Kāpiti Coast
DISTRICT COUNCIL
Me Huri Whakamuri, Ka Titiro Whakamua

Environment Strategy

Direction of Travel: Engagement Document

September 2026



Introduction

This document sets out the direction we are proposing for our Environment Strategy. A Direction of Travel is a document we use to test our thinking with the community before we finalise our approach.

The Council worked with the community during 2023 and 2024 to develop Vision Kāpiti. This sets out what our community wants Kāpiti to be like in 2060 and beyond. The environment came through strongly in that feedback and has featured prominently in recent engagement on the draft community priorities for the Long Term Plan 2027–37.

The aim of the Environment Strategy is to add further detail to the aspirations our community identified through Vision Kāpiti. It will concentrate on four Focus Areas: land use, air quality, biodiversity and water and ocean health. It is also informed by the Council and Mana Whenua Partnership Agreement and our shared commitment to protecting and restoring the Environment.

We are not starting from scratch. A wide variety of existing policy and direction already shapes how we look after our natural and built environment including our **Growth Strategy (Te Tupu Pai)** and the **District Plan**. The Environment Strategy will bring this work together by showing what we are already doing, and what needs to change over the next ten years.

The Environment Strategy will be broader than just Council's work plan. It is for all of us to own. Council has a part to play, and so do our iwi partners, other agencies, community groups, businesses and households.

We want to know whether we are focusing on the right areas and priorities. What you tell us will shape the Environment Strategy that we intend to release in December 2026.

Questions for our community

1. **Are we accurately reflecting community aspirations through our outcomes and focus areas? Is there something you think should receive more attention?**
2. **Do our proposed principles reflect what matters most to you when decisions are made about our environment? Why/why not?**
3. **Are our proposed objectives focusing our work on the right things? Is there anything important that we've missed?**
4. **Are we tracking the right things to know whether we are making a difference? Is there anything else we should be measuring?**

We'll be developing an Action Plan in 2027. This will set specific actions to implement our Environment Strategy and Direction of Travel.

5. **Any other comments you'd like to make or ideas we should be considering in our Action Plan?**

How to have your say

Feedback is open from **28 September** to **27 October 2026.**

- Complete our survey online at **haveyoursay.kapiticoast.govt.nz/EnvironmentStrategy**
- Come and talk to us at one of our drop-in sessions. Details are on our website.
- Email your feedback to **haveyoursay@kapiticoast.govt.nz**
- Post it to Environment Strategy feedback, Private Bag 60601, Paraparaumu 5254.

What the Environment Strategy will cover

The Environment Strategy sits alongside Vision Kāpiti and our Operating Strategies to provide a holistic view of wellbeing and sustainable development across people, place and partnership.

The Environment Strategy will be about our place – the land, the air, the water and the living things that make up our local environment. Its focus will be on protecting what is left and restoring what has been lost. It will position Council and the community to respond to future challenges and make the most of our opportunities. Our Strategy will focus on four Focus Areas:

- **Land use**
  How we use, develop and look after the land in Kāpiti. This includes where and how we grow, protecting productive land and significant sites, the health of our soils, managing natural hazard risk, the open space network, and waste minimisation.
- **Air quality**
  The air we breathe, and the things that affect it. This includes local air quality and how well we monitor it, emissions from traffic on our roads, and the smoke, dust and odour that can affect people's health, comfort and enjoyment of where they live.
- **Biodiversity**
  The variety of living things in our district, and the places they need to survive. This includes our native plants, birds, lizards, insects and fish, the habitats they depend on, and the pest plants and animals that threaten them.
- **Water and ocean health**
  The health of our fresh, coastal and marine waters, and what happens on land to affect them. This includes rivers, streams, wetlands and groundwater, stormwater pollutants, how we treat and discharge wastewater, the health of aquatic life and mahinga kai, and the condition of our estuaries, beaches and dunes.

These Focus Areas are interconnected and cannot be approached in isolation. They flow from the 'Place' portion of the Vision Kāpiti Doughnut Model and connect to the aspirations Vision Kāpiti identified **(Figure 1)**.

