

Appendix 1.4 – Officers Recommended Amendments to Description of the district Chapter

Note the below provisions represent the Section 42A Report Writing Officer's recommended amendments to the provisions of the Proposed District Plan, in response to submissions (with underline used for new text and ~~strikethrough~~ for deleted text).

Description of the district

The Far North is the northernmost district in New Zealand and shares its southern boundary with Kaipara and Whangarei Districts. The remainder of the district is surrounded by sea. The district has eight harbours and has a coastline of 1,756 kilometres, however, if all islands and rocky outcrops are taken into account, the coastline becomes 2,194 kilometres.

The district has a land area of 669,251 hectares and an estimated residential population of 69,300. The population of the Far North is predicted to grow to 78,443 by 2043, which is an increase of over 21 percent from 2021.

The population of the Far North District is dispersed through the districts expansive rural and coastal areas. Population forecasts for the district suggest that growth will not occur evenly across the district. The most significant growth will occur in and around Kerikeri, followed to a lesser extent by the Mangonui, Coopers Beach and Cable Bay areas. Other areas, such as Kaikohe township, the Kohukohu and Hokianga North area, and Kawakawa and Moerewa are predicted to experience ongoing population decline over the next 20 years^[1].

The ethnic composition of the Far North District has some notable differences when compared to New Zealand as a whole. It has significantly more people who identify as Māori, and less who identify as belonging to European, Pacific peoples and Asian ethnic groups^[2]. In some small areas, like Moerewa and Kaikohe, the proportion is much higher at around 65%.

Growth of the district's urban areas conveys specific challenges in the context of the management of the local natural and physical resources. For example, the district's three main town centres Kaikohe, Kerikeri and Kaitaia are all located on or near highly productive land, with each community having water supply requirements that are integral to long term environmental, economic and resilience outcomes. Kerikeri has a large scale irrigation network and an established kiwifruit industry, while Kaitaia and surrounds have access to a large scale aquifer and the avocado industry has established on land that has not historically seen as being highly productive. Kaikohe has Land Use Classes (LUC) 2 to 3 which are supporting pastoral activities. Due to limited water resources, new investment in water supply has the potential to enable significant economic productive output. There are also different climates and subsequent growing conditions throughout the district due to its scale and land form. Many parts of the district have their own micro climate.

The district's natural environment and ecosystems supports a biodiversity that is rich, unique and under threat. It contains some of the most distinctive ecological areas in New Zealand, and these have an exceptional biological diversity, offering habitat to a wide range of indigenous fauna. Land use change, urban growth and effects of climate change represent significant challenges to the maintenance and enhancement of these resources.

The district has many important natural and historic heritage areas. This arises from its long history of Māori settlement, its experience as the first area of permanent European settlement in New Zealand, and the place where Te Tiriti o Waitangi / the Treaty of Waitangi was signed.

[1] Community Profile: <https://profile.idnz.co.nz/far-north>

[2] Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings 2013 and 2018*. Compiled and presented in profile.id

Significant Resource Management Issues

Ten significant resource management issues were identified for the district through consultation with tangata whenua, communities, stakeholders and consideration of higher order statutory documents. These key resource management issues have helped inform and shape the direction of the District Plan. These significant resource management issues are:

- **Issue 1 - Partnerships with tangata whenua** - Historically it has been difficult to build strong partnerships between Council and tangata whenua due to lack of resources, awareness and capacity within both parties. Through the legislative process (RMA), there is limited use of tikanga, matauranga māori, and māori values to express kaitiakitanga in the management of resources. Development of Māori freehold and Treaty Settlement land can be complex because of multiple ownership, no governance structure, financing and involvement of multiple government agencies. The District Plan is focussed on improving planning tools (zoning, overlays etc.) to enable tangata whenua to use land in a manner which exercises their kāwanatanga and rangatiratanga.

