



Kaipara District Environmental Scan 2026

An overview of the operating environment
of the Kaipara District Council

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1 Executive Summary

This Environmental Scan was compiled in February 2026. The purpose of this document is to provide a fact-based overview of the environment in which Kaipara District Council operates. This includes information on the physical environment, demographic trends, economy and state of the district's infrastructure. While the information presented in this document is intended to inform decision-making, this document does not make recommendations.

This report finds Kaipara is a geographically extensive district centred around the northern reaches of the Kaipara Harbour (the largest harbour in the southern hemisphere) and the Mangawhai Harbour. The district's geology is underlain by greywacke bedrocks which are tilted to the west. These are overlain by soft, highly weathered sedimentary rocks of the Northland allochthon, which tend to be fractured and broken up as a result of the allochthon process. In addition, much of the district's west coast and part of its east coast are comprised of consolidated sand dune deposits which have built up on the older sedimentary rocks. Consequently, the main geological hazards affecting the district are land instability (slumping and sliding) and consolidation settlement in soft ground under the load of new buildings. Kaipara, together with the wider Northland region, is considered among the most tectonically stable areas in the country, meaning there is a low risk of damaging earthquakes. Kaipara has some extensive areas of highly versatile soils, particularly around the Northern Wairoa River Delta, though most of the district is comprised of more marginal hill country.

Kaipara has a mild, humid, subtropical climate. Rainfall is typically plentiful all year round with sporadic very heavy falls however, droughts and floods are not uncommon. Climate change is anticipated to make Kaipara drier with droughts more common. Short duration, high intensity rainfall events are also projected to become more common. Sea level rise, the result of a warming climate, will have significant ramifications for the Kaipara District due to its proximity to the ocean, extensive tidal river network, and large expanses of low-lying land.

The district's fractured and highly weathered northland allochthon geology combined with its warm climate and high intensity rainfall result in higher risks of land instability and flooding. This poses a challenge for Council when attempting to maintain roads and infrastructure across the breadth of the district.

Kaipara is a rural district with its 2025 estimated resident population of 26,800 spread across a collection of small towns throughout the rolling hills of the district. The largest centre in the district is Mangawhai (estimated usually resident population of 7,200), located just north of the border with the Auckland Region. The second largest centre is Dargaville (estimated usually resident population of 5,170), which acts as a service centre for the western part of the district. Kaipara District's population has been growing strongly, particularly over the past decade, where the annual growth rate averaged 2.2%. This strong growth has primarily been focused around Mangawhai. Initially, Mangawhai's growth was driven by people building holiday homes or retiring with most migrants coming from Auckland. More recently, roading improvements and the advance of employment north



into Auckland's North Shore have seen more young families moving to Mangawhai with many now able to work from home part of the week, commuting to work on the North Shore only some days a week. This has seen the number of holiday homes in Mangawhai reduce, with more and more becoming permanently occupied. By contrast, other areas of Kaipara have seen more modest growth driven primarily by local employment opportunities. Dargaville and its surrounds have seen sustained population growth in response to growing local employment. The more rural parts of Kaipara have seen stable populations as advances in technology have seen a need for fewer workers in the primary sector, particularly dairy. These trends look set to continue with Kaipara continuing to experience steady growth over the coming decade (0.9% per annum). The slowdown in Kaipara's growth follows a national trend, with fewer job opportunities in the national economy reducing international net migration. Population ageing and a trend towards families having fewer children will also contribute to this slowdown in both Kaipara and New Zealand.

Most areas of Kaipara have medium to low wellbeing scores according to the New Zealand Index of Deprivation. Deprivation was generally worse in urban centres than in the rural areas between them with indicators for access to services scoring particularly poorly across all areas due to the rural nature of the district. Despite this, Kaipara's crime rate (194 criminal proceedings per 10,000 residents) is low compared to the Northland and national average (256 and 215 criminal proceedings per 10,000 residents respectively).

Kaipara's economy is firmly founded on its primary industries (23% of its GDP), particularly the dairy sector, supported by a strong manufacturing sector. Dairy farming was the largest segment of the agriculture industry, making up 11% of the district's total economy, with sheep, beef cattle, and grain farming comprising a further 4.4% of Kaipara's GDP, forestry and logging accounted for 3% and horticulture and fruit growing (which includes kumara) accounted for 2.3%. By comparison, the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry accounts for just 5% of the economy nationally. The contribution of the primary sector to Kaipara's economy is anticipated to increase further as the Te Waihekeora reservoir and Kaipara water distribution scheme is coming online with the ability to support an additional 1,100ha of horticultural development.

Manufacturing was Kaipara's second largest industry, comprising 11% of its economy. Kaipara's manufacturing sector is closely aligned with the primary sector with Silver Fern Farms Dargaville meat processing plant and Fonterra's Maungatūroto manufacturing facility processing primary sector products and other factories producing parts and equipment for farms and agribusinesses.

The construction industry (7.9% of Kaipara's GDP) was another major contributor to economic output in Kaipara, particularly in Mangawhai where population growth has been stronger than other areas of the district.

Northland and Kaipara's infrastructure is improving, though limitations and challenges remain. Northland (including Kaipara) has historically had poor connectivity (both internally and to the rest of New Zealand) via land transport (road and rail). This is largely a function of the difficult terrain between Auckland and Whangārei which increases the cost of constructing and maintaining roads and railways, often necessitating steep and winding

routes being chosen, which further contributes to low resilience. This has limited the extent to which Auckland and the Upper North Island's growth has spilled over into the North Auckland region, with a preference instead to locate in the better-connected South Auckland and Waikato regions. The present government's Roads of National Significance programme aims to change this by progressively constructing a motorway/expressway between Whangārei and Auckland. To date, the motorway has been extended as far north as Warkworth, with the Warkworth to Te Hana section under procurement and planning advancing for a bypass to the Brynderwyn Hills. As this road connection continues to improve, Kaipara can expect further population and employment growth, particularly in the eastern and central part of the district.

Kaipara's state highway connections are supported by an extensive network of local roads which are maintained by the Kaipara District Council. Of these, 70% or 1,098kms are unsealed and 30% or 477kms are sealed.

Northland's rail system has just received its most comprehensive upgrade in over half a century, following a prolonged period of neglect and under investment. The line between Fonterra's dairy factory at Kauri (just north of Whangārei) and Auckland is now open and upgraded to carry hi-cube shipping containers. However, the Dargaville Branch and the line from Kauri to the Far North remain closed. The key reason for rail's failings in Northland is that the network has no connection to Northland's port. Planning for a rail link to Northport is continuing, as is planning for reopening the line to the Far North.

Northland is served by a natural deep water port at Marsden Point (Northport) which has flexible facilities capable of handling large multi-purpose vessels. The port has ample vacant industrial zoned land to facilitate its expansion. Northport is currently expanding its berth capacity and aims to progressively increase its capacity as one of three strategic North Island ports, together with Auckland and Tauranga. For Kaipara, the continued development of the port both improves connectivity to international and domestic markets and increases employment opportunities for those residents who live within a reasonable commute.

Electricity supply in Kaipara is improving with projects to improve distribution and resilience of the Northpower network. In particular, Northpower are working to meet the demands of Mangawhai's growth by constructing an additional 33kV line to bolster supply to the town. Local electricity generation is also improving with additional solar generation having recently been constructed and construction of Mercury Energy's wind farm progressing.

Kaipara's telecommunications infrastructure has undergone considerable improvement with increasing mobile phone and broadband coverage and expansion of the ultra-fast broadband fibre network. In addition, the Hawaiki submarine cable with its Mangawhai landing station makes Mangawhai and Maungatūroto well positioned to attract future digital industries. Kaipara is now well connected via telecommunications.

Municipal water supplies and reticulated wastewater systems are provided to a limited number of Kaipara communities and there is pressure to connect more households and communities. In particular, Mangawhai, the district's largest centre, is currently



almost entirely dependent on private rainwater tanks for its water supply. Mangawhai's wastewater scheme is relatively new and can have its capacity progressively increased to cope with Mangawhai's growth into the future. Across the remainder of the district's water, wastewater and stormwater networks, ageing infrastructure will create the need for increased renewals over the next five to ten years.

Kaipara district has the second largest area in New Zealand protected by land drainage schemes after the Hauraki Plains. This includes the Dargaville central business district and Ruawai township as well as vast areas of productive farmland with highly versatile soils in the Ruawai, Aratapu, Hoanga and Parore areas. Much of this area is presently just above or just below mean sea level and there are concerns over the ability of these rural communities to fund the necessary upgrades to increase the resilience of these drainage systems.

Kaipara is generally under-supplied with social infrastructure, largely due to its small population base limiting its ability to support a full range of services. Health care services are particularly limited, as are opportunities for tertiary education.

2 Introduction

The Environmental Scan provides an overview of the Kaipara district; the land, its people, their economy and the infrastructure on which it relies. Its purpose is to both identify the environment as it exists at present and to identify emerging trends and potential drivers for change. As such, it provides an overview of the operating environment of the Kaipara District Council.

The Environmental Scan is structured around the New Zealand Treasury's four capitals; human, social, natural and financial/physical, and the four wellbeings that define the purpose of local government; social, economic, environmental, and cultural (section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002). In the Environmental Scan these are interpreted as the following sections:

3. The Kaipara – two oceans, two harbours (natural, environmental);
4. Demography – the people and communities of the Kaipara (human, social, cultural);
5. Economy – our livelihoods (economic); and
6. Infrastructure (financial/physical).

The Environmental Scan pulls together information from a variety of sources including Statistics New Zealand and Infometrics as well as an analysis of Council's internal records (e.g. resource consent data). While the information and analysis presented in this report is intended to support planning and decision-making functions of Council, it is not the role of this document to make recommendations or advise actions.

The Environmental Scan is a key document informing the development of Kaipara District Council's Long Term Plan and 30 year Infrastructure Strategy and the planning assumptions that underpin those documents. It also serves as a reference document for Council when developing other plans and strategies and is useful to inform elected members of the environment in which the Council operates. The Environmental Scan is also made available to the public on Council's website, both for their information and to provide an easy source of data that can be quoted in support of applications and submissions e.g. community groups and clubs applying for funding may want to support their application by explaining how their local population has grown.



3 The Kaipara – Two Oceans, Two Harbours

Mai Waipoua ki Pouto i Te Tai Hauāuru

Whakawhiti atu i te raki o te moana o Kaipara ki Oruawharo

Mai Oruawharo ki Mangawhai ki te rāwhiti

Mai Mangawhai ki Tangiteroria, whakahoki atu ki Waipoua

When introducing oneself or giving a pepeha, one often begins by describing the maunga (mountains), awa (rivers) and moana (harbours) that collectively comprise the land from which one comes. These features are the landmarks which define our place.

Kaipara's geology, topography, soils and climate offer both unique opportunities and constraints. These affect where settlements and infrastructure can be built and what crops can be grown.

3.1 Land around the water – our maunga, awa and moana

Kaipara is one of the few districts that stretches from the west coast to the east coast; from Ripiro Beach on the Tasman Sea to Mangawhai Heads on the Pacific Ocean. The district includes the land which wraps around two harbours, the Kaipara opening to the Tasman Sea and the Mangawhai Harbour opening to the Pacific Ocean.

The roughly triangular district stretches from a thinning of the North Auckland Peninsula south of Kaiwaka and Mangawhai in the southeast, around the foothills of the Brynderwyn Ranges and through the Northland hinterland to reach the Waipoua Forest in the northwest. From there the district extends down the west coast to the Kaipara Harbour entrance at Pouto. The district is bisected by the Northern Wairoa River and its tributaries, which flow into the northern end of the Kaipara Harbour. A map of the district is shown in Figure 1.

Kaipara Maunga

In the northern part of the district, the tupuna mountain of Maunganui holds a commanding presence at the head of Ripiro Beach. This small remnant of a once massive volcano still measures 459m above sea level and is a pillar for the Te Roroa people.

The highest peak in Kaipara and second highest in Northland is the tupuna mountain of Tutamoe at 770m above sea level. Tutamoe presides over much of the northern Kaipara District. Both Northland's east and west coasts can be seen from the summit which can be accessed via a walking track from Tararua Road.

The two rocky peaks of Maunga Tokatoka and Maungarahō preside over the southwestern Northern Wairoa area. These mountains are the exposed roots of former volcanoes and today form prominent local landmarks.

Tangihua, at 627m above sea level is the highest peak in the Tangihua Range. This dividing range between the east and west forms a prominent boundary between the Kaipara and Whangārei districts.



Figure 1: Map of the Kaipara district



Pukekaroro together with nearby Pukepohatu/Baldrock are the prominent peaks presiding over the southeast of the district. Pukekaroro is the Papa Maunga for Te Uri o Hau. Both Baldrock and Pukekaroro are of volcanic origin. Baldrock is composed of dacite lava, while Pukekaroro is mainly tuffs with thin lava flows.

Waipoua Forest

The Waipoua Forest straddles Kaipara's northern boundary. The Waipoua and adjoining forests of Mataraua and Waima, collectively comprise the largest remaining tract of the native forest that once covered most of Northland. These forests are managed as part of the Conservation Estate and are home to large stands of kauri trees, including Tane Mahuta, the largest known kauri tree alive today.

Tane Mahuta, the Waipoua Forest and nearby Trounson Kauri Park are among Northland's major tourist attractions and contribute greatly to attracting tourists to the region.

Ripiro Beach and the Pouto Peninsula

Most of the district's west coast is comprised of consolidated and active sand dunes running from Maunganui Bluff in the north to Pouto Point in the south. This long peninsula's eastern edge is bounded by the Kaihu Valley in the north and the Northern Wairoa River and Kaipara Harbour in the south. The peninsula's western edge is bounded by the Tasman Sea and lined by the extensive Ripiro Beach.

Ripiro Beach is a long sandy beach running almost the whole length of the Kaipara District's west coast. The beach serves as a road and is driveable over the whole of its 107km length. The beach is lined by sandy bluffs along its northern extent and active sand dunes along its southern extent. It also adjoins an extensive area of shifting sand at its southern end near Pouto.

This natural wilderness area is popular for surfing, fishing, off road driving, motorcross riding and forms part of the route of the Kaipara Missing Link Cycle Trail (one of the New Zealand Cycle Trail's Heartland Rides). These activities can damage these fragile sand dune environments if not undertaken responsibly.

There are also concerns about coastal erosion in some areas along the beach, particularly at Baylys.

Kai Iwi Lakes

The Pouto Peninsula is dotted with freshwater dune lakes along the whole of its length. The best known of these are the Kai Iwi Lakes, three of which, Kai Iwi, Taharoa and Waikare are located within the Taharoa Domain; a large recreation reserve administered by the Kaipara District Council in partnership with Te Roroa and Te Kuihi as Mana Whenua.

The Kai Iwi Lakes have exceptionally high water quality and are of high ecological significance. The Taharoa Domain is popular for camping, hiking, swimming, water skiing, kayaking, trout fishing and sailing. The domain incorporates two campgrounds which are managed by Kaipara District Council and its popularity appears to be growing with both campers and day visitors.

Northern Wairoa River

The Northern Wairoa River and its tributaries are a dominant feature of the northern and western Kaipara district. The Northern Wairoa River is the longest and largest river in Northland draining a catchment of 3,650km² which stretches across all three Northland districts. The river flows into the Kaipara Harbour and is tidal for about 100km of its lower length (Northland Regional Council [NRC], 2020). Strong tidal currents and the mixing of fresh and saltwater keep sediment suspended and result in the river having a muddy brown appearance for much of its lower reach.

The lower reaches of the Northern Wairoa River are surrounded by extensive flood plains, including the Ruawai, Hoanga and Kaihu Valley areas. These areas are protected by land drainage schemes and harbour some of the district's most fertile soils. Consequently, this area is responsible for production of almost the whole of New Zealand's kumara crop.

Flooding remains a concern in much of the Northern Wairoa catchment, especially as the effects of climate change begin to be realised.

Kaipara Harbour

The Kaipara Harbour is the largest enclosed harbour in the Southern Hemisphere and New Zealand's largest estuarine ecosystem (Kaipara Moana Remediation, 2023). The Kaipara Harbour is the receiving environment of a massive 640,000ha catchment that extends across the Auckland and Northland regions and includes almost the whole of the Kaipara district (see Figure 2) (Kaipara Moana Remediation, 2023).

Evidence exists that the Kaipara Harbour plays a significant fisheries role in the wider west coast North Island ecosystem as a nursery ground for key commercial and recreational species including snapper, grey mullet, flounder, white shark, hammerhead shark and rig (Kaipara Moana Remediation, 2023).

The Kaipara Harbour has suffered a prolonged period of degradation, primarily due to the release of sediment from the deforestation of its catchment (Kaipara Moana Remediation, 2023). This degradation continues into the present with inputs of sediment from streambank and hill country erosion continuing to be the primary pollutant (Kaipara Moana Remediation, 2023).

To address the ongoing environmental degradation of the Kaipara Harbour, the Kaipara Moana Remediation programme (KMR) has been established to work with landowners on projects to reduce sediment and nutrients from entering the harbour (Kaipara Moana Remediation, 2023).

KMR has an ambitious goal to halve sediment flows into the Kaipara Moana through a 10-year programme of action. Through this programme, KMR is able to offer assistance to landowners and community groups working to fence and plant waterways, or reduce erosion (Kaipara Moana Remediation, 2023).



Figure 2: Extent of the Kaipara Harbour catchment (Kaipara Moana Remediation, 2023)

Mangawhai Harbour

The Mangawhai Harbour opens to the Pacific Ocean on the Kaipara District's east coast and is protected from the open ocean by a large sand spit. The sand spit is the result of sand being pushed north across the harbour mouth by wave action (known as longshore drift). The longshore drift pushes the harbour entrance further north until it meets the hard rock of Mangawhai Heads and can go no further. The harbour entrance is kept open by the force of tidal flows in and out of the harbour as well as flows of fresh water from the harbour's catchment flowing into the sea.

The sand spit is a dynamic landform and can change in response to wave action, ocean and tidal currents. In the years leading up to 1991, a series of large storms (including Cyclone Bola in 1987) caused the Mangawhai Harbour entrance to block up with sand and a new entrance to form further down the sand spit. This new entrance would have gradually been forced northward by the long shore drift current to resume its usual position, however in the meantime it was proving hazardous for navigation. In response, a large number of committed locals gathered together, dug out the usual harbour entrance and stopped up the new entrance.

Following this event, the Mangawhai Harbour Restoration Society was formed to maintain the Mangawhai Harbour into the future. The Society's work has included establishing a nursery to grow native spinifex and pingao plants to stabilise the Mangawhai sand spit, dredging of the Mangawhai Harbour and removing mangroves. The Mangawhai Harbour Restoration Society continue to operate a dredge in the Mangawhai Harbour.

The Mangawhai Harbour is also a key habitat and foraging ground for the New Zealand fairy tern/tara iti which nests on the Mangawhai sand spit. With a population of around 45 individuals that includes approximately 12 breeding pairs, the New Zealand fairy tern is probably New Zealand's most endangered indigenous breeding bird (Department of Conservation, 2019).



3.2 Geology – bones of the landscape

Kaipara's geology is important to understand, because it speaks to the geotechnical properties, strength characteristics, and engineering properties of the rocks and soils (ENGE0, 2019). It is the foundation upon which our district is built.

The Kaipara district is characterised by rolling hills of some of the most diverse and complex geology in all of New Zealand (ENGE0, 2019). The basement rock (commonly called bedrock) of the Kaipara District is typically comprised of thin bedded, alternating fine grained sandstone and argillite (claystone/mudstone) with massive beds of laminated argillite and highly fractured Greywacke sandstone. These rocks are typically strong to very strong and closely fractured. These basement rocks are the oldest known rocks in the Kaipara district and most often are buried deep beneath younger rocks and soil. The whole of Northland's geology has been tilted down to the west by tectonic forces. This means these older rocks are typically only exposed along the east coast, northeast of Mangawhai Heads, where they form sheer craggy cliffs in coastal exposures, and spiny mountainous terrain inland (ENGE0, 2019). This tilting is also the reason why most rivers in Northland flow to the west instead of the east.

These bedrocks are overlain by rocks of the Northland Allochthon (ENGE0, 2019). The Northland Allochthon is the result of a rare geological phenomenon in which the down tilting of the bedrocks created a vast under sea basin into which younger sedimentary rocks gradually slid to lie over the top of the rocks within the basin. This occurred at a time when Northland was covered by the sea. The Northland Allochthon is a series of thrust sheets and broken up rock containing a range of sedimentary and igneous rocks. Stronger rocks of the Allochthon include the Mahurangi Limestone and Punakitere Sandstone and are most common in the east of the district (ENGE0, 2019).

Due to the nature of their past movement, the Northland Allochthon thrust sheets (or nappes) are faulted, folded and sheared resulting in a complex structure (ENGE0, 2019). They also tend to be deeply weathered. This results in rolling hills that are generally soft and vulnerable to slipping and instability. These hills are bisected by broad valleys and incised gullies, which are filled with young alluvial sediment eroded from the surrounding landscape and deposited by rivers. In particular, extensive river flats have developed around the lower reaches of the Northern Wairoa River (ENGE0, 2019).

Kaipara's complex geology is also bisected by past volcanic activity and plutonic rocks (plutonic rocks form when magma rises through the Earth's crust but hardens inside the earth rather than emerging at the surface as a volcano) (ENGE0, 2019). Remnants of these old volcanos and plutonic rocks exist throughout the district, including in the Kaihu, Waipoua, Tutamoe, Kaiwaka and Mangawhai areas. Between Tokatoka and Dargaville about 140 small basaltic, andesitic and dacitic intrusions extend through Northland Allochthon rocks. Maungaraho is a prominent example of these (ENGE0, 2019).

The most recent geological feature of the Kaipara District is the Pleistocene to Holocene-aged coastal sand deposits which comprise almost the whole of Kaipara's west coast area as well as much of the Mangawhai area (ENGE0, 2019). Holocene-aged, fixed dunes comprise loose and poorly consolidated sands with inter-dune lake and swamp deposits

of minor sand, mud and peat. These deposits are generally stabilised by vegetation growth. Pleistocene dune deposits typically comprise weakly cemented and uncemented sands with preserved interdune deposits, where buried organic material has formed lignite. These lignite layers are notably observed at Baylys Beach though they are present along the whole of Kaipara's west coast. The presence of titanomagnetite (an iron rich mineral) in the west coast sands makes these consolidated sand dunes susceptible to the development of iron pans. Mobile (or active) dune deposits comprise constantly moving sand dunes with sparse vegetation, particularly in the Pouto area (ENGE0, 2019).

There are no known active faults in the Kaipara District, and the Northland Volcanic Field is generally considered to be dormant (ENGE0, 2019). This means Northland and Kaipara have a low risk of volcanism and damaging earthquakes and is considered one of the most tectonically stable regions in the country.

The main geological hazards to consider in the Kaipara District are consolidation settlement in soft ground under the load of new buildings, land instability near steep land or Northland Allochthon rock units and liquefaction in young alluvial sand deposits (ENGE0, 2019). Of these, land slumping and sliding is particularly prevalent given Northland's susceptibility to high intensity rainfall events, the broken up nature of the Northland Allochthon rocks and the warm wet subtropical climate which accelerates the weathering of rock minerals into clays. All of these geological hazards can be adequately managed, however early recognition is key to understanding and developing an effective and efficient solution (ENGE0, 2019).

3.3 Soil – foundation of life

With such complex and varied geology, it naturally follows that the district has a diverse range of soil types and that soil type is highly localised. Kaipara's soils include sandy soils derived from weathered sand dunes, hill country soils derived from strongly weathered sedimentary or volcanic rocks, and alluvial and peat soils deposited on flood plains and river terraces. A significant limiting factor of Kaipara soils is drainage, with many of the most versatile soils having imperfect drainage, a problem not uncommon in Northland.

The most versatile soils in Kaipara are found on the flood plains around the Northern Wairoa River (Griffiths et al., 2003). These are predominantly clays and peaty clays dominated by Whakapara soils from alluvium derived from sedimentary rocks. While these can be poorly drained, they are well supplied with plant nutrients and are widely used for kumara growing. Better drained alluvial terraces and hill country flood plains also occur but have a narrow distribution and are generally not used for cropping (Griffiths et al., 2003).

In addition, about 51km² of Parore peaty sandy loam occurs in small valleys in the sand country (Griffiths et al., 2003). While these soils are generally very poorly drained with shallow rooting depth, they may provide good growing environments for a limited range of crops. Due to these soils being imperfectly drained and susceptible to flooding, careful site assessments are required when considering moisture-sensitive crops (Griffiths et al., 2003).

Most of the western Kaipara is comprised of sand country soils which occur all the way up the west coast, and for a significant distance inland; becoming older and more weathered



away from the coast (Griffiths et al., 2003). The sequence begins seaward with the very weakly developed and recent Pinaki series. The Red Hill series occurs inland from these and covers an area of 90km². The Red Hill series has just enough development to provide one of the better opportunities for land-use conversion to higher value crops (especially in some protected inter-dune basins), although subsoil acidity would need checking as it can be low. Tangitiki sandy soils are slightly older and show high variability over short distances, with some sites strongly podzolised ('egg cup podzols' where large kauri trees once grew). Podzols named Te Kōpuru occur furthest inland on the oldest dunes. These are uniformly poor in many attributes affecting the growth of deeper rooting and moisture-sensitive crops (Griffiths et al., 2003). All these sandy soils benefit from being free draining however this drainage can be impeded by the regular occurrence of iron pans. These free draining qualities can also make these soils more drought prone. While these sandy soils are best known for dominating Kaipara's west coast, similar sandy soils are also to be found around Mangawhai, with some rated as highly versatile (Harmsworth, 1996).

Kaipara also has some areas of volcanic soil where rolling slopes have developed on basalt volcanic geology and where terraces have formed from redeposited volcanic material (Griffiths et al., 2003; Harmsworth, 1996). These primarily occur in the Donnellys Crossing to Kaihu area, Tangihua Range and Tinopai Peninsula. These volcanic soils are naturally well supplied with plant nutrients, have good structure and offer good opportunities for crop production. While upper subsoils can be firm and plant rooting slightly restricted, the soils do not become firmer with increasing depth (Griffiths et al., 2003).

The majority of soils across the rest of the district are hill country soils which have weathered from a variety of sedimentary rock types (Harmsworth, 1996). These are to be found on the rolling hill country which typifies most of central Kaipara. The main parent materials are sandstones, mudstones, argillites (shale), and limestones, and in some areas deeply weathered volcanic rock may also be complexed or associated with the sedimentary rock types. Because of the complex and variable spatial pattern of rock types from which these soils have formed, soil type can vary considerably over short distances. Furthermore, many of the soils form complexes or spatially complex associations, having formed from a mix of parent rock types. Adding to the complexity, these soils range from weakly to strongly leached and weakly podzolised to podzolised (Harmsworth, 1996).

Yellow-brown earths are recorded extensively across this hill country landscape, including the Pūhoi, Waiotira, Omu, Omanaia, Purua, and Omaiko suites) (Harmsworth, 1996). Rendzinas and associated soils are also common, typically forming on limestone, calcareous argillite, or calcareous mudstone. The rendzinas and associated soil group comprises three main soil suites; being Arapohue, Maungatūroto, and Konoti (Harmsworth, 1996).

Some of these sedimentary soils can be valuable for agriculture where they occur on easy slopes (Griffiths et al., 2003). In particular, soils in the area east of the Kaihu River/Waihue Road area are typically Omu, Aponga and Mata series soils with potential plant rooting depth generally about 45-60cm (Griffiths et al., 2003). Soils in the hills east of Dargaville and Ruawai are typically Arapohue and Rockvale series soils formed from argillaceous limestone, and while both have heavy clayey subsoils, potential plant rooting depth is still

about 60–90cm in Rockvale soils but is shallow (25–45cm) in Arapohue soils. The Waitotira soils are another of the better hill country soils being moderately well drained and having few root restrictions above about 60cm depth. However, slope steepness on Waitotira soils generally precludes arable land uses and subsoil pH may need to be checked (Griffiths et al., 2003).

Figure 3 maps Kaipara's soils based on their New Zealand Land Resource Inventory (NZLRI) Land Use Capability (LUC) score. The LUC considers both soil type and slope to identify how versatile an area of land is. Class 1 land is land with virtually no limitations for arable use and suitable for cultivated crops and most other uses. At the other end of the scale, class 8 land is land with very severe to extreme limitations or hazards that make it unsuitable for cropping, pasture or forestry. There is no class 1 land in Kaipara but there are extensive areas of class 2 land as well as class 3 and 4 land. The reader should note that the LUC scale is focused on arable use. It therefore overlooks that the sandy soils in the west of the district (classified as 6 and 7) are favoured for some uses such as avocado growing.

