



WHICH WAY SHOULD TCDC GO?



Which way should TCDC go?

Change is coming to how local government works.

The current Government has said it wants to reduce the number of councils across New Zealand and wants councils to tell them which way we should go by 9 August 2026.

If we don't tell them, then they will tell us which way to go.

This gives us a very short timeframe to consider reorganising ourselves before decisions are potentially made for us.

For the Thames-Coromandel, there are options.

But before we consider these, we are listening to you.

Listening as much as we can in the short space of time before our proposal needs to be finalised.

Our first opportunity to hear from you was via the survey we sent out asking for your views on the things that you want to see in any local government reform process.

Our second opportunity to hear from you is via this booklet – where we are now asking you:

Which way should TCDC go?

Please read this booklet carefully

It tells you:

1. What the Government has told us
2. The timeline we are working to
3. What we have done so far
4. What you have told us so far
5. The options

And then it asks you for some feedback on those options.

How can I provide feedback?

You can provide feedback via the TCDC website or by handing in a form at our services centres and libraries, or by calling our Customer Services team on 07 868 0200.

Closing date is 15 July 2026.

Social media comments will also be considered and summarised, but cannot all be formally reported to Council.

The future shape of local government will ultimately be determined by central government.

“Our job is to make sure the voices of the people of Thames-Coromandel are captured and considered before any proposal is put forward to Government under Simplifying Local Government”

Mayor Peter Revell

1. What the Government has told us

The Government has said that they want councils to work together to decide new and larger structures for local government services and delivery.

They offered two pathways:

- 1. Head Start** – joint proposals (neighbouring councils working together and agreeing how they could achieve the new, larger structure) submitted by 9 August 2026
- 2. Back Stop** – The Government tells councils by early 2028 how they are to be restructured if they are not in a Head Start proposal

“Reorganisation proposals must provide for the establishment of new unitary authorities. The most straightforward approach is for all councils in a region to combine to form a single unitary authority.

We will also consider outline proposals for sub-regional unitary authorities and potential cross-boundary proposals, where:

- *existing territorial authorities are combined and regional council functions are transferred*
- *the proposed arrangements would result in fewer local authorities overall*
- *the proposed arrangements would deliver clearer accountability and effective delivery of key functions, including regional planning, transport, and catchment management.”*

Department of Internal Affairs/
Government instructions

Other points to note

Councils were told that “single council” proposals (eg a standalone TCDC Unitary Council) would not be considered viable and therefore are not acceptable as an option.

Councils may put in a proposal that includes other councils, without all the councils included having formally agreed to that proposal.

Criteria for assessment

The Government also supplied five criteria that would be used to judge whether a proposal is viable or not.

Deliverability

Proposals are realistic and demonstrate how new arrangements can be implemented in a timely manner.

Supports the new planning system

Shows clear support for implementing the new planning system – including progress on spatial and natural environment plan development – and avoids or minimises disruption to that work.

Simplifies local governance

Proposes more efficient regional governance arrangements, consolidating decision-making and improving alignment between a region’s councils.

Economies of scale

Supports regional strategic planning and effective delivery of key regional functions (such as transport and catchment management) and demonstrates responsible and affordable asset management, infrastructure investment and service delivery.

Maintains local voice

Demonstrates fair and effective representation for communities of interest and how decisions will be made at the local level, balancing urban and rural interests.

