Maniapoto: Te Nehenehenui (PSGE)
- Raukawa: Raukawa Settlement Trust (PSGE)
- Waikato-Tainui: Waikato Raupatu River Trust (PSGE)
- Ngāti Tūwharetoa: Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board (PSGE)
- Ngāti Hauā: Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust (PSGE)
- Ngāti Korokī Kahukura: Taumatawiwi Trust (PSGE)
- Ngāti Pāoa: Ngāti Pāoa Iwi Trust (PSGE)
- Ngāti Tamaoho: Ngāti Tamaoho Settlement Trust (PSGE)
- Te Arawa River Iwi: Te Arawa River Iwi Settlement Trust (PSGE)

Strengthening partnership through future design

The proposal recognises that meaningful partnership extends beyond Treaty settlement obligations alone. Multiple large and small iwi and hapū are mana whenua of the Waikato region. Each has distinct histories, rohe, priorities and relationships with local places. Local government reform should recognise and support this diversity rather than seek to replace it with a single regional approach.

The detailed design phase should therefore be undertaken in partnership with iwi, affected PSGEs, councils, communities and the Crown. This process should include the co-design of governance arrangements, Māori representation, local participation mechanisms and transition planning, while allowing sufficient time and support for iwi to consider proposals through their own governance processes.

Importantly, Te Tiriti partnership should not be viewed solely through the lens of statutory obligations or representation arrangements. Through its governance, investment decisions, planning frameworks, service delivery models and stewardship of place, local government plays a significant role in supporting the aspirations of iwi, hapū and communities. Across the Waikato, iwi are also key partners in emergency management, civil defence, natural hazard management and climate resilience, reflecting the important role they play in protecting communities before, during and after emergency events. Future governance arrangements should seek to strengthen these existing partnerships.

The establishment of a new unitary authority provides an opportunity to further embed Te Ao Māori perspectives within the way the organisation plans, invests and delivers for future generations. This includes recognising the unique histories, cultural landscapes, aspirations and relationships that exist across the Waikato and ensuring these are reflected in decision-making, investment priorities and the delivery of services and infrastructure.

This is not about creating a single regional identity. Rather, it is about creating a governance framework capable of recognising and supporting the distinct identities and aspirations that make up the Waikato. By strengthening partnership beyond statutory requirements alone, the future model can help ensure that local distinctiveness, Māori identity and place-based outcomes continue to shape how communities develop and thrive over time.

Consistent with the broader principles underpinning this proposal, the future governance model should seek to strengthen Māori participation and partnership at both regional and local levels, recognising that enduring relationships are built through shared stewardship, mutual respect and a long-term commitment to working together.

Matters for detailed design

Consistent with the Government's Head Start guidance, this outline proposal does not seek to resolve how the WWUA will engage with every Treaty settlement or relationship matter at this stage. Should the proposal proceed, detailed design should be undertaken alongside iwi, PSGEs and the Crown, while wider governance and representation matters would be considered through the detailed design process with councils, iwi and hapū, communities and central government. Matters include:

- confirmation of all Treaty settlement obligations and statutory arrangements to ensure continuity;
- development of a comprehensive inventory of existing partnership, co-governance and relationship mechanisms across the region;
- confirmation of Māori representation arrangements within the future governance model, consistent with applicable legislative and democratic requirements;
- continuation and, where appropriate, strengthening of co-governance and co-management arrangements;
- transition planning to ensure continuity of relationships, institutional knowledge and organisational capability; and
- identification of opportunities to strengthen partnership and Māori participation within the future governance framework.

It is noted that the Crown will be responsible for undertaking any legislative changes required under the WWUA model in partnership with the relevant PSGE, but that local government plays an important role at place.

This approach recognises that successful transition is not simply an organisational exercise, but also one of maintaining trust, protecting relationships and carrying forward the shared foundations that already exist across the Waikato region.

Overall assessment

The proposed WWUA provides a strong platform for upholding Treaty settlement arrangements with equivalent effect while creating opportunities to strengthen partnership with iwi through the future design of the organisation. The proposal seeks not only to protect existing commitments and relationships, but also to support a governance model that better reflects Te Tiriti partnership in practice through planning, investment, service delivery, environmental stewardship, emergency management and the long-term care of place.