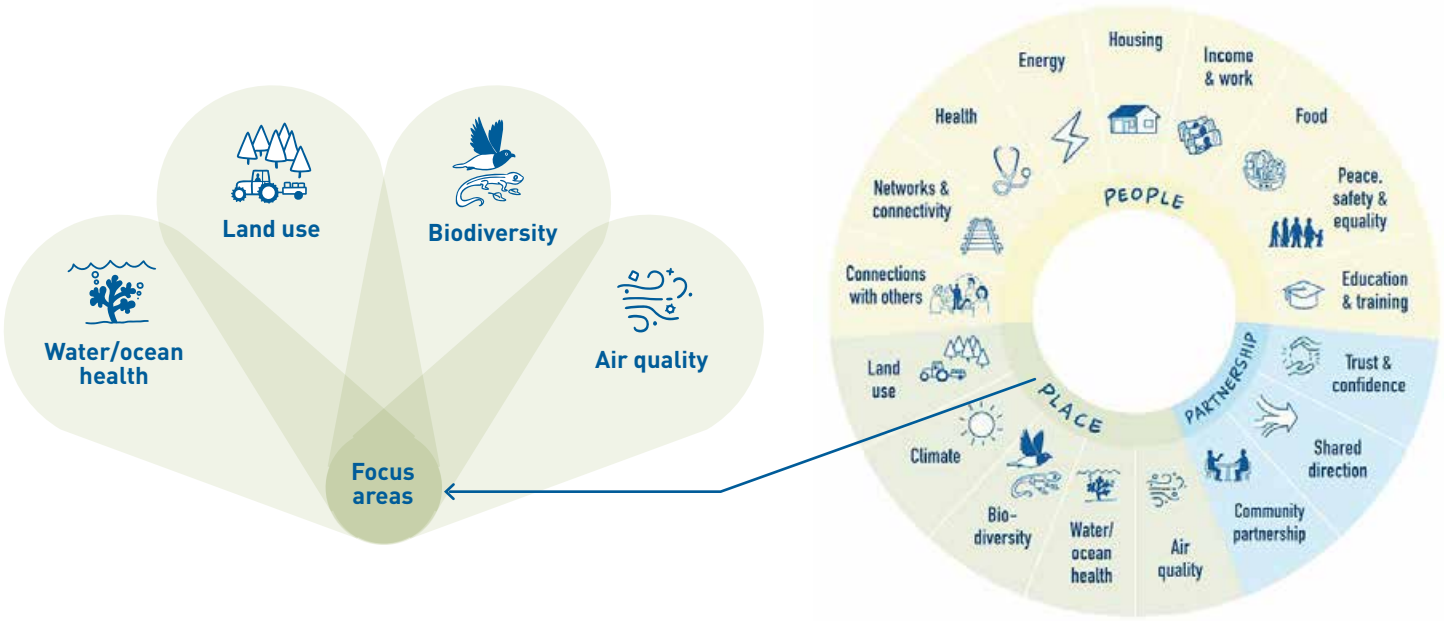


Figure 1: Environment Strategy Focus Areas and connection to the Vision Kāpiti outcomes model.

What it will not cover

Council has separated its strategies on climate and environment to ensure climate is given an appropriate level of focus. Our climate approach is now being developed across three strategies (mitigation, resilience and adaptation). Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is covered by our Emissions Reduction Strategy, adopted in 2025, which sets out how we work toward our aspirational goal of a net zero Kāpiti by 2040.

Despite progressing separate strategies, we recognise that climate and the environment are inherently linked. Changes in one affect the other and vice versa. Where climate change affects the things covered in this strategy we acknowledge these connections.

Detailed actions and projects to implement the Strategy will follow through an action plan we will develop during 2027.

Working through a period of change

The rules that shape how we look after our environment are changing. Central government is replacing the Resource Management Act 1991 with a new planning system, and other national settings that affect land use, air quality, biodiversity and water are also under review.

We are developing our direction and priorities to hold up through the change ahead. Where Council's regulatory role changes, the Strategy will guide how we advocate, where we invest and who we work with. Where the shape of local government changes, it will give a clear indication of our community priorities and direction.

Mana Whenua partnership and priorities

We're committed to our partnership with Mana Whenua and enhancing our communities by honouring and giving mana to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In 2025, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai, Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki and Kāpiti Coast District Council renewed our Partnership Agreement. The renewed agreement sets out four mātāpono (guiding principles) to shape what we do together **(Figure 2)**.

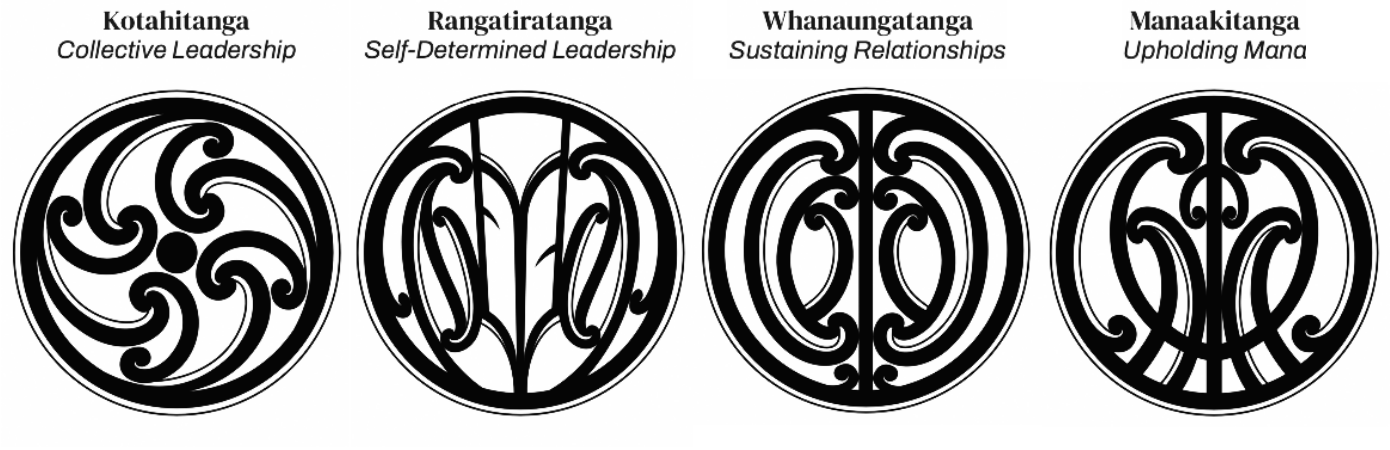


Figure 2: The four mātāpono from the 2025 Partnership Agreement.

The environment (Te taiao) is a top priority for both Mana Whenua and Council. We've engaged with Mana Whenua, both directly and via Te Whakaminenga o Kapiti to understand our collective priorities. Te Whakaminenga o Kapiti has supported the use of the Te Haerenga Whakamua[1] framework **(Figure 3)** which reflects their high level priorities.

This framework has shaped development of our Direction of Travel and is relevant to all the principles, objectives, and measures we are proposing.