Glossary

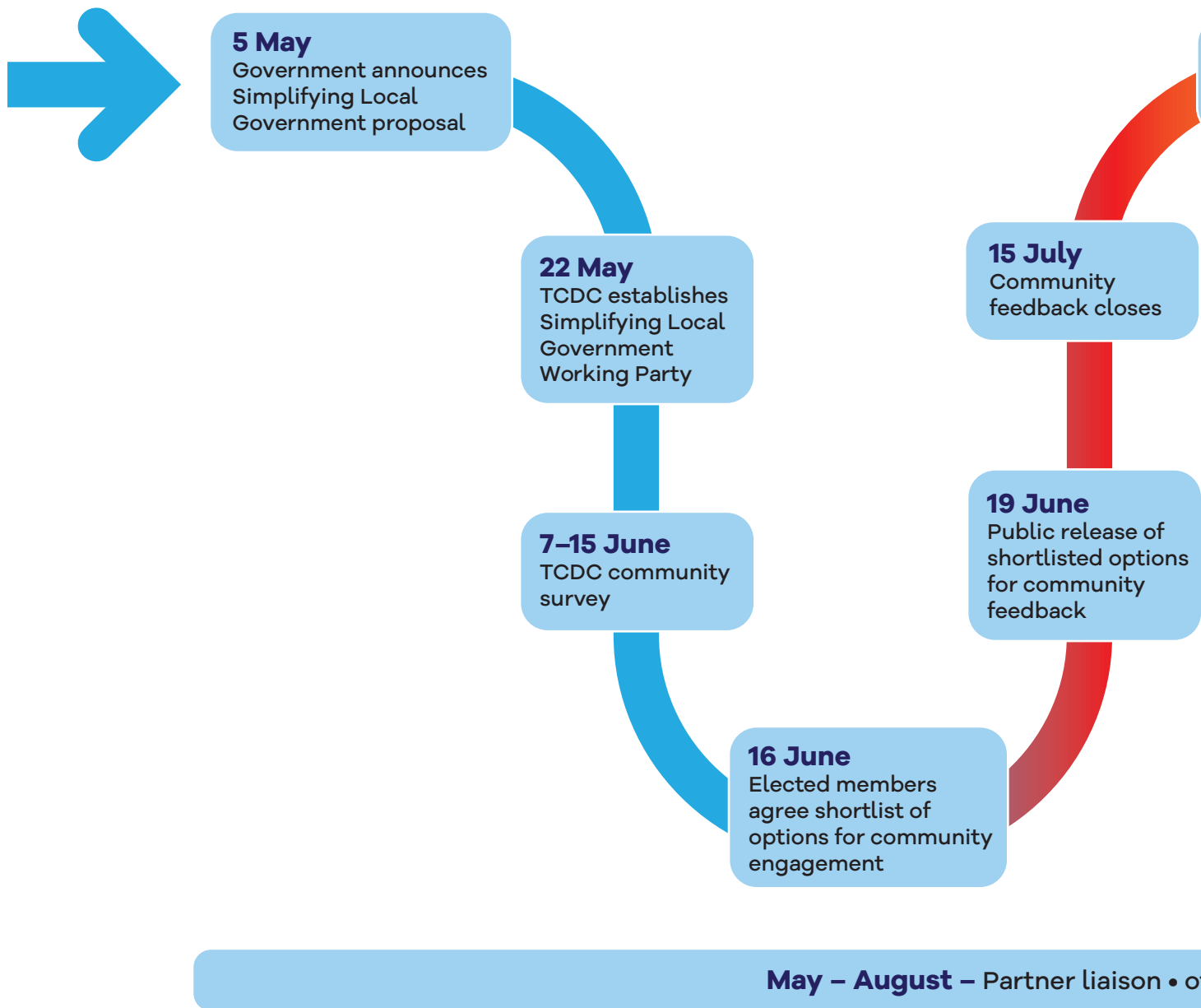
A **territorial authority** is a city or district council, responsible for local infrastructure and community services, such as roads, water supply, wastewater, stormwater, rubbish and recycling, libraries, parks and local regulatory functions (TCDC is a territorial authority)