Through ongoing partnership with iwi, PSGEs, communities and the Crown, the model provides an opportunity to support local aspirations, strengthen Māori participation and ensure that the unique identities, relationships and cultural landscapes that define the Waikato continue to shape its future.

9 Government support and implementation enablers

Legislative framework

Successful implementation would require legislation to establish the WWUA, provide for the transition from existing councils, and transfer statutory responsibilities, assets, liabilities, staff and governance arrangements to the new organisation.

Legislation would also need to provide appropriate transitional powers, define the role of the Establishment Board and Chief Executive, and establish the legal framework for implementation.

Transition support

Given the scale, complexity and significance of the proposed reorganisation, a successful transition will require active support from central government. Establishing a new unitary authority while maintaining service continuity, preserving democratic accountability and delivering ongoing statutory obligations will require dedicated capability, funding and coordination.

Government support would ensure that transition delivers the intended outcomes while minimising disruption to frontline services.

Support needs to include:

- adequate resourcing for establishment activities, organisation integration, systems implementation and workforce transition;
- establishment programme and change management support;

- legislative support and regulatory flexibility to enable the transfer of functions, assets, liabilities and statutory responsibilities;
- specialist legal, financial, governance and technical expertise;
- cross-government coordination and leadership to align local government reorganisation with planning reform, infrastructure delivery, emergency management and other related government initiatives;
- support for engagement with key partners;
- access to implementation guidance based on previous local government reorganisations and public sector transformation programmes;
- support for digital, information management and systems integration; and
- ongoing partnership between central and local government to manage implementation risks, resolve issues and support delivery of reform outcomes.

Recognising the national significance of local government reform and its connection to wider planning, infrastructure and economic growth objectives, an active partnership between central and local government will be critical to successful implementation and the timely realisation of reform benefits.

Transitional compliance relief

During implementation, councils would continue to meet existing statutory obligations while preparing for the new authority.

Government should provide targeted and time-limited regulatory relief where existing statutory processes would duplicate work, divert significant capacity from transition, or require councils to develop arrangements that would shortly be superseded. This should include consideration of flexibility in relation to:

- representation reviews and associated electoral processes;
- Long Term Plan and Annual Plan requirements, including the timing and preparation of planning and reporting documents;
- statutory consultation and engagement requirements where these would duplicate consultation being undertaken through the transition;
- resource management and spatial planning requirements, where timing needs to be aligned with implementation of the new planning system and establishment of the WWUA; and
- other statutory planning, reporting and administrative requirements where compliance would result in material duplication during transition.

Any relief should be clearly defined and time-limited, while maintaining appropriate transparency, accountability and democratic oversight.

Wider policy and funding settings

Successful reform will also depend on the wider funding and policy settings within which the new authority operates. The participating councils therefore ask Government to:

- Provide direct Crown funding for transition costs. This recognises that the costs of establishing a new authority should not fall solely on existing ratepayers.
- Provide for any transition costs associated with local government reorganisation, that are not met through direct government funding, to be excluded from any rate-capping regime (similarly to Waters).
- Provide flexibility around the timing of the 2028 local elections, including the option of deferral to 2029 if the parties consider this necessary to allow sufficient time for detailed design, community engagement and an orderly transition. Longer term, consideration should also be given to aligning four-year local and central government electoral cycles from 2033.
- Allow local authorities to retain the GST collected on rates to support the financial sustainability of local government.
- Apply general rates to Crown-owned property, ensuring the Crown contributes appropriately towards the local services and infrastructure that support its properties and activities.

Partnership with central government

Successful implementation would require an ongoing partnership between local government and central government throughout the transition.

This should include dedicated implementation teams within local and central government, supported by a Crown facilitator function to help coordinate agencies, resolve cross-government issues and maintain momentum through the transition. It would also require coordinated decision-making across relevant agencies, alignment with other reform programmes, and regular engagement to resolve implementation issues as they arise.

