



# Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Strategy



## Credits and alternative formats

This document is also available in the following formats:

- NZSL (New Zealand Sign Language)
- Easy read
- Large print
- Audio
- Te Reo Māori
- Electronic Braille - hard copy Braille will be made available upon request
- If you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech impaired or find it hard to talk, you can use the [New Zealand Relay Service](#)

This document was put together by the Councils of Te Tai Tokerau (Northland). When you see the word 'we' - it means the following Councils:

- Northland Regional Council (NRC)
- Te Kaunihera o Te Hiku o te Ika - Far North District Council (FNDC)
- Kaipara District Council (KDC)
- Whangarei District Council (WDC)



# Contents

What do we mean by accessible?	5
What do we mean by disability?	6
Accessibility affects everyone	6
Language	7
Intersectionality	8
Human rights model of disability	9
Why are we doing this?	10
What do councils do?	11
Regional Approach	12
Who was involved?	13
Our community	14
Key documents and strategic links	15
<b>Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Strategy Overview</b>	<b>16</b>
Key goals	19
Focus areas	19
Strategy review	25
Principles	26
Universal Design	28
Goals of Universal Design	29
Appendix	31

**Go straight  
to the plan**





# What do we mean by accessible?

We understand an accessible community to be where everyone:

- ✓ has realised rights,
- ♥ is treated with dignity and respect, and
- ↩ can access all places, activities, services and information easily and appropriately.

When we say people with access needs, we mean:

- Tamariki and whānau
- Older adults/kuia and kaumātua
- Disabled people
- People with health conditions
- People with language difficulties.





## What do we mean by disability?

This strategy uses the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#) definition for a person with a disability:

**Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.**

## Accessibility affects everyone

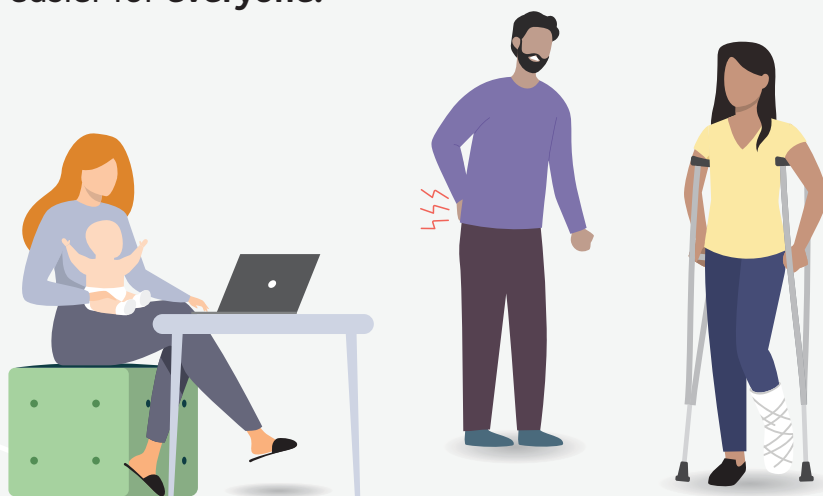
Everyone faces accessibility issues at some point in their lives. People may have **temporary, situational, or fluctuating** impairments.

For example, a **temporary** impairment might mean someone with a broken leg.

A **situational** impairment might be a new parent holding a baby and doing things with one arm.

Others may have health conditions that flare up or **fluctuate** in severity, making it hard to function as usual.

When we make things better for people with access needs, things are better and easier for **everyone**.



# Language

We recognise that there are individual preferences about how people label themselves. Some people prefer the person-first approach (people with disabilities) while others prefer an identity-first approach (disabled people).

The Deaf community consider themselves a distinct cultural group with their own language and not as disabled people.

The New Zealand Disability Strategy uses disabled people based on advice from the disability sector.

We will use the following terms:

- people with access needs
- disabled people/people with disabilities
- Deaf community
- tāngata whaikaha Māori/whānau hauā
- older adults/kaumātua and kuia.

## Definitions

**Whaikaha** means to have strength, to have ability, and to be enabled. It is a strength-based term and includes all disabilities.