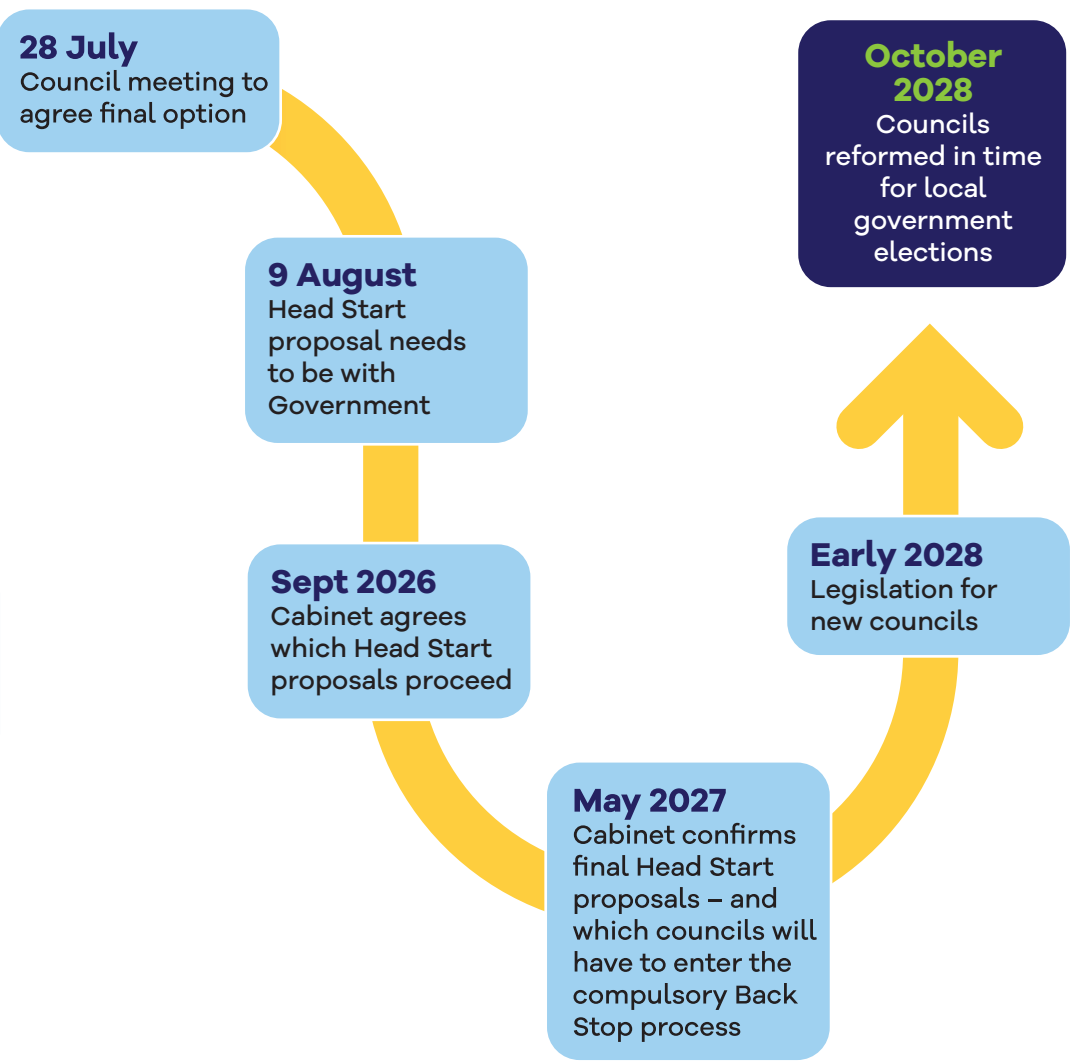
A **unitary authority** is a council that combines both local and regional functions within a single organisation

A **regional council** is a council responsible for environmental management and services that affect a whole region, such as flood protection, pest control, regional transport planning, air and water quality and regional parks

A **sub-region** is part of a regional council area ie not the whole region

2. The timeline we are working to





ther councils • proposals

3. What we have done so far

Following the Government's announcement in May, TCDC established a Simplifying Local Government Working Group (SLGWG) to work at pace on considering its approach.

The SLGWG first met on 28 May to determine what would be required to submit a proposal that would meet Government criteria and deadline for Head Start.

Since then (and continuing as long as needed) the SLGWG has been meeting with other councils, government officials and Ministers – ensuring that we are working together towards an agreeable and workable proposal.