10 Conclusion

The western Waikato already functions as a highly interconnected environmental, economic and community system. Anchored by the Waikato and Waipā catchments, Hamilton's metropolitan economy, productive rural landscapes, and a network of towns and communities, it shares many of the opportunities and challenges that will shape its future.

The proposed Western Waikato Unitary Authority represents a practical and achievable pathway for reform. Bringing regional and territorial functions together within a single organisation would provide greater scale, capability and accountability for integrated planning, infrastructure investment and environmental stewardship, while maintaining meaningful local representation and strong community connections.

The proposal also recognises that the western Waikato's success depends on the wider region. Ongoing collaboration with iwi, neighbouring authorities, the Waihou-Piako-Hauraki-Coromandel catchment and central government will remain essential on matters that extend beyond administrative boundaries. A strong Western Waikato Unitary Authority would therefore support a connected and competitive Waikato region with the scale and capability to make an even greater contribution to New Zealand's prosperity and success.

Significant detailed design work remains, and successful reform will depend on effective governance, strong leadership and enduring partnerships. The councils supporting this proposal are committed to undertaking this work collaboratively with iwi and hapū, communities, businesses, neighbouring councils and central government. The WWUA provides a credible platform to build from: locally responsive, regionally connected and positioned to support a stronger Waikato and a stronger New Zealand.

11 Signatories

This proposal is jointly submitted by:

Aksel Bech
Mayor, Waikato District Council

Signature: Date: 07/08/2026

Mike Pettit
Mayor, Waipā District Council

Signature: Date: 07/08/2026

Susan Law
Chief Executive, South Waikato District Council - as approved by Mayor, Gary Petley

Council Resolution: CNCL2026-79

Signature: Date: **07/08/2026**

Appendices

Appendix A – Detailed implementation considerations, trade-offs and matters for further design

A.1 Supports the new planning system

Trade-offs and risks

The principal risks are associated with undertaking planning reform and local government reorganisation at the same time.

These include:

- uncertainty while the final national legislative framework is being developed;
- pressure on specialist planning, environmental and regulatory staff;
- potential disruption to statutory planning and consenting processes;
- the complexity of integrating existing plans, data, systems and policies;
- the risk of unnecessary rework if transition and planning-reform timeframes are not aligned; and
- ensuring that stronger regional consistency does not diminish appropriate place-based input.

These risks would need to be managed through phased implementation, clear transitional accountabilities and close coordination with central government.

Matters for detailed design

Further work would be required to determine:

- governance arrangements for regional spatial and regulatory planning;
- statutory plan sequencing and transitional provisions;
- consenting, monitoring, compliance and enforcement arrangements;
- transitional delegations and decision-making responsibilities;
- integration of planning data, systems and ePlans;
- arrangements for retaining specialist capability and institutional knowledge;
- mechanisms for regional, iwi partner and local input into planning decisions; and
- alignment between reorganisation and the final national planning framework.

A.2 Simplifies local governance

Trade-offs and risks

The principal trade-off is between reducing organisational complexity and avoiding the creation of an overly centralised or internally complicated governance model.

Potential risks include:

- unclear boundaries between regional and local decision-making;

- unnecessary centralisation and costly, uncooperative bureaucracies;
- creating too many committees or local bodies and reproducing existing complexity internally;
- regional functions becoming less visible within a larger organisation;
- inconsistent delegations or accountability; and
- disruption during the transition from existing governance arrangements.

These risks would need to be addressed through a clear governance framework, disciplined committee design and transparent allocation of responsibilities.

Matters for detailed design

Further work would be required to determine:

- the governing body and committee structure;
- the allocation of regional and local responsibilities;
- the roles of local boards and community boards;
- delegation and accountability frameworks;
- governance and resourcing of regional council functions;
- Māori representation and partnership arrangements;
- financial delegations;
- the future role of council-controlled organisations; and
- mechanisms for reviewing and adapting governance arrangements over time.