**Tāngata whaikaha** means people who are determined to do well. This term is used to refer to Māori with disabilities.

**Whānau hauā** is an ‘umbrella’ term for Māori with disabilities and reflects Te ao Māori perspectives and collective orientation. This term states that the disabled individual is part of a wider whānau – disability and oranga are issues for the whānau and not just for the individual.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 [Finding our name | Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People](#)



Glass Ceiling Arts Collective present The Lion King in Whangārei in 2023  
Photo credit: Kate Little Photography

## Intersectionality

We acknowledge that identities and experiences can intersect to create different experiences of discrimination and privilege.

Identities could include race, sexuality, gender, age, and disability. Different combinations of identities would result in different experiences of privilege and discrimination. For example:

- A Māori disabled woman may have different experiences compared to a Pākehā disabled man
- Many Māori will also identify primarily as Māori first and disabled second.





## Human rights model of disability

This document follows the human rights model of disability.

This model is based on basic human rights principles.

It recognises that:

- Disability is a natural part of human diversity that must be respected and supported in all its forms
- People with disability have the same rights as everyone else in society
- Impairment must not be used as an excuse to deny or restrict people's rights.

The rights model comes from the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**. This document is an international human rights treaty. This treaty was developed by disabled people.

The aim is achieving equality for disabled people around the world. It explains what governments must do to uphold, promote, and protect the rights of disabled people.

The New Zealand Government signed the Convention at the United Nations on 30 March 2007, and ratified it on 26 September 2008.

For more information, visit the [Disability Advocacy Resource Unit website](https://www.daru.org.au/how-we-talk-about-disability-matters/introducing-the-human-rights-model-of-disability).<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.daru.org.au/how-we-talk-about-disability-matters/introducing-the-human-rights-model-of-disability>



## Why are we doing this?

**“Disabled people report that local government has a greater impact on their daily lives than central government.”<sup>1</sup>**

**Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) has the second highest rates of disability and impairments in New Zealand.<sup>2</sup>**

**Councils in Te Tai Tokerau want to make our region a better place to live, work and play for everyone.**

1 Office for Disability Issues November 2019

2 [CCS Disability Action 2021 “The state of wellbeing and equality for disabled people, their families and whānau” \(PDF\)](#)