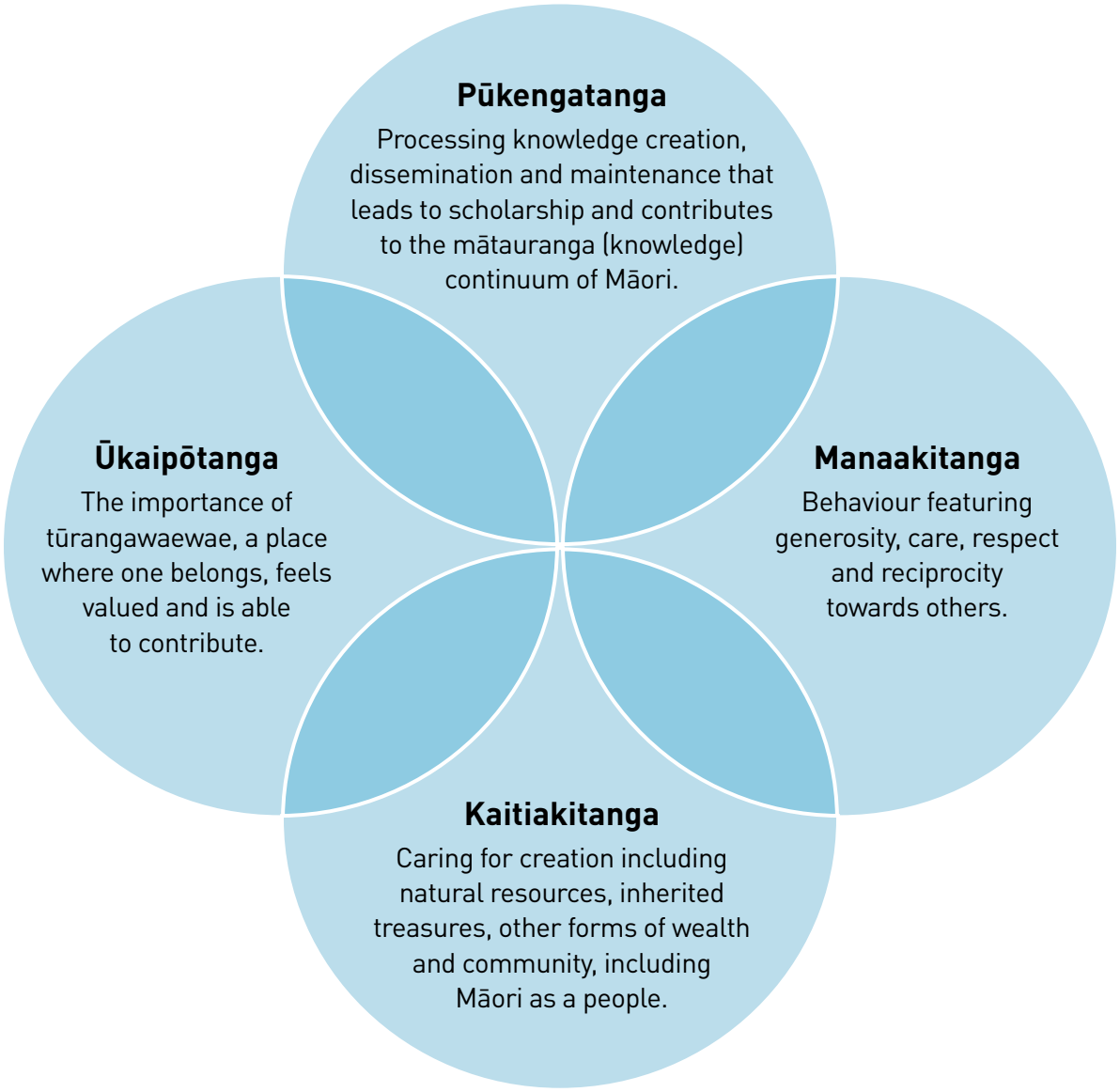


Figure 3: Iwi priorities as derived from Te Haerenga Whakamua.

[1] Moore, P., Royal, C., & Barnes, A. (2012). *Te Haerenga Whakamua – A review of the District Plan Provisions for Māori: A vision to the future*. Te Haerenga Whakamua was prepared as a part of Council's District Plan review that occurred between 2009–2012. The report was prepared for the purpose of providing an iwi perspective on the district plan review and sought to articulate iwi priorities for the future.

Our principles – what will guide our decisions

These principles reflect the ideas we want at the heart of our Environment Strategy. They are intended to support good decision making, particularly where different needs must be balanced. They would act as guardrails for future work and remind us of what is important when making difficult decisions.

They are not new ideas. The principles have been informed by our iwi partners as well as existing strategies and community engagements.

