

District Wide Spatial Strategy Project Update – Attachment 1: summary of key aspects of the DWSS Project Plan

1. Context and Purpose of the District Wide Spatial Strategy

The Far North district faces distinct challenges and opportunities. The combination of large, complex geography, a predominantly rural population, extensive infrastructure networks and vulnerabilities, significant long-term socio-economic issues and inequalities position the Far North as unique within New Zealand. A spatial strategy is a mechanism through which long-term community aspirations can be explored and understood, and a planned approach to their realisation can be developed. Some key statistics about the wider district are shown overleaf:

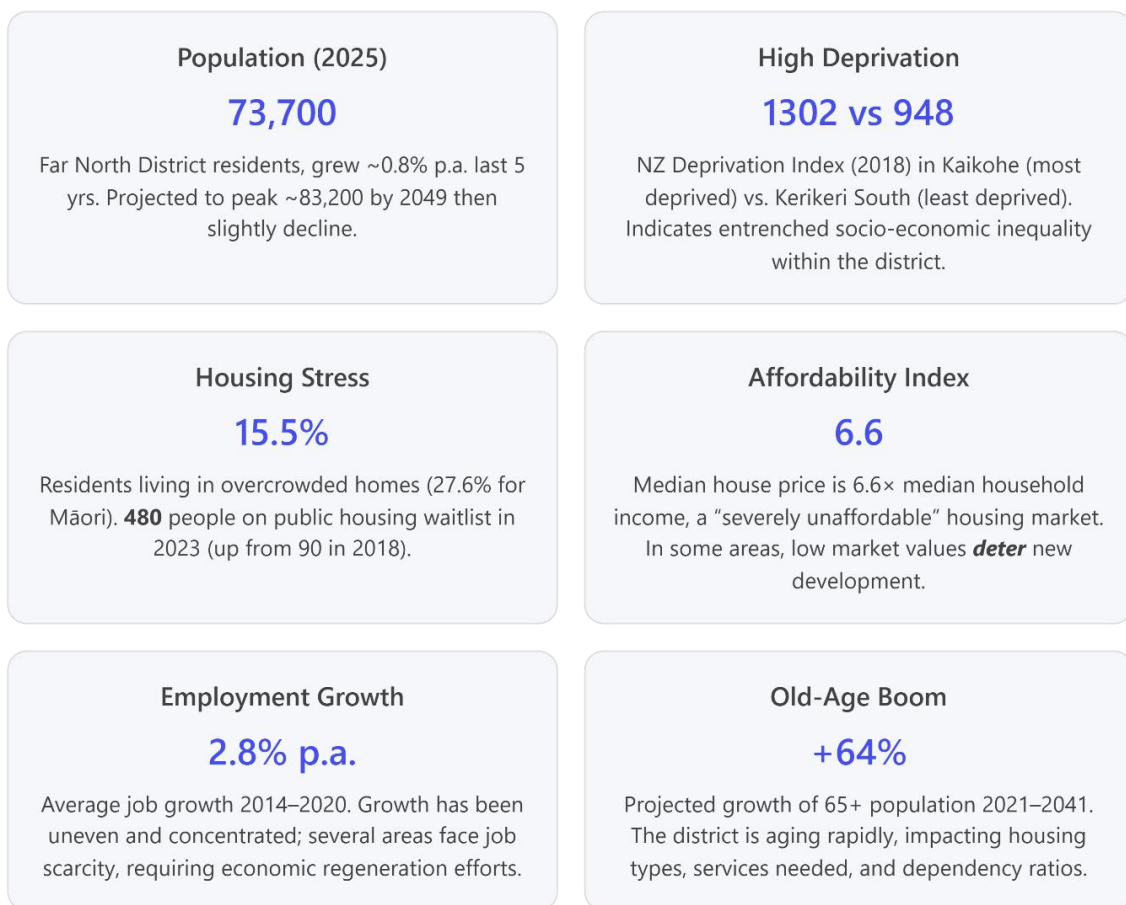


Figure 1: Statistics - Far North (various sources)

The purpose of developing a District-Wide Spatial Strategy for the Far North district is:

To deliver an inclusive, integrated district wide spatial plan which delivers effective growth planning, promotes community well-being, and enables structural change through policy, investment and partnership strategies, including clear, achievable shifts/directions/strategies and measurable action plan to deliver the shared vision for the district and its communities.