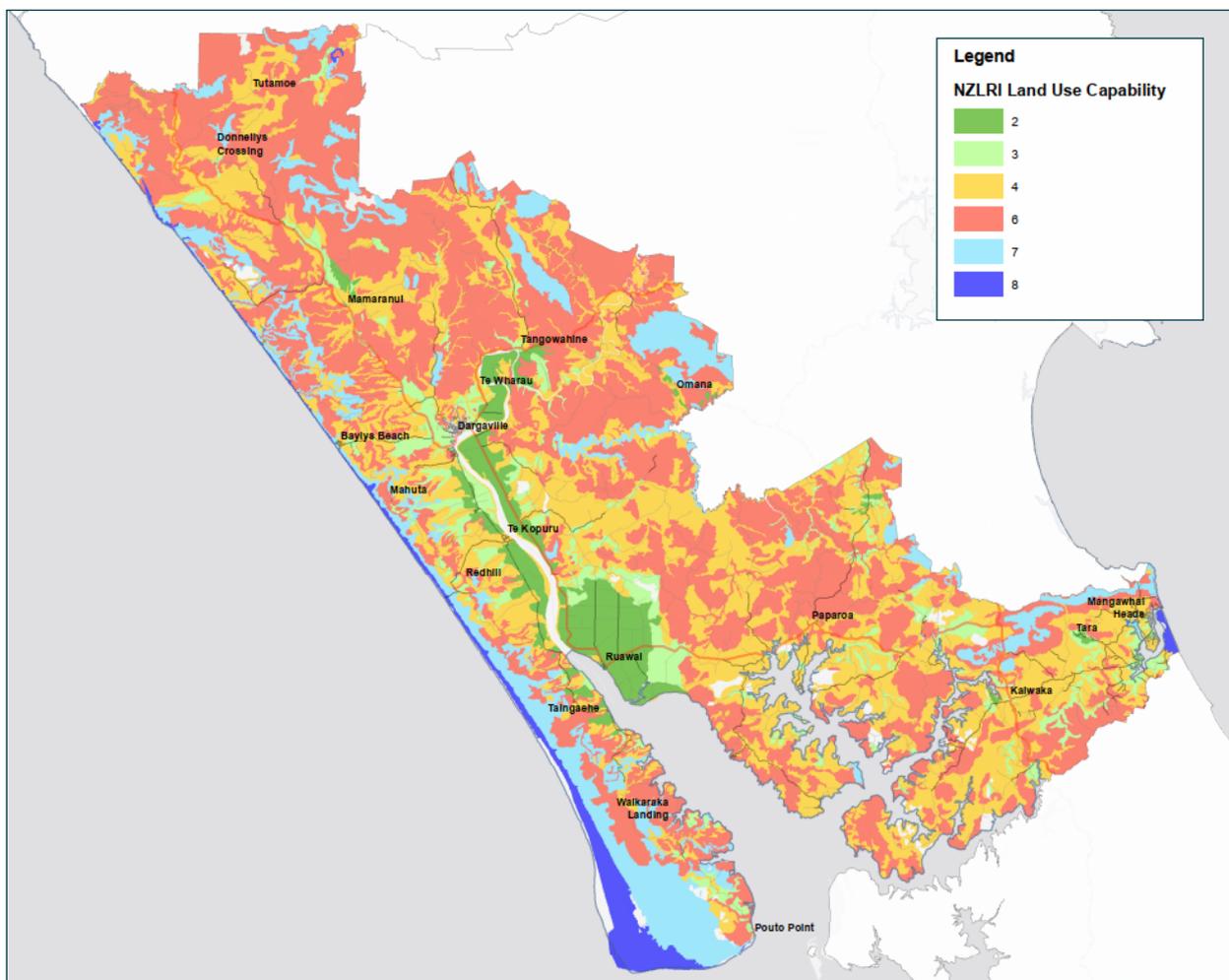


Figure 3: Land use capability in the Kaipara District (NRC, 2016)

Figure 4 maps Kaipara's highly versatile soils as identified in the Northland Regional Policy Statement. In addition to showing the LUC class 2 and 3 land, it also identifies the specific LUC units for Kaipara's most versatile soils.

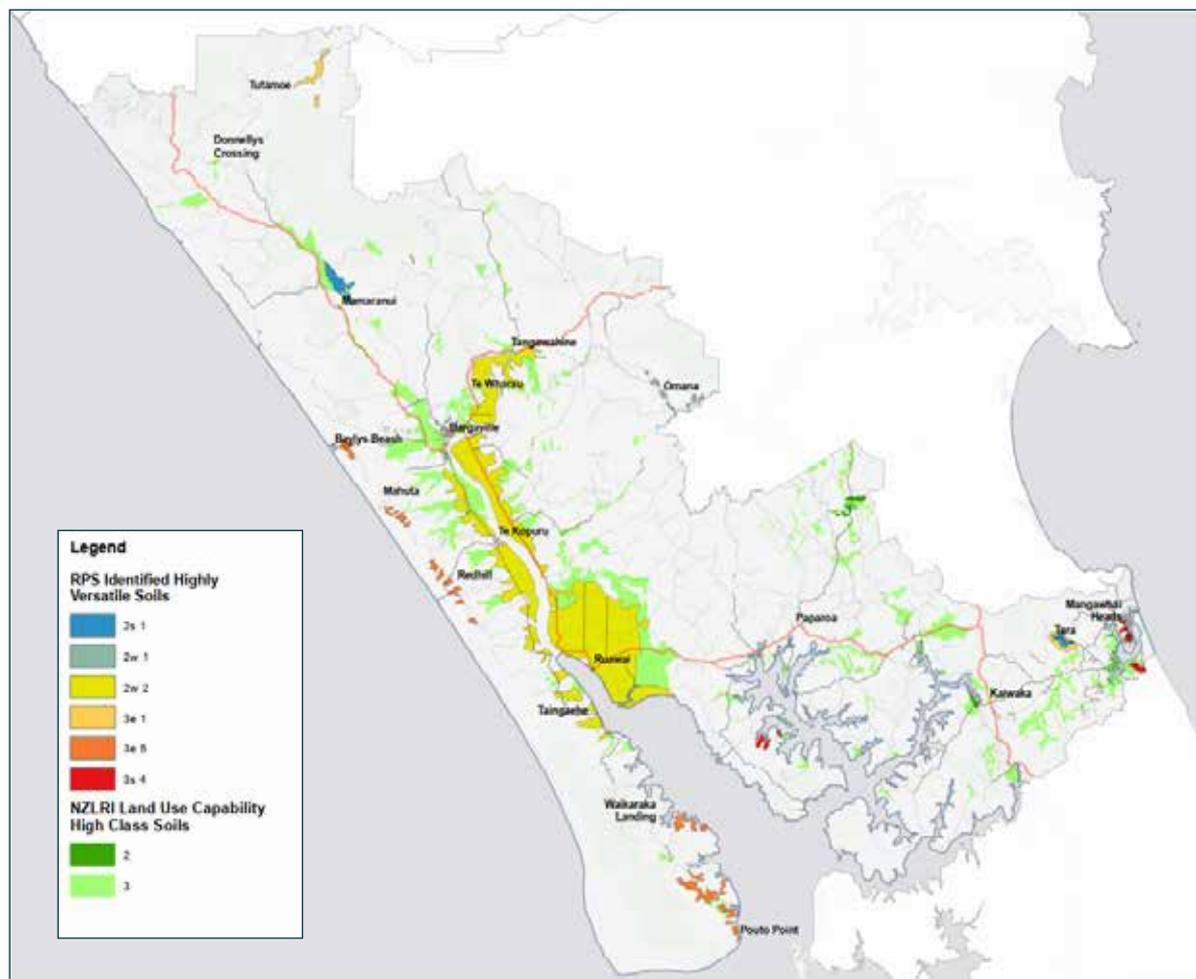


Figure 4: Kaipara’s highly versatile soils as identified in the Northland Regional Policy Statement (NRC 2016)

3.4 Weather and climate

Northland, with its northern location, low elevation and close proximity to the sea is characterised by a mild, humid and relatively windy climate (National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research [NIWA], 2014). Summers are warm and tend to be humid, while winters are mild, with many parts of the region having only a few light frosts each year. Rainfall is typically plentiful all year round with sporadic very heavy falls. However dry spells do occur, especially during summer and autumn. Most parts of Northland receive about 2,000 hours of sunshine per year. It can be very windy in exposed areas and occasionally Northland experiences gales (NIWA, 2014).

Mean annual temperatures in Northland are typically between 14°C and 14°C, with a mean annual temperature range (difference between summer and winter) averaging just 8.1°C (NIWA, 2014). The mean annual temperature for the region north of Auckland City is the highest for any part of New Zealand (NIWA, 2014). Figure 5 below shows the median annual average temperature as it varies across Northland.

The airflow over Northland is predominantly from the southwest (NIWA, 2014). This is particularly so in winter and spring, however in summer the proportion of winds from the easterly quarter, especially in eastern districts, about equals that from the southwest (NIWA, 2014).

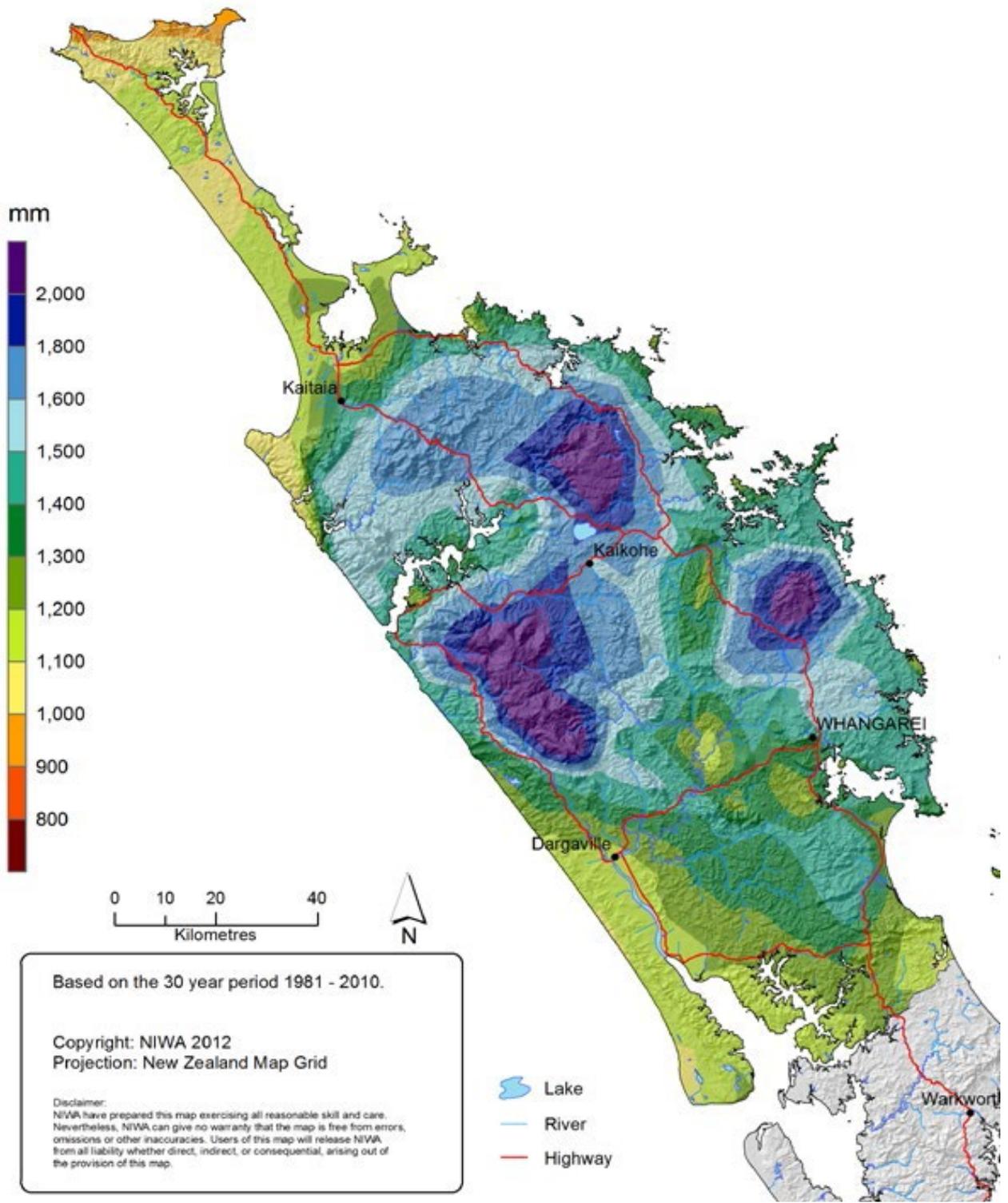


Figure 6: Northland median annual total rainfall 1981-2010 (NIWA, 2014)

Table 1 lists monthly rainfall norms and percentages of annual totals for the period 1981/2010 for selected weather stations. This table clearly shows that rainfall is greater during the winter, June to August, period (NIWA, 2014).

Table 1: Northland's monthly rainfall norms and percentages of annual totals for the period 1981/2010 shown as a) monthly/annual rainfall norms (mm) and b) percentage of annual total for each month (%) (NIWA, 2014).

Location		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Ann
Cape Reinga Aws	a	58	65	56	109	96	103	128	95	85	61	57	76	988
	b	6	7	6	11	10	10	13	10	9	6	6	8	
Kaitaia Observatory	a	85	93	81	96	135	151	169	144	128	99	87	100	1367
	b	6	7	6	7	10	11	12	11	9	7	6	7	
Kaitaia Aero Ews	a	69	121	86	119	138	125	136	104	93	93	73	99	1253
	b	5	10	7	9	11	10	11	8	7	7	6	8	
Kaeo Northland	a	88	102	120	140	144	169	200	170	148	113	102	100	1596
	b	6	6	8	9	9	11	12	11	9	7	6	6	
Rawene 2	a	78	72	89	98	128	145	164	142	118	91	83	91	1299
	b	6	6	7	8	10	11	13	11	9	7	6	7	
Opononi	a	86	65	93	94	124	144	133	116	105	93	92	88	1234
	b	7	5	8	8	10	12	11	9	8	8	7	7	
Kaikohe Aws	a	110	106	109	140	139	152	188	159	124	100	96	109	1532
	b	7	7	7	9	9	10	12	10	8	6	6	7	
Kerikeri Airport	a	122	117	138	145	154	185	205	182	162	127	114	123	1775
	b	7	7	8	8	9	10	12	10	9	7	6	7	
Russell	a	91	87	116	117	130	144	172	146	121	97	89	90	1400
	b	7	6	8	8	9	10	12	10	9	7	6	6	
Waipoua Visitor Centre	a	89	82	103	97	146	177	166	153	132	110	93	94	1443
	b	6	6	7	7	10	12	11	11	9	8	6	7	
Whangārei Airport	a	78	98	117	103	110	132	169	127	110	84	76	97	1300
	b	6	8	9	8	8	10	13	10	8	6	6	7	
Dargaville 2	a	64	69	102	107	97	121	141	109	109	82	63	74	1137
	b	6	6	9	9	9	11	12	10	10	7	6	7	

Figure 7 shows region-wide variability in days of soil moisture deficit per year (days when there is not enough soil moisture to sustain plant growth without irrigation) for the period 1981/2010. The figure shows that, in an average year, there is between 50 and 70 days of soil moisture deficit for most areas of the Kaipara (NIWA, 2014). The area around Mangawhai appears to be particularly dry. It should be noted however, that this model does not take soil type into account. Free draining sandy soils such as those in the western Kaipara will therefore likely have more days of soil moisture deficit than indicated by this figure.

Northland Median Annual Days of Soil Moisture Deficit

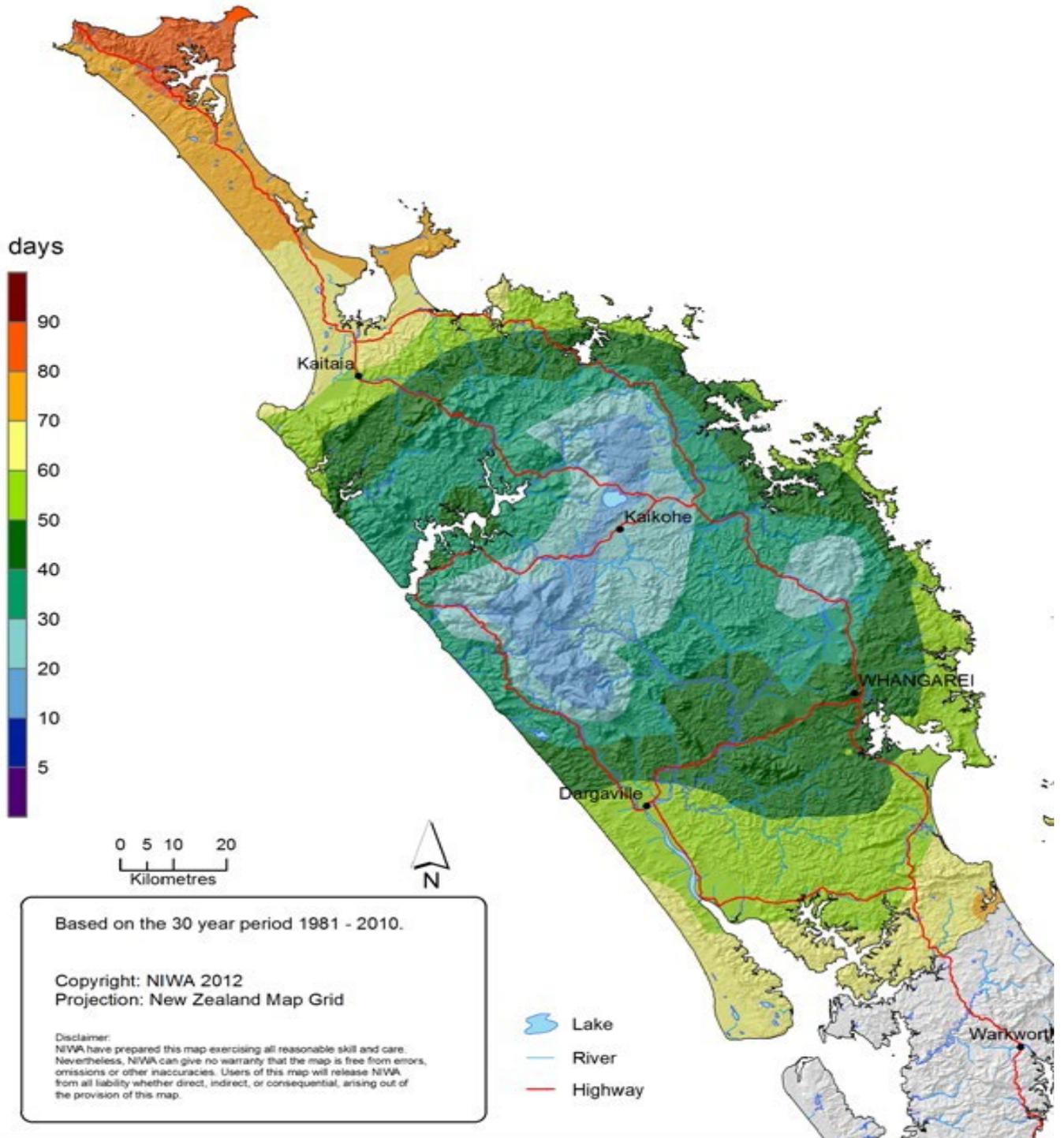


Figure 7: Northland median annual days of soil moisture deficit (NIWA, 2014).

In addition to varying throughout the year, rainfall can also vary considerably from year to year with the risk of both floods and droughts. Rainfall can also be highly localised, particularly with respect to thunderstorms and heavy downpours. Extreme weather events, such as droughts and storms do occur and can endanger essential services and the prosperity of Northland's primary industries. In the recent past, Kaipara experienced droughts in 2010, 2012/13, 2014 and 2019/20 (Ministry for Primary Industries [MPI], 2013) and major floods in February, March and July 2007, April 2008, January 2011, March 2012, July 2014, August 2016, August 2017, July 2020 and February 2023. Both the lack and abundance of rain can therefore pose significant problems for council infrastructure with heavy rain causing slips and flooding and droughts causing water restrictions.

On average at least one ex-tropical cyclone passes within 550km of New Zealand (NZ) each year. Tropical cyclone (TC) season is November to April with late summer through early autumn considered to be the peak of the tropical cyclone season. If an ex-TC tracks close to NZ, there is a near equal probability of it tracking to the east or west of the North Island. An ex-TC entering the NZ region could produce significant rainfall, severe winds, hazardous marine conditions and coastal damage.

However, despite these occasional extremes, Kaipara enjoys a pleasant subtropical climate overall with reasonably consistent warm temperatures and plentiful rain and sunshine.

3.5 Climate change

The Earth's climate has never stood still, and climatic swings such as the Younger Dryas, Holocene Climatic Optimum and Little Ice Age have had a profound effect on human civilisation across the ages. In the present era, there is a greater awareness of climatic changes and the influence that anthropogenic greenhouse gases have on these changes. The combustion of fossil fuels, deforestation and some agricultural processes are all contributing to higher concentrations of greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere; trapping additional heat and resulting in a warmer period than the Earth would otherwise be experiencing at this time.

Projecting changes in the climate is difficult as it can be affected by a multitude of factors both natural (e.g. volcanic eruptions) and anthropogenic. The climate projections presented here are therefore based on different emissions scenarios for the future. These scenarios are plausible pathways for how the future may unfold. The scenarios take into consideration our understanding of the climate, and how global policies and social or economic development might affect emissions. They can be used to develop projections of the impact climate change might have in the future, based on how quickly global emissions rise or fall.

Shared socio-economic pathway (SSP) scenarios are global emissions scenarios developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). They include gross domestic product, population size, urbanisation, economic collaboration, and human and technological development (MFE, 2024).



Four scenarios were used in the Ministry for the Environment’s projections:

- a) The ‘Sustainability’ scenario, SSP1-2.6, assumes that the world shifts gradually toward a more sustainable path, emphasising more inclusive development that respects environmental boundaries. It assumes that warming stays below 2°C, with net zero CO2 emissions reached by 2050.
- b) The ‘Middle of the road’ scenario, SSP2-4.5, assumes that the world follows a path in which social, economic, and technological trends do not shift markedly from historical patterns. It assumes that warming reaches 2.7°C by 2100.
- c) The ‘Regional rivalry’ scenario, SSP3-7.0, assumes the world becomes more focused on national and regional security issues, and there is no additional climate policy. It assumes CO2 emissions approximately double from current levels by 2100 and warming reaches 3.6°C by 2100.
- d) The ‘Fossil-fuelled development’ scenario, SSP5-8.5, represents the high end of the range of future scenarios. It assumes that the world places increasing faith in competitive markets, innovation, and participatory societies to produce rapid technological progress and development of human capital as the path to sustainable development, with warming of more than 4°C by 2100.

Of these scenarios, the Ministry for the Environment (MFE) has only included the first three scenarios in the analysis and graphs; cited below. The following graphs show how the climate is projected to change in Kaipara District between now and 2099 and presents projections as a range of values from low emissions to a high emissions future (within the bounds of the first three scenarios). These projections are relative to the 1995-2014 period (MFE, 2024).

Average daily air temperatures in Kaipara are likely to be 0.8-1.3°C warmer by 2050, and 0.8-2.9°C warmer by 2099 (see Figure 8), with the greatest seasonal change projected in Summer (MFE, 2024). The average temperature in Summer is likely to increase by 1.0-1.6°C by 2050, and 0.8-3.6°C by 2099 (MFE, 2024).

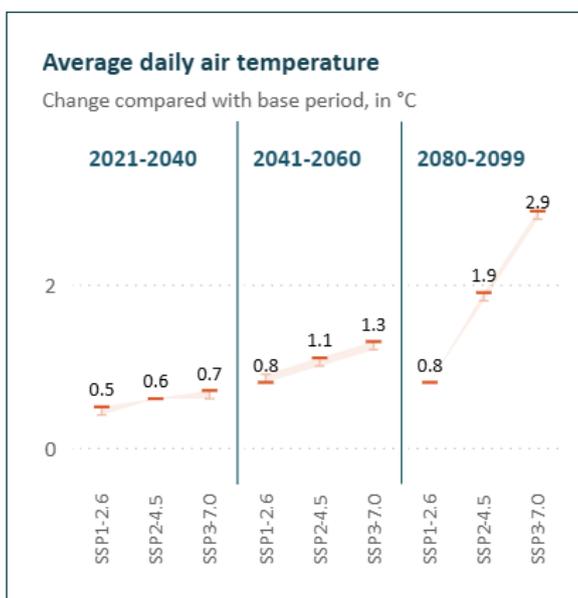


Figure 8: Projected changes in daily air temperature (MFE, 2024)

There were an average of 25.4 hot days (days when the temperature gets above 25°C) per year for Kaipara District in the 1995-2014 period (MFE, 2024). There are projected to be between 4.9 and 40.8 more hot days per year by 2050, and between 4.5 and 90.6 more hot days per year by 2090 (see Figure 9) (MFE, 2024).

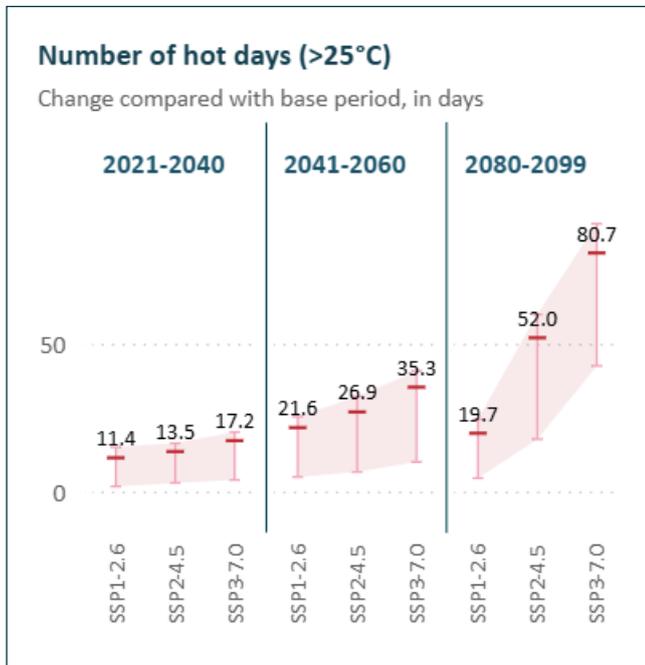


Figure 9: Projected changes in the number of hot days per year (MFE, 2024)

An increase in the number of days where temperatures go above 30°C will further increase the risks of melting of road surfaces and can result in increased transport network repair and maintenance.

Higher temperatures will allow earlier sowing of crops, and they will generally reach maturity faster (depending on sowing time). However, higher temperatures could also lead to decreased yields. The greatest risk for pasture and cropping will be the availability of water, which is projected to decrease due to increased evaporation. Higher temperatures and more “hot days” are also likely to cause more heat stress in cattle and livestock.

In horticulture, subtropical crops such as persimmon and macadamia have already become commercially viable in northern New Zealand, and it is expected that new subtropical (and possibly tropical) crops will begin to be commercially grown as the climate warms in Northland. Avocado in particular is currently expanding in the region.

There was an average of 1.2 frost days (days when the temperature gets below 0°C) per year for Kaipara District in the 1995-2014 period (MFE, 2024). There are projected to be between 0.0 and 1.7 fewer frost days per year by 2050, and between 0.0 and 2.4 fewer frost days per year by 2090 (see Figure 10) (MFE, 2024). A lack of winter chilling will become increasingly limiting for the kiwifruit industry in Northland, in particular for the Hayward variety. That said, new kiwifruit varieties which require lessor winter chilling to achieve adequate bud break and flowering are being developed.

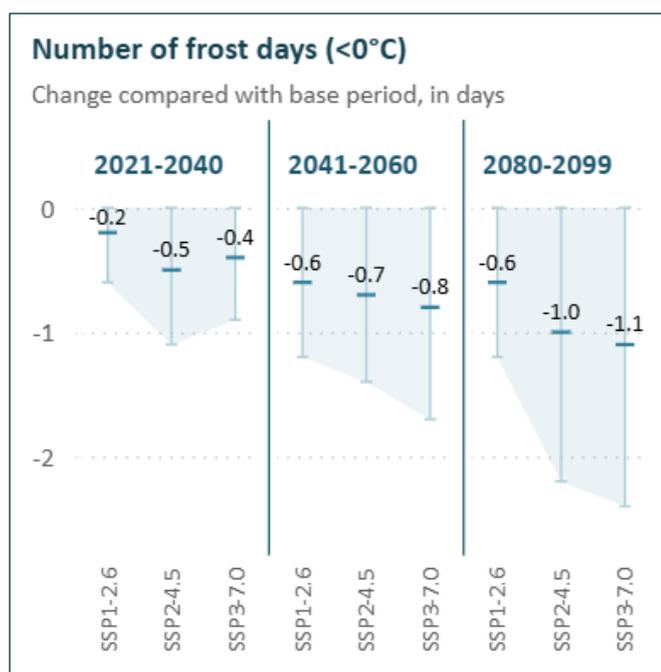


Figure 10: Projected changes in the number of frost days per year (MFE, 2024)

Changes in pests and diseases will also occur with changing temperatures and will be an important factor for agriculture. Many foreign species which are currently unable to survive and reproduce in New Zealand may be able to establish as the climate warms. However, while much of the biosecurity risk will come from species establishing from beyond New Zealand’s borders, there are also a number of species already in New Zealand which are not able to spread and flourish to the extent they could if the climate was warmer. These types of pests are often weeds but may also be invertebrates (such as the Sphenophorus venatus vestitus weevil, migratory locust *Locusta migratoria*, tropical armyworm *Spodoptera litura* and even the native moths *Epyaxa rosearia* and *Scopula rubraria*).

Pinus radiata, is expected to perform even better in a warmer Northland than it currently does. However, forestry potential may be negatively impacted by increasing wildfire conditions. Wildfire risks are likely to increase due to increased temperatures and dryer conditions.

There were an average of 221.2 dry days (days when rainfall is less than 1mm) per year for Kaipara District in the 1995-2014 period (MFE, 2024). There are projected to be between 3.6 fewer and 0.9 more dry days per year by 2050, and between 1.6 fewer and 10.0 more dry days per year by 2090 (see Figure 11) (MFE, 2024).

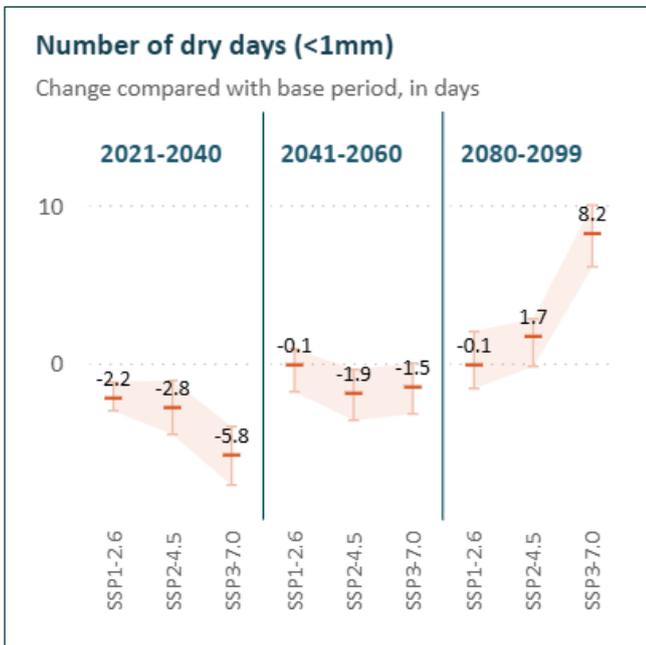


Figure 11: Projected changes in the number of dry days per year (MFE, 2024)

Annual rainfall in Kaipara District is likely to change by between -4.5% and +0.4% by 2050 and decrease by between -12.9% and -0.6% by 2090, with greatest seasonal change projected in Spring (MFE, 2024). The total annual rainfall in Spring is likely to change by between -11.1% and +1.5% by 2050 and decrease by between -21.2% and -1.9% by 2090 (see Figure 12) (MFE, 2024).

