

**SmartGrowth**  
Building our futures together

# Update July 2025

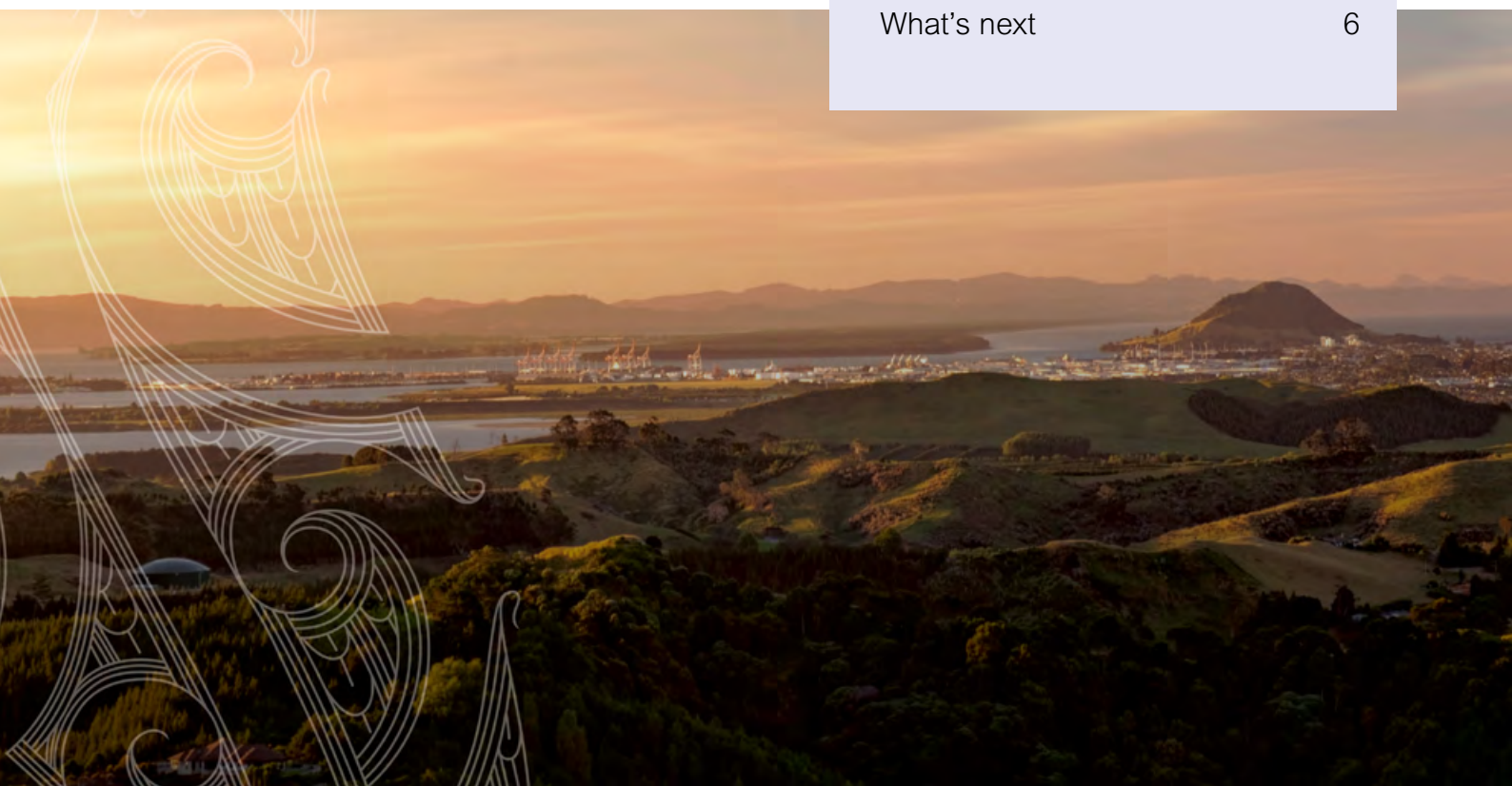
## A Strategic Quarter of Transition and Delivery

Amid major national reforms and evolving regional priorities, the partnership remains focused on delivery.

Key milestones this quarter include announcements on City and Regional Deals, updates to the Implementation Plan, the formal establishment of Te Rōpū Arotahi to support tāngata whenua outcomes, and early thinking on the next wave of spatial planning under RM reform.

### In this issue

City and Regional Deal	2
Implementation Plan Update	2
RM Reform – Preparing for what's next	3
Development Opportunities Process	3
Te Rōpū Arotahi: Tāngata Whenua Outcomes in Action	4
Looking Ahead – National Direction, Housing Growth and Reform	4
Hamilton–Tauranga Corridor Study – Supporting Strategic Integration	5
What's next	6





# City and Regional Deal

On 2 July 2025, central government announced that it had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the western Bay of Plenty subregion to progress a Regional Deal.

The MOU outlines the key priorities for a long-term partnership between the subregion and central government and is a major step towards securing a Regional Deal that will help unlock the Western Bay's growth potential, so it can boost productivity and thrive.

The Government's City and Regional Deal framework is based on a 30-year vision for the subregion, with a negotiated 10-year strategic plan designed to progress joint priorities.