# Te Tai Tokerau - Northland

## District Council Wards

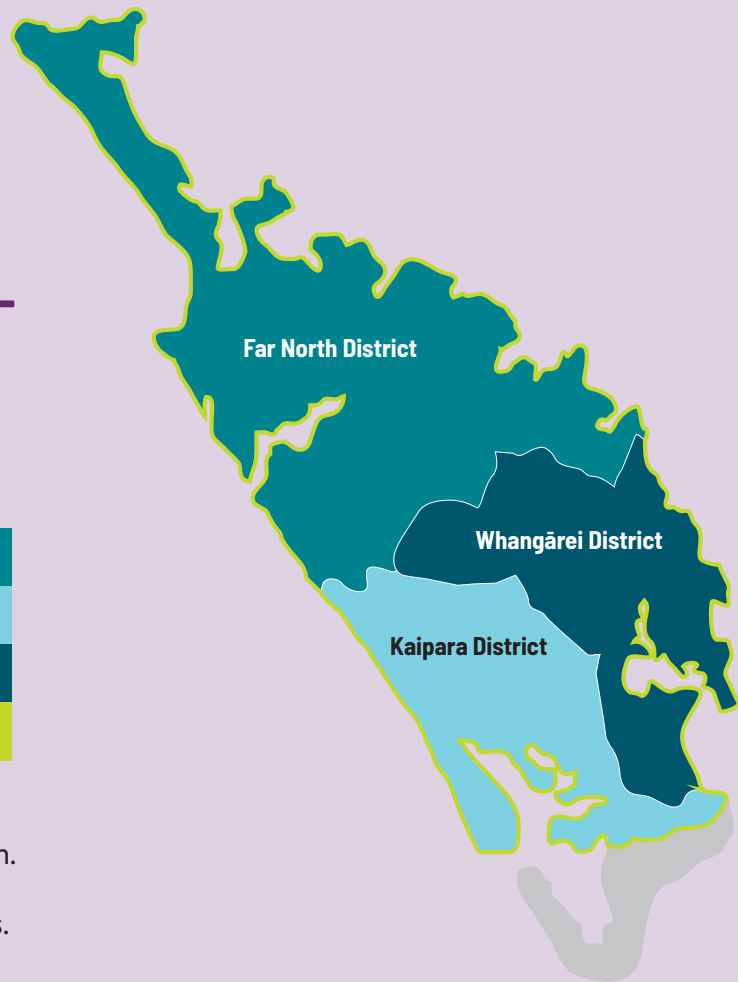
Far North District

Kaipara District

Whangārei District

Northland Regional Council

Northland Regional Council (NRC) covers the entire Northland region. Regional councils have different responsibilities to district councils.



## What do councils do?

In Te Tai Tokerau, we have three District Councils and one Regional Council.

Find out more out what councils do:

- [Northern Regional Council: What we do](#)
- [Whangarei District Council: Councils role and purpose](#)
- [Kaipara District Council: About Kaipara District](#)
- [Far North District Council: Your council](#)





## Regional Approach

The four councils of Te Tai Tokerau already work together on a number of programmes, initiatives, and projects. For example:

- [Northland Forward Together](#)
- [Climate Adaptation](#)
- [Northland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group](#)

This mahi is another example of where a cohesive regional approach allows Councils to share resources and learnings to work together better for our communities across boundaries.

This plan gives Te Tai Tokerau a shared vision, values, outcomes, and actions to improve accessibility and the experiences of people with access needs. It will talk about what we can do to make Te Tai Tokerau more:

- **Inclusive:** If something is inclusive, everyone can take part.
- **Accessible:** If something is accessible, everyone can use it.

The plan will also serve as a strategic framework for each individual council to develop their own implementation or action plans.

## Who was involved?

In 2020 we ran a survey (the Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Community Survey) to find out how accessible our districts were. The feedback showed that only 17% of those who responded thought their district was accessible. Based on this feedback it was decided that an accessibility plan was needed.

We asked the access needs community to tell us what an accessibility community would look like and what should be in the plan.

We did this in various ways, including facilitated workshops, online meetings, quickfire surveys, self-directed groups, and feedback booklets.

We also talked with:

- Whangarei District Council's Disability Advisory Group
- Whangarei District Council's Positive Ageing Advisory Group
- Far North District Councils Disability Action Group.

### **Regional Accessibility Strategy Working Group**

We brought together a working group made up of people with access needs and Council staff to work through all the information and feedback gathered.

Members of the group included whānau hauā and a Kaiārahi Tikanga Māori (Māori Cultural Advisor).

This group set the vision, values, focus areas and key outcomes, facilitated by Carolyn Watts (Quigley & Watts Ltd).

## Our community

- One in 4 people (24%) in New Zealand have a disability<sup>1</sup>
- Te Tai Tokerau has the second highest rate of disabilities at 29%<sup>2</sup>
- Māori have the highest rate of disability at 26%<sup>3</sup>
- 36% of Te Tai Tokerau's population is Māori, the second highest<sup>4</sup>
- There are higher-than-average rates for physical limitations (19%) and learning difficulties (7%) in Te Tai Tokerau
- In 2022, 21% of Te Tai Tokerau's population was aged 65 or more; that is projected to rise to 27% by 2033 (when the national figure will be only 21%)<sup>5</sup>
- Many people in Tai Tokerau experience hardship and we know that hardship is both a cause and consequence of disability.

### **Te Tai Tokerau's access needs community is growing**

As people age, they are more likely to experience disability or chronic illness.

There will be more people with hearing and vision impairments as over 50% of people with these disabilities are over 65 years. Mobility impairment is also an issue for this age group. Access to facilities and services will continue to be an important focus for our Councils.