- **Issue 2 - Rural sustainability** – ~~The Rural Environment contains a number of~~ ~~There are~~ competing demands for a range of land use activities ~~in the Rural Environment~~. A permissive planning framework has led, in some areas, to incompatible land uses, land fragmentation and significant adverse effects on rural character, amenity and indigenous biodiversity. ~~In some cases,~~ highly productive land (~~which includes~~ including versatile soils) have been used in such a way that ~~compromises~~ the future viability of primary production activities, such as horticulture and agriculture has been compromised. ~~and These uses have also~~ inappropriately used existing infrastructure and services. The current Rural Production Zone has applied a single set of provisions to the majority of the District, ~~which This approach does~~ has not addressed the specific issues faced by in the different rural areas and their communities. It is ~~also~~ important that the District Plan reflects that rural settlements differ in their ability to access the infrastructure and services available in urban centres.”

- **Issue 3 - Hazard resilience and climate change** - Communities in the Far North District are vulnerable to a number of natural hazards. The problem is exacerbated by historic and cultural associations with areas of the landscape that are most vulnerable to the risks of existing natural hazards and climate change. For example, historically communities settled in flood plains and coastal areas. Inadequate identification of the risks, and lack of sufficient controls, has resulted in greater exposure to the effects of natural hazards and climate change. Existing infrastructure that is located in these vulnerable places is at risk of hazard events, which — in turn — impacts on the health, safety and resilience of communities.
- **Issue 4 - Urban sustainability** - A permissive approach to development has compromised urban character, amenity and the ability to provide infrastructure. A number of commercial and industrial activities are located in unserviced rural areas because of lower land costs and minimal regulation. In some cases this means existing infrastructure is used inefficiently, and it makes infrastructure planning and deployment difficult to forecast. Furthermore, some urban zoned land (commercial, mixed-use, industrial, and residential) — where development should occur — is not currently serviced by infrastructure. Council needs to make sure that the right activities are happening in the right places. The National Policy Statement on Urban Development Capacity (2020) requires Council to provide for future development capacity. As Council makes these forecasts, it needs to consider what communities can afford, and ensure those areas are resilient to natural hazards and climate change.
- **Issue 5 - Indigenous biodiversity** - Council has limited information on the location and quality of the Far North District's indigenous biodiversity, which means it is difficult for landowners to protect and manage this resource. Where indigenous biodiversity occurs on private land, there is tension between the public benefit from its protection and management, and the costs — both perceived and real — on the landowner. There are significant areas of indigenous biodiversity on Māori land. Whilst Council wants to protect indigenous biodiversity in these areas, it needs to make sure that cultural practices, such as Rongoā Māori, are able to continue.
- **Issue 6 - Affordable infrastructure** - The Far North District has a low population density with diverse social and economic communities. The district is subject to a range of natural hazards, such as flooding and coastal erosion, and must consider the impacts of climate change. This has resulted in parts of the district having limited access to efficient, resilient and affordable infrastructure and services and incompatible land uses. Council needs to make sure that the right activities are happening in the right places in order to use existing infrastructure efficiently and ensure its affordability now and into the future.
- **Issue 7 - Heritage management** - The Far North has a rich history. The stories told through this history are very much part of the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of the district's communities today. It is important that the district's heritage is recognised through the District Plan so that these stories, and the artefacts that give structure to them, are protected. A number of the district's historic buildings, objects, trees, archaeological sites, cultural heritage and sites of cultural significance to Māori are not adequately protected, or — in some cases — have not yet been formally identified. Consequently, there is a risk that sites are damaged or lost.
- **Issue 8 - Outstanding landscapes and features** - Council is required to protect the Far North's outstanding natural landscapes and features. There is a tension between this requirement and the need to provide landowners with the ability to develop. Council needs to protect outstanding natural landscapes and features from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. At the same time, it must enable Māori to benefit from their ancestral lands in ways that do not compromise features or landscapes that are deemed worthy of protection.
- **Issue 9 - Coastal management** - Council needs to preserve and protect the natural character of the coastal environment. It is also necessary to provide for appropriate access and development in the right places. The Council's coastal settlements put pressure on coastal resources and amenity*. Continuing to build in the coastal environment exacerbates the risk to people, property, and infrastructure, particularly from the effects of natural hazards and climate change. *amenity: the pleasantness or attractiveness of a place.
- **Issue 10 - Significant Natural Areas** - Our district is home to a range of unique landscapes, species and habitats, many of which are under threat. Under the Regional Policy Statement for Northland, Council is required to identify these habitats and to protect them.