Click here for more information:

[Western Bay of Plenty Deal proposal](#)

---

## Implementation Plan Update

The SmartGrowth Leadership Group has endorsed updates to the SmartGrowth Implementation Plan reflecting recent legislative changes and regional strategic priorities.

A full review of key actions was undertaken including alignment with the Government's proposed Planning Act. One notable change is the retirement of the "Closing the Gaps in Regional and District Plans" key action, replaced by a new key action to coordinate development of a single integrated regional spatial plan.



Click here to view the Implementation Plan update



# RM Reform – Preparing for what's next

The Government has released its **Blueprint for RM Reform**, proposing a full replacement of the RMA. While legislation is still forthcoming, SmartGrowth has commenced planning to respond early to the new operating environment.

Key changes include:

- Elimination of Regional Policy Statements
- Stronger statutory weight for spatial plans
- Simplified national direction and consenting processes



Blueprint: [EAG Report](#)  
- [Blueprint for RM Reform](#)



Cabinet Paper: [Proactive Release Coversheet](#)

SmartGrowth will continue to align workstreams and be ready to lead implementation once the new framework is confirmed.

## Development Opportunities Process

To improve how future growth proposals are brought forward by developers and infrastructure providers, SmartGrowth has finalised a new Development Opportunities Process.

This process is designed to:

- Identify strategic development proposals aligned with the SmartGrowth Strategy
- Enable early engagement across the partnership
- Minimise the need for ad hoc FDS submissions and plan changes

The Development Sector Group, Combined Tāngata Whenua Forum, and Urban Task Force will all play a role in identifying proposals. The aim is to improve efficiency, increase alignment, and ensure growth is strategically planned and sustainably serviced. The first stage is a Registration of Interest.



[Click here for more information](#)




# Te Rōpū Arotahi: Tāngata Whenua Outcomes in Action

The Combined Tāngata Whenua Forum has formally established Te Rōpū Arotahi, a dedicated group to drive monitoring and delivery of Māori housing and development priorities.

The forum's key focus is on:

- Creating a measurable outcomes framework for the six CTWF outcomes
- Elevating papakāinga and marae-centred development into regional planning
- Aligning data, infrastructure funding, and engagement across councils

This marks a transformational step toward embedding tāngata whenua priorities in spatial and investment planning.

 [See latest He Pitopito Kōrero ePānui: Combined Tangata Whenua Forum ePanui](#)

## Looking Ahead – National Direction, Housing Growth and Reform

SmartGrowth is actively preparing a joint submission across all four national direction consultation packages:

- Package 1: Infrastructure and Development
- Package 2: Primary Sector
- Package 3: Freshwater
- Package 4: Going for Housing Growth

The most recent release, **Package 4 – Going for Housing Growth**, focuses on Pillar 1 of the Government's reform programme: removing unnecessary planning barriers and freeing up land for development. While no changes to the NPS-UD are proposed at this stage, the package includes important changes for responsive planning and housing delivery.

Key issues being assessed include:

- Future Development Strategies and spatial planning
- Housing growth targets
- Responsive planning and intensification
- Rural–urban boundaries
- Impacts on Māori housing outcomes

This work will also help position the partnership for the coming **Phase 3 reform**: a new resource management system replacing the RMA.



# Hamilton–Tauranga Corridor Study – Supporting Strategic Integration

SmartGrowth is contributing to a joint study led by the Future Proof partnership on the Hamilton–Tauranga corridor. The purpose of the study is to understand how land use, economic development, and transport investments can be better coordinated along this nationally significant growth corridor.



Key objectives include:

- Identifying spatial development opportunities that support economic productivity and freight efficiency
- Aligning land use with major transport investments like the Tauriko and Cambridge–Piarere expressways
- Providing a 30-year spatial vision to inform the Future Development Strategy and Regional Spatial Plans

The study is being led by consultancy firm Formative, with input from SmartGrowth partners. A joint governance meeting is scheduled for August, and findings will be shared with the SmartGrowth Leadership Group in September.



For further information on this study visit:

[Hamilton to Tauranga Corridor Spatial Study | Future Proof](#)



# What's next

The months ahead will be focused on maintaining momentum across key actions while adapting to changes in national direction and legislation. As the planning and policy landscape continues to evolve, the partnership will remain centred on delivery, collaboration, and supporting the region's long-term growth priorities.

The SmartGrowth partnership remains committed to delivering a well-planned, connected, and inclusive future for the western Bay of Plenty.

We'll be in touch again with updates following the September SmartGrowth Leadership Group meeting.

Ngā mihi maioha,  
The SmartGrowth Team



**SmartGrowth**  
Building our futures together

Find out more at [smartgrowthbop.org.nz](https://smartgrowthbop.org.nz)  
E. [administration@smartgrowthbop.org.nz](mailto:administration@smartgrowthbop.org.nz)

---

An urban growth partnership involving Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Tauranga City Council, Western Bay of Plenty District Council, tāngata whenua and central government. The purpose of SmartGrowth is to take a collaborative and coordinated approach to managing and shaping growth within the western Bay of Plenty sub-region.