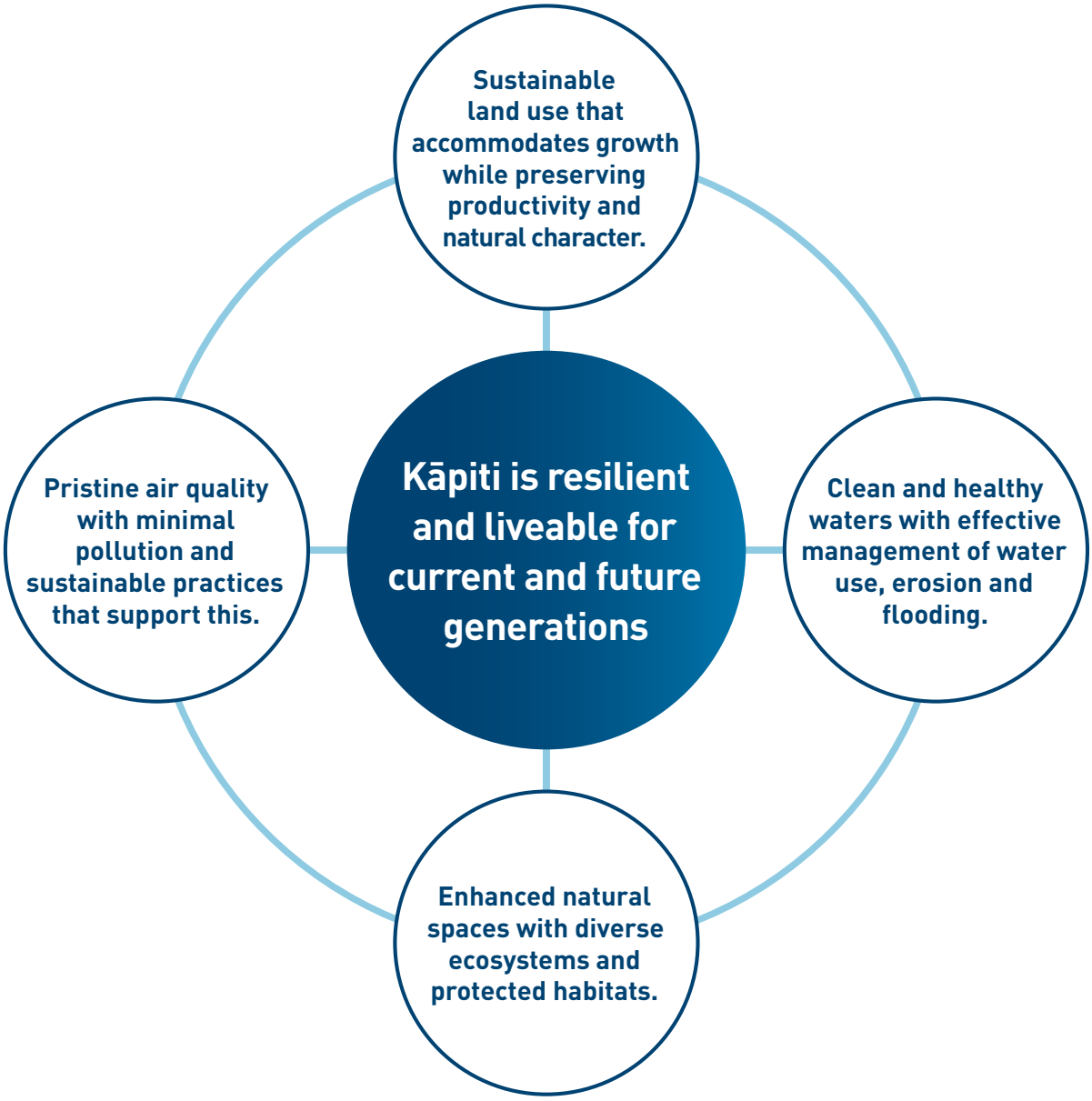
We would like to know whether these are the right principles to guide decisions that affect our environment.

Principle	What it means
Take an integrated approach	We will consider how decisions affect the whole environment (rather than individual parts) to preserve its inherent value and life supporting capacity.
Protect and enhance	We will support actions that protect and enhance our unique native plants, animals and the health of our waterways.
Avoid harm before needing to fix it	We will make decisions which first look at how environmental harm can be avoided, before considering options for mitigation or future offsetting of the effects.
Support iwi aspirations	We will work with Mana Whenua to support the exercise of rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga and give effect to environmental aspirations in line with our Partnership Agreement.
Think about current and future generations	We will influence Kāpiti to grow sustainably. Our decisions will take a long term view by considering climate change and natural hazards, so communities are healthy and resilient, now and in the future.
Work in partnership	We will promote actions that empower our community and partners to be responsible guardians of our environment.
Invest for impact and efficiency	We will respect financial and ecological limits by investing wisely in projects that will have the biggest long term impact and return on investment.

Our outcomes – delivering on Vision Kāpiti

The Environment Strategy builds on the significant engagement with the community through Vision Kāpiti and related projects to express our collective aspirations for the future. The desired future states and shifts required to get there identified in Vision Kāpiti have been developed into summary outcomes to support development of our Operating Strategies. They are fundamentally a product of what our community has told us matters most.

Our outcomes are fundamentally interconnected, and we recognise that action in one area will affect many others. Much of what we are proposing does more than one job at once, which matters when funding is tight and the challenges are long term. The outcomes that will guide our Environment Strategy are:



Our focus areas add detail to these outcomes by proposing objectives and measures to bring us closer to these desired future states and our overall vision for Kāpiti.

Our environment today

Our place

The Kāpiti Coast stretches from Ōtaki in the north to Paekākāriki in the south. We have over 40 kilometres of beautiful coastline, including the famous Kāpiti Island, which is home to many rare birds and plants that cannot be found anywhere else.

Behind us are the Tararua Ranges. The rivers that come off them, particularly the Ōtaki and the Waikanae, supply our drinking water and shape the landscape between the ranges and the sea. In between are sandy beaches, coastal dunes, wetland remnants, rolling hill country and the towns most of us live in.

Our environment is not what it once was. Over the last 150 years most of the lowland forest was cleared, wetlands were drained, streams were straightened and piped, dunes were flattened, and towns and roads were built across the coastal flats. While that was normal practice at the time, we now have a much better understanding of the value of our local environment and how what we do affects it. The consequences of past practices are not easily undone and contribute to many of the challenges we face today.

What remains is still extraordinary and we need to look after it. The Environment Strategy is not only about protecting what is left, but about restoring what we have lost.

Our people

About 58,000 people live here (as of June 2025). Most of us live in the towns along the coast: Ōtaki, Te Horo, Waikanae, Paraparaumu, Raumati Beach, Raumati South and Paekākāriki. Residents and visitors to our district value the easy access to quality beaches our district provides.

We expect the district to keep growing. Current forecasts suggest between 17,000 and 25,000 more people will call Kāpiti home in thirty years' time. Those people will need homes, water, roads and places to go, and where and how we build for them is one of the biggest environmental decisions this district makes.