The SLGWG started analysis on a long list of potential options for a reform proposal.

On 7 June, the SLGWG released a "sprint" survey to get public input to their thinking.

A weighting was given to the five government criteria as follows:

- Keeping local voices strong – 30%
- Better value for ratepayers – 25%
- Less bureaucracy and clearer decisions – 25%
- Better planning for the future – 10%
- Making change practical and achievable – 10%

This meant the long list could be assessed to determine a short list of viable options.

A long list of nine options was shortlisted to three at a workshop with all the elected members.

The full list of options considered can be viewed on the TCDC website.

The SLGWG is now asking for your views on the shortlisted options [go to page 10].

4. What you have told us so far

We received 527 responses to our Simplifying Local Government community survey.

The key points you raised:

- 70% named rates control as a priority for any new council and nearly 50% listed rates affordability as a top concern
- losing local representation (53%) and decisions being made further away (49%) were the two most-ticked concerns
- people want real simplification (not another layer of bureaucracy) and clearer, more transparent decisions
- people favour partnering with councils of similar size, character and coastal geography and want to avoid taking on

others' debt or being absorbed by a big inland or urban council

- 50% split between keeping council to core services and wanting council to have an active role in wellbeing, arts and the environment
- most who raised Māori involvement supported strong iwi relationships and upholding Treaty arrangements
- only small numbers were firmly for or against change – most focused on how to 'do reform well'

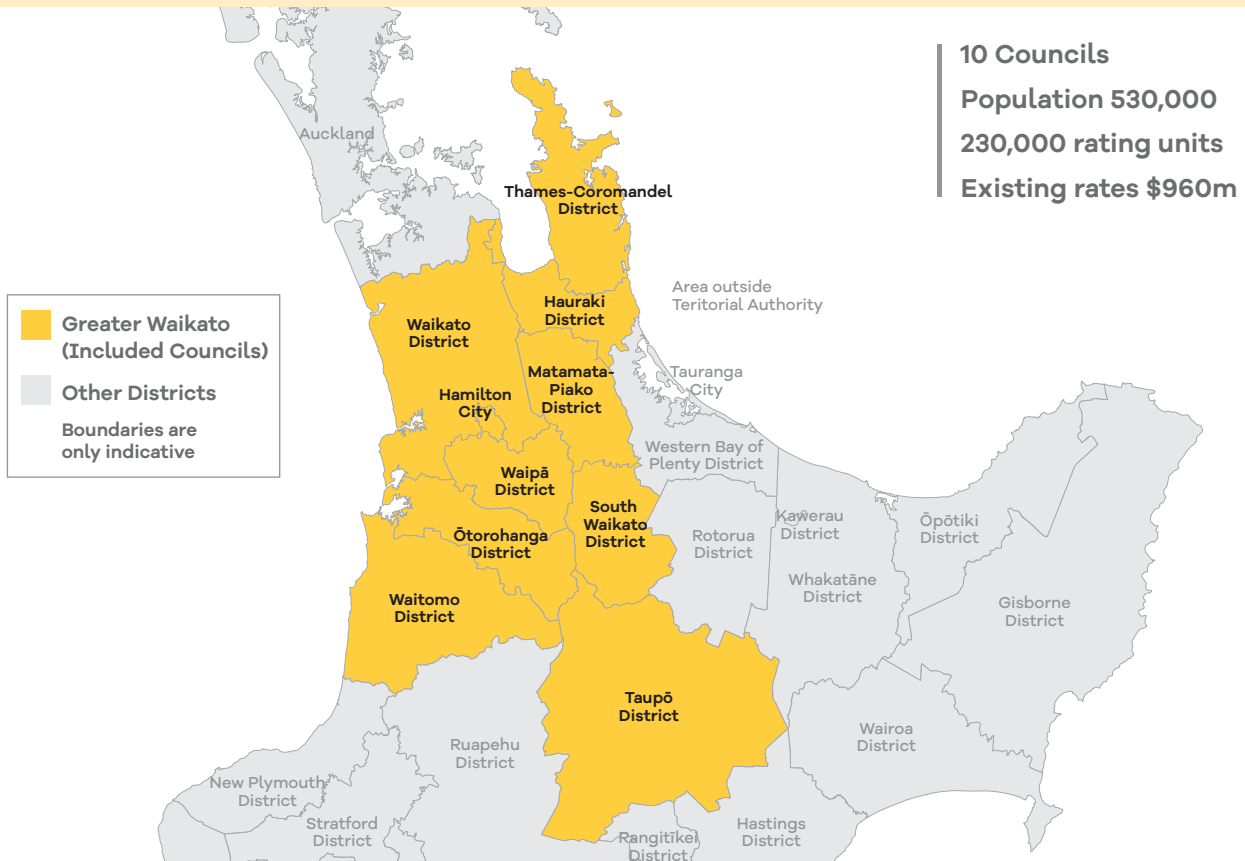
Your views have been included in the final weightings we gave the Government's criteria for proposals.