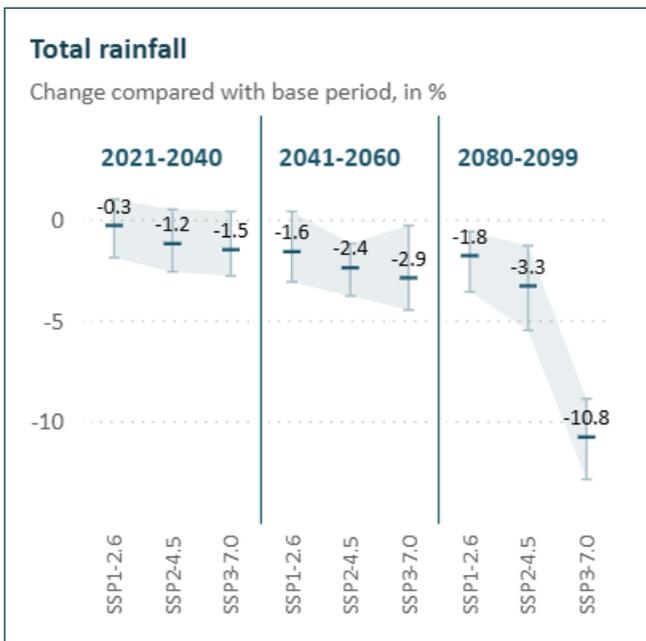


Figure 12: Projected changes in total annual rainfall (MFE, 2024)



There was an average of 9.3 very rainy days (where rainfall exceeds 25mm) for Kaipara District in the 1995-2014 period (MFE, 2024). There are projected to be between 0.4 fewer and 1.1 more very rainy days per year by 2050, and between 2.7 fewer and 1.0 more very rainy days per year by 2090 (see Figure 13) (MFE, 2024).

Reducing rainfall and increased drought potential will be important considerations for Kaipara with its economy based on primary sector production and many households dependant on private rainwater tanks for their water supplies. Drought conditions usually come with high temperatures, increasing the demand for water at the same time as it is most scarce. Drought potential may also negatively impact water quality.

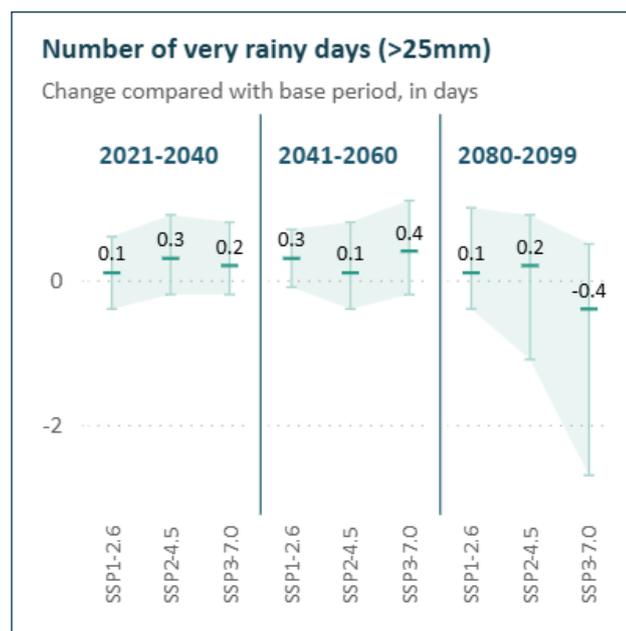


Figure 13: Projected changes in the number of very rainy days per year (MFE, 2024)

There was an average of 60.1 windy days (days when the wind speed exceeded 10 meters per second) per year for Kaipara District in the 1995-2014 period (MFE, 2024). There are projected to be between 0.9 and 9.7 fewer windy days per year by 2050, and between 0.5 and 23.1 fewer windy days per year by 2090 (MFE, 2024).

Higher global temperatures will also result in rising sea levels, due partly to thermal expansion of the water in the Earth’s oceans and partly to the release of water from melting ice sheets. In the case of a tectonically active county like New Zealand, the rate at which sea levels will rise relative to any given point on the land, will also be affected by the rate of any vertical land movements which may be taking place i.e. some areas of New Zealand are presently rising higher, while others are gradually subsiding lower.

Sea level srose 0.21 metres on average across New Zealand (before local vertical land movements are considered) between 1901 and 2020. Out to 2050 there is a comparatively narrow range of sea level rise of 0.2 metres to 0.3 metres, but this range of uncertainty increases when we look out to the end of the century to 0.4 metres to 1.2 metres, with deep uncertainty on the rate, timing and magnitude of sea level rise depending on the emissions scenario used in the projections.

When vertical land movements are applied, the rate of sea level rise relative to any given point on land becomes even greater across most of Kaipara as most of Kaipara is gradually subsiding. Figure 14 shows the projected rate of relative sea level rise (i.e. accommodating for both changes in global sea levels and local vertical land movements) for the Kaipara Harbour across three different emissions scenarios. Figure 15 shows similar projections for the Mangawhai Harbour.

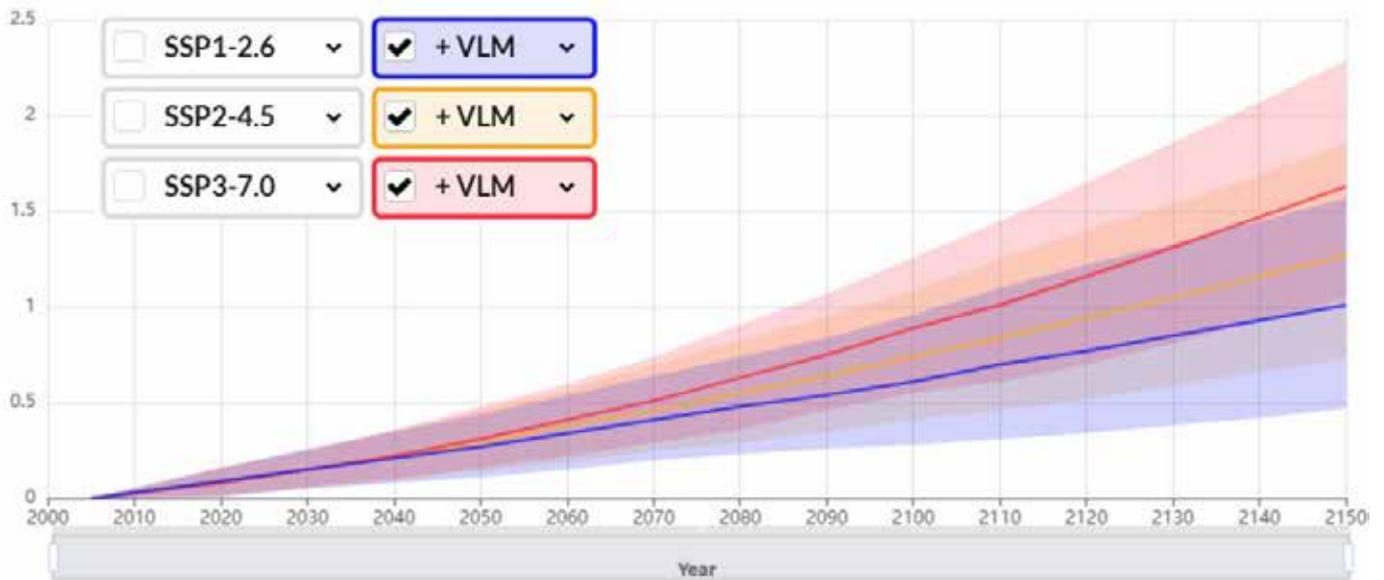


Figure 14: Projected relative sea level rise for the Kaipara Harbour across three different emissions scenarios (NZ SeaRise, 2026)

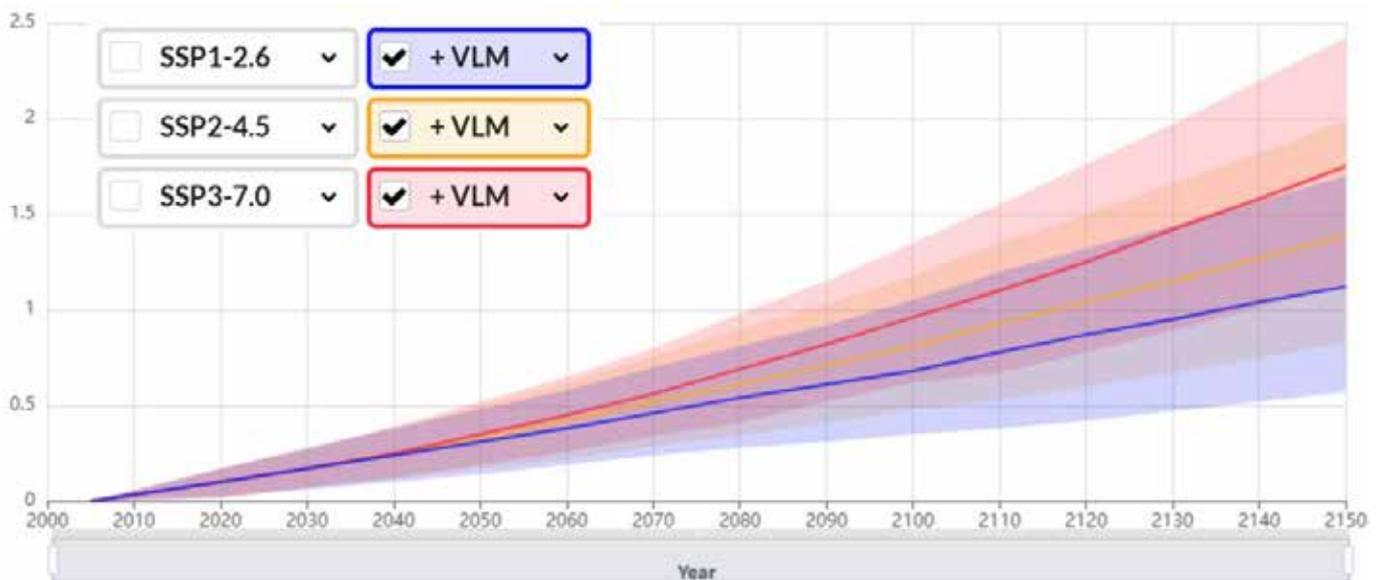


Figure 15: Projected relative sea level rise for the Mangawhai Harbour across three different emissions scenarios (NZ SeaRise, 2026)

As sea levels rise, there will be an inland advance of the saltwater-groundwater interface, which may increase the risk of saltwater intrusion into groundwater bores and reduce water availability. Rising groundwater can also lead to long-term standing surface water. Both rising groundwater and infiltration of seawater underground can affect land productivity capacity.



In low-lying coastal areas, rising groundwater can impact on-site wastewater treatment systems by increasing soil saturations and reducing the effectiveness of land disposal systems (dispersal fields). This increases monitoring and compliance pressures for Council and increases the risk of water contamination and public health issues.

Low-lying catchment areas, where rivers or creeks drain into the Kaipara Harbour or Mangawhai Estuary, are particularly exposed to coastal flooding because higher sea levels can cause the rivers or creeks to back up inland. Coastal erosion is also projected to worsen with sea level rise.

3.6 Distribution of Settlement

Kaipara is an extensive rural district with no cities and significant distances between centres. Historically, transport was primarily by sea, resulting in many settlements being established in the upper reaches of harbours/harbour arms or along navigable rivers.

The largest settlements in the district are Dargaville and Mangawhai. Dargaville is the key service centre for the western and northern part of the district. It is 13km/14 minutes' drive from Baylys and 12km/12 minutes' drive from Te Kopuru which serve as satellite settlements. Dargaville is 57km/50 minutes' drive from Whangārei (Northland's only city) and 173km/two and a half hours' drive from Central Auckland.

Mangawhai has historically been a community with a significant proportion of holiday homes as well as a large retiree population. However, the settlement is now emerging as a service centre for the surrounding area, including Kaiwaka (14km/16 minutes' drive away) and Maungatūroto (26km/25 minutes' drive away). Mangawhai's proximity to Auckland, increasing services and the rising popularity of working from home are seeing Mangawhai grow rapidly with more permanent residents and more young families. Mangawhai is now Kaipara's largest centre. Mangawhai is 98km/one and a half hours' drive from Central Auckland, 64km/an hour and seven minutes' drive from Whangārei, 25km/30 minutes' drive from Waipū and 88km/one hour and ten minutes' drive from Dargaville.

Outside of the two largest settlements, the district is serviced by a collection of smaller settlements which also service the needs of the district's rural residents. The most prominent of these are Kaiwaka, Matakohe, Paparoa, Ruawai and Maungatūroto. Maungatūroto is 62km/53 minutes' drive from Whangārei and 112km/one hour 40 minutes' drive from Auckland.

Some of Kaipara's smallest communities are very remote and have few services such as shops and health care. Emergency services can often be a considerable distance away. For example, Pouto is 69km/one hour and ten minutes' drive from Dargaville, Donnellys Crossing is 41km/37 minutes' drive from Dargaville and Waipoua Settlement is 57km/56 minutes' drive from Dargaville. This means someone in Pouto wanting to attend a doctor's appointment would need to allow two hours 20 minutes of their day just to drive there and back, and someone calling 111 for a fire in Waipoua Settlement could have to wait close to an hour for assistance.

4 Demography – Our people, Our communities

Ko ngā maunga ngā poupou hei whāinga mō ngā awa o te rohe o te Kaipara. Ko ngā moana ko Kaipara, Ko Mangawhai. Ko ngā waka i hoea mai nei i te nuku o whenua i mauria mai ngā iwi, ngā hapū me ngā whanau ki ngā marae. Ko ngā marae ngā puna huihuinga tangata, huihuinga kaupapa.

Tihei ki runga, mauri ora ki whenua.

This section looks at population and demographic trends affecting Kaipara’s communities. It begins by considering population trends nationally and regionally, before looking at local population trends and local wellbeing.

“He aha te mea nui o te ao. He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata”.

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

4.1 Population nationally

New Zealand had an estimated resident population of 5,324,700 in 2025 (Infometrics, 2026a). New Zealand’s population growth continued to slow, from 2.3% in 2023, to 1.7% in 2024, and just 0.7% in the year to June 2025. This pattern played out with remarkable uniformity, with every territorial authority facing the same or slower growth in 2025, compared to 2024. Slowing net migration is the primary cause of the current population growth slow down, with international net migration to New Zealand declining from 108,400 in 2023 to 70,400 in 2024 and 13,700 in 2025 (Infometrics, 2025a).

Putting aside the border-closure affected years of 2021 and 2022, this is New Zealand’s lowest level of net migration since 2013 (Infometrics, 2025a). However, a key difference between 2013 and 2025 is that natural increase (births minus deaths) has weakened significantly since then. New Zealand’s natural increase in 2013 was 30,800, resulting in overall population growth of 0.8%pa. In 2025, natural increase was just 21,000, meaning that with a similar level of net migration to 2013, New Zealand’s population growth is now weaker (Infometrics, 2025a).

Underneath the 0.7% growth nationally in 2025, New Zealand’s territorial authorities ranged from growth of 2.4% to a decline of 0.4% (Infometrics, 2025a). Most areas grew to some degree, but 18 areas saw their population decline in 2025, and four saw no change. Every territorial authority faced a lower rate of growth in 2025 than 2024 (Infometrics, 2025a).



As shown in Figure 16, population growth was relatively strong throughout much of the mid and lower South Island (Infometrics, 2025b). In the North Island, growth was strongest in parts of the golden triangle including Kaipara (0.8%), Auckland (1.0%), Waikato (1.0%), Matamata-Piako (1.1%), Hamilton (1.4%) and Waipa (1.1%). Tauranga and Western Bay of Plenty are normally a fast-growing part of the golden triangle, but took a back seat in 2025, with growth of 0.1% and 0.4% respectively. In 2025, Tauranga recorded its slowest population growth since this series began in 1996 (Infometrics, 2025a).

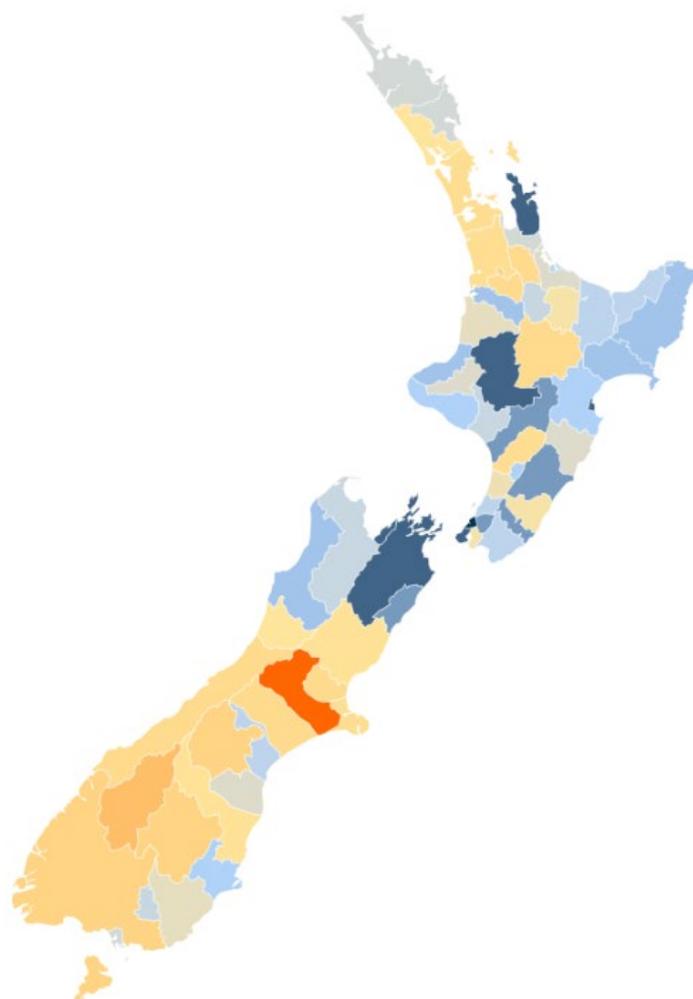
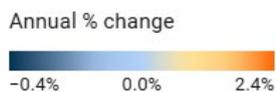


Figure 16: National variance in the rate of population growth in 2025 (Infometrics, 2025b)

Looking more closely at internal migration (movements of people from one area of New Zealand to another, rather than from overseas), there is a broad pattern that sees metro areas attracting strong net gains of 15-29-year-olds (17,700 between 2018 and 2023) (Infometrics, 2025b). This reflects that once young people leave high school, they often move away for education, employment, or simply life experiences. The majority (14,800) of these young people came from provincial areas (Infometrics, 2025b).

However, provincial areas make substantial gains in other age groups – gaining 43,400 30-64 year olds and 9,700 people aged 65 years and older between 2018 and 2023 (Infometrics, 2025b). These patterns reflect that although young people may seek to leave

provincial and rural areas, they are more likely to return when they are older, particularly when seeking a better lifestyle for their growing families or later in life when looking to retire/semi-retire (Infometrics, 2025b).

The age of incoming migrants varies widely throughout the country, reflecting that different areas attract people at different life stages (Infometrics, 2025b). Figure 17 shows that areas with a strong reputation for pre-retirement and retirement life stages attract older migrants, such as Kaipara (average age of 44), Thames-Coromandel (52), Buller (47), and Kaikoura (47). Areas with a strong tertiary offering attract younger migrants, such as Dunedin (23) and Wellington (26). Hamilton has a strong tertiary offering too, but attracts slightly older migrants, with an average age of 29, reflecting that the city is also popular for those looking to raise a family (Infometrics, 2025b).

Areas surrounding main centres appear to be more popular for raising a family and so tend to attract people of child-bearing age. For example, the average age of people leaving Wellington is 34, close to the average age of people arriving into Porirua (33), Lower Hutt (32), and Upper Hutt (34).

2018-2023

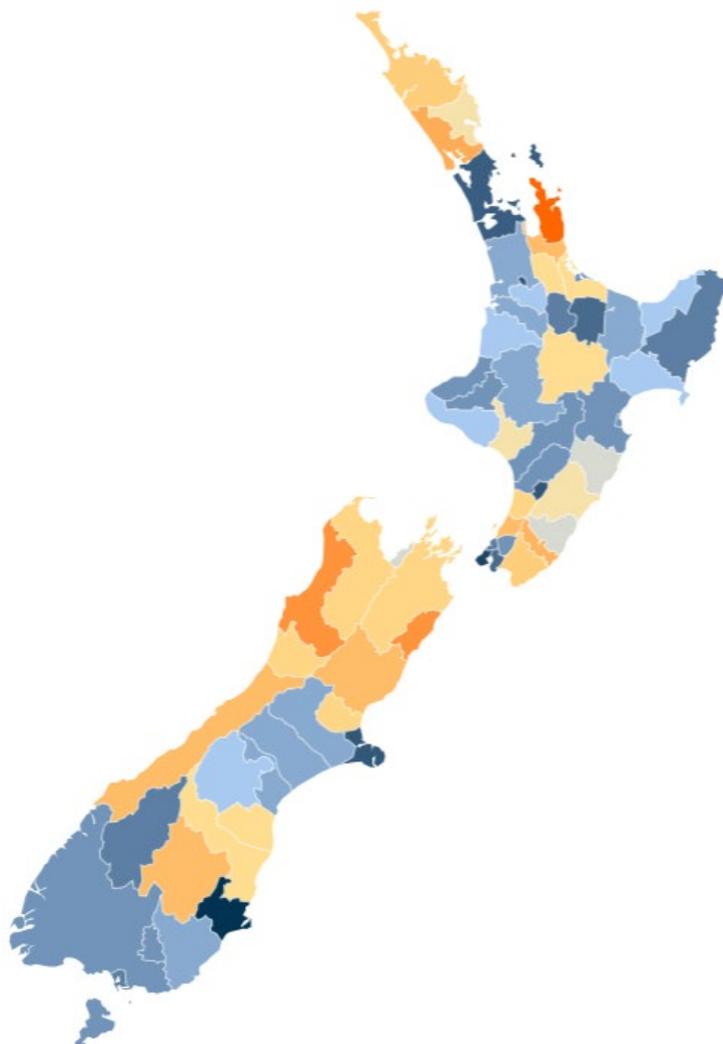


Figure 17: Average age of internal migrant arrivals (Infometrics, 2025b)



Auckland saw a net outflow of essentially all age groups over the 2018-23 period, with a large fall in 30-64 year olds (Infometrics, 2025). This outcome highlights the more usual shift to the regions that occurs after living in Auckland for some time. That's likely true both for international migrant arrivals from overseas who settle in Auckland then shift after some time, and Kiwis who are born there or shift to Auckland for work at a younger age then over time shift to other parts of the country (Infometrics, 2025).

Looking ahead to 2026 and beyond, Infometrics expect more of the same for New Zealand's population growth (Infometrics, 2025). With a muted labour market, there's little impetus to bring in workers from overseas, so it is expected international net migration will continue at its current low levels. This in turn reduces pressure in major centres (where international migrants preferentially settle) for existing residents to move to provincial areas, resulting in weaker growth across the country. Natural increase is also expected to continue to decline, a consequence of the population ageing. Altogether, Infometrics expect a similar, muted, rate of population growth in 2026 (Infometrics, 2025).

4.2 Population regionally

Northland had an estimated resident population of 201,100 in 2025 (Infometrics, 2026a). This was a 0.3% increase on the previous year (Infometrics, 2026a).

Whangārei is Northland's only city and the closest city servicing the Kaipara district. Whangārei district accounts for about half Northland's population with an estimated usually resident population of 100,600 in 2025, a 0.3% increase on the previous year (Infometrics, 2026a). Whangārei has been experiencing steady growth of around 1.4% per annum over the decade from 2015 to 2025. Looking forward, this growth is projected to slow in line with national trends but remain steady at around 0.7% per annum over the decade from 2025 – 2035 (Infometrics, 2026b).

Out migration from Auckland is a key contributor to Northland's growth, accounting for 41% of migrants to both Whangārei and the Far North and 55% of migrants to Kaipara over the 2018-2023 period (Infometrics, 2025b). This trend reflects high housing costs that drive Aucklanders to look north and south of the city, particularly as they seek better conditions in which to raise a family or begin to look towards retirement.

Areas close to Auckland and near the coast have been the most attractive to migrants, allowing for quick connections back to jobs, services and family in Auckland while offering improved lifestyle opportunities. Consequently, the fastest growing areas of Northland have been around Kaiwaka/Oneriri, Mangawhai and Waipū which are both close to Auckland and near the sea.

The Far North district also saw strong growth in some areas, the district growing by 1.5% per annum over the decade from 2015 to 2025 to reach 73,700 residents by 2025 (Infometrics, 2026b). The Far North's population is projected to continue growing at a slower but steady rate of around 0.5% per annum over the decade 2025 - 2035 (Infometrics, 2026b).

4.3 Kaipara's Population

4.3.1 Kaipara Uri – Kaipara's first peoples

Kaipara settlement goes back more than seven centuries, when the ancestors of the many iwi and hapū lived by fishing, hunting and growing crops in an area blessed with rich harvests from the harbour, ocean, rivers, forest and soil. The Kaipara was also a major route for travel between the Far North and the Waitemata and Manukau Harbours.

The major iwi/hapū of the Kaipara are Te Roroa and Te Uri o Hau. Te Roroa iwi occupy the hinterland and rich valleys between the Kaipara and Hokianga harbours, particularly the Kaihu Valley, Waipoua, Tunatahi (Dargaville) and Maunganui Bluff areas. Te Uri o Hau occupy the Pouto peninsula, the hill country around the many arms of the Kaipara Harbour and the Mangawhai area. Te Uri o Hau are a hapū of Ngāti Whātua whose tribal area extends into Auckland. These major Kaipara hapū rohe are shown in Figure 18.



Figure 18: The major Kaipara hapū rohe and location of significant battle sites prior to 1840

Te Uri o Hau, together with their overarching Iwi; Ngāti Whātua, and Te Roroa have Mana Whenua status over their ancestral lands (their rohe). This means they are recognised as having authority to exercise kaitiakitanga over their rohe. Council needs to be aware of Te Uri o Hau and Te Roroa's rohe extents and work with these Iwi appropriately.



4.3.2 Population Growth in Kaipara

Kaipara had an estimated resident population of 26,800 persons in 2025 (Infometrics, 2026a). Kaipara's population has grown quickly over the past 25 years, driven primarily by out migration overflowing from a fast-growing Auckland city. Kaipara's annual growth rate averaged 2.2% over the decade from 2015 to 2025. Looking ahead, Kaipara is projected to continue growing steadily, though at a slower rate, in line with a slowdown in population growth nationally (including in Auckland). Kaipara's annual growth rate is projected to average around 0.9% over the decade 2025 to 2035 (see Figure 19) (Infometrics, 2026b).

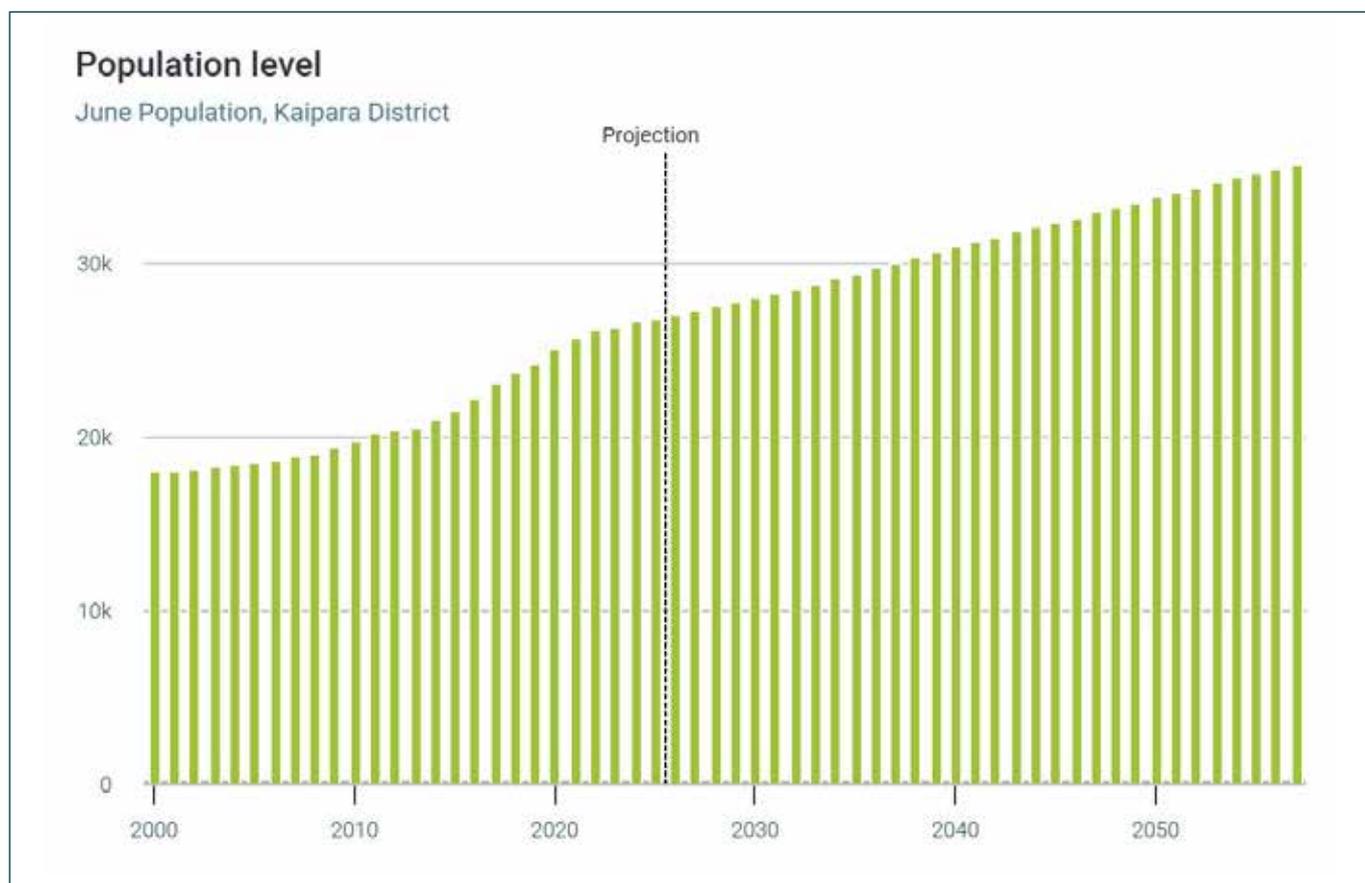


Figure 19: Kaipara's recent and projected population growth (Infometrics, 2026b)

Kaipara's growth has however not occurred consistently across all areas. Nor has growth across all areas been driven by the same influences (Infometrics, 2026a). Most of Kaipara's growth has been centred on the east of the district, particularly Mangawhai and to a lesser extent, Kaiwaka and the Oneriri Peninsula (Infometrics, 2026a).