Critically, this work can help to position the Far North to actively shape its voice within the impending Resource Management framework. By establishing a clear, community-informed spatial direction now, the district ensures that its unique rural context, infrastructure challenges, and aspirations for

regeneration are not only visible but influential in regional decision-making. The DWSS can serve as a key input into the development of the Regional Spatial Plans, enabling the Far North to participate proactively and assertively in the process. It also ensures that local priorities, particularly those of iwi/hapū and underserved communities, are embedded early and carried through into regional planning conversations.

2. Scope of the District-Wide Spatial Strategy

The DWSS will:

- achieve the purpose as set out above.
- keep line-of-sight to the developing requirements of the Planning Act.
- be district-wide and inclusive and provide a strategy for the diverse demographic and expansive geographic areas within the Far North District. However, because FNDC recently adopted Te Pātukurea, a sub-district spatial plan for Kerikeri and Waipapa, the DWSS will integrate and align with the outcomes, priorities, and learnings from Te Pātukurea.

The DWSS will not:

- duplicate or override the outcomes, priorities and actions identified in Te Pātukurea

3. Governance and Project Structure

The governance and project structure for the DWSS Project is intended to be simple, with clear roles and line-of-sight to escalation and decision-making obligations Figure 2 sets out the structure and Table 1 provides a summary of the governance and project role descriptions.

