

Research Report

Far North 2100 – Progress Report

1 Purpose

To provide a progress report to Council on the implementation of Far North 2100 (FN2100).

2 Context

Far North 2100 was adopted by Council in 2021. It is an economic, social and environmental strategy for the Far North. It is scheduled to be reviewed during 2025.

This report reviews key economic, social and environmental indicators for the region in the period prior to the adoption of FN2100. It also highlights the Council's achievements in implementing FN2100.

3 Discussion

FN2100 was adopted by Council and published in 2021. It is a strategy to realise the vision of "He Whenua Rangatira – a district of sustainable prosperity."¹ FN2100 is far reaching and ambitious. It sets important directions of Council's work. It also sets out aspirations for the economic and social development of the region:

- For Council, it guides the direction of land-use, infrastructure and planning, by supporting the District Plan, the Long-Term Plan, and infrastructure plans.
- For the *District*, it provides guidance for "investment decisions, community development and our cultural identity."²

A focus for the strategy was the reinstatement by the Government of the four aspects of community wellbeing in the Local Government Act.³

¹ Far North 2100.

² *ibid*

³ The Government has announced that Council responsibility for advancing these wellbeings will be removed from the Local Government Act.

FN2100 incorporates three strategic objectives:

- *Communities of Care* – social and cultural prosperity
- *Growth* – promoting economic prosperity
- *Stewardship* – Promoting environmental prosperity.

The implementation of FN2100 was to be undertaken through initiatives grouped under five “drivers of change”:

- putting the wellbeing of the communities and people first
- promoting resilient economic growth for sustainable prosperity
- active response to climate change
- connecting people, businesses, and places
- protecting the natural environment for future generations.

Each of the ‘drivers of change’ has an action plan with:

- actions on implementation of the strategy in 2021
- actions for the period 2021 – 2024
- actions for 2024 onwards.

FN2100 seeks to promote the Far North around its comparative advantages. It also seeks to diversify the economy so that the region is more resilient to economic shocks. The actions in FN2100 are both:

- **specific to the council** – e.g. achieving excellence in spatial planning, actioning climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the incorporation of te ao Māori into Council decision making
- **advocacy for the region and persuading others to act in the interests of the region** – e.g. assisting businesses to access entrepreneurship support from central government or acting as an advocate for education in the region.

FN2100 was developed because there are material gaps between the current and desired states of economic, social and environmental wellbeings in the Far North. In adopting FN2100, Council adopted a central role in closing those gaps. The social and economic conditions in the Far North cannot be materially improved without a strategy. The region will not prosper unless the Council takes effective actions to promote growth, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. One of these actions is ensuring that Council staff are equipped to provide Te Ao Māori governance and that Māori communities are strong, and resilient and that they can pursue opportunities to achieve prosperity.

4 Economic and Social Indicators⁴

The starting premise for FN2100 was that the region could do better to achieve wellbeing for the people who live here. Table 1 shows key social, environmental, and economic indicators for the Far North. These indicators provide essential information about the region in the period shortly prior to FN2100 being developed.⁵

Table One - Indicators

Indicator	Far North District	New Zealand
Economic Growth 10 years to 2018	1.5%	2.2%

A persistent gap between GDP growth in the Far North and the rest of New Zealand places pressure on living standards and the resources available to support the community.

Economic diversity

Agriculture, forestry and fishing is the most important sector in the Far North, accounting for 13.4% of GDP, compared to 5.1% nationally. However, *services sectors*, such as *retail* and *health services* are increasingly important in the region.

Productivity⁶	\$110,808	\$133,370
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Productivity in the Far North was 16.9% lower than the New Zealand average in the Far North. That gap was consistent over the preceding 10 years.

Unemployment	8.3%	4.6%
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Unemployment has been consistently higher in the Far North compared to the rest of New Zealand for the last two decades.

Taitamariki not in education or employment	13.3% ⁷	11.8%
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The numbers of young people aged 2018 – 2025 who are not in employment, education and training has consistently been higher than average in the Far North.

Greenhouse gas emissions⁸	1,327	83,054
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Greenhouse emission in the Far North comprise 1.6% of New Zealand emissions. In the ten years to 2018, Far North emissions decreased by an average of 1.0% annually, compared to an average annual decrease of 0.1% in New Zealand.

⁴ All sources are from *Infometrics – Regional Economic Profile*.

⁵ 2018 is presented as a base year because it avoids the effects of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. It coincides with the initial consideration of adopting a strategy such as FN2100.

⁶ GDP per job – this shows how efficient the region is compared to the rest of New Zealand.

⁷ The 2018 level was unusually low. In 2017 it was 10.4% and in 2019 it was 17.5%.

⁸ Kilotonnes CO₂e.

Chart 1 – Wellbeing Indicators – Far North District and New Zealand 2018⁹

Wellbeing radar
2018



These wellbeing indicators tell us a story about the Far North in the period prior to the adoption of FN2100.