This reflects the proximity of these areas to Auckland and to a coastal living environment, and the desire of Auckland expats to maintain connections to family, services and increasingly; employment back in Auckland.

Mangawhai is now the largest centre in the Kaipara District by resident population, with a 2025 population of 7,200 (Infometrics, 2026a). The drivers of Mangawhai's growth have changed over the years. Mangawhai had largely been a bach community, with a small resident population and large influxes of families during holiday periods. However, as property prices in Auckland rose and these bach-owning families got older, the prospect

of selling the family home in Auckland to fund an early retirement by the sea became more attractive. Mangawhai’s growth accelerated as the disparity in house prices between Auckland and this small coastal settlement drove large numbers of retirees to seek a quieter pace of life away from the city. However, as Auckland’s growth has continued to be focused on the North Shore and transport links and working from home opportunities have continued to improve, Mangawhai now finds itself commutable to job opportunities in northern and central Auckland. This is now driving a further phase in Mangawhai’s growth, as young Auckland families seek a better lifestyle and more affordable housing while remaining within range of their jobs in Auckland. Looking ahead, Mangawhai is projected to continue growing with further improvements to transport links signalled, more subdivisions being progressed and more shops and services opening. Mangawhai’s growth is projected to be slower than recent levels as slower growth in Auckland reduces pressure on existing Auckland residents to relocate. Growth will be strongest in those areas of Mangawhai that are not already built up, as is shown in Figure 20.

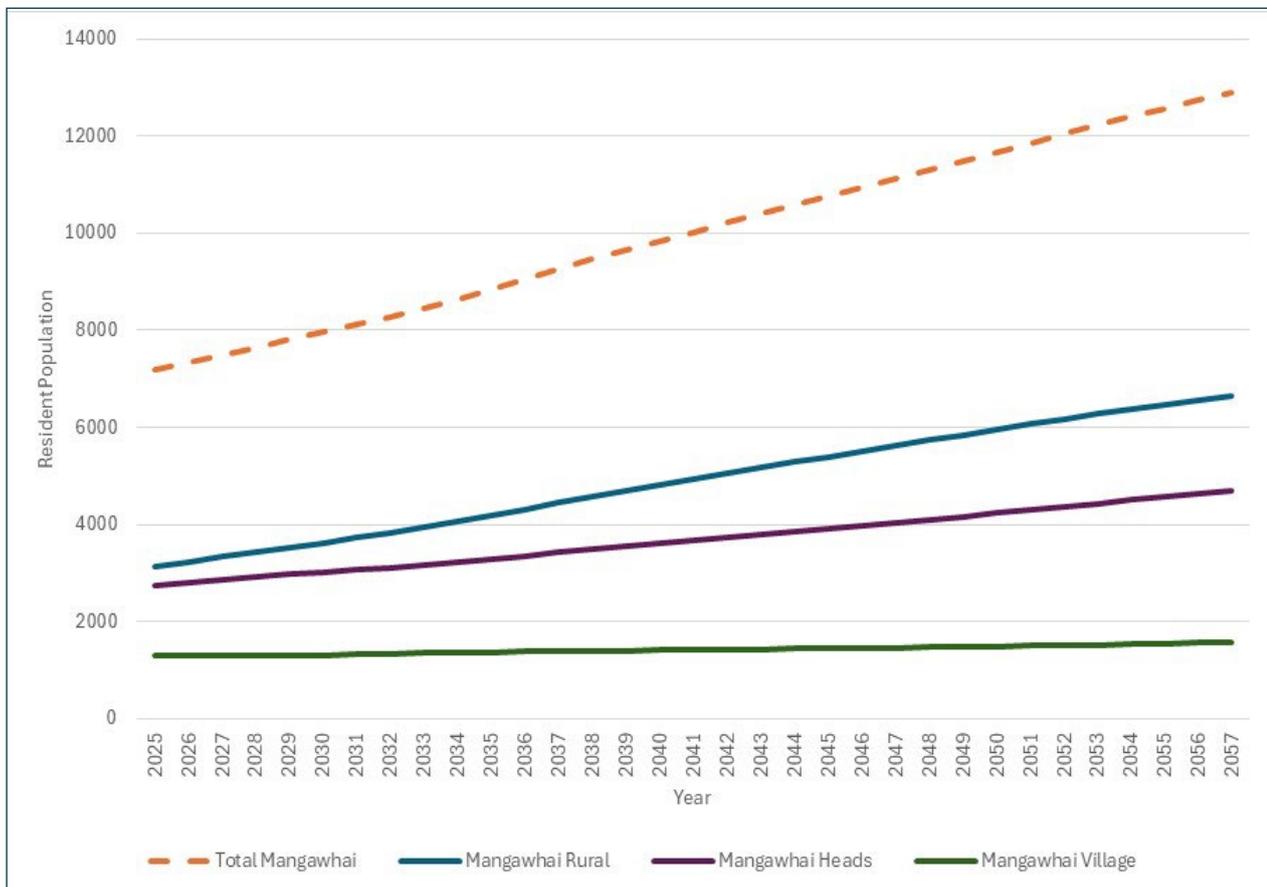


Figure 20: Mangawhai’s projected population growth (Infometrics, 2026b)



In contrast to Mangawhai, Dargaville’s growth appears to be largely driven by local employment opportunities. The town functions as a service centre and manufacturing base supporting a wider agricultural area. Here, additional jobs bring additional workers and their families, while job losses and declining services drive residents to consider their prospects elsewhere. Going forward, Dargaville is projected to see steady growth, as are its surrounding areas, which include satellite suburbs such as Te Kōpuru and Baylys Beach. Dargaville’s growth will benefit from an expanding horticulture sector in the area serviced by the Kaipara Water Company and a ready supply of affordable housing within a reasonable commute of the expanding Whangārei base hospital. Improving state highway connections to Auckland will also help residents in this agricultural service centre to feel more connected, though travel times will remain too great to enable commuting to jobs in Auckland. Dargaville is projected to reach a population of 5,463 by 2037 and 6,110 by 2057 (see Figure 21) (Infometrics, 2026b).

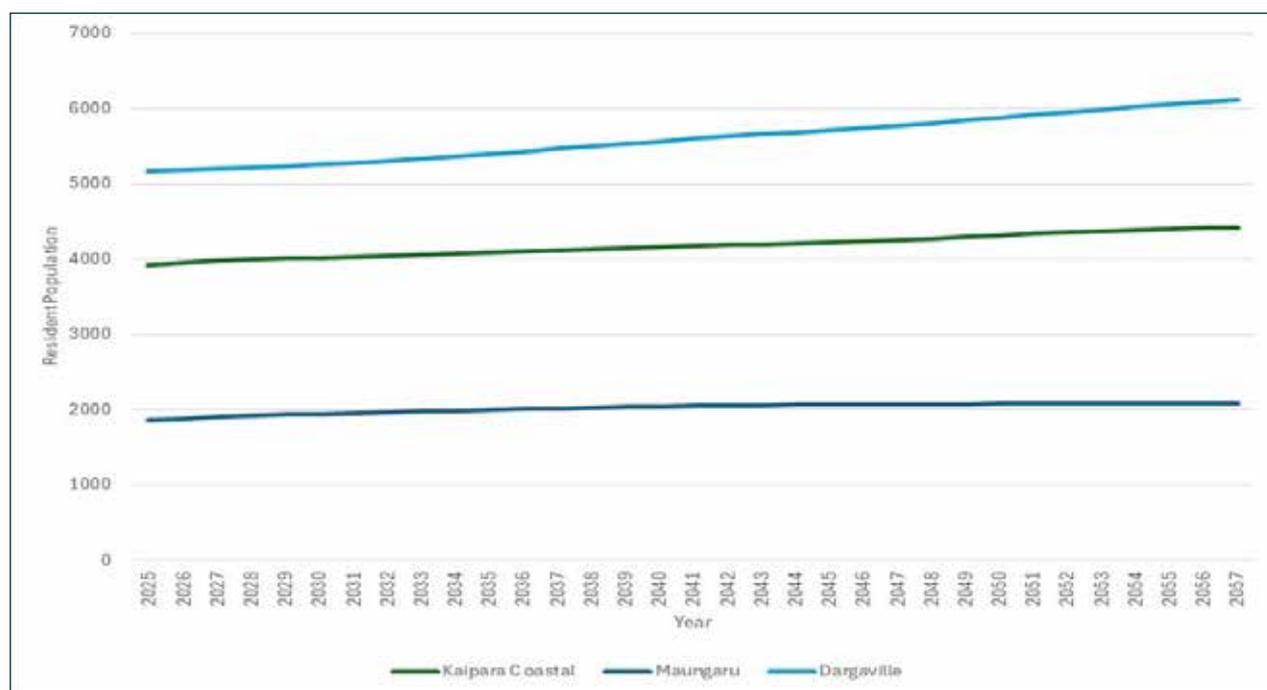


Figure 21: Projected population growth for Dargaville and its surrounding areas (Infometrics, 2026b)

For context, the geographic extents of the Statistics New Zealand SA2s for the Kaipara District (including “Maungaru” and “Kaipara Coastal”) are shown in Figure 22.

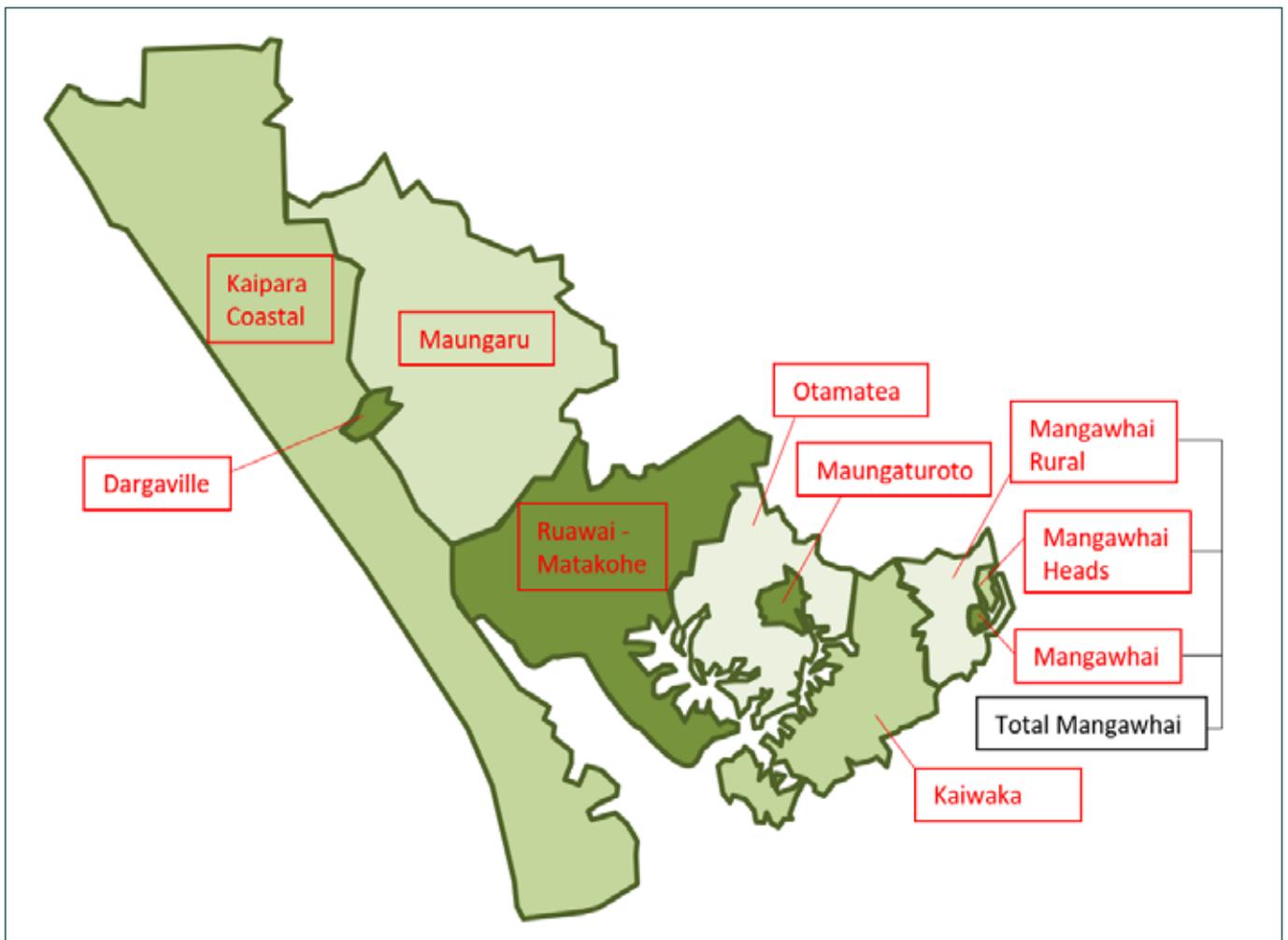


Figure 22: The geographic extents of the Statistics New Zealand SA2s that comprise the Kaipara District Note that the Mangawhai Central development is located in the Mangawhai Rural SA2

The central area of the Kaipara is also projected to continue growing due to a mix of the trends affecting Dargaville and Mangawhai (see Figure 23). Kaiwaka, including the Oneriri Peninsula, is projected to grow strongly, due largely to its proximity to Auckland and the rural residential lifestyle opportunities offered in the rolling hills bordering Mangawhai and the Kaipara Harbour.

Maungatūroto too is projected to grow steadily, with an expanding industrial base and improving links to Northport and Auckland being signalled; including the Roads of National Significance programme working to bypass the Brynderwyn Hills and a proposal for a rail connection to the port gaining momentum.

The Ruawai-Matakohe area is projected to experience more modest growth as modernisation of farming practices sees a continuing decline in the number of people employed in agriculture resulting in fewer rural jobs while still maintaining production.

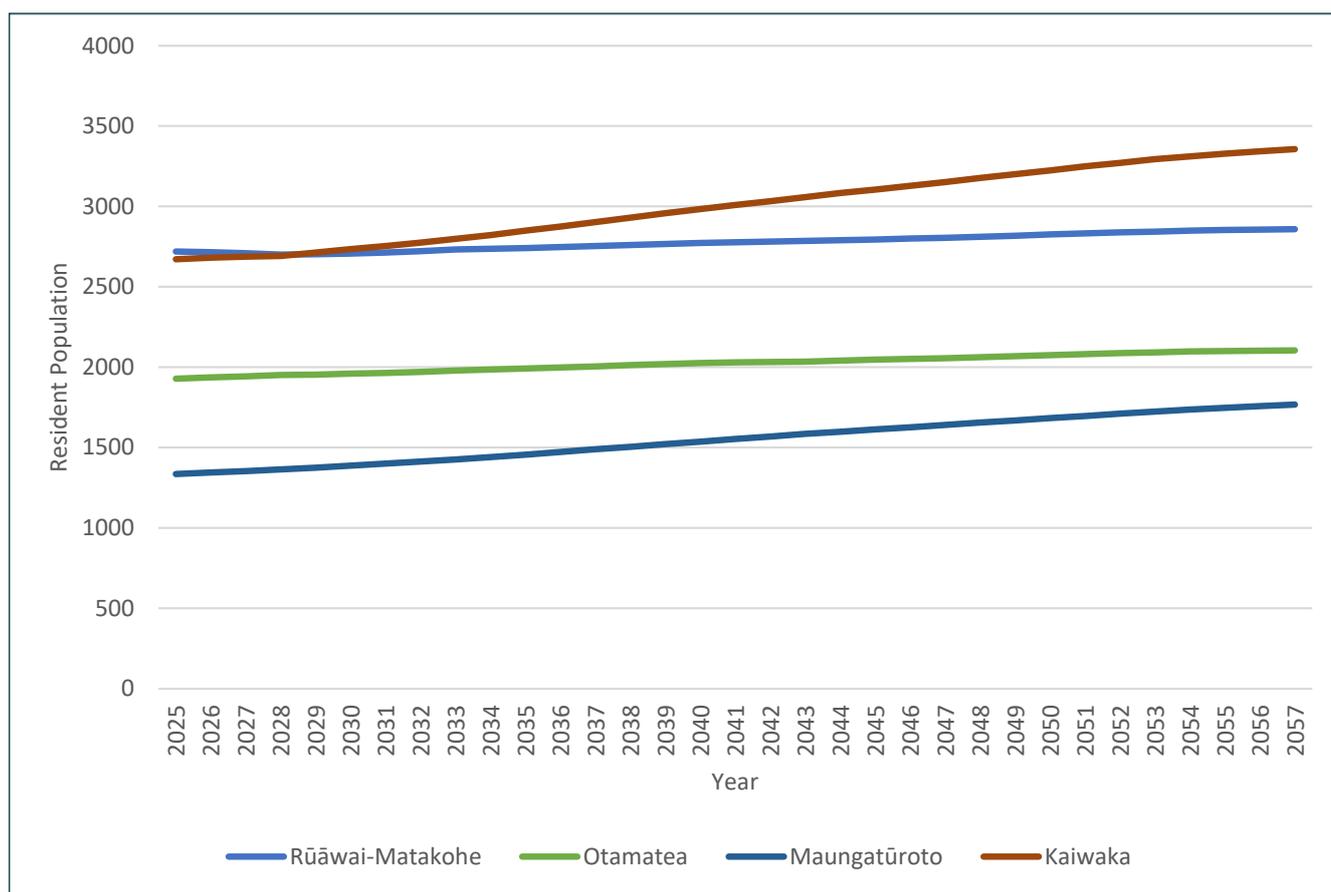


Figure 23: Projected population growth for central Kaipara (Infometrics, 2026b)

4.3.3 Age structure of Kaipara’s population

Kaipara’s population is comparatively old and is projected to age further, a function of the district’s (particularly Mangawhai’s) attractiveness as a place to enjoy an active retirement. In 2025, 56.7% of Kaipara District’s population was of working age (15-64 years) compared to 64.9% nationally (Infometrics, 2026a). This proportion was lower than in Far North District (57.7%) and Whangārei District (59.1%). The proportion of people 65 years and older was 25.4% in Kaipara District. This proportion was higher than in Whangārei District (21.5%) and Far North District (23.2%) and the national average of 16.9% (Infometrics, 2026a).

Figure 24 shows how the age structure of Kaipara’s population has and is projected to change over time. In addition to showing the dominance of the older age cohort, it also reveals a hollowing out of the young adult population. This likely reflects young people leaving in search of tertiary education and career opportunities outside the district. The growing number of residents in their thirties and early forties, together with a growing number of children suggests these young people may be attracted back to the district later in life after having started a family and began looking for better housing and lifestyle opportunities. However, the district’s ability to attract these working age families is dependent on its ability to provide sufficient job opportunities or short enough commuting times to jobs outside the district.

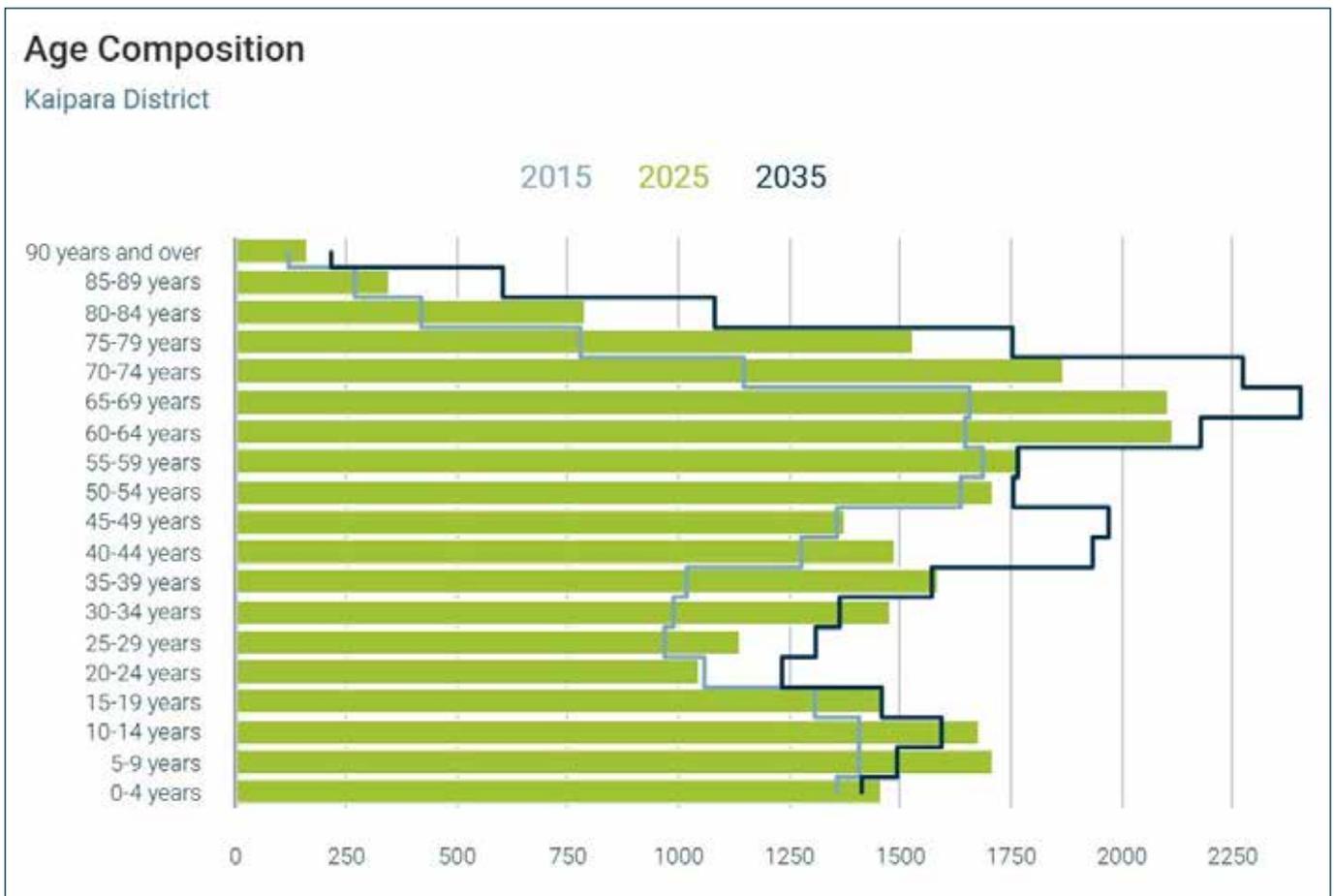


Figure 24: The changing age structure of Kaipara's population (Infometrics, 2026b)

4.3.4 Ethnicity of Kaipara's population

Ethnicity is a measure of cultural affiliation. It is not a measure of race, ancestry, nationality, or citizenship. Ethnicity is self-perceived, and people can belong to more than one ethnic group (Stats NZ, 2020).

At the time of the 2023 census, the proportion of Kaipara's population who identified as Māori was proportionately large at 25.4% compared to 17.8% nationally. The proportion of the population who identify as Māori has been steadily increasing both in Kaipara and nationally. This likely reflects more people of Māori descent choosing to identify as Māori and reconnect with Māori culture rather than higher rates of fertility among Māori. The proportion of Māori in Kaipara is projected to continue increasing into the future. The largest ethnic group in Kaipara were those of European ethnicity, which at 83.7% was large compared to the national rate of 67.8%, though consistent with New Zealand's rural areas at 80.8%.

Kaipara had a low percentage of other ethnicities compared to the national average. Pacific Peoples accounted for 4.8% of Kaipara's population compared to 8.9% nationally and the respective figures for Asian Peoples was 3.6% compared to 17.3% and all others 2% versus 3%. Kaipara's population is projected to become slightly more diverse over time, with an increase in people identifying with multiple ethnic groups and a decline in the percentage of people identifying as European (Infometrics, 2026a).



These statistics were however not consistent across the district with some communities such as Dargaville being more diverse than others. The Figures 25 to 28 compare ethnicity across different areas of the district.

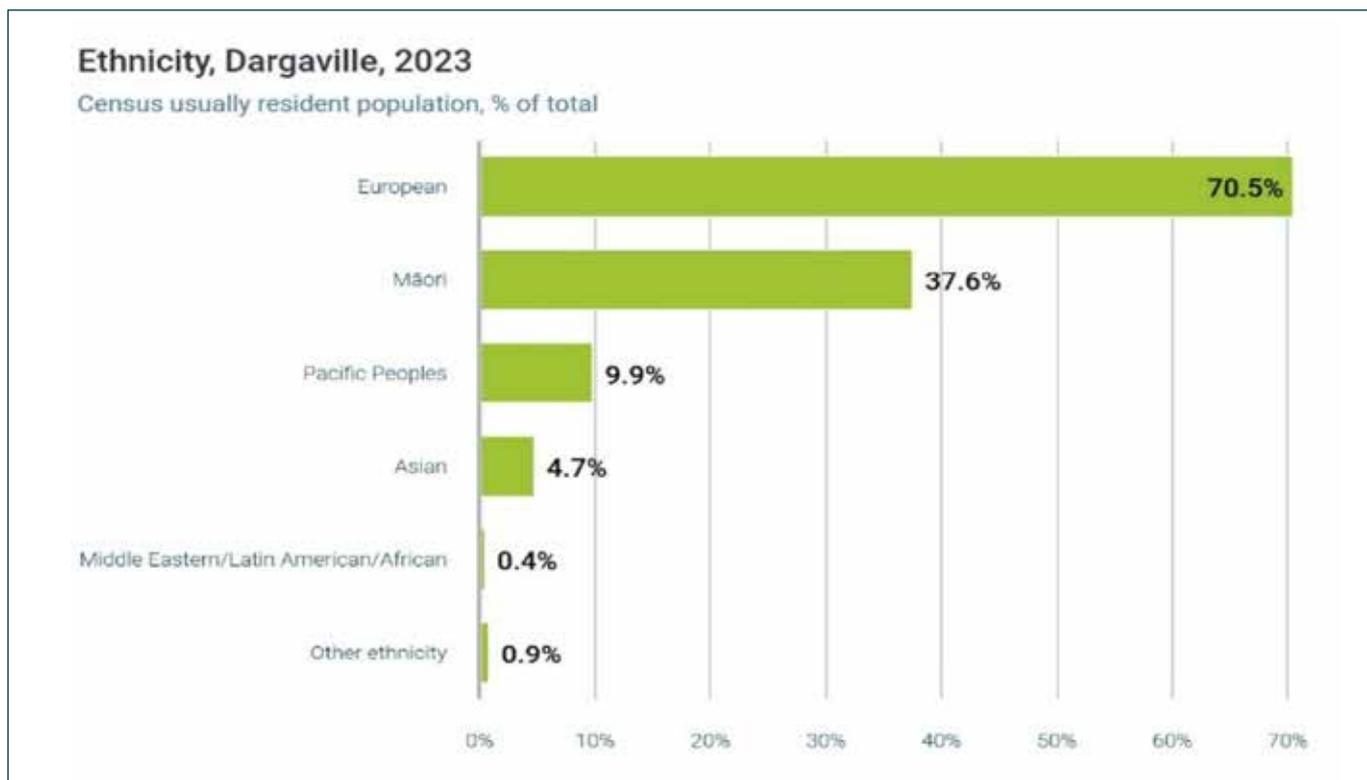


Figure 25: Ethnicity of the Dargaville urban area (Infometrics, 2026a)