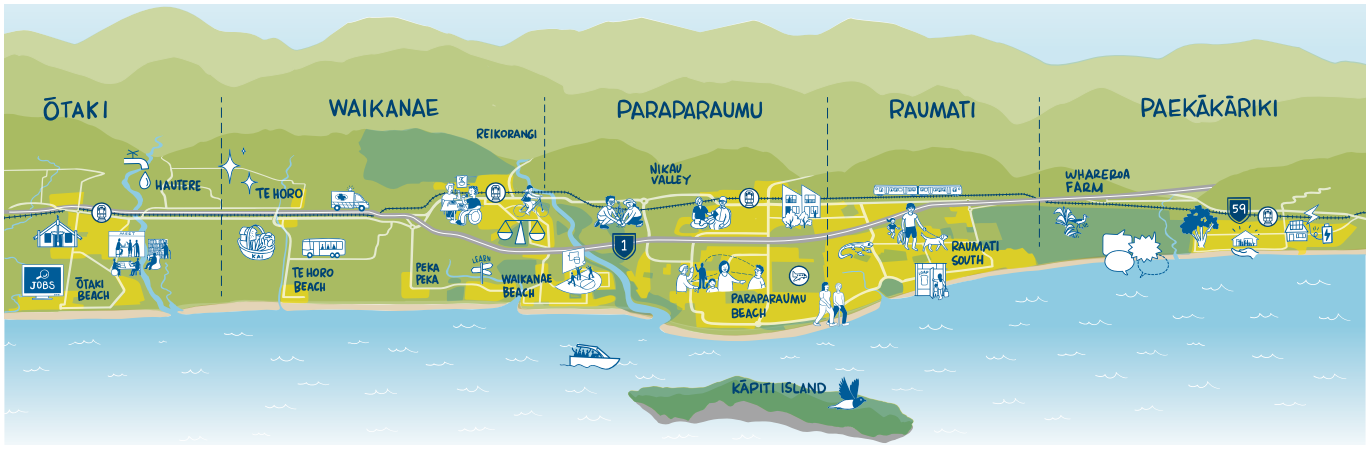


Figure 4: A map of the Kāpiti district. Our home.

Our challenges and opportunities

We know that our environment faces a range of challenges, however we also have significant strengths and opportunities to work with. We have identified the challenges (blue) and opportunities (green) that cut across all Focus Areas **(Figure 5)**. We also identify specific challenges under each Focus Area. Our proposed objectives seek to respond to these.

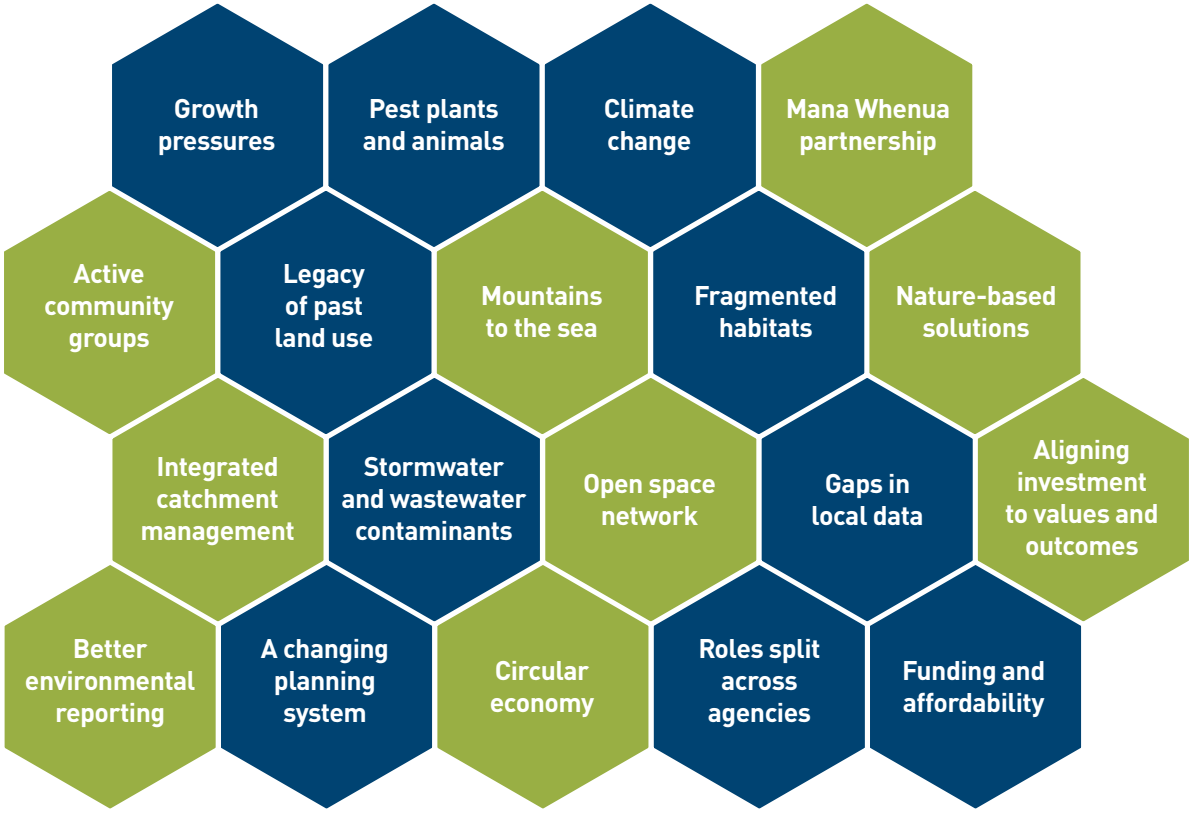


Figure 5: Our overarching challenges and opportunities.