A.3 Economies of scale

Trade-offs and risks

Key risks include:

- significant upfront transition and integration costs;
- benefits taking longer than expected to realise;
- overestimating potential savings;
- disruption from system and organisational change;
- loss of local knowledge or relationships;
- standardisation that does not reflect legitimate local circumstances;
- uneven impacts from rating and debt harmonisation;
- differing asset condition and renewal needs across the region; and
- increased borrowing capacity creating pressure for higher investment or debt.

These risks reinforce the need for detailed financial analysis and a transparent benefits-realisation framework.

Matters for detailed design

Further work would be required to determine:

- projected transition costs and benefits;

- rating harmonisation options and transitional protections;
- debt and treasury arrangements;
- asset condition and renewal requirements;
- infrastructure investment priorities;
- workforce and specialist capability requirements;
- information technology and systems integration;
- procurement opportunities;
- water-services and council-controlled organisation arrangements;
- local service-level variations; and
- how anticipated benefits would be measured, reported and independently assured.

A.4 Maintains local voice

Trade-offs and risks

The principal challenge is achieving the right balance between regional integration and local responsiveness. Too little delegation could leave communities feeling disconnected from decisions. Too much fragmentation could recreate the governance complexity the proposal seeks to reduce. Other risks include:

- local bodies having representation but insufficient authority or funding;
- boundaries that do not reflect communities of interest;
- urban population growth dominating smaller communities;
- inconsistent local service expectations;
- unclear accountability between regional and local bodies; and
- local governance arrangements becoming overly complex.

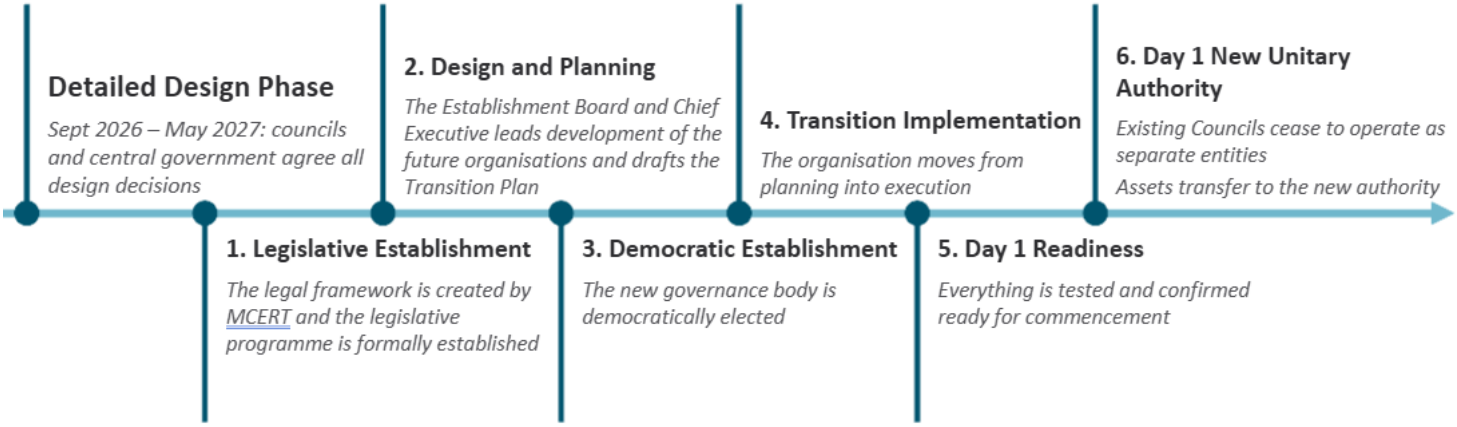
Matters for detailed design

Further work would be required to determine:

- governing body, ward and constituency arrangements;
- Māori representation;
- local board and community board boundaries;
- the responsibilities delegated to local governance bodies;
- local funding arrangements and budget authority;
- the relationship between regional and local decision-making;
- practical local access to representatives, services and staff;
- mechanisms for rural, provincial, coastal and lakes representation;
- relationships with iwi, hapū and existing community organisations; and
- mechanisms for reviewing and adapting the model over time.

A.5 Deliverability

TRANSITION

Establishment Roadmap

The path from detailed design through to Day 1 of the new unitary authority.