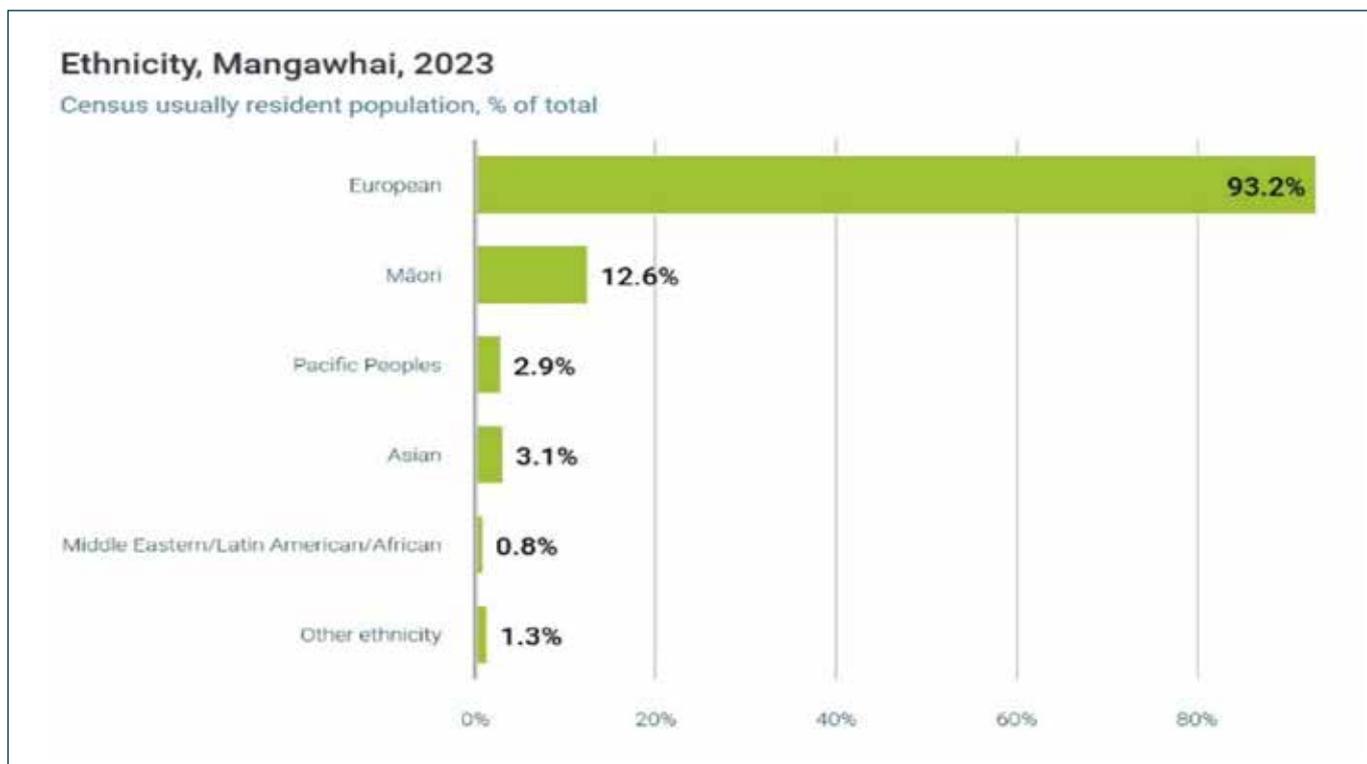


Figure 26: Ethnicity of the Mangawhai area (Infometrics, 2026a)

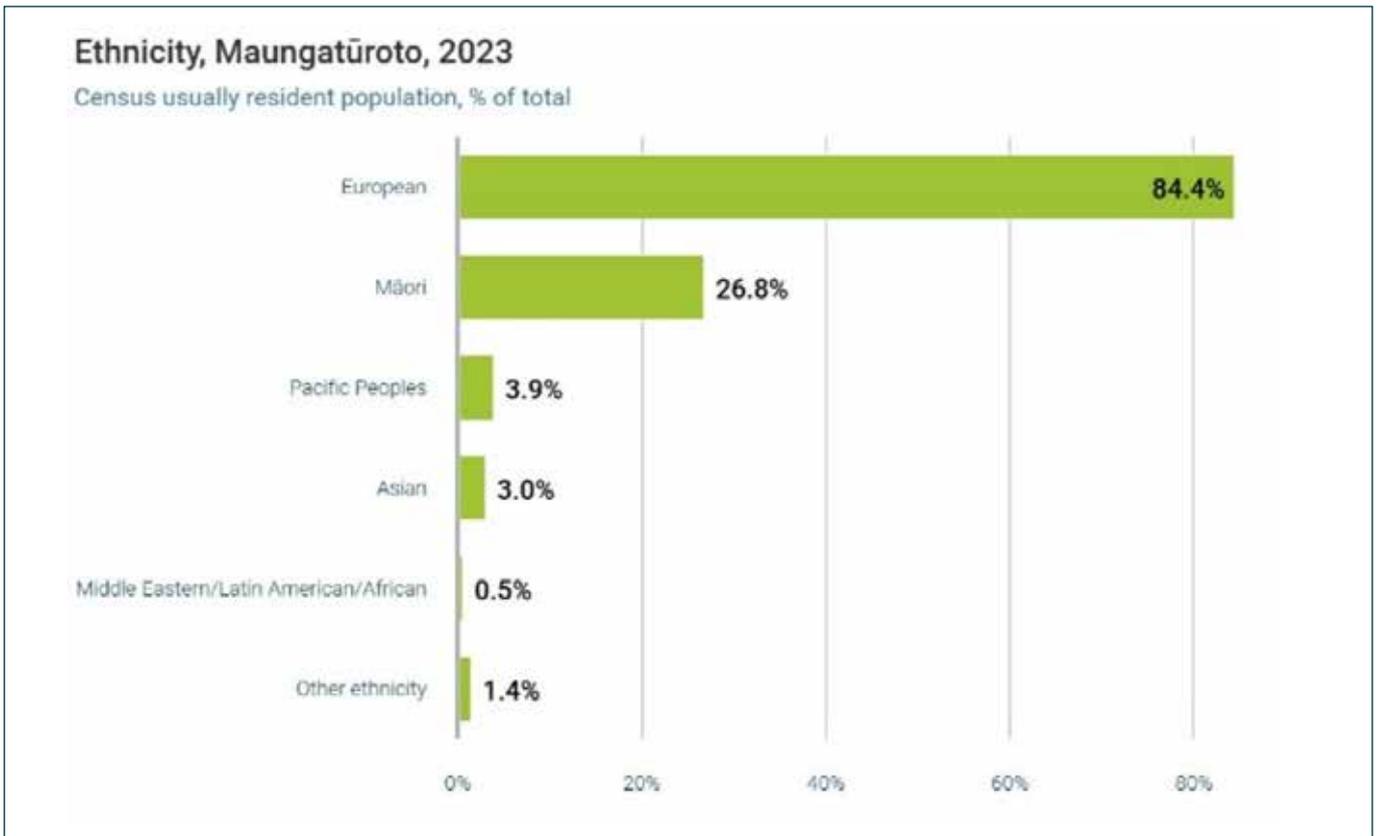


Figure 27: Ethnicity of the Maungatūroto urban area (Infometrics, 2026a)

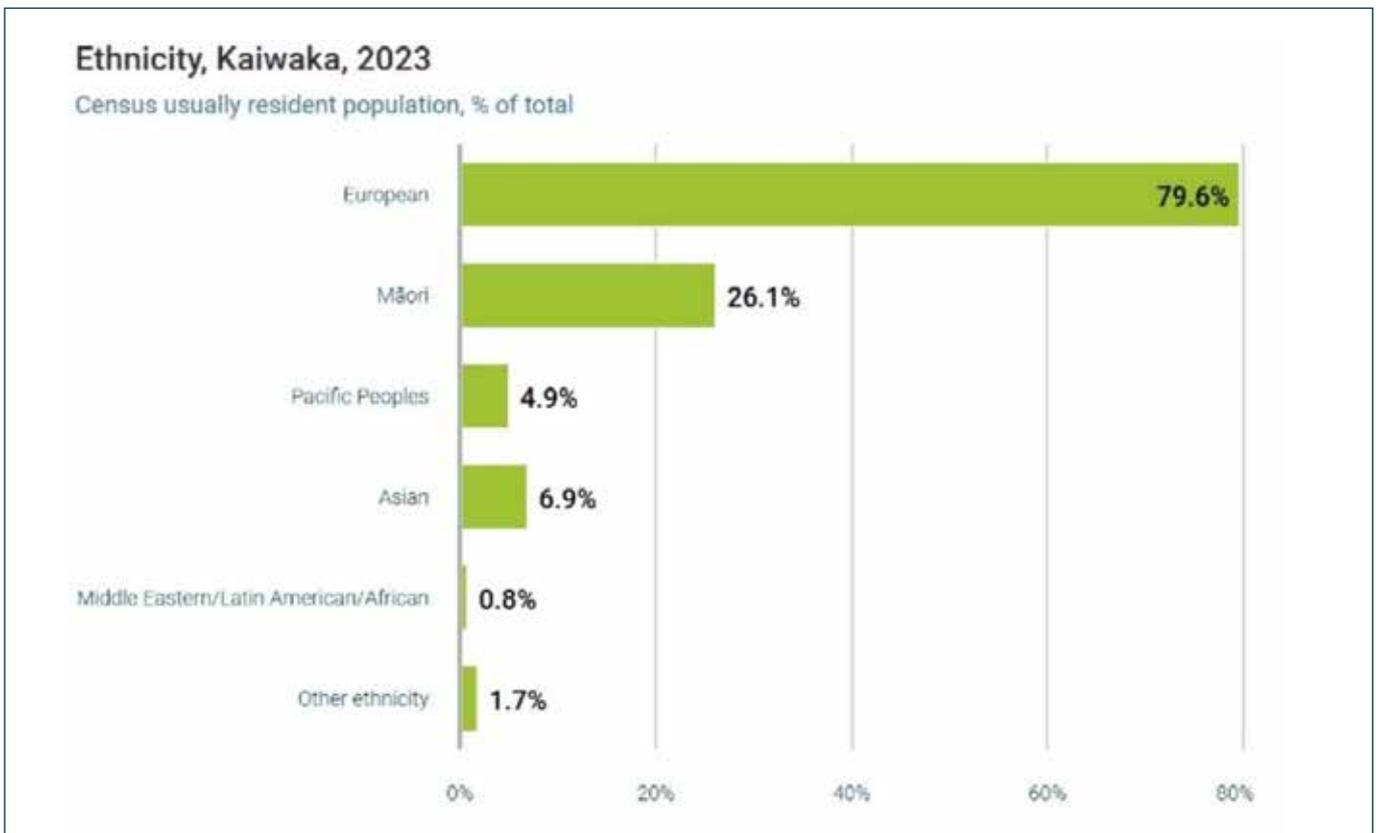


Figure 28: Ethnicity of the Kaiwaka (including Oneriri Peninsular) area (Infometrics, 2026a)



5 Economy – Our Livelihoods

[Section 5 has been prepared for Kaipara District Council by Infometrics]

Authorship

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5.1 Wider economic context

Slower global growth to weigh on export demand growth

Future growth expectations were relatively muted for the next few years prior to the US tariff announcements earlier this year. Weaker expectations for growth in both China and North America has weighed on the outlook for global growth.

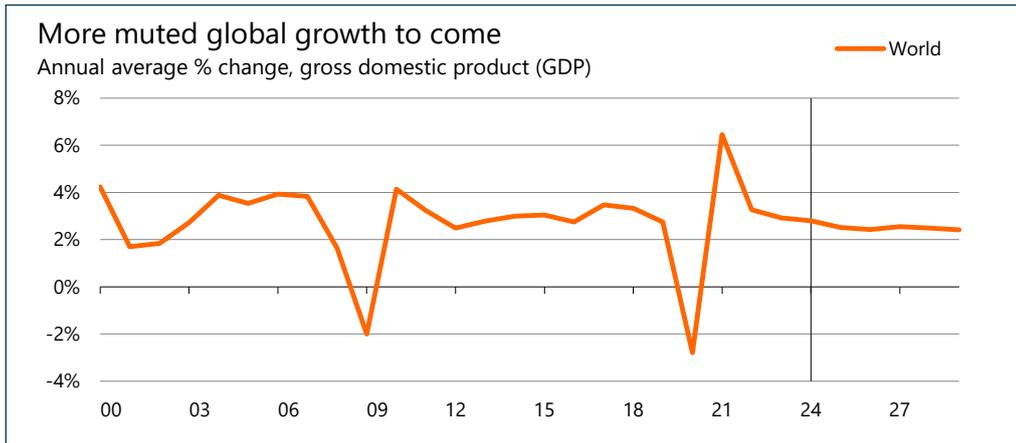
China continues to deal with a property market slump following the default of Evergrande Group, triggered by an oversupply of property. China is set to grow slower than its government-mandated 5.0% economic growth target, with expected growth of 4.8%pa and 4.3%pa in 2025 and 2026 respectively.

Expectations for the US remain lower with employment growth slowing, indicating a clear slowdown in economic growth to come, as the US economy is expected to grow just 1.7%pa in 2026, slower than the 2.3%pa average between 2014 and 2023.

Expectations have settled over recent months following a volatile period caused by the on-again, off-again nature of the "reciprocal tariffs", additional tariffs for individual countries, sector targeted tariffs, and trade negotiations. But there remains risks to future global growth given the relatively unknown effects of the US tariff policies implemented in 2025.

The global economy is expected to grow 2.4%pa over the next 10 years, which is relatively slow compared to the 3.0%pa average over the 10-year period prior to the pandemic (see Chart 1).

Chart 1



Source: World Bank, Consensus forecasts

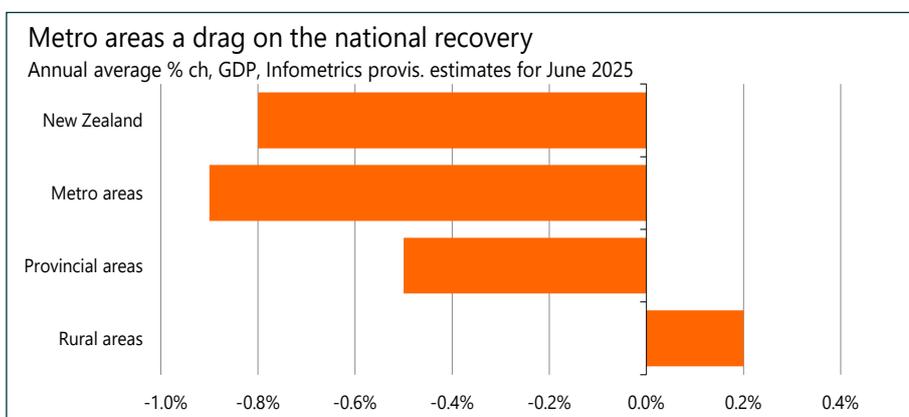
Slower global growth is expected to weigh on the NZ economy as growth in demand for our exports slows. Slower growth in major economies such as China and the US is particularly pertinent to NZ growth given our reliance on exports for growth and as the two nations our are first and second largest export markets respectively.

Primary sector driving the NZ economic recovery

The economic downturn in New Zealand has been more severe and prolonged than forecast. The six-month period between April and September 2024 was the largest fall for NZ’s economic activity since the first half of 1991, excluding the 2020 lockdown. The recovery since has been uneven, with primary sector returns growing strongly off the back of a prolonged period of 12-18 months of strong commodity prices. The NZ economy shrank 0.8% over the year to June 2025 compared to the year prior.¹

The contribution of primary sector returns is evident across differences in economic growth between regional groupings. Metro areas have declined more sharply than the national average, contracting 0.9% over the year to June 2025 compared to the year prior. Provincial areas declined 0.5% in contrast to rural areas which grew 0.2% over the same period (see Chart 2).

Chart 2



Source: Infometrics

¹ Infometrics (2025) Slow economic recovery starts for most regions – Note our initial estimate is likely to be revised higher to 1.1% following the outsized drop in economic growth in the official GDP Stats NZ release for June 2025.



The underwhelming economic recovery has pushed the Reserve Bank towards additional interest rate cuts and raised pressure on the government to support a recovery via infrastructure spending. We expect these factors, along with strong export returns and a turnaround in the labour market, driving economic growth up to 2.3% pa by early 2027.

Sluggish global economic growth and uncertain international trade conditions, alongside weak net migration and the stagnant housing market provide near-term downside risks to economic growth. As the Reserve Bank cut rates further into stimulatory territory, with the official cash rate (OCR) expected to reach a low for this cycle of 2.25% before the end of 2025, there are risks that officials could overdo the stimulus, leading to faster economic growth by late 2026, increasing the need to ramp up interest rates to neutral (around 3.0%).

Some unavoidable cost-of-living pressures still coming through

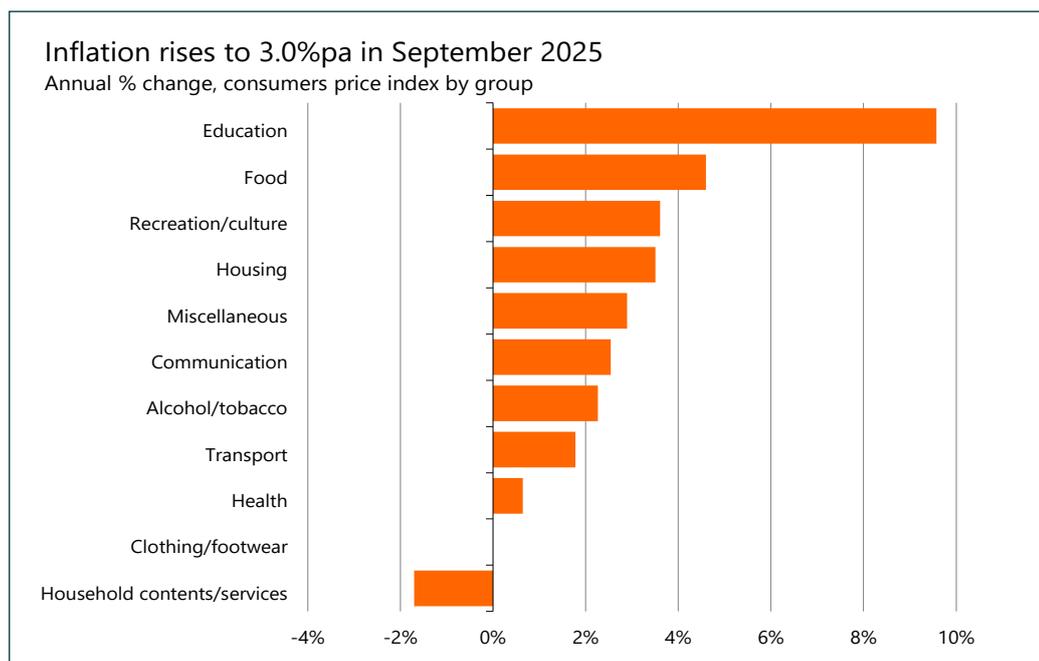
The consumers price index (CPI) rose 3.0%pa in the September quarter, up from 2.7%pa in June. Inflation is now at the top of the Reserve Bank’s target band of 1-3%pa, although this was anticipated.

Electricity prices rose 11%pa, the highest since March 1989, when there were major electricity market reforms. Retail prices rose to reflect increases in line charges as electricity distribution businesses and Transpower are both ramping up investment in electricity infrastructure.

Local government rates and charges rose 8.8%pa, down from 12% in 2024, but the increase follows on significant increases over the previous three years.

Both electricity and local government rates and charges are a part of the housing group, which more broadly saw a 3.5%pa rise (see Chart 3).

Chart 3



Source: Stats NZ

Food prices (4.6%pa) rose strongly but are highly seasonal and should ease back in coming quarters. Major contributors to the rise were milk, cheese and eggs (11%pa), meat and poultry (8.3%pa), and vegetables (7.1%pa). Global dairy prices have pulled back 21% from their May 2025 peak, so milk and cheese prices faced by consumers should pull back in future quarters. Meat price growth has been driven by a lack of supply in the global market place for both beef and lamb. Vegetable prices, along with dairy, should pull back in future quarters, helping to bring the headline food inflation rate down.

The 9.6%pa increase in the education group was driven by Fees Free for the first year of study or training ending at the end of 2024, replaced by final-year Fees Free from 1 January 2025.

Under the hood, core inflation pressures appear to be contained, and are expected to head back towards 2.0%pa in 2026.

Highlighted by electricity, food and local government rates increases, the largest contributors to the recent reacceleration in inflation were across goods and services which are largely unavoidable for households, adding to cost-of-living pressures which have persisted through recent years.

Primary sector helping Kaipara show relative strength

The Kaipara economy has showed relative strength as the NZ economy has faltered, growing 0.5% in the year to June 2025 compared to the year prior. The Northland Regional economy followed national growth trends, contracting 0.7% over the same period. The difference between declines in economic activity in Northland and growth in Kaipara is largely due to the performance of the primary sector. Agriculture, forestry and fishing industries make up 23% of total activity in Kaipara, but just 10% in the wider Northland region. Improved prices across meat, dairy and horticulture over the 18 months to June 2025 has supported the economy recovery in Kaipara.

Despite positive performance in the primary sector, forestry and logging has not performed as strongly. The industry accounted for 3.0% of total GDP in Kaipara in the year to March 2024. International demand for forestry products has been weak due to the downturn in the construction sector in China as the industry deals with an oversupply of housing that arose in 2022. Domestic demand for forestry products has remained soft as well, with residential construction volumes, adjusted for building cost inflation, falling 10%pa over the year to June 2025.

The decline in construction activity has also likely weighed on the recovery in Kaipara as the construction sector contributed to 7.9% of total GDP in Kaipara in 2024. Annual residential consents fell to just 90 in the year to June 2024, well below the 2022 peak of 276, indicating a decline in construction activity over the year to June 2025.

Relative resilience in the Kaipara labour market is also a sign of strength in the district as employment grew at 3.4%pa over the year to June, and growth has outpaced NZ-wide and Northland growth for almost four years.

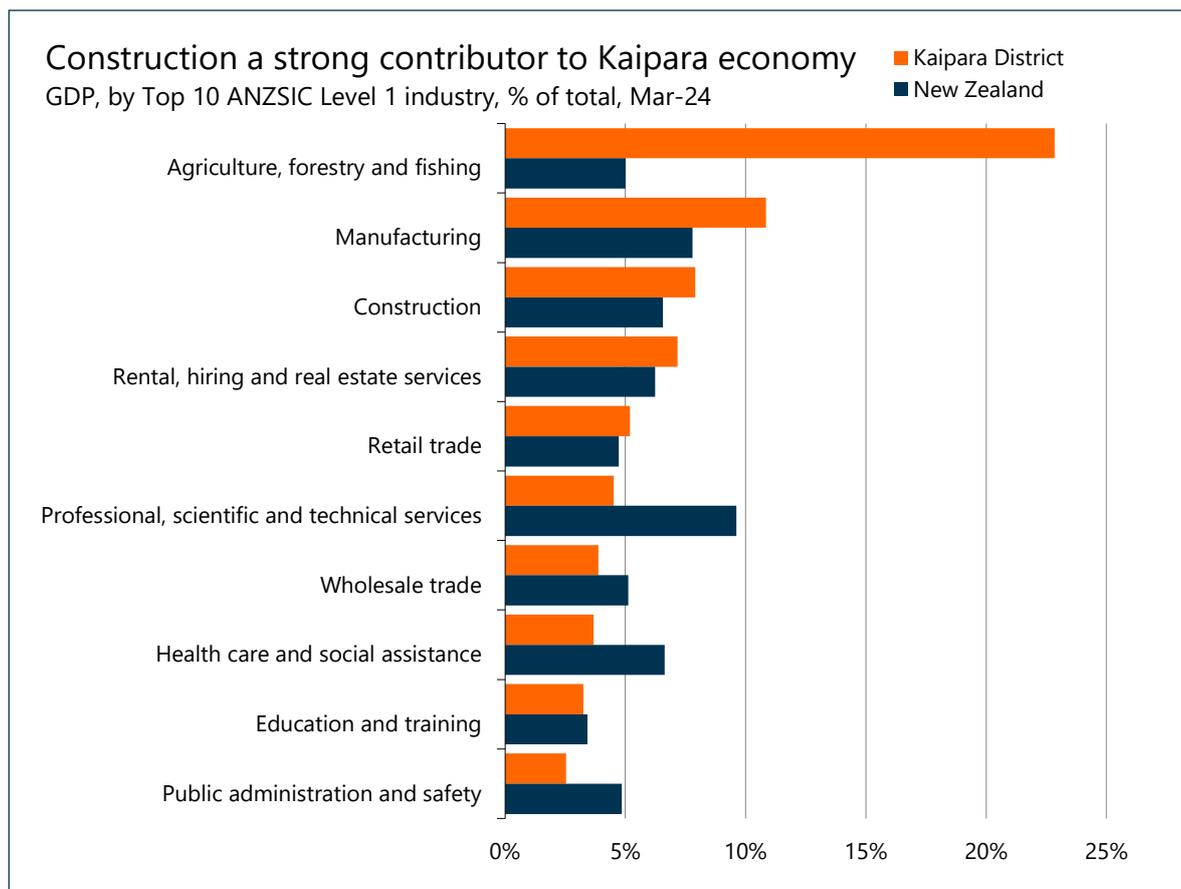


5.2 Kaipara’s economy

Economy led by primary sector, manufacturing and construction

The Kaipara economy is driven by agriculture, forestry, and fishing which contributed to 23% of economic output in the district over the year to March 2024. The largest contributors were dairy cattle farming (11%), sheep, beef cattle and grain farming (4.4%), forestry and logging (3.0%), and horticulture and fruit growing (2.3%). Nationally, the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry accounts for just 5.0% of the economy (see Chart 4).

Chart 4



Source: Infometrics

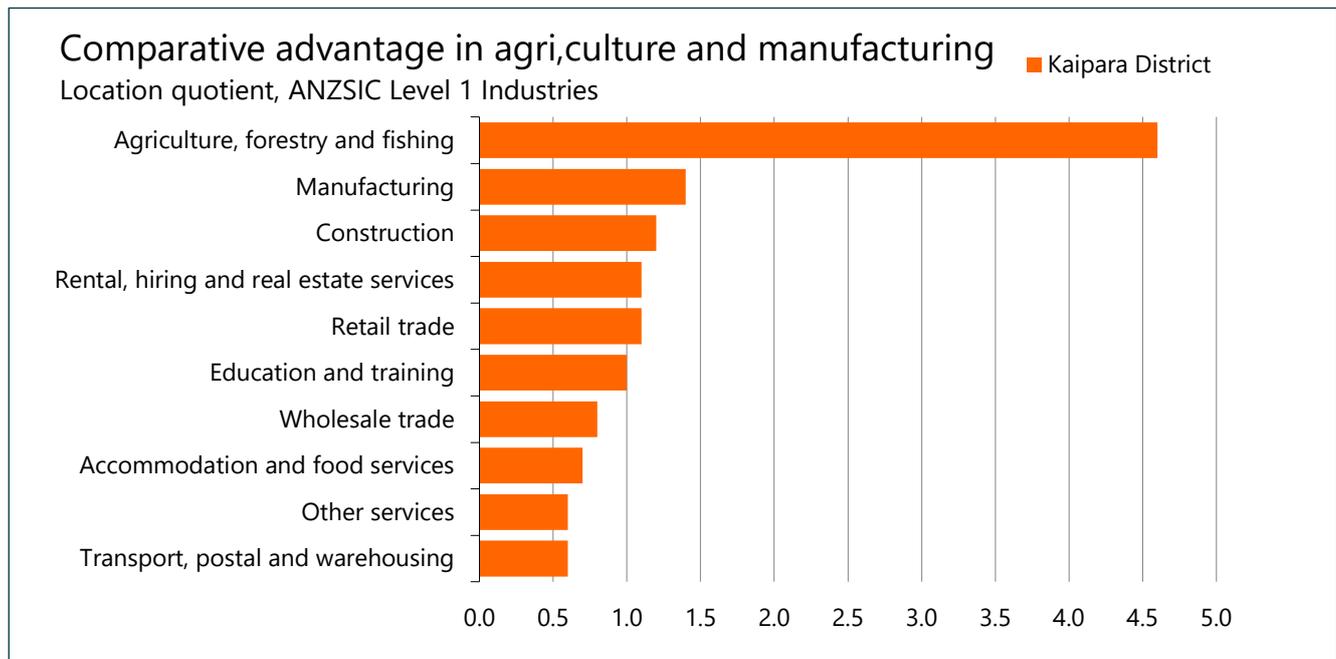
The manufacturing industry (11%) supports the primary sector and its performance in Kaipara is strongly align with the performance of the primary sector. The Silver Fern Farms Dargaville plant and Fonterra’s Maungatūroto manufacturing facility support broader output in the meat and dairy industries.

Construction (7.9%) was another major contributor to economic output in Kaipara, particularly in Mangawhai where population growth has been stronger than other areas of the district.

Comparative advantage in agriculture and manufacturing

Kaipara has a high concentration of agriculture, forestry and fishing operations, indicating it has a particularly strong comparative advantage in producing products and services at a lower opportunity cost than other regions of New Zealand. This has likely resulted from a mix of natural land endowments, proximity to major ports, and a skilled workforce that has been developed over time (see Chart 5).

Chart 5



Source: Infometrics

Kaipara also has strong comparative advantages in manufacturing and construction. A comparative advantage in manufacturing has likely been built up from a legacy in meat, dairy and wood product manufacturing, which has fostered a labour force with relevant skills. A comparative advantage in construction has likely been built over the last decade due to population growth which drove consents, and construction activity in the district.

Tourism employment recovering post-pandemic

Tourism employment moderated as the borders closed during the pandemic, with tourism employment falling from 635 in the year to March 2020 to a low of 500 in 2022. Tourism employment has recovered to 725, the highest number of people employed in the sector since 2011.

Tourism employment as a share of total employment in Kaipara fell to a low of 5.6% in 2022 and equated to 7.9% in 2024. Tourism's share of employment peaked at just above 11% in 2008.

Tourism employment has consistently been a lower share of Kaipara's total employment than the regional average, but the gap has closed significantly in recent years. Northlands tourism employment share is now 8.2% (see Chart 6). In other words, Kaipara's tourism sector has grown faster than tourism across the rest of Northland.