What we want to achieve – Focus areas

We are already doing a lot of work that contributes to our aspirations for the environment. The Environment Strategy will highlight that work and the things we need to change. Ultimately, we want Kāpiti to be resilient and liveable for current and future generations.

For each focus area we set out why it matters, what you have told us, how we will get there, the challenges we are likely to face, and how we would know whether we are making progress.



Land use

Why this matters

How we use land affects the health of the water, air, plants and animals around us, what our communities feel like to live in, and the health of those who live here. Kāpiti is going to keep growing, so the question is where, how and at what cost to the things we value.

Through Vision Kāpiti, we heard your concerns about managing the effects of growth and development on our environment and local character. Where and how the district grows is set through our Growth Strategy (Te Tupu Pai) and the District Plan. The Environment Strategy will support what happens under these processes by setting out what a good environmental result from growth looks like, so that growing well and looking after our environment pull in the same direction.

Objectives – How we will get there

- **Smart growth planning**. Make sure new development supports healthy, connected communities and delivers the benefits of higher density living, without damaging our environment or the character of our towns.
- **Design out waste as we grow**. Reduce the waste created by building, and development, support local reuse and resource recovery and promote a circular economy in line with our **Regional Waste Management and Minimisation Plan**.
- **Make sustainable living easier**. Use land use decisions to support good public and active transport options for our community.
- **Protect valuable land and heritage**. Respect and balance the productive capacity of our land as we grow, and work with iwi to identify significant sites including waahi tapu, ensuring appropriate protections are in place.
- **Resilient living**. Steer development away from places at risk from natural hazards and protect the natural systems that give us protection during storms and floods.
- **Connected and accessible open spaces**. Make sure current and future residents have well-connected open space that meets their needs and keeps pace with growth.



What challenges are we likely to face

- Protecting highly productive land and minimising soil degradation and erosion.
- Growing sustainably and providing healthy urban environments.
- Minimising and managing waste.
- Responding to resource management system changes.

Measures – How we would know we are making progress

What we would measure	Direction we want
Total waste to landfill (tonnes/yr and per capita)	Decrease
Waste diversion rate (% diverted; recycling and organics tonnes)	Increase
Open space provided (ha total; ha per 1,000 residents)	Maintain or improve
Significant natural areas and waahi tapu identified	Increase
Development capacity vs projected demand (housing and business)	Maintain



Air quality

Why this matters

Air quality in Kāpiti is generally good, and our focus is on keeping it that way. That means watching for change, understanding our air quality better, and making sure the decisions we make about growth and travel do not erode what we have.

Through Vision Kāpiti you told us that you want a future where air quality is at least as good as it is now, with positive practices embedded to minimise air pollution.

Objectives – How we will get there

- **Increase tree canopy coverage in urban areas.** Establish a baseline for tree canopy across our towns and look at how canopy and public open space could support cleaner air and cooler streets.
- **Cleaner home heating.** Work with Greater Wellington and other agencies to advocate for and enable access to clean and efficient home heating and energy.
- **Know more about our own air.** We will work with Greater Wellington on local monitoring, so that we can better understand local conditions, track the impact of our actions and detect change.
- **Deliver our emissions reduction work.** Carry out the actions in our Emissions Reduction Plan, working toward our aspirational goal of a net zero Kāpiti by 2040.

What affects air quality?

This Focus Area is about air pollutants that directly impact the health of people and the environment. Air pollutants include tiny particulates (referred to as $PM_{2.5}$ and PM_{10}) and gas pollutants, such as carbon monoxide (CO), emitted from wood burners, vehicle exhausts and industrial processes.

Air pollutants are slightly different to greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO_2), which trap heat in the atmosphere and contribute to climate change. Many actions to reduce greenhouse gases, such as improving the fuel efficiency of vehicles, can also help to improve air quality by reducing the air pollutants coming from vehicle exhausts.



What challenges are we likely to face

- Reducing pollution from transport emissions.
- Barriers to accessing clean and efficient home heating solutions.
- Limited monitoring and data in the district.
- Maintaining good air quality as we grow.

Measures – How we would know we are making progress

What we would measure	Direction we want
Transport pollutants at monitored sites	Decrease
Share of homes using a heat pump and using a wood burner as the main heating type	Heat pumps – Increase Wood burners – Decrease
Air quality complaints (smoke, dust, odour) (number/yr)	Decrease
Urban tree canopy cover (%) district wide and by town	Increase



Biodiversity

Why this matters

Our native plants and animals are a big part of what makes Kāpiti special. They have suffered great losses over the years, and they take a long time to recover in number and health. Without active work, fragmented habitat, introduced predators and invasive weeds will keep threatening the survival of native species.

Through Vision Kāpiti you described a future with increased biodiversity, thriving and healthy natural environments, and protection for native plants and animals.

Objectives – How we will get there

- **Increase indigenous vegetation cover**. Prioritise native planting on Council land, balanced against other uses and long term maintenance costs.
- **Green our waterway margins while managing flood risk**. Support the establishment and maintenance of vegetation buffers along waterways to support habitat and water quality improvements.
- **Promote ecological corridors**. Work with our community and partners toward continuous corridors of forest and vegetation from the mountains to the sea.
- **Support community-led conservation to flourish**. Enable, support, and celebrate community-led conservation and restoration initiatives.
- **Restore and protect special habitats**. Support the protection, restoration and enhancement of dune, wetland, peatland and estuarine ecosystems.



What challenges are we likely to face

- Combatting pest plants and animals.
- Fragmented areas of native vegetation.
- Poor riparian vegetation along waterways.
- Prioritising actions against limited funding.
- Managing the impact of local activities on biodiversity.
- Preserving dune and estuarine ecosystems.