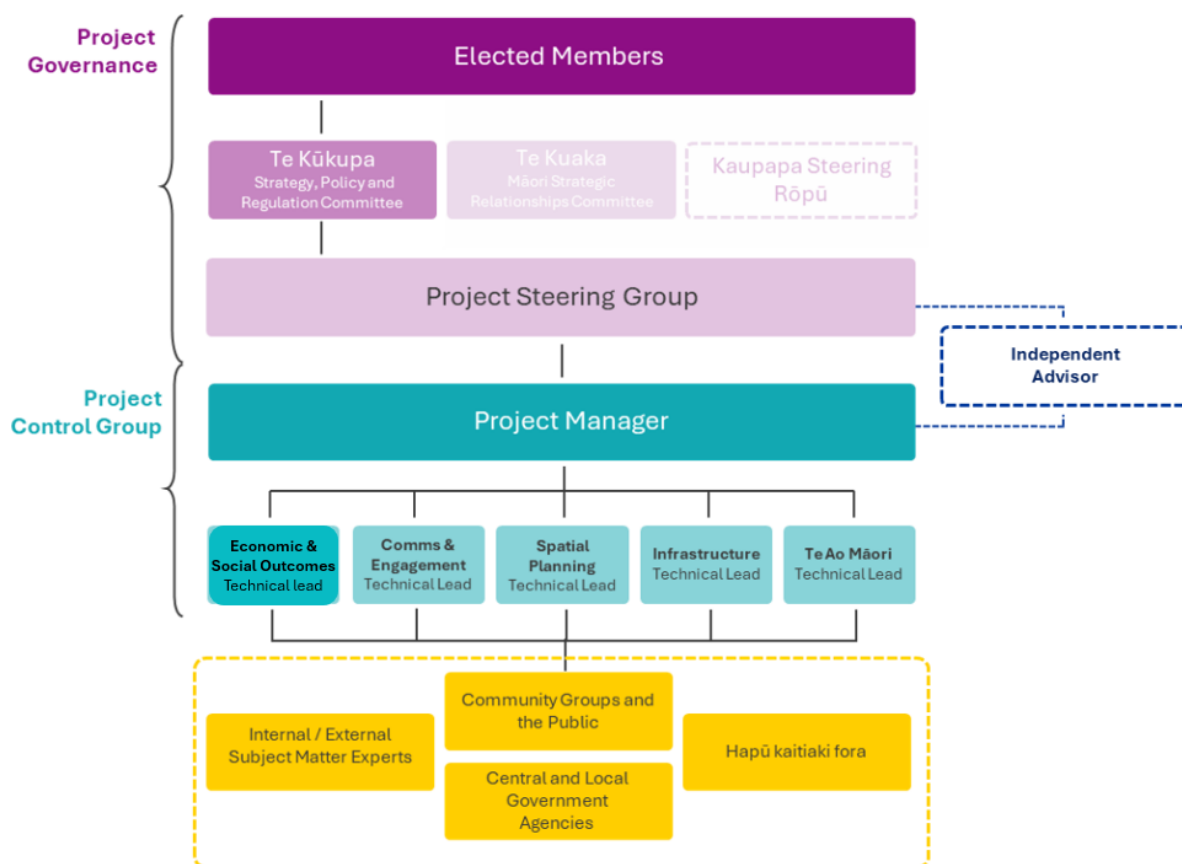


Figure 2: Proposed Governance Structure:

Governance or Project Role	Role Description
Elected Members (Council)	Adoption of the District Wide Spatial Strategy
Te Kūkupa Committee	<p>Strategic advisory role with decision making functions on strategy objectives and vision; Spatial Scenarios Report; Draft Spatial Strategy Report for Consultation; and recommendation to Council for adoption.</p> <p>Information reports will be provided to Te Kūkupa for the following project milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Steering Group Terms of Reference • Communication and Engagement Plan Summary • Foundation Report • Evidence Base Summary • Baseline Analysis and Community Profiles • Scenario Development Report • Technical Memos (typically included with above listed milestone reports) • Engagement Summary
Te Kauka Committee/ Kaupapa Steering Rōpū	<p>The Kaupapa Steering Rōpū (KSR) has been setup to provide strategic guidance, Te ao Māori lens and iwi leadership to district-wide projects. This Rōpū consists of members from Council’s Te Kuaka committee. Staff will confirm at the March 2026 Te Kuaka meeting the extent of reporting required to Te Kuaka for this project, or if the Kaupapa Steering Rōpū will provide te ao Māori strategic guidance.</p>
Internal Project Steering Group	<p>Monitor project progress and performance, ensuring alignment with objectives and Council priorities; track progress against project milestones, timelines, and deliverables. This group has a focus on strategic implications externally and across Council functions and meeting milestones and is responsible ensuring that the decision-making processes and draft content papers and outputs meets quality standards. Support/advise on any governance issues that arise.</p> <p>Not yet established, this group is intended to comprise senior council staff, project sponsor, project owner, project manager and relevant Senior Leadership Team members. A Terms of Reference will be created for this group.</p>
Project Sponsor	<p>Group Manager Planning and Policy. Ensure the project has what it needs to succeed. They are the champion and enabler for the project. Their focus is on making sure the DWSS aligns with</p>

	<p>organisational priorities, securing resources and getting executive-level support when necessary.</p> <p>The Project Sponsor will be a member of the Project Steering Group and will approve key project outputs up to Te Kūkupa.</p>
Project Owner	<p>Manager Integrated Planning. Accountable for making sure the Project is successful. They make sure that project outcomes meet the objectives, project timeline, and quality standards. They provide direction to the Project Manager and may chair the Steering Group or act as the key link between governance and delivery.</p>
Project Manager	<p>Team Leader Growth Planning and Placemaking. Responsible for tactical project delivery and control. Includes monitoring and managing the project's day-to-day execution, reviewing and endorsing changes before they go higher, and managing project-level risks and issues. The Project Manager will also be responsible for preparing council papers though initial drafting of papers will sit with technical leads</p>
Independent Advisor	<p>External Spatial Planning subject matter expert. Support for Project Manager / Lead as well as the Project Steering Group in dealing with technical issues that arise. Provide peer review and independent assurance on deliverables and strategic advice.</p>
Technical Leads	<p>2x Senior Strategic Planners supported by relevant internal and external subject matter experts. Are responsible for day-to-day project development and process, including contract management of their workstream; keeping the technical workstream scope, programme and budget under control and recommending to the project manager if any changes are required for their respective workstreams as soon as practicable; identifying and reviewing risks, producing, or monitoring and overseeing the deliverables (in instances where deliverables are wholly or partially outsourced), recommend the need for legal or further expert review and deciding when deliverables are ready for Project Managers review and sign-off. They are effectively the technical production and verification ahead of approval. They will also coordinate SME inputs, including preparation of workshop/steering group materials. Reports to Project Steering Group. Responsible for Council reporting.</p>
Project Coordinator	<p>Responsible for providing administrative support to the Project Manager and Team, including programme and task / action tracking, budget and risk tracking.</p>
Project Administration	<p>Responsible for meeting record keeping (where necessary, i.e. it is not intended to keep records of all project team meetings),</p>