---

1 [Disability Survey 2013](http://www.stats.govt.nz/disability-survey-2013): www.stats.govt.nz/disability-survey-2013

2 [Disability Survey 2013](http://www.stats.govt.nz/disability-survey-2013): www.stats.govt.nz/disability-survey-2013

3 [Disability Survey 2013](http://www.stats.govt.nz/disability-survey-2013): www.stats.govt.nz/disability-survey-2013

4 [Stats NZ: Māori population share projected to grow in all regions](http://www.stats.govt.nz/2018-census)  
www.stats.govt.nz/2018-census

5 [Te Whatu Ora Te Tai Tokerau](http://www.northlanddhd.org.nz/our-health-profile): www.northlanddhd.org.nz/our-health-profile



# Key documents and strategic links

In addition to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and Universal Design, this plan has been influenced by a range of approaches and documents, including:

- **World Health Organisation Age Friendly Cities**  
This focuses on enabling older adults to age safely in communities that foster healthy and active ageing.
- **Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034**  
This is the Government’s strategy for our ageing population which focuses on making the future better for New Zealanders as we age.
- **The New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026**  
This guides the work of the government on disability issues.
- **Whāia Te Ao Mārama**  
The Māori Disability Action Plan 2018-2022 has a culturally anchored approach to supporting Māori with disabilities.
- **Enabling Good Lives**  
This is a partnership between the disability sector and government agencies to ensure that disabled people have greater control over their lives.

## Legislation

Disability rights are addressed through human rights legislation in New Zealand.

Human rights in New Zealand are protected by the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 (NZ BORA) and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Under the Local Government Act, local authorities are responsible for improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of our communities.

# Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Strategy Overview



## Vision

### He Ara Whaikaha o Te Taitokerau

He wāhi maioha

He wāhi taurikura

He tūāpapa mō ngā  
tangata whaikaha  
katoa

### A Journey of Strength for Northland

This is a place of  
welcome

A place that is positive  
and thriving

A foundation for all  
people with access  
needs

## Goals

People with access needs:

- Are included and treated with respect
- Can easily participate in their communities with their whānau, hapū iwi, friends, and family with dignity
- Feel safe
- Can communicate with ease
- Can go where they want to go

## Outcomes

- Lived experience of disabled people is valued and guides accessibility planning and decision-making
- Public places and events are barrier-free
- People with access needs are prioritised in emergency, crisis, and disruption plans
- Communication and information are accessible
- Safe and accessible transport

## Values

### **Mana tangata**

We celebrate our diversity; we are equal, and everyone is valued

### **Manaakitanga**

An inclusive culture of caring about people, placing people first

### **Mahi tahi**

Working in partnership: community and council working towards one vision

### **Whanaungatanga**

Connection, belonging and an inclusive community.  
We are connected within our communities

### **Āhurutanga**

Creating a safe space for everyone to be themselves – physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually

## Focus Areas

- Transport in all forms
- Communication, information, and services
- Buildings and facilities
- Public spaces and activities (parks, playgrounds, beaches, events, recreation)
- Community safety and emergency response
- Community engagement and consultation
- Representation and decision-making

## Guiding Principles

- Universal Design
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities





## Key goals

We have taken the goals from the overview and expanded these into aims and actions.

These are bold goals with bold aims, and some are aspirational in nature. The actions are the more practical things councils can do to work towards the bold goals and aims. It is the actions that we will be measuring and reviewing over time as we achieve them.

## Focus areas

- **Transport in all forms** – public transport, roads, mobility parks, footpaths, and traffic management
- **Communication, information, and services** – customer services, social media and communication channels, websites, and staff interaction
- **Buildings and facilities** – council owned buildings (recreation centres, libraries etc.) building control, public toilets
- **Public spaces and activities** - parks, playgrounds, beaches, events, recreation, walks
- **Community safety and emergency response** – civil defence messaging, evacuation centres, safe spaces, community patrols
- **Community engagement and consultation** – accessible formats, technology, meeting spaces
- **Representation and decision-making** – elections, council meetings, annual plans, long term plans.

Housing and health services are not in the scope of this plan. These are complex localised issues addressed by individual councils and central government.