The full survey summary can be viewed on the TCDC website.

5. The options

OPTION 1 – Greater Waikato

This option would bring together all councils currently in the Waikato Regional Council area.



Potential opportunities

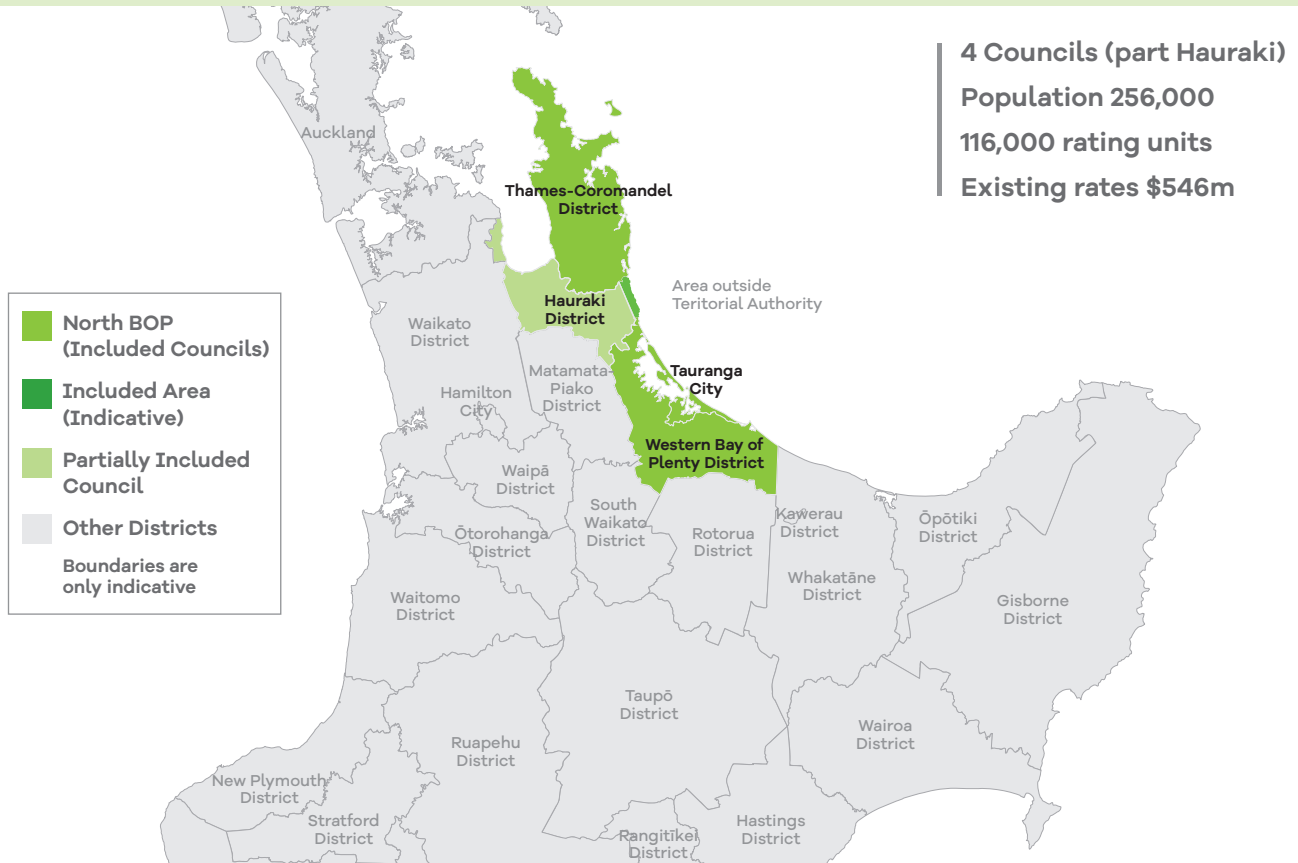
- This option aligns with the Government’s Head Start guidance that the simplest option is for all territorial authorities in a region form a single unitary authority, potentially simplifying decision-making
- Supports a stable and coordinated planning process across the whole region which makes planning more streamlined and efficient
- We already know that regional functions such as flood management, natural resources and pest/plant control are efficient at this scale
- Builds on operations, processes and service delivery that already exist