	coordinating and supporting project meetings, workshops and engagement activities.
Subject Matter Experts	Responsible for providing technical expertise within their discipline to support the delivery of the DWSS, completing the tasks within the allocated hours and timeframes provided by the technical leads and are accountable for deciding when documents and processes are ready for the Technical Lead to review. A range of Subject Matter Experts input will be required, including (but not limited to), Te Hono, planning, economics, urban design, ecology, natural hazards, infrastructure (transport and three-waters), GIS.

Table 1: Summary of governance and project role descriptions

4. Project Programme - key stages and timeframes

This section of the Project Plan outlines the key project steps and deliverables that will guide the development of the DWSS. It provides a staged timeline for activities from project establishment through to final strategy delivery and explains how each step contributes to future planning processes under the new legislation. The key recommendation is to proceed with multiple foundational workstreams now, such as governance setup, baseline analysis, and vision setting, while using hold points to reassess and adapt the programme as legislative requirements become clearer.

At present the final content of the Planning Bill and the date of enactment is unknown. We anticipate enactment in August 2026, but given this uncertainty, at present the project programme post-August 2026 must be considered indicative.

Since resource management reform is imminent, the programme assumes the following:

- (a) National Direction / Standards will be developed and in place before Regional Spatial Plans.
- (b) Regional Spatial Plans will identify future urban areas, infrastructure corridors and strategic sites, and priority areas for public investment, informed by environmental constraints mapping. The data gathered as part of this project can inform these.
- (c) Regional Spatial Plans will start to be developed, once the Planning Act and Natural Environment Act achieve royal assent. This will continue through 2027 and 2028. The current target date of notification of draft Regional Spatial Plans is approximately October 2027 (15 months after the Planning Act becomes legislation), with adoption of the Regional Spatial Plans approximately 6 months later. At present the timeline for enactment of the Planning Bill is uncertain.
- (d) Land use plans will be developed after Regional Spatial Plans. These will be required to implement the regional spatial plan and will select from the national menu of standardised zones, and be required to apply them according to local context. The scenarios developed and decided upon as part of this project can inform the development of these.
- (e) The Planning Act will prescribe the process for developing regional spatial plans and combined district plans. This process and requirements are uncertain at this stage.
- (f) There will be no Special Consultative Procedure.

Step	Deliverable and timing	Timing	Contribution to future processes
1. Project Establishment and Governance	The initial deliverables are the DWSS Project Plan (this document itself) and a Project Steering Group Terms of Reference defining roles and governance structure. These set up the project’s framework. An internal Communications & Engagement Plan is also prepared at this stage to guide how stakeholders will be engaged. A dedicated project website and GIS data portal are launched early as tools to share information and support analysis.	January – February 2026 (2 months)	Establishing project roles (Steering Group, Project Coordinator, etc.) and decision processes that keep a “line of sight” to the upcoming Planning Act requirements. Early governance also allows collaboration with regional entities (and potentially central government and iwi partners) consistent with the new system’s emphasis on joint spatial planning across councils.
2. Iwi, Stakeholder and Community Engagement	During the engagement phase, the team uses the Communications and Engagement Plan to conduct outreach and gather input. While no formal report is issued solely from this stage, the ongoing feedback is captured for later reporting. By the end of the project, an Engagement Summary document will compile all community and stakeholder input received, but this is built up across stages rather than a single output from this step.	Early iwi engagement from late-2025 and ongoing; Hapū engagement in-line with FNDC’s Te Hono-led Hapū Engagement Strategy; Early community and stakeholder engagement March – May 2026	Early engagement will allow the DWSS to understand and reflect the community’s vision for the district’s direction. Engaging central government agencies and regional partners early (as part of stakeholders) lays groundwork for the “spatial planning partnership” model anticipated under the new system. Effective iwi/hapū engagement is critical in ensuring that specific iwi/hapū spatial priorities and aspirations are integrated into the project objectives, scenarios, and outcomes. Early engagement is critical for the development of the Vision, Principles and Objectives
3. Baseline Data Collection and Context Analysis	Key analytical deliverables are produced in this step. The Evidence Base Summary compiles all relevant baseline data (demographics, land use, infrastructure, etc.). Complementing it is the Baseline Analysis and Community Profiles	January 2026 to the end of May 2026 (5 months)	This step delivers detailed spatial data on population, infrastructure, environmental constraints, etc. This work directly contributes to the future Regional Spatial Strategy (RSP) because the new system requires a strong evidentiary