Measures – How we would know we are making progress

What we would measure	Direction we want
Native planting on Council land	Increase
Length of waterway margin with established vegetation buffer	Increase
Indigenous vegetation cover	Increase
Active community conservation groups	Maintain or increase
Extent and health of wetlands and peatlands	Maintain or improve
Pest animal control effort (traps in place and area under active control)	Increase



Water and ocean health

Why this matters

Water connects everything in our environment. Healthy rivers, streams, and coastal waters support native plants and animals, provide places for recreation, and are culturally significant. Our beautiful coastline and waterways are highly valued and are a key part of our local identity.

Through Vision Kāpiti you described a future with clean water, easy access to beaches and waterways, and resilience against erosion and flooding.

Objectives – How we will get there

- **Improve stormwater management**. Use integrated catchment management and planning across the stormwater network, with a focus on improving stormwater runoff at source, promoting low impact design[2] and minimising the adverse effects of stormwater runoff in the urban environment.
- **Invest in green infrastructure**. Promote increased use of nature-based solutions to protect and enhance water quality, such as incorporating the use of rain gardens and permeable surfaces in urban design.
- **Improve water quality and the health of aquatic life**. Restore and protect the health and mauri of our waterways by partnering with iwi and the community to build on the work of Kāpiti Whaitua to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai in our district.
- **Protect the accessibility and resilience of our coastal environment**. Support the health of dunes, beaches and estuaries, and encourage recreational use that respects these places.
- **Safe and healthy coastal waters**. Reduce the sediment and contaminants that inland waterways carry to the sea and support Greater Wellington, the Department of Conservation, Iwi and community groups to care for the coastal marine environment.

[2] Low Impact Design is an integrated set of principles to minimise the effects of development on the environment through stormwater management and land use planning techniques.



What challenges are we likely to face

- Coastal erosion and inundation.
- Variable river and stream quality.
- Declining health of freshwater species.
- Managing the impact of growth and development on our waterways.
- Understanding and responding to pollution from septic tanks, horticulture and agriculture.

Measures – How we would know we are making progress

What we would measure	Direction we want
Coastal swimming sites suitable for swimming through the summer season	Maintain or improve
Council's compliance with our resource consent conditions	Maintain
Health of aquatic life, including macroinvertebrate indices	Improve
Extent of dunes under active restoration	Increase
Freshwater quality attributes at monitored sites	Improve

Monitoring and reporting

A lot of environmental data is collected by Council and different agencies, but there are gaps. Some data is gathered at the regional level rather than for Kāpiti specifically, and it can be fragmented or infrequently updated. There are some things that we would like to know more about which we don't have consistent and reliable information for. These gaps in our current data set make it difficult to monitor the health of our environment in some areas and whether our actions are making a difference.

Improving our monitoring and reporting is a core focus for our Environment Strategy. We know we need to better understand our environment to realise the collective aspirations this strategy works towards. Alongside the Strategy, Council is developing an Environmental Reporting Dashboard to bring together what we know and what we want to measure into one place.

The Environment Direction of Travel contains some measures about the condition of our environment. It also contains measures that track levels of activity where we don't have good data about the health of that part of our environment. We've also expressed our proposed measures in directional terms (increase/decrease).

As we develop the full Strategy and progress the Action Plan, we will be looking to fill our current information gaps and improve our data maturity. This will involve establishing baselines and over time, will involve a better focus on condition measures with a view to setting targets to work toward. We will also consider measures that track the growth and success of partnerships connected with delivering on the Strategy.

Working together

Growing strong and effective partnerships is a core focus of this Strategy. The best environmental outcomes happen when we work together. This means building strong, respectful relationships between Government, business and the community – not just focusing on individual projects or goals.

The Environment Strategy is a community strategy based on the feedback about what is most important for people in our district. Realising our aspirations will take collective action from all of us within the broader local environmental ecosystem **(Figure 6)**.

We're committed to supporting and amplifying the valuable work already being done by community groups, iwi, and other organisations, rather than duplicating efforts or imposing top down solutions.

Our key partnerships

- **Iwi Partners** – Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai, and Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki are our most important partners in environmental stewardship. Our partnership, and Mana Whenua priorities are discussed more on page 4 of this document.
- **Community groups** – Over 20 community groups work on environmental restoration and protection in Kāpiti. These groups bring passion, local knowledge, and volunteer effort that makes a huge difference.
- **Government partners** – We work closely with Greater Wellington Regional Council, the Department of Conservation, and central government agencies to clarify roles and responsibilities, coordinate efforts and advocate for better policies.
- **Residents and businesses** – Every person and business in Kāpiti has a role to play in environmental stewardship. Small actions by many people add up to big results.

How we'll strengthen partnerships

- **Regular communication** – Maintaining contact with partners through meetings, information sharing, and informal check-ins.
- **Shared decision making** – Involving partners in planning and decision making processes, especially our iwi partners through Te Whakaminenga o Kapiti.
- **Resource sharing** – Sharing advice, expertise, and sometimes funding to help partners meet our shared outcomes and objectives.
- **Celebrating success** – Recognise and celebrate the great work being done by our partners and share success stories to inspire future action.