Potential challenges

- A large city will have different priorities and challenges to those of the provincial and rural councils and the balancing of the two may be difficult
- Ensuring local voices are heard – especially across such a large area
- The area covers many river catchments
- The Waikato region is complex and diverse and this option may be difficult to reach agreement on structure in time for the 2028 elections

OPTION 2 – North Bay of Plenty

This option brings together TCDC with Tauranga, Western Bay and part of Hauraki.



Potential opportunities

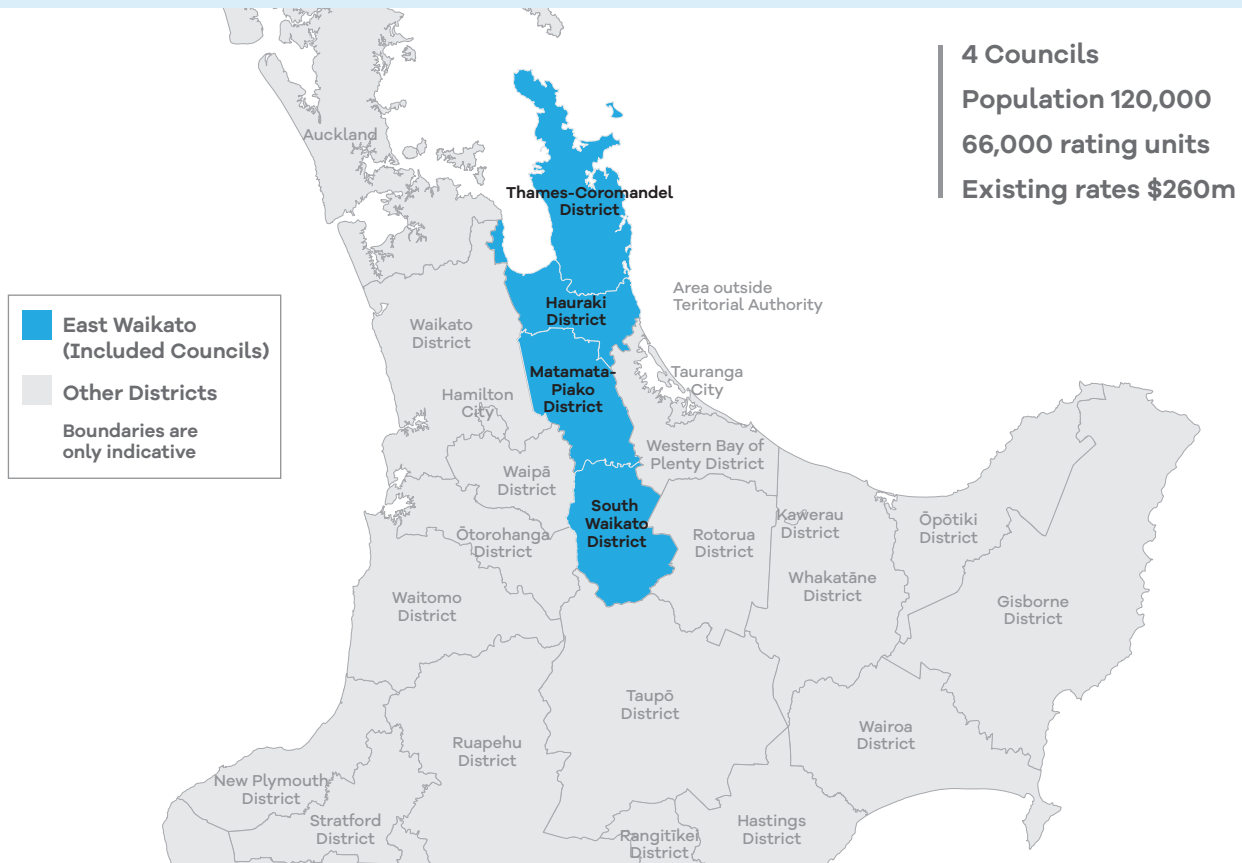
- Each council in this option brings scale and supports stronger regional functions and services
- These councils share similar coastal communities of interest and tourism and marine-based industry are important economic drivers
- Our Local Waters Done Well direction aligns with this grouping