Step	Deliverable and timing	Timing	Contribution to future processes
	<p>report, which provides detailed area-by-area profiles and identifies key issues and trends. The GIS portal is populated with these data layers to support scenario modeling and to ensure the evidence is accessible.</p>		<p>foundation for these matters. In compiling this information now at the district scale, FNDC is doing the groundwork for what will be needed in the RSP.</p>
<p>4. Vision, Principles and Objectives</p>	<p>Here the project's strategic direction is set. The principal deliverable is the Foundation Report, which establishes the agreed vision for the district, core planning principles, and strategic objectives for the DWSS. This document serves as the framework against which options will be developed and evaluated. It's an internal blueprint ensuring that the economic development and well-being goals are woven into the plan's foundation.</p>	<p>March – July 2026; Council workshop June 2026; Te Kūkupa endorsement decision, July 2026</p>	<p>Having a clear, community created and endorsed vision for Far North ensures that when the RSP is developed, there is no ambiguity about what Far North District wants to achieve.</p>
<p>5. Scenario Development and Analysis</p>	<p><u>NOTE: programme is indicative from July/August onwards, considering Planning Act uncertainties.</u></p> <p>This step produces several technical outputs leading into a major report for public consultation: a Scenario Development Report that details the different spatial scenarios explored. Alongside, various Technical Memos are developed to dive into specific topics that inform the scenarios. Using these inputs, the project then publishes the Spatial Scenarios Report – a comprehensive, public-facing document presenting the shortlisted scenarios (with a preferred option) for public consultation. The Spatial Scenarios Report includes appendices such as the evidence</p>	<p>June – December 2026; Scenario development report delivered Dec 2026; Consultation on spatial scenarios February 2027.</p>	<p>This will enable FNDC to come to the table with a well-considered scenario (and clear rationale) for the district, helping to streamline the decision on the preferred spatial option in the new system for the district land use plan.</p>

Step	Deliverable and timing	Timing	Contribution to future processes
	summary, technical memos, and engagement summary to provide supporting detail.		
6. Final Strategy Development and Analysis	In the final step, the preferred scenario is refined into the full spatial strategy. First, a Draft Spatial Strategy Report is released for public consultation, outlining the proposed district-wide plan incorporating feedback from the scenario stage. The evaluation of scenarios and rationale for the preferred strategy are documented in an Evaluation Report (appended to the draft). After consulting on the draft, the team produces the Final Spatial Strategy Report, the version of the plan.	February 2027 – December 2027 Consultation on Draft Spatial Strategy – May 2027; Adoption of Draft Spatial Strategy – Mid-2027; Integration of Draft Spatial Strategy in regional spatial plan for notification late-2027.	The future district / land use plan for Northland will be required to implement the regional spatial plan by translating identified constraints and development opportunities into appropriate zones and other provisions. In large part, the DWSS will identify these areas and policy intents, so when the combined plan is written, planners can directly assign the appropriate standardised zones or overlays to our district in line with what the DWSS calls for.

Table 2: Description of DWSS Key Stages, Timing and Associated Outputs