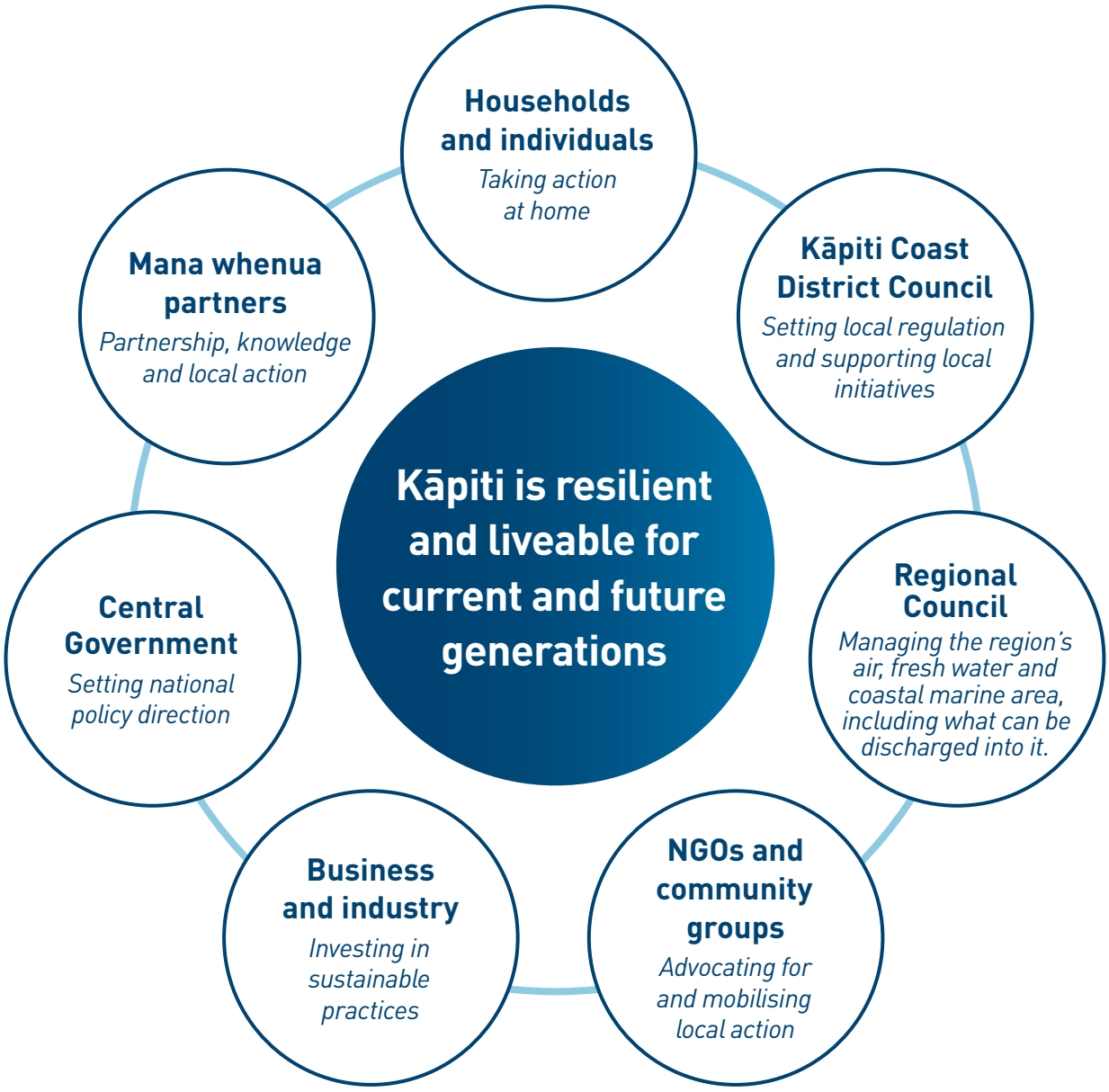


Figure 6: Working together for Kāpiti.

Appendix 1: Council's role in our environment

Much of what the Council does for the environment is required of us by law through a range of legislation and regulations. This is not a complete list, but it covers the main ones relevant to Council responsibilities in this context.

Legislation	What it requires of Council
Resource Management Act 1991	Prepare and administer the District Plan, process resource consents, monitor effects and enforce compliance. Council does this with reference to relevant national policy and standards made under the Act. These provide specific direction we apply locally across topics such as indigenous biodiversity, freshwater management and highly productive land.
Local Government Act 2002	Provides the framework for what councils do and how we make decisions, plan and consult.
Reserves Act 1977	Administer and manage reserves according to their classification. Requires preparation of Reserve Management Plans.
Biosecurity Act 1993	Manage biosecurity risks and support the Regional Pest Management Plan.
Waste Minimisation Act 2008	Promote waste minimisation, prepare a waste management and minimisation plan and provide waste services.
Litter Act 1979	Provide public bins, keep public places clean and enforce litter control.
Health Act 1956	Protect public health, including sanitary services, water and waste.
Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025 and Water Services Act 2021	Provide drinking water, wastewater and stormwater services and meet national regulatory and reporting requirements.
Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002	Plan for, respond to and recover from emergencies, including their environmental effects.

Appendix 2: What we're already doing

Land use	Air quality	Biodiversity	Water/Ocean health
Managing the use of land through our planning and consenting functions	Managing air pollution from land use	Planning for biodiversity	Managing effects on waterways
Planning for future growth	Planning for clean transport	Managing pests on Council land and road reserves	Providing quality water services
Looking after public spaces	Supporting cycleways, walkways and bridleways	Supporting environmental and ecological restoration	Monitoring water quality
Promoting waste management and waste minimisation in our community	Advocating for increased access to public transport	Publishing information about native and pest species to encourage community action	Integrated catchment planning
Supporting community resilience and preparedness for future emergencies		Supporting community and volunteer efforts	Managing beach access
Providing quality public infrastructure		Helping private landowners through guidance and our Biodiversity and Heritage Funds	Managing water demand
Protecting significant natural and cultural areas		Supporting landowners to improve planting along waterway margins (such as through our Riparian Fund)	Coastal protection
Monitoring compliance and environmental health			
Town Centre planning			

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