# Key Goal 1

## People with access needs can easily participate in their communities with their whānau, hapū, iwi, friends, and family

### Council aims:

- Everyone can safely access popular beaches
- Provide a range of accessible parks, playgrounds, reserves, and other recreation facilities
- Our events are accessible to all
- Our buildings are accessible for everyone.

### Actions:

- Provide accessibility training to internal planning, design and building control teams
- Ensure all new Council buildings use universal design principles and meet accessibility standards (at a minimum)
- Provide more accessible public toilets and ensure cleanliness. Strive to go beyond the minimum requirements
- Universal design principles are used to design parks, playgrounds, and reserves
- Review Council event planning guidelines (for example including quiet times for public events so people with sensory issues can attend)
- Review options to make popular beaches accessible
- Provide more accessible walking tracks where possible.

### Focus areas:

- Buildings and facilities
- Public spaces, and activities.

## Key Goal 2

### People with access needs can go where they want to go

#### Council aims:

- Our public transport is timely, safe, and accessible
- Safe, obvious and step free pedestrian routes.

#### Actions:

- Advocate for cohesive regional public transport
- Ensure new transport infrastructure is accessible
- Undertake education about mobility parking and shared paths
- Ensure public car parking, including mobility parking is appropriate and sufficient
- Ensure resourcing for enforcement of parking conditions
- Advocate for input from people with access needs into network infrastructure planning
- Review the condition and design of new and existing pathways and identify any gaps in the process
- Advocate to central government to allow more flexible funding decisions to bring old footpaths up to the new standards
- Educate utility providers on their obligations when undertaking groundworks, to ensure all reinstatements (including temporary) result in accessible and safe footpaths.

#### Focus areas:

- Transport and roading.



# Key Goal 3

## People with access needs can communicate with ease

### Council aims:

- Our communication and information is accessible
- We make it easier for people with access needs to communicate with council and access our services
- We use a wide range of communication methods, ensuring our communication and information is accessible.

### Actions:

- Develop accessible communication guidelines
- Understand the access needs within each of our communities
- Ensure everyone can access information independently
- Train internal designers and customer facing staff on accessibility
- Include accessibility training in all staff induction
- Audit website and social media for accessibility
- Develop shared image library showing real people with access needs in Northland context
- Make it easy to find out what accessible Council facilities and services are available
- Review how customer queries about accessibility issues are responded to and prioritised to improve customer satisfaction.

### Focus areas:

- Communication, information and customer services
- Community safety and emergency response
- Community engagement and consultation
- Representation and decision-making.

## Key Goal 4

### People with access needs feel safe

#### Council aims:

- Civil Defence emergency facilities (including marae and community facilities) are accessible
- Our emergency, crisis and disruption plans prioritise people with access needs
- Our infrastructure design is people-centric and prioritises safety and accessibility
- Social and physical connectivity is promoted via the development of platforms (both digital and other).

#### Actions:

- Work with the access needs community in collaboration with emergency management to develop emergency, crisis, and disruption plans
- Ensure people with access needs are involved in community response plans
- Advocate for people with access needs at the regional and national level (CD)
- Community Patrols, Māori Wardens, City Safe etc are trained to interact appropriately with people with access needs.

#### Focus areas:

- Community safety and emergency response
- Buildings and facilities
- Public spaces, and activities.

## Key Goal 5

### People with access needs are included and treated with respect

#### Council aims:

- We value the lived experience of disabled people and use it to guide accessibility planning and decision-making
- People with access needs can take part in all aspects of civic life
- We are working towards providing accessible workspaces.

#### Actions:

- Encourage people with access needs to apply for jobs at Council
- Ensure feedback platforms make it easy for people with access needs to provide input and advice to Council
- Ensure all public meetings are held in accessible facilities
- Review engagement processes for flexibility and inclusivity.

#### Focus areas:

- Community engagement and consultation
- Representation and decision-making.



## Strategy review

Councils will review progress toward achieving the actions and the goals of the Strategy on an annual basis.

Progress will be measured against the baseline of:

**17% of respondents thought that their district was doing a good job of accessibility.<sup>1</sup>**

Councils will seek public feedback via a joint three-yearly community survey. Individual councils will engage directly with local groups (e.g. Far North's Disability Action Group (DAG)) on a regular basis.