Wellbeing in the Far North in 2018 compared to the rest of Aotearoa New Zealand

- **Housing** was slightly lower – rental affordability and overcrowding are the key concerns.
- **Health** was slightly lower – life expectancy, mental health, and the suicide rate are the key concerns.
- **Environment** was slightly higher – waste management is excellent compared to other regions.
- **Civic engagement and governance** were about the same.
- **Social connections** are much lower – the truancy rate was a problem and internet access was lower than for the rest of the nation.
- **Knowledge and Skills** were much lower – ECE participation, workforce qualifications, school leavers with NCEA Level 2, and transitions of young people from school to tertiary education were all low relative to New Zealand generally.
- **Safety** was much lower – road fatalities, workplace injury, and crime rates were higher than for New Zealand generally.

⁹ Source: Infometrics, Regional Economic Profile, Far North District, 2018.

- **Jobs and earnings** were lower – the unemployment rate was higher than the New Zealand average, and the numbers of young people not in employment, education, or training were higher than the New Zealand average.
- **Income and consumption** were much lower – measured by beneficiary numbers, earnings, and household incomes.

5 Progress by the Council in Implementing FN2100 - Highlights

This section sets out the highlights of the Council’s progress in actioning the drivers of change in FN2100.

Putting the wellbeing of the communities and people first

- Council staff have developed draft social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing indicators¹⁰. However, these have not yet been systematically included in decision making.
- Council collaborates with other agencies to promote wellbeing. For example, Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora was involved in the development of the Far North District Alcohol Control Bylaw.
- *Te Pae o Uta* is a highlight for the Council. It is a wide-ranging strategy to create enablers across staff to respond more effectively to Māori and to empower communities, working collaboratively.

Promoting resilient economic growth

- Taitokerau Northland Economic Wellbeing Pathway is a comprehensive evidence and strength-based strategy that encompasses the collective aspirations of the Far North. It has been co-created by representation from business and industry, Iwi/Māori, local and central government, community, Northland Inc, and guided by Te Rerenga Steering Group. Te Rerenga seeks to cultivate a prosperous, sustainable, and innovative economy for all to partake in its benefits.
- Council endorsed Te Rerenga - Taitokerau Northland Economic Wellbeing Pathway at its 12 October Council meeting.
- Council has actively participated in the Joint Regional Economic Development Committee. The Committee has a focus on raising economic growth in the region. Consistent with FN2100, the Committee focuses on sustained economic growth as a means of generating the resources needed to address the pressing problems affecting the region, such as relatively poor housing, health and education.

Active response to climate change

- Council has adopted a Climate Action Policy that sets adaptation, emissions reduction and climate-related risk management objectives.
- Sustainability guidance is integrated into the procurement policy.
- Council has published 2022-2023 footprint reports for Te Taitokerau Northland and Te Hiku o Te Ika Far North District.

¹⁰ The Government has announced its intention to remove references to wellbeing from the Local Government Act 2002. This briefing does not analyse the implications of that announcement for FN2100.

- Council disclosed climate change impacts, risks, opportunities and key work in the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan.
- Te Tai Tokerau Climate Adaptation Strategy was adopted in 2022, and a regional work programme has been established.
- Council has developed a Community Adaptation Programme and started of the Programme, Community Adaptation and Planning the Hokianga area.

Connecting people, business and places

- Council has successfully implemented the “Nothing But Net” programme to break down barriers to accessing the internet for Far North communities.
- The District Wide Spatial Strategy is a planning document that will look at 30 to 50 years into the future. It is focused on how the Far North should grow and function. It looks at how settlements, or selected locations, work together and how we connect with the wider region. It enables the district to take a long-term spatial view of wellbeing, infrastructure objectives and growth. It will also help to facilitate investment from public and private sector partners and influence any future regional spatial plans.
- A high performing transport system is important for social connections and lifting productivity. This was identified as one of the actions in FN2100. Council has developed a Programme Business Case in conjunction with key stakeholders to support an Integrated Transport Strategy. This business case is a transport investment map that will address the key transport problems faced by the Far North. It will address the challenges of growth, changing land use and new technology.

Protect the natural environment for future generations

- The Proposed District Plan (PDP) has mechanisms to protect indigenous vegetation and fauna, indigenous biodiversity, and versatile soils. One of these mechanisms is a horticulture zone. This zone is intended to prevent fragmentation of productive land. There are also new rural production subdivision rules. These require the protection of biodiversity for those who wish to undertake lifestyle development. This new proposed framework will better protect our natural resources than the operative district plan, which is over 20 years old.

6 The Scheduled Review of FN2100

A review of FN2100 is scheduled for 2025. The review will be undertaken by Council staff, with targeted consultation with the community. This review will inform recommendations to Council about a refreshed FN2100. Subject to decisions by Council, FN2100 could be redeveloped through a codesign process with the community.