Chart 6



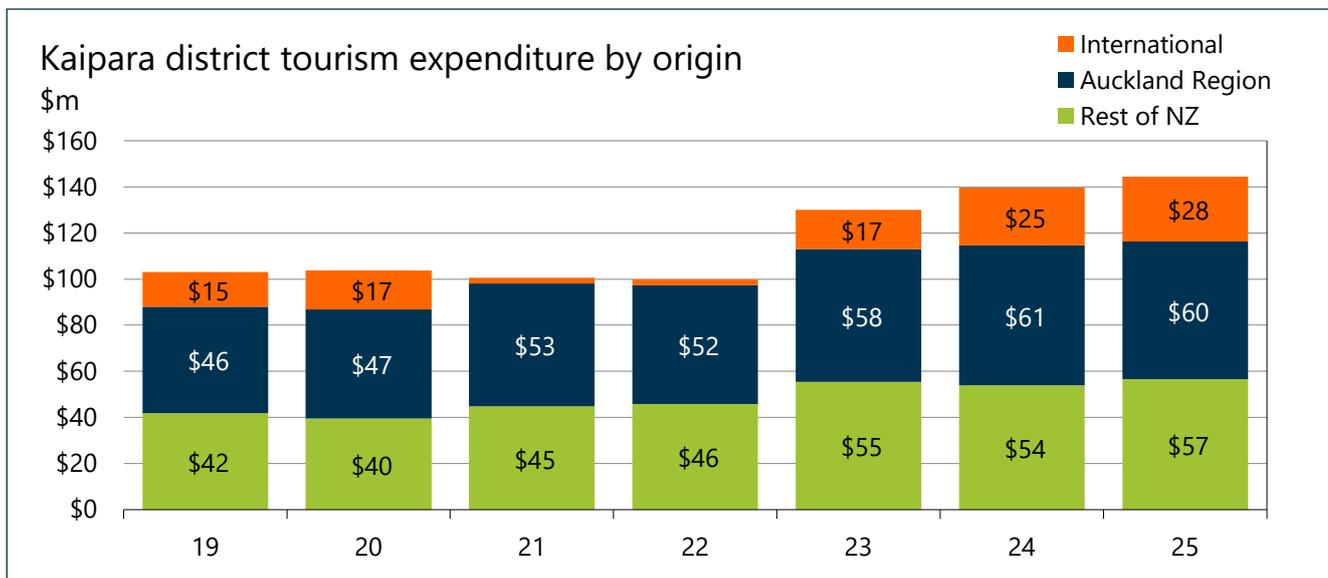
Source: Infometrics

Auckland tourism employment is lagging at 5.3%, as is the broader recovery in tourism. This is largely a function of the slower recovery in international tourism arrivals. Tourism expenditure by international visitors in the year to March 2025 made up 46% of total tourism expenditure in Auckland, compared to just 20% in Kaipara and 25% in Northland.

Auckland remains largest tourism market for Kaipara

The origin of Kaipara’s tourists has shifted over time as New Zealand’s borders were closed and then reopened. However, Auckland residents have remained the largest single tourism market for Kaipara over the past seven years at least. Chart 7 shows that in the year to March 2025, Auckland residents spent \$60m in Kaipara, and residents from the rest of New Zealand spent a similar amount, \$57m. Spending by international visitors has steadily recovered since New Zealand’s borders reopened in 2022, however, this only totalled \$28m in 2025, less than half the spending of Auckland residents.

Chart 7



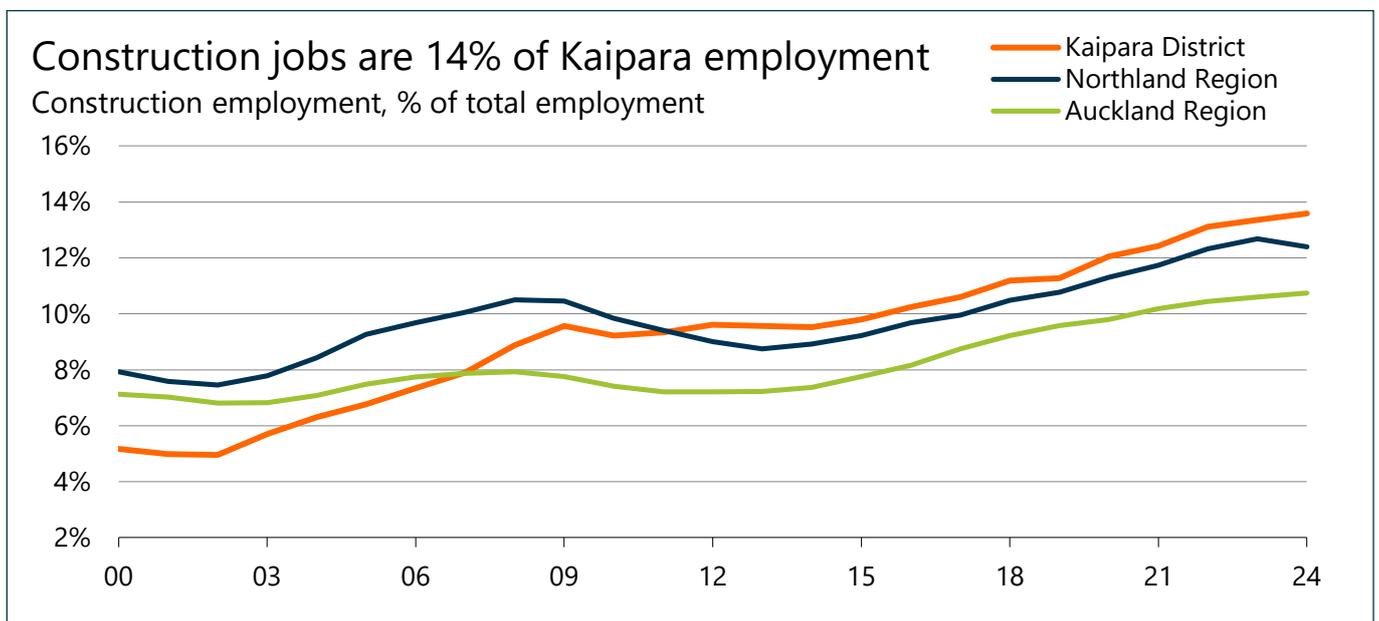
Source: Infometrics, MBIE

International visitor spending has lifted from 15% of all spending in Kaipara in 2019 to 20% in 2025. By comparison, international spending made up 25% of tourist spending across Northland Region and 46% across Auckland. There may be some opportunity for Kaipara to capture more of the international tourist activity taking place in Auckland and the rest of Northland, but Auckland residents are likely to remain the largest market for Kaipara.

Construction an important part of the Kaipara economy

The construction industry has grown substantially over the past 10 years across Kaipara, Northland, and Auckland. In the year to March 2024, there were 1,246 people employed in the construction sector in Kaipara, equating to 14% of total employment in the district. Construction’s share of employment in Kaipara is higher than Northland (12%) and Auckland (11%) (see Chart 8).

Chart 8



Source: Infometrics

Construction is important for the Kaipara economy as it has seen significant population growth over the past decade, adding 5,300 people over the 10 years to June 2025. The size of Kaipara’s construction sector is closely linked to the growth of the district’s population. Although the district currently has ample subdivision opportunities, future development – and the resulting construction industry jobs – will rely on national macroeconomic conditions being favourable. That is, low mortgage interest rates and a solid to growing outlook for house prices.



5.3 Evolution of the Kaipara economy

Primary sector’s share of the economy has declined

The primary sector made up 44% of the Kaipara economy in 2000 and largely retained its share until falling below the 40% threshold in 2007. Since 2007, the primary sector’s share of the economy has declined on a consistent basis, reaching a low of 27% in 2022 and 2023. Primary sector output has been steady over this period in real terms – but other parts of the economy have grown, diluting the primary sector’s share.

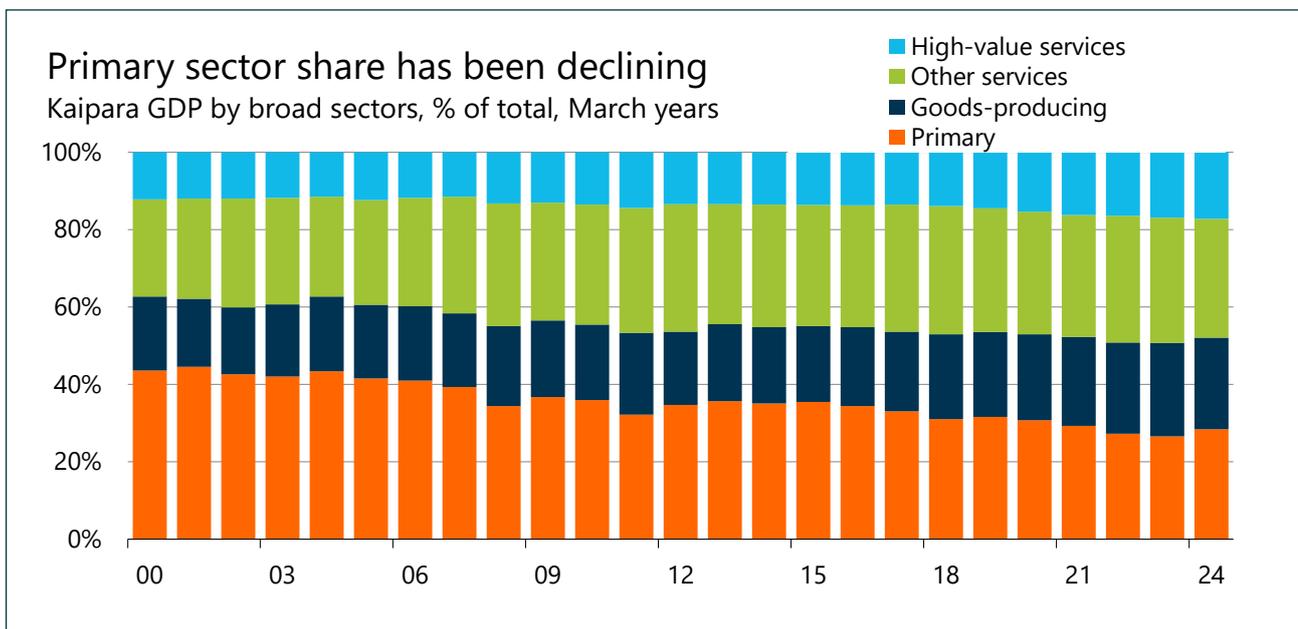
As the primary sector’s share has declined, the other three broad sectors shares have all increased. Goods-producing industries (24%) contribute almost a quarter of the total GDP in Kaipara, having trended up from 19% in 2000 (see Chart 9).

Growth in high-value and other services sectors has been significant, together making up 48% of the Kaipara economy in 2024. Much of this has been related to the construction of new dwellings and the operation of related services.

Construction services’ share of the Kaipara economy has grown sharply as Kaipara and its population has grown, contributing to 1.84% of GDP in 2000, rising to 3.86% in 2024.

Rental, hiring and real estate services has grown 2.8%pa since 2000, ahead of the broader Kaipara economy (2.2%pa).

Chart 9

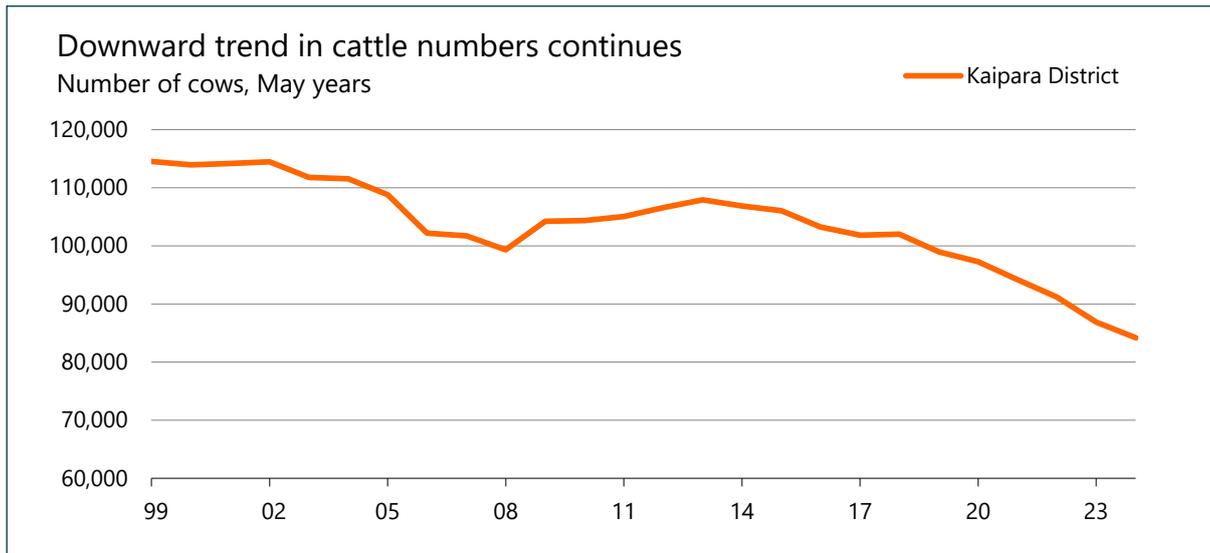


Source: Infometrics

Cow numbers have been reducing significantly

The dairy farming sector has undergone significant change over the past decade, with the Kaipara herd size reducing by 21% since 2014. The number of cows in Kaipara fell below 100,000 in 2019 for the first time since 2008 and in 2025 was just above 84,000 (see Chart 10).

Chart 10



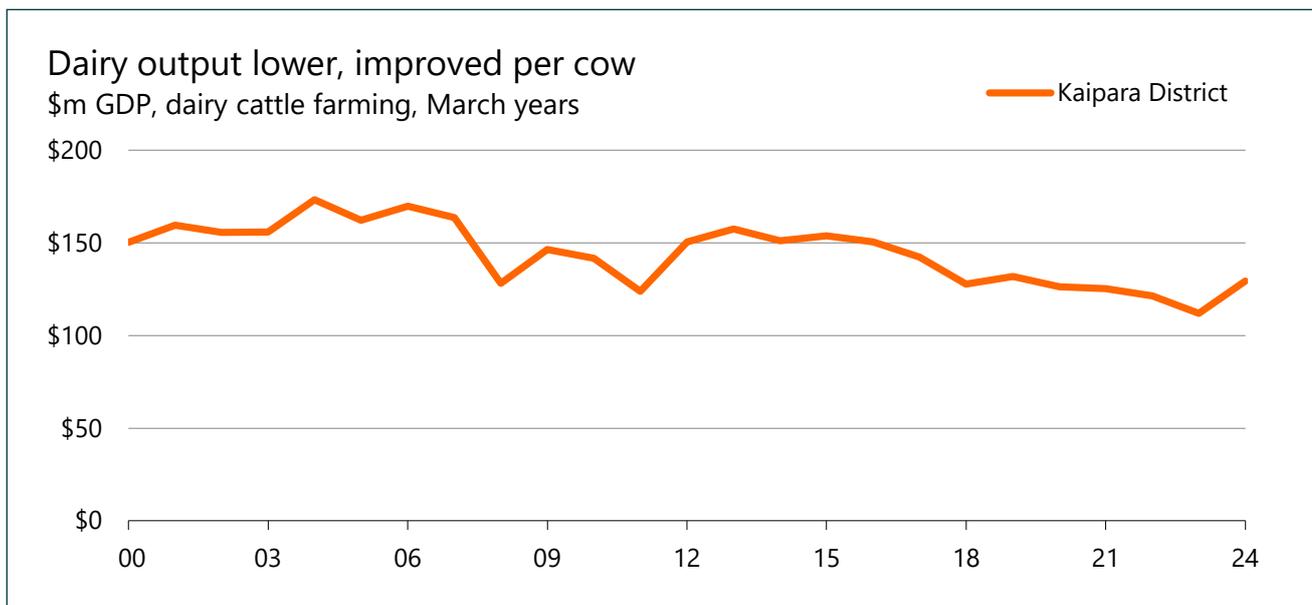
Source: DairyNZ, LIC, Infometrics

Since 2014, the area of land in dairy production in Kaipara has fallen 15%, less than the fall in herd size, which implies a marginal increase in the intensity of the remaining dairy farms.

Dairy GDP has fallen, productivity has risen

Lower cow numbers have resulted in a downward trend in real GDP produced by the dairy farming industry. Although, to a lesser extent than the cattle figures suggest as the farming sector has become much more productive per cow over the past two decades. The dairy farming sector contributed to \$129m of GDP in Kaipara (see Chart 11), equating to just under 11% of total GDP. Despite a 21% reduction in the number of cows since 2014, the industry's GDP has only fallen 14%. The number of people employed in dairy farming in Kaipara has fallen 33% since 2014, highlighting a significant increase in GDP per worker.

Chart 11



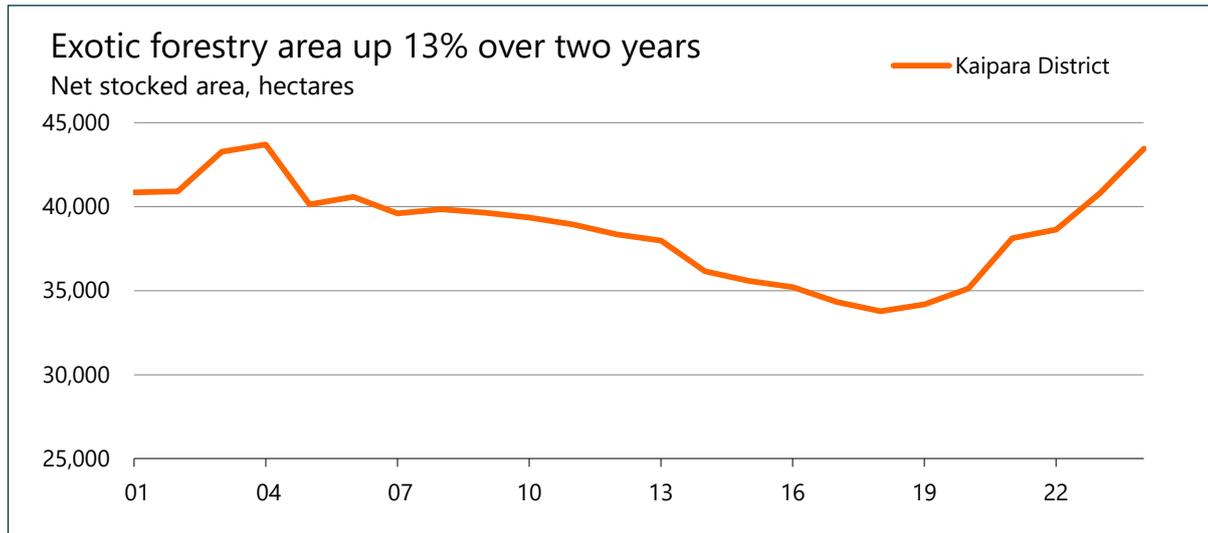
Source: Infometrics



Incentives remain present for carbon forestry

The net stocked area of exotic forestry fell to a low in 2018 at just under 34,000ha and grew steadily at 3.4%pa over the four years to 2022. Growth accelerated in more recent years, rising a total of 13% over the two years to 2024. The total net stocked area of exotic forestry in Kaipara is approaching the 2004 peak, now sitting at just under 43,500ha. (see Chart 12)

Chart 12



Source: Ministry for Primary Industries

Legislation changes by the government to NZ’s climate change law² in November 2025 sent the carbon price plummeting from \$52/NZU to \$33/NZU, before improving to \$44/NZU.

Despite the recent dip in prices incentives still remain for carbon forestry, which should see the net stocked area of exotic forestry in Kaipara continue to rise.

5.4 Kaipara’s economic performance

Economic output rising despite headwinds

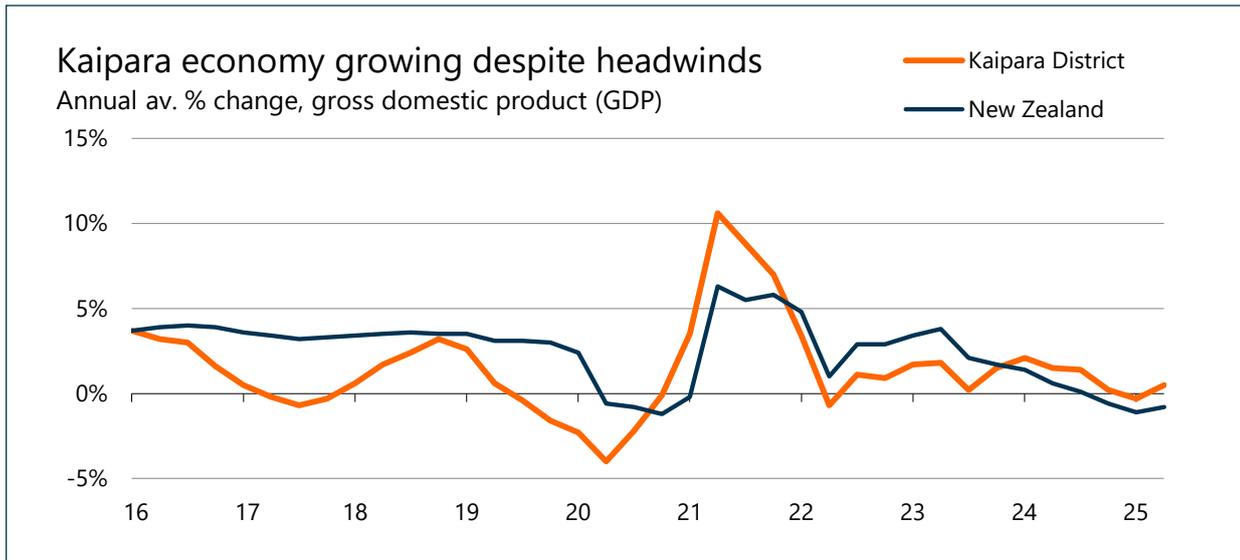
The Kaipara economy managed positive growth in the year to June 2025, expanding 0.5%pa from the year prior, compared to a 0.8%pa decline nationally.

Over the past decade, the Kaipara economy has grown 1.9%pa on average, slightly ahead of the Northland region (1.7%pa) and slower than national GDP which has grown 2.4%pa on average. (see Chart 13)

Kaipara GDP growth has largely moved with population growth in the district, as population growth averaged 2.2%pa over the past 10 years. This suggests the source of economic growth has been driven by more people contributing to the economy through population growth rather than improvements in productivity. Whereas national level economic growth outpaced the 1.5%pa population growth over the same period.

² Ministry for the Environment (2025), Government announces a series of changes to NZ’s climate change law - <https://environment.govt.nz/news/government-announces-a-series-of-changes-to-nzs-climate-change-law/>

Chart 13



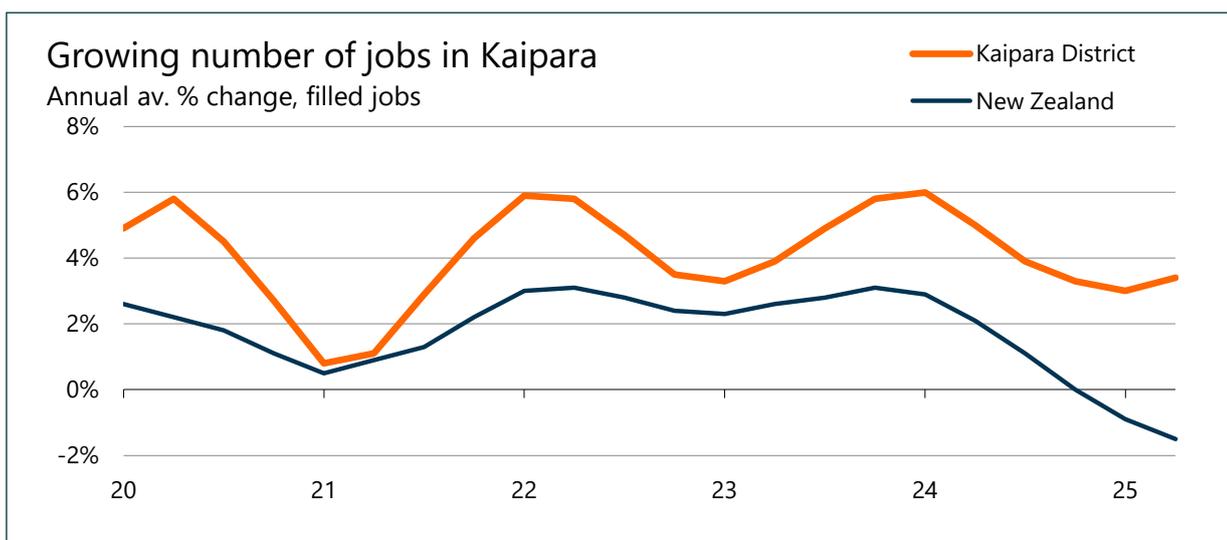
Source: Infometrics, Stats NZ

5.5 Employment growth showing strength

The number of filled jobs in Kaipara District has consistently grown faster than the national average for the past five years. The annual average number of filled jobs (place of residence) in Kaipara in the year to June 2025 was 8,828, increasing by 294 filled jobs from June 2024.

The number of filled jobs in the year to June 2025 grew 3.4% compared to the year to June 2024, whereas at the national level, employment fell 1.5% (see Chart 14).

Chart 14



Source: Stats NZ

The largest contributors to growth in the June 2025 quarter, compared to the same quarter in the June 2024 were retail trade, arts and recreation, and education. While employment fell in a small number of industries including administration and support services, manufacturing, and information and telecommunications.

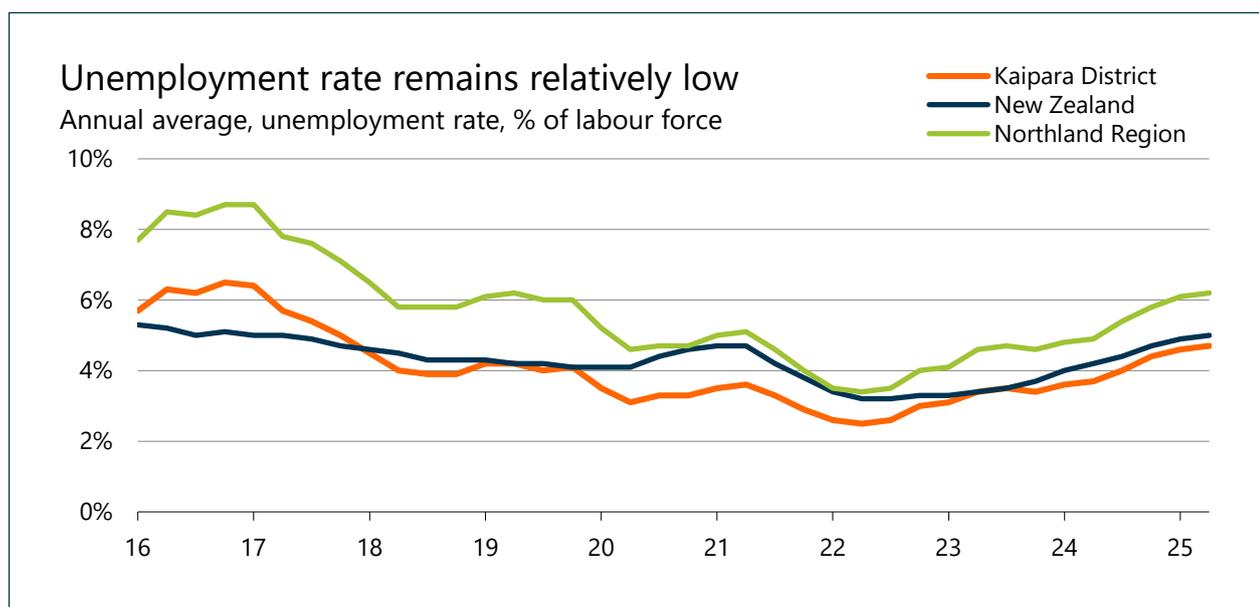


Unemployment rising, remains low comparatively

The national economic decline has weighed heavily on the labour market, as weak consumer spending resulting from higher mortgage rates has seen the unemployment rate rise to 5.2% in the June 2025 quarter, the highest rate since the COVID-19 peak in September 2020, and before that, December 2016.

Kaipara has tended to have a lower unemployment rate than the wider Northland region. Since 2020, Kaipara has had a lower unemployment rate than the national average as well. The annual average unemployment rate in Kaipara in June 2025 was 4.7%, lower than both the Northland region (6.2%) and NZ (5.0%) over the same period (see Chart 15).

Chart 15



Source: Infometrics, Stats NZ

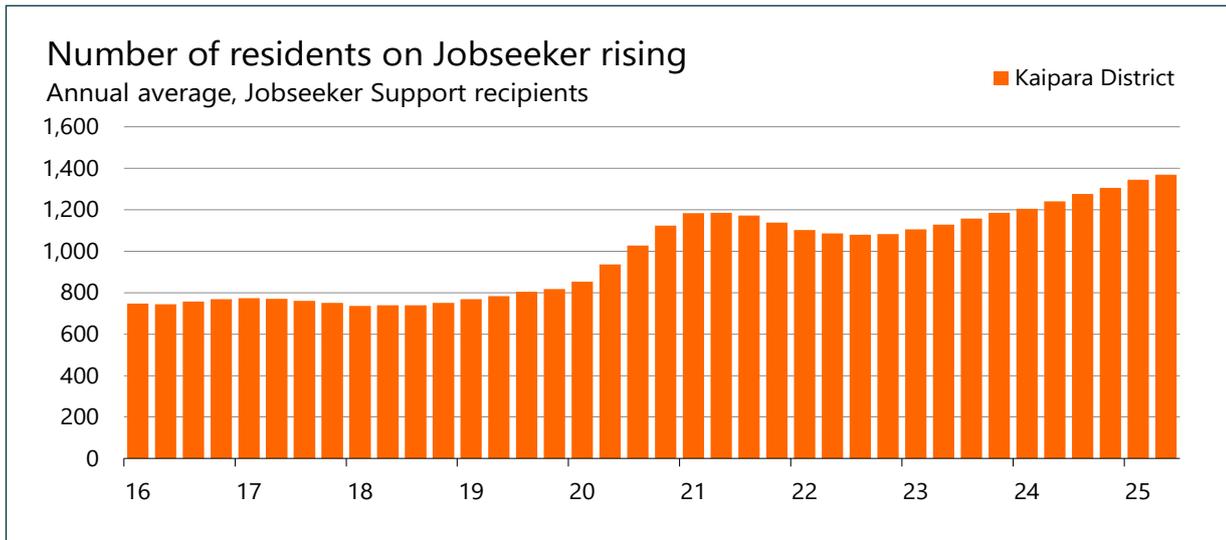
The labour market is beginning to slowly turn, with the national unemployment rate in the September 2025 quarter rising to 5.3% expected to be the last increase for this cycle. The labour market is usually the final part of the economy to turnaround as the economy recovers, so this outlook along with job advertisements beginning to rise from a low bodes well for a recovery in the final part of 2025 and in early 2026.

Number of beneficiaries rising

The annual average number of Jobseeker Support recipients in Kaipara has risen by 10.3% (128 people) (see Chart 16) in the year to June 2025 compared to a year earlier. The total number of Jobseeker Support Recipients in Kaipara was 1,369, higher than the pandemic peak by 184 people. This difference reflects a combination of both the increase in population in the district and the state of the labour market.

Although the increase in the number of Jobseeker Support recipients has been sharp in Kaipara, the increase has been less pronounced than the 12% increase nationally.