Potential challenges

- This option does not align with existing regional council boundaries which results in potential complexity for delivering against the proposed new planning systems
- City priorities and challenges can be very different from those faced by provincial and rural communities
- There is some fragmentation of catchments meaning the management of some natural waterways would need to be shared across boundaries

OPTION 3 – East Waikato

This option brings together TCDC with Hauraki, Matamata-Piako and South Waikato.



Potential opportunities

- These councils have a history of working together
- This option aligns well with water catchments and the model can support regional spatial planning and coordination – even though it only covers part of the regional spatial plan area
- With almost 120,000 population it is sufficiently large to create efficiencies

Potential challenges

- We will need to ensure individual local communities are given a real voice
- Other governance arrangements would be required for regional functions such as roading and planning

Note: other councils may put in a proposal to Government that includes TCDC even if that is not our preferred option.

How can I provide feedback?

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The closing date is 15 July 2026.

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FEEDBACK FORM

1. Please rank the options from the list below:

1 is your preferred option

2 is your second preferred option

3 is your least preferred option

Option 1 – Greater Waikato

Option 2 – North BOP

Option 3 – East Waikato

The Council will receive all your feedback on the options and will consider this alongside any other analysis and/or input from discussions with other councils, before deciding which way TCDC should go.

2. Please tell us the main reason you selected your preferred option (in your own words):

3. Any other comments?

4. About you

What is your age?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Under 15 | <input type="radio"/> 36-40 | <input type="radio"/> 56-60 | <input type="radio"/> 76-80 |
| <input type="radio"/> 16-24 | <input type="radio"/> 41-45 | <input type="radio"/> 61-65 | <input type="radio"/> 81-85 |
| <input type="radio"/> 25-30 | <input type="radio"/> 46-50 | <input type="radio"/> 66-70 | <input type="radio"/> 86+ |
| <input type="radio"/> 31-35 | <input type="radio"/> 51-55 | <input type="radio"/> 71-75 | |

Do you live in Thames-Coromandel?

- Yes No

If yes, where do you live?

Name of town/community or Ward

If you don't live in Thames-Coromandel, where do you normally live?

Name of city/town/community

Do you own or rent a property in Thames-Coromandel District?

- Own Rent

If you neither live in Thames-Coromandel, nor own a property here, how often do you visit?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Weekly | <input type="radio"/> Once a year |
| <input type="radio"/> Monthly | <input type="radio"/> Every few years |
| <input type="radio"/> Every few months | <input type="radio"/> I never visit Thames-Coromandel |
| <input type="radio"/> A couple of times a year | |



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