<sup>1</sup> 2020 Te Tai Tokerau Regional Accessibility Survey





## Principles

This plan will use three sets of principles to help guide our work:

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Universal Design.

### Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The founding document of New Zealand. It is an agreement between Māori and the Crown. The agreement has the following principles:

- Tino Rangatiratanga / Self-Determination
- Pātuitanga / Partnership
- Mana Taurite / Equity
- Whakamarumarutia / Active Protection
- Kōwhiringa / Options.

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention)

The Convention is an international treaty identifying the rights of disabled people. The eight guiding principles aim to ensure that disabled people enjoy the same human rights as everyone else and that they can take part fully in society by receiving the same opportunities as others. New Zealand signed this document in 2008.

- Participation and inclusion
- Non-discrimination–equality
- Accessibility
- Respect and dignity
- Autonomy
- Right to live in the community
- Freedom of expression and opinion
- Right to work
- Right to participate in political and public life
- Right to participate in cultural life.

**Preamble P** states that the convention has concerns about the troubles and discrimination faced by people with disabilities who also experience discrimination for being Indigenous (Māori).

# Universal Design

Universal Design is “a design process that enables and empowers a diverse population by improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation” (Steinfeld and Maisel, 2012).

## Equitable Use

The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

## Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

## Simple and Intuitive Use

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

## Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities.

## Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

## Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently, comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.

## Appropriate Size and Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is allotted for approach, reach and manipulation regardless of physical characteristics such as size or mobility.



# Goals of Universal Design

The ultimate goals of the principles are:



## Body Fit

Accommodating a wide range of body sizes and abilities



## Comfort

Keeping demands within desirable limits of body function and perception



## Awareness

Ensuring that critical information for use is easily perceived



## Understanding

Making methods of operation and use intuitive, clear, and unambiguous



## Wellness

Contributing to health promotion, avoidance of disease, and protection from hazards



## Social Integration

Treating all groups with dignity and respect



## Personalisation

Incorporating opportunities for choice and the expression of individual preferences



## Cultural Appropriateness

Respecting and reinforcing cultural values, and the social and environmental contexts of any design project.







Merry Christmas FROM

**Whangarei**  
District Council

Private Bag 10271, Te Maai, Whangārei 0143, New Zealand  
Forum North Building, Just Aeonus, Whangārei  
Ruakāka Service Centre, Takitai Place, Ruakāka

Phone: +64 9 430 4300  
Email: [mailroom@wdc.govt.nz](mailto:mailroom@wdc.govt.nz)  
Website: [www.wdc.govt.nz](http://www.wdc.govt.nz)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/WhangareiDC](https://www.facebook.com/WhangareiDC)

WHANGAREI Christmas Festival  
25 NOV to 24 DEC

Love it Here!



# Appendix

## Glossary

- **Accessibility** enables people to participate by removing barriers to participation.
- **Barrier** is something that makes it difficult or impossible for people to do something.
- **Disability** is something that happens when people with impairments face barriers in society that limit their movements, senses, or activities.
- **People with a disability** are people who have long term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (disabled people is a term also used).
- **Equality** means that everyone gets the same opportunities.
- **Impairment** is the reduction or loss of function and ability.
- **Universal design** is good design that works for everyone.

## Regional Accessibility Strategy Working Group members

We would like to acknowledge and thank our working group for providing their expertise, personal experiences and advice to help shape this strategy.

Carol Berghan

Claire Lewinski

Clara Aperahama-Kopa

Jonny Wilkinson

Jordan Slater

Kim Robinson

Linda Allan

Patti Poa.

# Contact Details

## Northland Regional Council

0800 002 004

Private Bag 9021 Te Mai, Whangārei 0143

## Far North District Council

0800 920 029

Private Bag 752, Kaikohe 0440

## Kaipara District Council

0800 727 059

Private Bag 1001 Dargaville 0340

## Whangarei District Council

0800 932 463

Private Bag 9023, Te Mai, Whangārei 0143