Chart 16



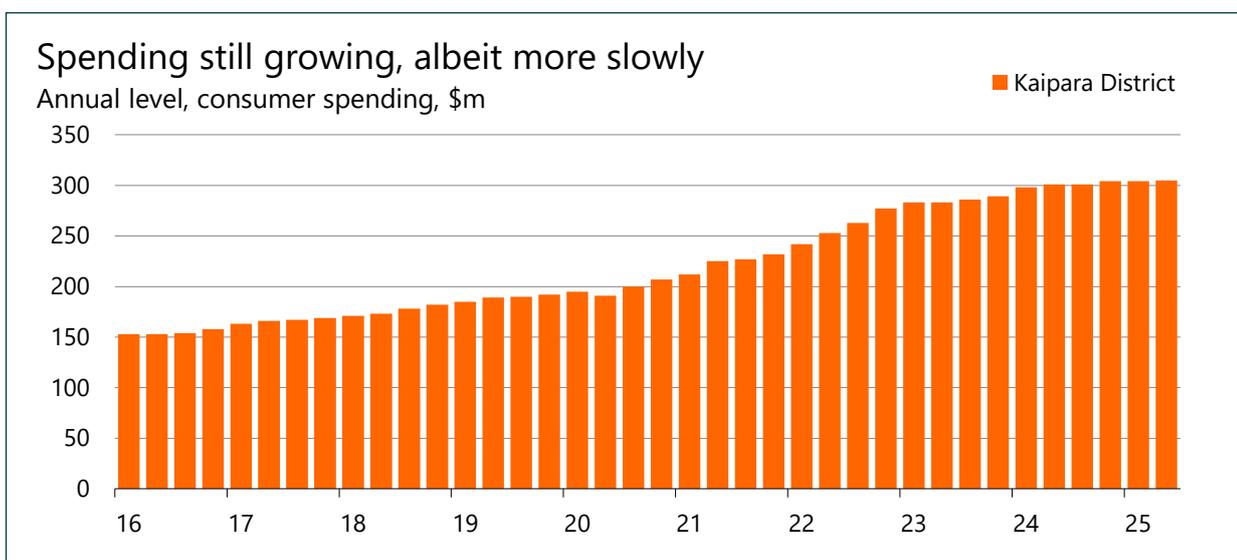
Source: Infometrics, Ministry of Social Development (MSD)

Consumer spending grew despite difficult conditions

Consumer spending in Kaipara has bucked the national trend by growing 1.3% in the year to June 2025 compared to a year earlier. Spending in Northland (-0.6%) and NZ (-1.7%) have fallen in 2025 for the first time since the pandemic. It appears that Kaipara’s strength in consumer spending is driven by stronger consumer confidence, as the district’s population growth was similar to the national average over this period. Spending in Kaipara grew faster than local population growth yet spending across New Zealand fell behind while the population grew modestly.

Growth in consumer spending in Kaipara has been flattening over the past 18 months, with consumer spending in Kaipara totalling \$305m in the year to June 2025, as measured by Marketview (see Chart 17).

Chart 17



Source: Marketview

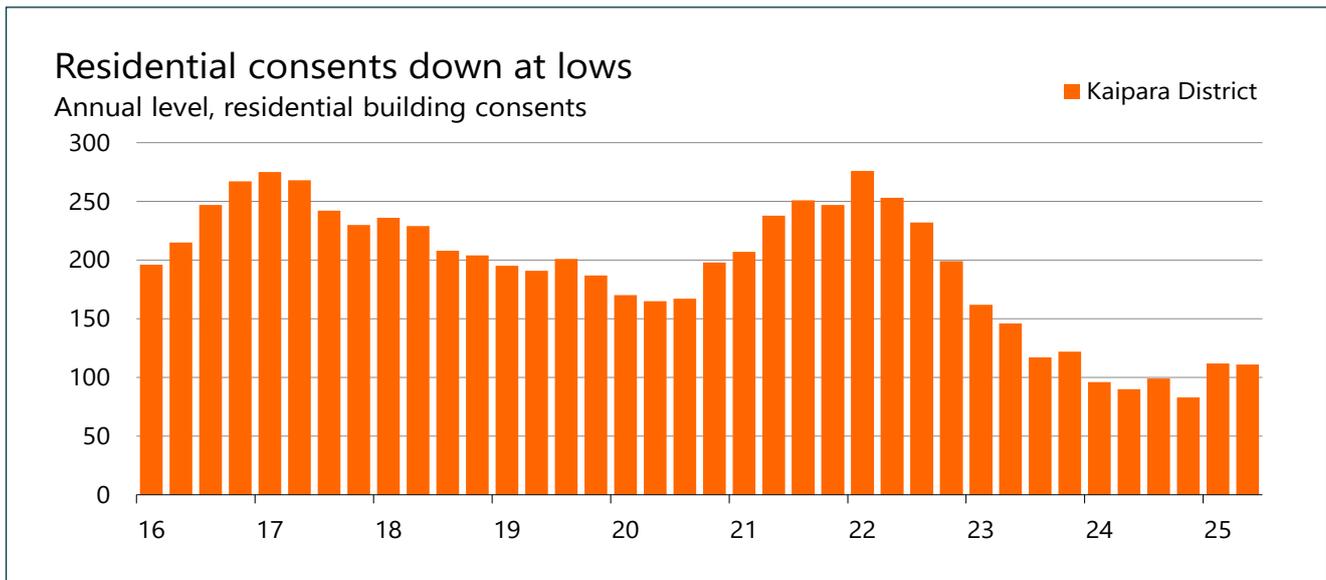


Residential consents lower following strong levels

The residential construction sector saw an unsustainable boom in activity following the pandemic as low interest rates (a government response to stimulate the economy) resulted in consents and construction activity soaring. As interest rates were hiked back up in response to the economy overheating and rising inflation, consents began to slow.

There were 111 residential building consents issued in Kaipara over the year to June 2025, up from a low of 83 in the year to December 2024 (see Chart 18).

Chart 18



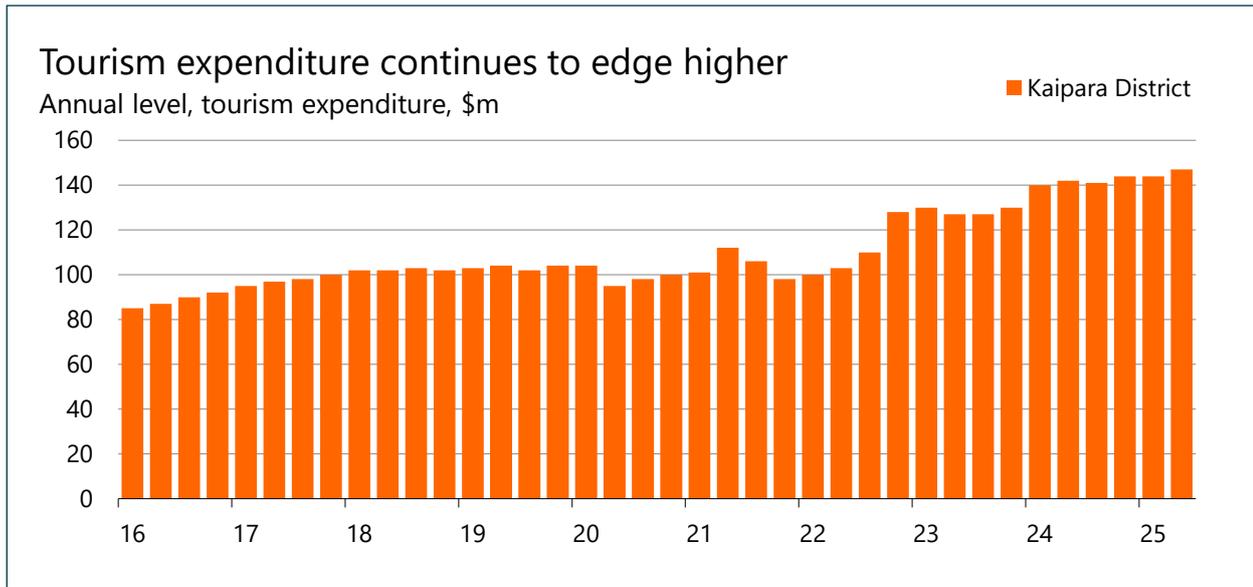
Source: Stats NZ

The overheated nature of residential consents in 2021/22 is less evident in Kaipara consenting figures, as the lift to a peak of 276 consents in the year to March 2022 was in-line with the previous boom five years earlier in response to strong population growth in Kaipara. This suggests that current levels of consents of around 100pa are a little on the low side and may rise a bit higher.

Tourism spending still growing

Tourism expenditure in Kaipara has continued to edge up, albeit more slowly than previously observed. Tourism expenditure over the year to June 2025 grew 3.5%, totalling \$147m in Kaipara (see Chart 19).

Chart 19



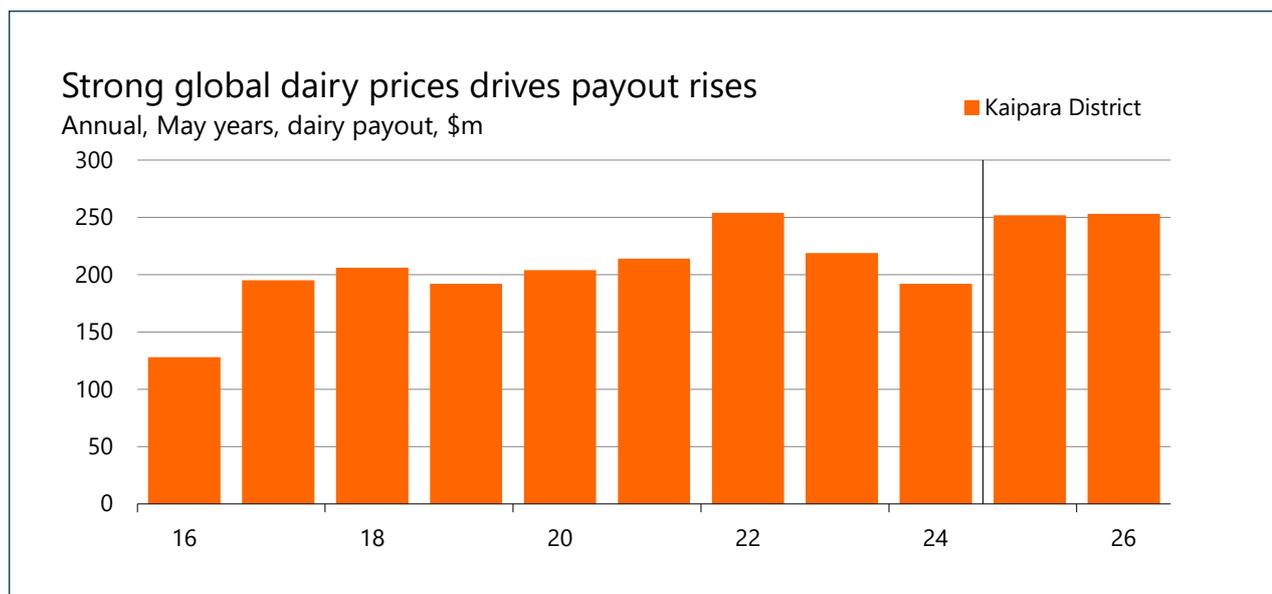
Source: Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)

Growth in tourism expenditure was much faster than in the wider Northland region, which grew just 0.2%pa in June 2025.

Strong dairy payout expected despite downside risks

The annual dairy payout for the season to May 2025 is estimated to have been \$252m, narrowly lower than the 2022 peak payout of \$254m. A solid payout is expected for the 25/26 season of \$253m (see Chart 20).

Chart 20



Source: Infometrics

There are some risks around the 25/26 payout lowering as global whole and skim milk powder have fallen 20% and 13% respectively since their peaks in May 2025.

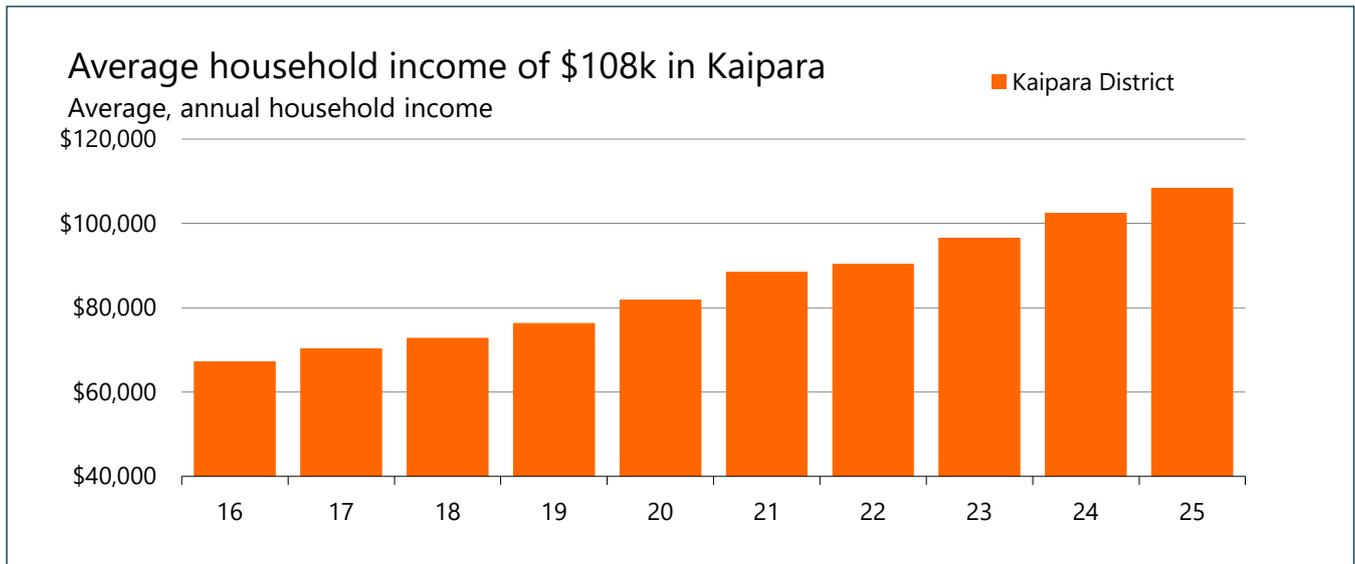


5.6 Living standards

Average household income reaches \$108k

The average household income in Kaipara rose 5.8% over the year to March 2025, rising to \$108,000pa (see Chart 21). Growth was much stronger than the national average which was more muted growth of 1.8%pa. This strong increase could have come about through attraction of higher-income migrants (such as from Auckland) rather than a uniform lift in incomes of existing residents.

Chart 21



Source: Infometrics

Kaipara household incomes remain well behind the national average of \$135,000pa, but in line with the Northland regional average of \$109,000pa.

In 2024, Kaipara household incomes were 23% below the national average, yet average earnings from employment in the district were only 15% below the national average. This difference suggests that the reasons for Kaipara’s lower household incomes are multi-faceted – including lower earnings, fewer people per household working.

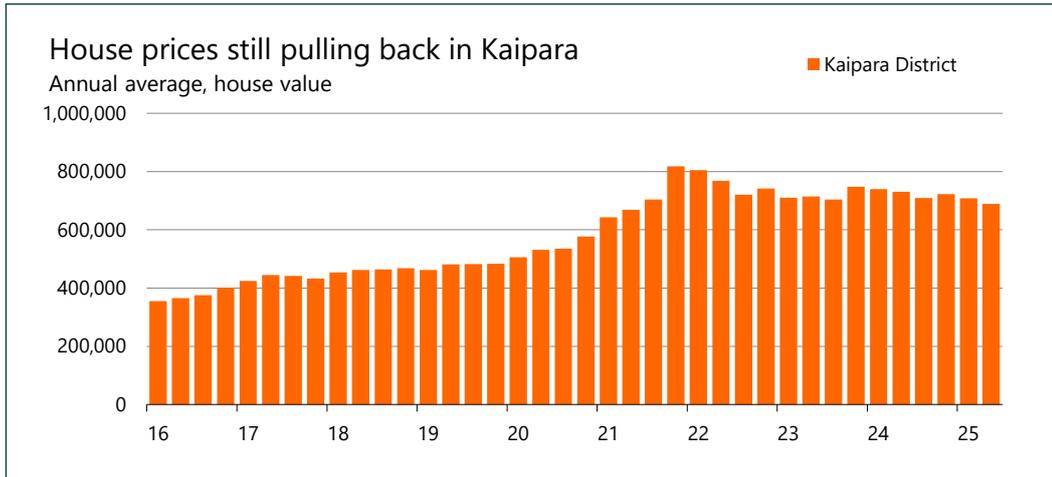
5.7 Affordability improving

Average house price pulls back 5.7%pa to \$689k

House prices have pulled back 5.7% over the year to June 2025 compared to a year earlier. Over the past decade, Kaipara house prices have seen two significant rallies, in March 2025 (+22%pa), and following the pandemic reaching +42%pa in December 2021.

The average house price in Kaipara is now \$689,000 and has fallen below \$700,000 for the first time since June 2021.

Chart 22



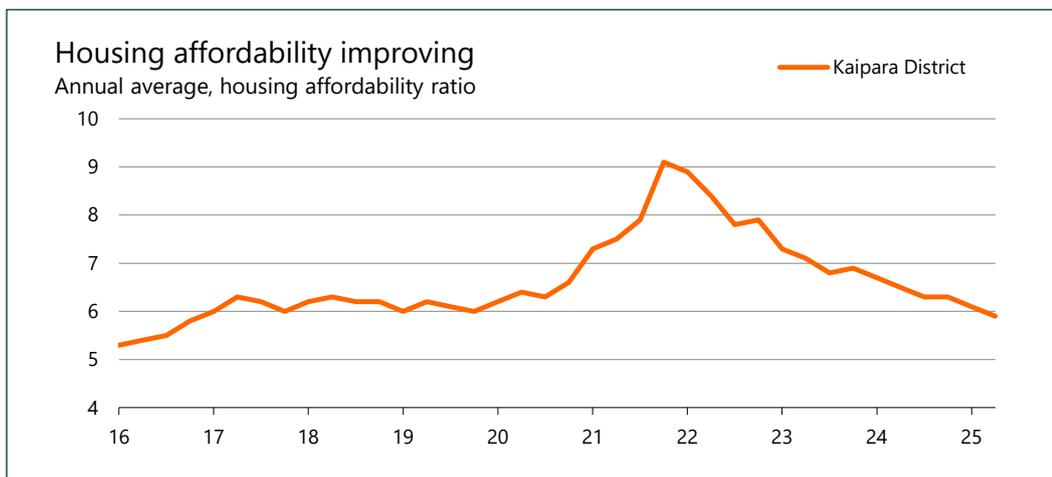
Source: Cotality (formerly CoreLogic)

Best housing affordability since late 2016

Housing affordability has continually improved in Kaipara since the average house value reached its least affordable level compared to average household incomes at 9.1 times at the end of 2021.

Over the year to June 2025, the average house value equated to 5.9 times the average household income, the most affordable level in Kaipara since December 2016.

Chart 23



Source: Infometrics

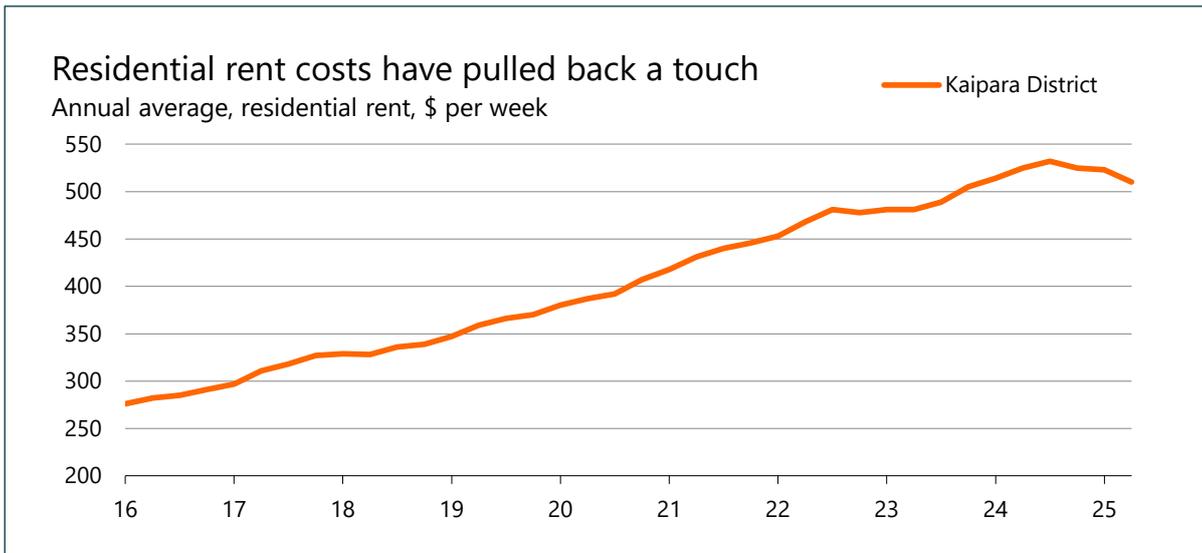


The improvement has been driven by the decline in house prices while at the same time the average household income has seen considerable growth. However, it should be noted that experiences within the district may vary, with variation in house prices and incomes within the district.

Downward pressure on rental prices

The average household rent cost fell 2.9%pa to \$510 per week over the year to June 2025. The decline in the average household rental cost follows a year of strong growth in the year to June 2024, where rents rose 9.1%pa.

Chart 24

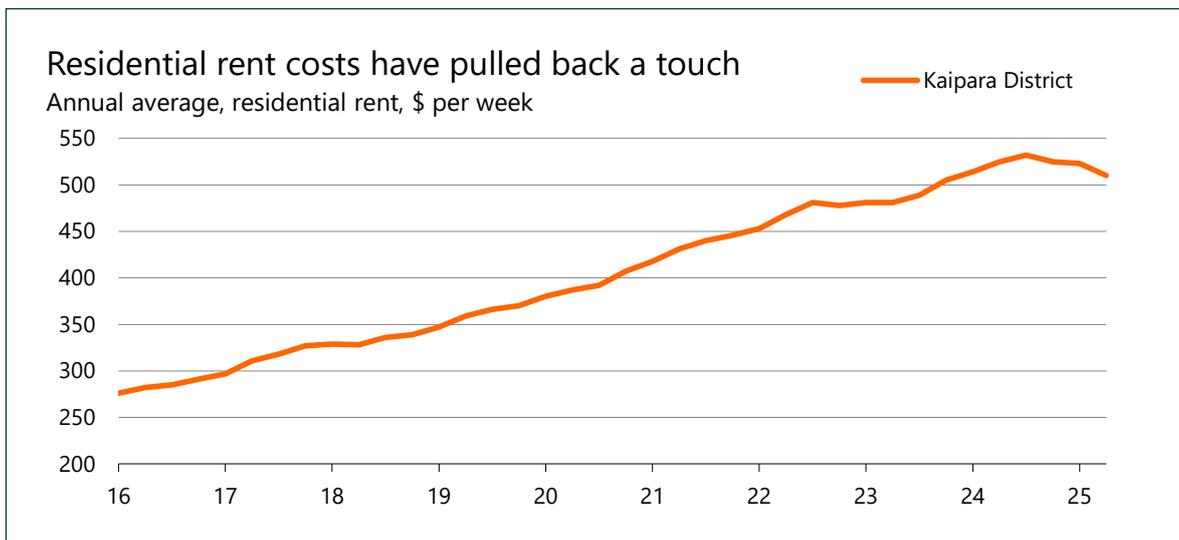


Source: Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)

Best rental affordability since early 2017

Rental affordability continues to improve in Kaipara, as the average household rent equated 22.6% of the average household income over the year to June 2025.

Chart 25



Source: Infometrics



Rents in Kaipara are the most affordable relative to the average household income since the year to March 2017. Experiences may vary for different communities, however, as income and housing cost growth can vary within the district.

Rental affordability remains worse than the national average of 22.0%, but the gap has closed significantly since residential rents reached their least affordable, relative to incomes, in Kaipara in the year to September 2022.

Mangawhai Estuary





5.8 Deprivation

One means of comparing wellbeing between areas is through the New Zealand Index of Deprivation (NZDep). The NZDep2023 scores areas within New Zealand based on the level of deprivation in each of those areas, as assessed against nine variables from the 2023 census which reflect eight dimensions of socioeconomic deprivation.

Table 2: Variables from the 2023 census used to calculate the NZDep

Dimension of socioeconomic deprivation	Description of variable
Communication	People with no access to the Internet at home
Income	People aged 18-64 receiving a main means tested benefit
Income	People living in equivalised* households with income below an income threshold
Employment	People aged 18-64 unemployed
Qualifications	People aged 18-64 without any qualifications
Owned home	People not living in own home
Support	People aged <75 living in a sole parent family
Living space	People living in equivalised* households below a bedroom occupancy threshold (i.e. overcrowding)
Living condition	People living in dwellings that are always damp and/or always have mould greater than A4 size

**Equivalisation: methods used to control for household composition.*

It should be noted that the NZDep is an index of relative, not absolute, socioeconomic deprivation. That is, the NZDep is displayed as deciles. Each NZDep decile contains about 10% of small areas in New Zealand. Therefore, about 10% of the national population are living in each socioeconomic-deprivation decile. This would be true even if the entire population of Aotearoa New Zealand had experienced a great increase in living standards. The primary use of NZDep2023 is to show which areas are more socioeconomically deprived than others, not how socio-economically deprived each area, or the country as a whole, is in absolute terms.

The following Figures 29 to 31 show how deprivation (as measured by the NZDep) varied across each of Northland's three districts. Note that while the NZDep is based on deciles, these maps display the data as quintiles.

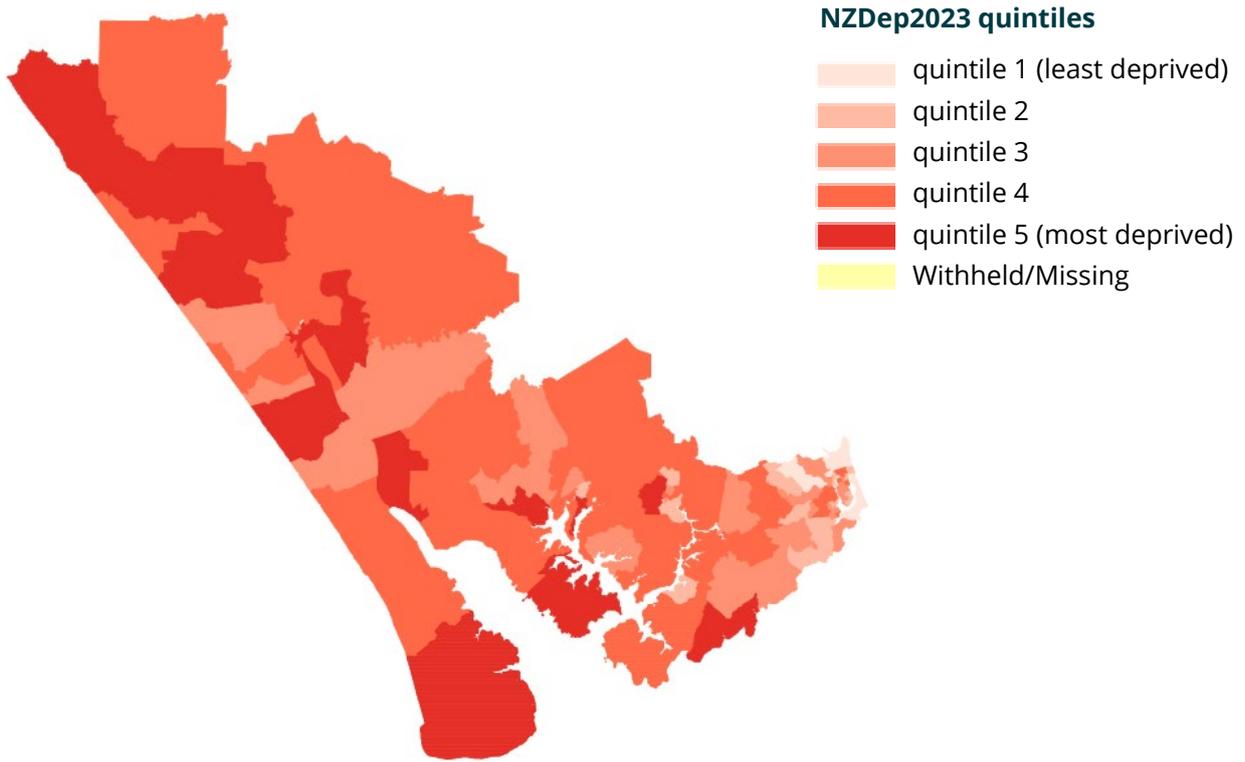


Figure 29: The disparity of deprivation in the Kaipara District (as measured by the NZDep2023)

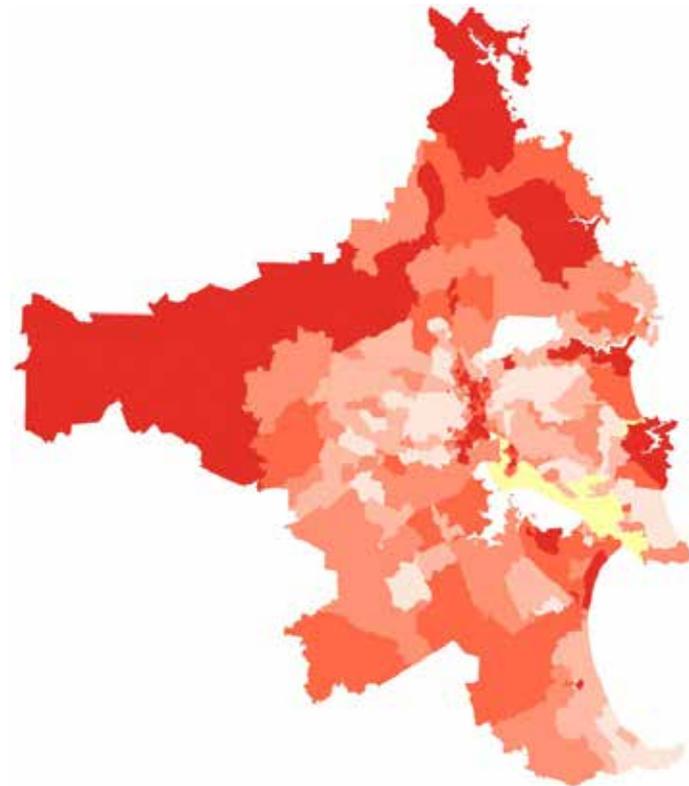


Figure 30: The disparity of deprivation in the Whangārei District (as measured by the NZDep2023)

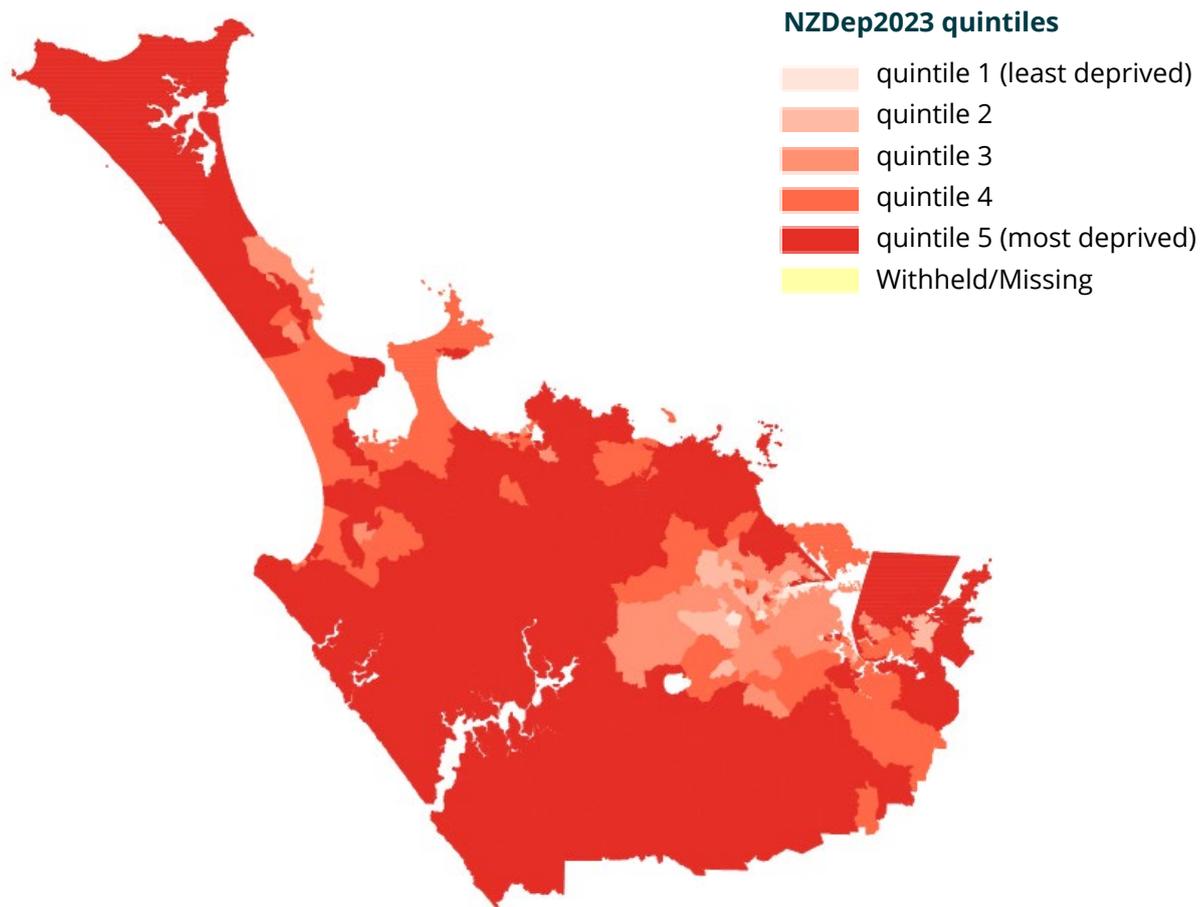


Figure 31: The disparity of deprivation in the Far North District (as measured by the NZDep2023)

In addition to the nine variables used to prepare the NZDep, crime rates can also be quite telling of the hardships an area is experiencing. New Zealand’s crime rate continued to ease from 229 criminal proceedings per 10,000 people in the year to September 2024, to 215 in the year to September 2025. More than half of this decrease was driven by a fall in traffic and vehicle offence, followed by a fall in breaches of bail and sentencing orders. Burglary and sexual offences both recorded a notable rise. Figure 34 and 35 compare the crime rates for the different Northland districts with those for Auckland and the national average. These reveal that Kaipara District consistently has below average levels of crime. Kaipara’s crime rate was 194 criminal proceedings per 10,000 people in the year to September 2025. Though this was an increase from 166 per 10,000 people a year earlier, Kaipara’s crime rate remained below the New Zealand average and the rates for the Whangārei and Far North districts.

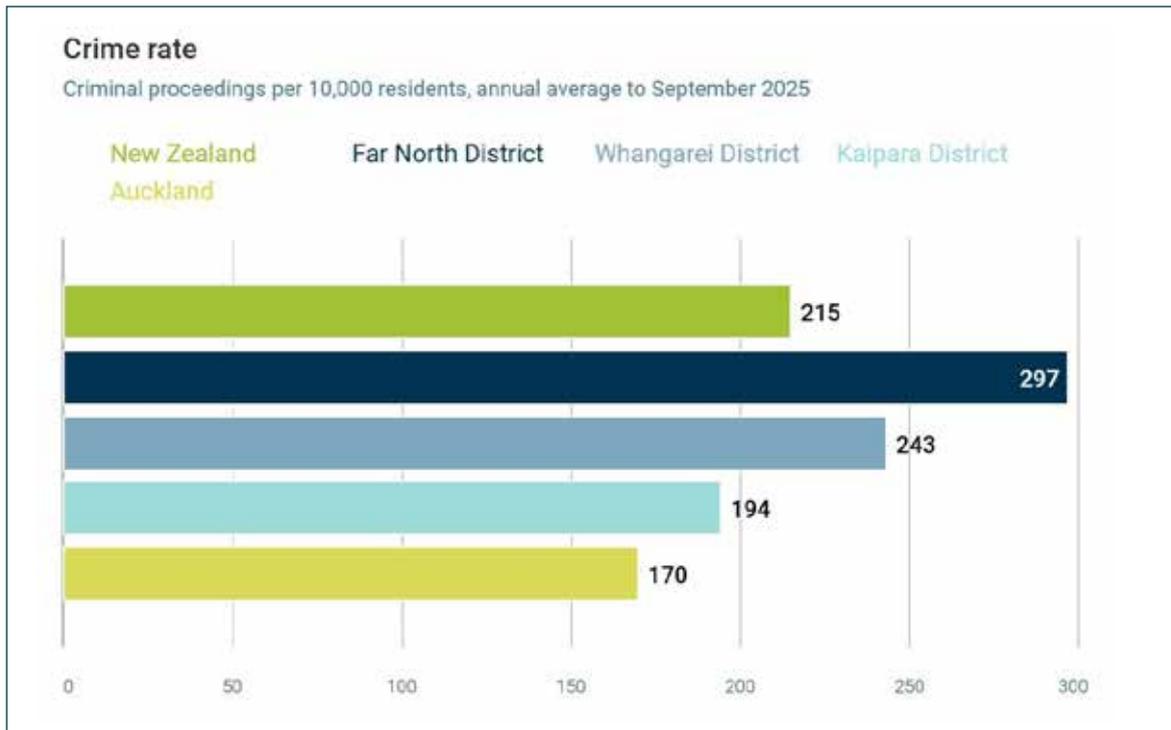


Figure 34: Criminal proceedings per 10,000 residents, annual average to September 2025 (Infometrics, 2026a)



Figure 35: Criminal proceedings per 10,000 residents, annual average (Infometrics, 2026a)

Northland's elevated crime rate relative to Kaipara suggests that within the same region, crime exposure varies sharply. Social stressors such as deprivation, drug issues, and policing capacity contribute to the difference. Overall, Northland experiences higher levels of violent and drug-related crime. Nationally, metropolitan areas have higher property and public-order crime rates, while rural areas experience theft, isolation-related crime, and underreporting.



6 Infrastructure

Infrastructure provision is key to the wellbeing of a district. In Kaipara, land drainage schemes protect large areas of productive land while provision of water and wastewater infrastructure is key for processing and manufacturing operations. Roads, railways and ports are key in getting goods to market. In addition, infrastructure also contributes to community health and wellbeing with services such as water supply, solid waste and wastewater contributing to public health.

6.1 Transport

Transport is key both for getting goods to market and for social connectivity. The following subsections look at the road, rail, port and air transport infrastructure which service Northland. In all, this section finds Kaipara and Northland has poor, but improving, connectivity via land transport (road and rail), strong opportunities to utilise international and coastal shipping via Northport and currently limited use of air travel.

6.1.1 Road

The road network is the primary means of travel for both passengers and freight in Northland. Northland's roads are of two kinds; state highways and local roads. State highways provide the major connections between New Zealand's districts and regions. State highways are managed and funded directly by central government through the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA). Local roads provide for local connections within districts and link to the state highway network. Local roads are administered by local councils and funded through rates with a subsidy from NZTA's Land Transport Fund.

The Kaipara district has 1,575km of local roads of which 70% or 1,098kms are unsealed and 30% or 477kms are sealed. Given its small population and the large geographic extent of the district, Kaipara finds it challenging to fund the maintenance, and particularly upgrades to, this extensive roading network. The consequence of this is a limited level of service, particularly on lightly trafficked rural roads.

The key state highway linkage between Auckland and Northland is the section of State Highway 1 from the start of the Auckland motorway network at Warkworth to the intersection with Maunu Road in Whangārei. This section of State Highway 1 is Northland's key route (NZTA, 2018). This route is supported south of Wellsford by State Highway 16, providing a higher level of network resilience at this southern end. However, few alternative routes exist between Wellsford and Whangārei, resulting in lower resilience. Where alternative routes do exist, they are often not constructed to cope with the increased traffic in the event that a detour is put in place. This is particularly true of Cove Road between Mangawhai and Waipū and the Paparoa-Oakleigh Road which are commonly used as detours when incidents occur in the Brynderwyn Hills (NZTA, 2018).

The key points of low resilience between Whangārei and Auckland are the Dome Valley and Brynderwyn Hills, both of which are high crash areas and restricted to 80kms per hour as well as being prone to natural hazards such as slips (NZTA, 2018). NZTA is making strong progress on an extension of the motorway to bypass the existing Dome Valley

route. Procurement as a Public Private Partnership (PPP) is progressing well and NZTA will be moving into the negotiation stage after the evaluation of proposals is complete at the end of March 2026. A contract is expected to be awarded by the end of July 2026. The successful PPP consortia is expected to start detailed design and early construction works by the end of 2026.

Planning is also advancing to bypass the Brynderwyn Hills (NZTA, 2025). Bypassing this section had intended to be progressed as part of a larger project to progressively construct an expressway between Te Hana and Whangārei. However, to address the critical resilience issues in the Brynderwyn Hills, the NZTA board has endorsed taking a staged approach to the corridor, focusing on the alternative to the Brynderwyn Hills. The full expressway corridor route has now been confirmed (see Figure 36). Next steps for NZTA include property acquisition, with consents and designation for an alternative to the Brynderwyn Hills expected to be lodged using the Fast-track Approvals Act (FTAA) by the end of March 2026. Designations for the remainder of the route are expected to be lodged via the FTAA by late 2026. The full corridor will be delivered in stages over a number of years, enabling programme costs to be managed over time (NZTA, 2025).



Figure 36: Route and staging of the remaining Auckland to Whangārei corridor expressway upgrades (NZTA, 2025).



From Whangārei, State Highway 1 continues to the Far North, Kaitaia and Cape Reinga. State Highway 12, from Brynderwyn to the Hokianga and Kaikohe via Dargaville, is the key route linking most of the Kaipara district to State Highway 1, Auckland and beyond. In addition, State Highway 14 provides a key east to west link between Dargaville and Whangārei. The Paparoa-Oakleigh Road (a local road/not a state highway) is another key route for the Kaipara District, providing a more direct link between central areas of the District and Whangārei.

State Highway 15 between Kaikohe and Northport is Northland's key inland freight route and runs via the Mangakahia and Otaika Valleys. The route is key for freight traffic (particularly logging traffic) moving from the Mid-North and Far North to Northport and experiences a high level of heavy vehicle traffic.

In addition to carrying freight and providing connectivity for the travelling public, Northland's state highway network is also essential for tourism in the region, allowing visitors to access the region's attractions. Northland's state highways form the basis of the Twin Coast Discovery Highway touring route which leads visitors around Northland's key attractions. This route, and Northland's wider state highway network is shown in Figure 37.

The construction and maintenance of roads in Northland faces a number of challenges (NZTA, 2018). The region's challenging topography (particularly between Whangārei and Auckland), problematic geology and high impact seasonal rainfall present particular challenges for the maintenance and operation of the road network (NZTA, 2018).

Slope instability is a common problem along much of Northland's road network, resulting in random slips, debris and drop-outs (NZTA, 2018). Small slips can often be cleared quickly, but under-slips/dropouts (which undermine the road) and larger slips can be much more complex to fix (NZTA, 2018). Northland's hilly topography also results in tight terrain and narrow alignments. This combined with heavy vehicle crash involvement, can delay re-opening of routes as specialised equipment may be required to remove crash debris, particularly through the Brynderwyn Hills. Many sections of Northland's roads are also exposed to weather events, particularly flooding (NZTA, 2018).

In addition, roading aggregates available locally in Northland are of a lower quality than available elsewhere in the country. This means they degrade quicker, particularly when exposed to high levels of heavy vehicle traffic, resulting in more frequent repairs. Given the above challenges, undertaking renewals and improvements while at the same time keeping the corridor open and available to users presents an ongoing challenge to roading engineers; especially on the high-volume sections of the network (ARUP, 2018; NZTA, 2018).

This is concerning as the amount of freight being moved on Northland's roads is increasing (AECOM, 2019). Northport is now the second largest sea port in New Zealand by tonnage and, in the absence of a rail connection, is wholly dependent on the road network for its land transport needs (NZTA, 2018). The total freight task generated in Northland in 2018 was estimated at approximately 18,000,000 tonnes per annum, approximately 98.6% of which travelled by road. By 2042 the region's freight is forecast to grow to 23.2 million tonnes, with indications it could grow even faster (AECOM, 2019).



Figure 37: Route of Northland's Twin Coast Discovery Highway.

Note that the route includes a number of "Byways", alternative tourist drives which can be included or excluded to tailor the trip to individual interests (Northland Inc. 2020).



In all, Northland has poorer connections to Auckland and the upper North Island than would be expected given its proximity (AECOM, 2019), though connections are improving. Presently, Northland's key connections are lengthy, have higher safety risks and provide less reliable journey times (ARUP, 2018). These poor connections include the condition of the strategic intra-regional and inter-regional highway connections, as well as the ability of passenger and freight vehicles to move through the increasingly congested Auckland network (AECOM, 2019; ARUP, 2018).

6.1.2 Rail

Northland is connected to the rest of New Zealand by rail via the North Auckland Line (NAL). The NAL begins in Westfield in Auckland and makes its way north to Whangārei before continuing to Otiria in the Far North. In addition, the Dargaville branch links Dargaville to the NAL at Waiotira and an isolated section of railway links Kawakawa to Opua in the Bay of Islands. There is also a proposal to build a spur line to Northport at Marsden Point. These lines are shown in Figure 38 together with the state highway network. Collectively, the rail and state highway network form the region's core land transport network.

However, not all of Northland's railways are currently operating. After Whangārei's port was decommissioned and operations moved to North Port at Marsden Point, the region's rail network was left without a connection to the region's port. Consequently, rail freight volumes in Northland fell substantially with over a million tonnes of freight moving to road transport. Compounding the decline in volumes, the line was under-maintained and saw no substantial investment for over fifty years. By 2019, just over 110,000 tonnes of freight was moved on the NAL, with the majority of this being processed dairy volumes from Northland, along with logs from northern Auckland. This was just 1.4% of Northland's total freight and the line was described as being in a state of "managed decline" (AECOM, 2019).

Services on the Dargaville branch were suspended in October 2014 due to poor track conditions and low freight volumes. Shortly after closure, the line came to be used by Dargaville Rail and River for a rail tourism business using modified golf carts to offer a "rail cruising" experience. This operation ended in November 2025 when the owners sought to retire. At time of writing, the Dargaville Community Development Board Inc. are leading an effort to establish a community trust to take over this business and continue operations on the branch. The branch line, or a section thereof, could one day be reopened to freight trains but not without substantial investment and an anchor freight customer.

The northern most section of the NAL from Kauri (just north of Whangārei, where Fonterra's dairy factory is located) to the Far North saw services discontinued in 2016. KiwiRail is continuing to explore reopening the line, which would include replacing rail and sleepers and strengthening some bridges to carry 18 tonne axle loads, as well as construction of a road/rail transfer site at Otiria (KiwiRail, 2026).

The isolated section of railway between Kawakawa and Opua operates as the Bay of Islands Vintage Railway (AECOM, 2019).

Rejuvenation of Northland's railway system began in 2020 with a comprehensive package of upgrades designed to address decades of neglect and bring the railway up to modern

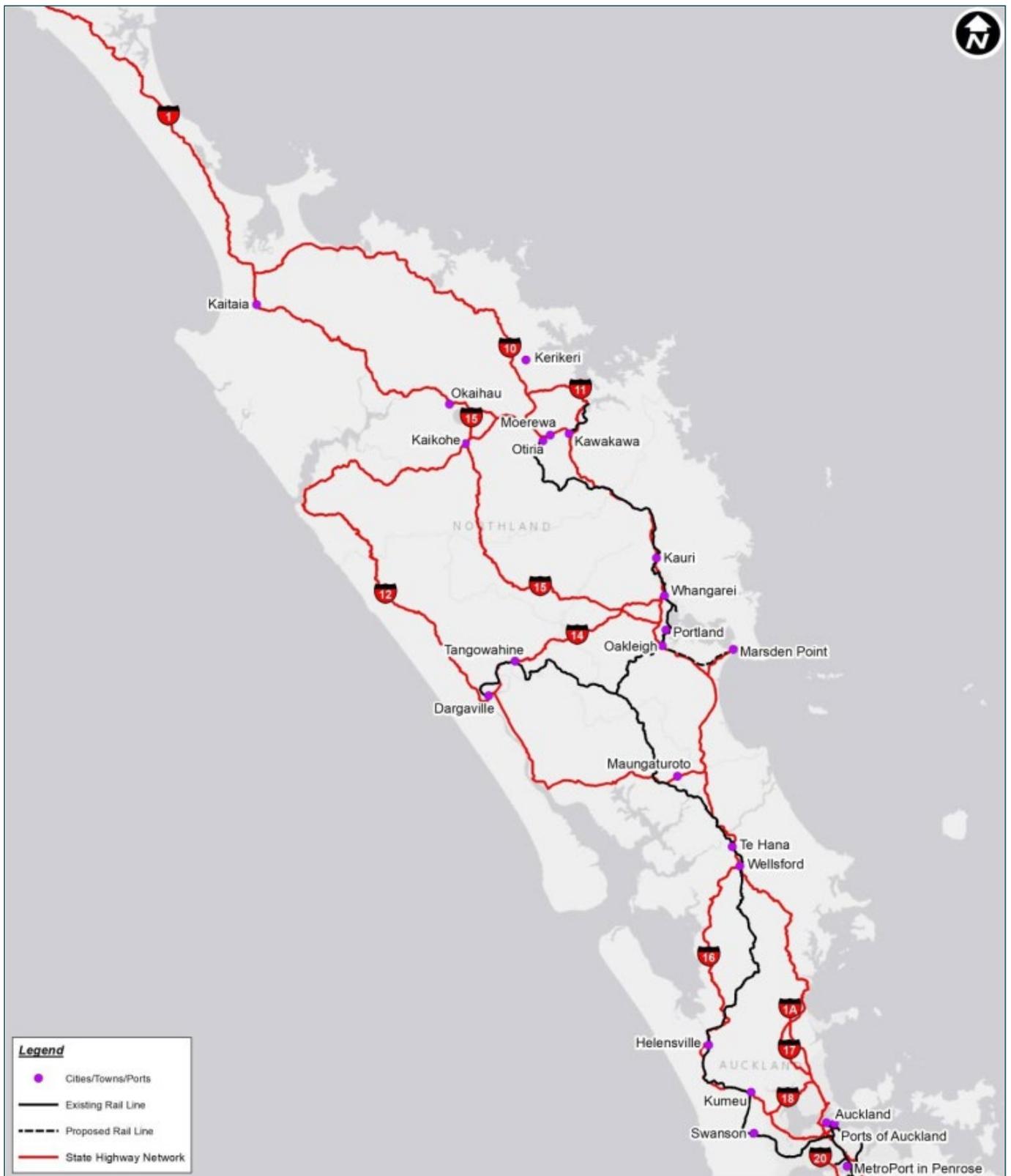


Figure 38: Northland's railway and state highway network

Note this map includes all existing rail lines, including those which are currently unused or used only for tourism (AECOM, 2019).



standards. This included replacement or upgrading of about 54km of the 181km track; replacement of over 100 thousand sleepers, adding tens of thousands of cubic metres of ballast; replacing five ageing bridges; increasing tunnel heights in 13 tunnels; carrying out overdue maintenance work on tunnels; clearing ditches and stabilising embankments (KiwiRail, 2026). This was the most significant upgrade since the mid-1950s when the line was upgraded to allow the use of diesel locomotives. The work required closing the NAL from June 2020 to 11 January 2021. These upgrades allowed the line to carry modern hi-cube shipping containers, removed speed restrictions and decreased the journey time.

However, only two years after the line reopened, Cyclone Gabrielle and other severe weather events over February 2023 caused extensive damage across the length of the NAL. The line closed immediately and was not reopened until September 2024 (KiwiRail, 2026). Reopening the line required major works to address about 50 separate slips. When the works were complete, the line was left in a more resilient state, with improved drainage works to better manage future heavy rain fall events. However, the need to divert materials, labour and funds to the rebuilding of the NAL between Auckland and Whangārei meant the project to reopen the NAL to the Far North was put on hold. At time of writing, the project to reopen the NAL to the Far North remains on hold, though planning is progressing. Ballast and new sleepers remain stockpiled along the line, but there is no set start date for any works.

Presently, the NAL operates as far as Fonterra's dairy factory at Kauri (just north of Whangārei) (KiwiRail, 2026). Freight volumes on the reopened section between Kauri and Auckland are already increasing, including seeing the return of cement traffic from the Golden Bay Cement works at Portland and some containers being trucked from NorthPort to Whangārei to be transferred to rail.

However, to truly meet the needs of freight customers in Northland and the Upper North Island, the NAL will need to be connected to Northport via a spur line to Marsden Point (AECOM, 2019). Until then, the region will continue to place a high dependence on road transport for moving freight (AECOM, 2019). Designation of the route for the Oakleigh to Marsden Point Line was approved following the relocation of the port, and the Government has recently worked to purchase the land needed for the proposed line. KiwiRail, NorthPort and central government statements continue to support the project however, no budget or timeframe for construction has as yet been confirmed. Without being connected to the port, Northland's railways are unlikely to play a significant role in moving the region's freight (AECOM, 2019). Each tonne of freight carried by road results in 70% more greenhouse gas emissions than that carried by rail, as well as impacting on other motorists and increasing road maintenance requirements (KiwiRail, 2026). As at 2023, transport produced 40% of New Zealand's domestic carbon emissions, with around a quarter of that produced by trucks.

6.1.3 Ports

The Northland region is serviced by a regional port facility at Marsden Point. This is a natural deep-water port sited in the mouth of the Whangārei Harbour. As New Zealand's northern most port, Northport is the closest port to New Zealand's international markets (New Zealand Government, 2019a). The port comprises two separate precincts; Northport, which has flexible freight handling facilities capable of handling large multipurpose vessels (NZTA, 2018) and Channel Infrastructure (formally Refining New Zealand) which has its own wharves adjacent to Northport where it receives shipments of refined petroleum products from overseas.

Channel Infrastructure is New Zealand's key fuel import terminal. It handles between 3-3.5 billion litres of transport fuels annually, primarily supplying the Auckland and Northland markets, which make up 40% of New Zealand's fuel demand (Channel Infrastructure New Zealand, 2026). The import terminal and storage facility is connected to Auckland via a 170km pipeline that runs from Marsden Point to the Wiri Terminal in South Auckland and to Auckland Airport. Construction is also progressing on a new bitumen import terminal and 10,000 tonne storage facility that will supply enough bitumen to meet the infrastructure needs of Auckland and the upper North Island. The bitumen facility is expected to be completed in the second half of 2026, bringing significant cost and time savings for northern construction projects, including aspects of the Government's Roads of National Significance programme (the next nearest bitumen import terminal is at the Port of Tauranga). Channel Infrastructure has further plans for growth including supporting additional fuel storage at their Marsden Point site. Presently, they have approximately 400 million litres of unutilised storage tanks, as well as significant land and facilities that can be utilised in support of the Government's fuel security ambitions. Channel Infrastructure are also exploring opportunities for alternative forms of energy such as biofuels, sustainable aviation fuels, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and potentially a biorefinery (Channel Infrastructure New Zealand, 2026).

Northport presently occupies 49ha with an additional 180ha of commercially zoned land for port use outside the Northport boundary (New Zealand Government, 2019a). This allows ample room for expansion and opportunities for other industries to establish alongside the port (New Zealand Government, 2019a).

Northport has ambitions to grow into a major port servicing not only Northland, but also Auckland and the Upper North Island. While much has been said in the media about relocating the Ports of Auckland to Northport, Northport does not envisage this happening. Rather, Northport recognises that freight volumes are growing and that it is well positioned to accommodate this growth while the Ports of Auckland is constrained. If this vision for growth is realised, Ports of Auckland would continue to operate in its current location without expansion while Northport would progressively expand to accommodate the growing freight demands of Northland, Auckland and the Upper North Island.

Northport already has resource consent to expand its linear wharf 270 metres eastwards. However, modelling makes it clear that this is not sufficient to cater for the projected growth in demand for container storage, handling and transportation at Northport. Consequently, Northport has submitted a further application for resource consent to



extend its berths a further 250 metres towards the east, together with an additional 11.7ha reclamation. This proposed eastern development will extend the existing port eastwards to accommodate a modern, efficient, container terminal capable of handling and storing expected increases in freight volumes. The expansion will also enable Northport to integrate the port with KiwiRail's proposed Marsden Point spur line (Northport, 2026).

Provision of a rail link to the port is important to reduce the impact of increasing freight volumes on Northland's roads (AECOM, 2019). In the year ended June 2018, there were 144,827 single truck movements to Northport, already placing considerable pressure on Northland's roads (New Zealand Government, 2019a).

Even in its current form, Northport is already a key port servicing the Upper North Island, together with the other Upper North Island ports of Auckland and Tauranga. The upper North Island ports are critical to the New Zealand freight task. Together they account for approximately half of New Zealand's total export volume and two-thirds of its import volume (in tonnes) (New Zealand Government, 2019a).

Port of Tauranga handles the highest volume of all New Zealand ports in tonnes, is New Zealand's largest container port and is New Zealand's largest container exporter (New Zealand Government, 2019a). Even some freight from Northland is railed to Port of Tauranga for export. In addition to containers, Port of Tauranga handles bulk goods such as logs (New Zealand Government, 2019a).

Port of Auckland is New Zealand's second largest container port, after Port of Tauranga. This includes the handling of both full and empty containers (New Zealand Government, 2019a). Being located in Auckland City, Port of Auckland is significant for imports due to the population that it supplies however its export volumes are low (New Zealand Government, 2019a). Port of Auckland occupies 77ha on the Auckland Central Business District waterfront. Its current location is generating concerns over social licence and is prompting public debate about whether there are better alternative uses for this prime waterfront land. This built-up inner-city location also constrains the movement of freight in and out of the port by land as well as the port's ability to expand (New Zealand Government, 2019b; Sapere, 2020).

While location of port infrastructure remains a topical debate, it is a fair assumption that Northport will continue to grow in importance as one of three strategic ports servicing the Upper North Island (together with Tauranga and some form of Ports of Auckland). This is anticipated to result in a high level of economic development for Northland and will likely attract existing Auckland industry and businesses to relocate to Northland (AECOM, 2019; New Zealand Government, 2019b). In addition, the development of the state highway and rail networks to service an expanded Northport will result in a much more connected Northland.

All this will have a high impact on the Northland community, particularly the already fast growing areas of Waipū, Mangawhai, Kaiwaka and Maungatūroto which are within commuting distance of Northport. By contrast, if road and rail infrastructure to support Northport are not provided, both the port and Northland will remain constrained (AECOM, 2019).

In contrast to Whangārei's natural deep water port, the Kaipara harbour sees very little commercial boating activity in the 21st century. Atlas Quarries have a wharf facility at Hukatere on the Tinopai Peninsula. This was formally used to load aggregate from their Hukatere quarry to barges for transport to Mount Rex near Helensville, avoiding the 119km road journey around the harbour. This facility is presently not being used and would require some dredging to be reopened to the barges presently being used by Atlas. Across the harbour, Atlas's Mount Rex shipping facility continues to operate and receives sand dredged from the Kaipara harbour for the Auckland construction industry.

Other Kaipara wharves and maritime facilities are aimed primarily at recreational boaties. These include a number of concrete boat ramps, wharves and jetties at locations such as Whakapirau, Pahi, Tinopai, Rangiora, Pouto, Ruawai, Te Kōpuru and Dargaville. The Mangawhai Harbour too has a number of boat ramp facilities to meet the needs of recreational boaties.

A new chapter in New Zealand's maritime scene appears to be on the horizon with Ocean Flyer working to start operating fully electric seaglidors in New Zealand from the mid-2020s (Ocean Flyer, 2025). The seaglider is a wing-in-ground-effect craft that operates about 10m off the water's surface and couples the high speed of an airplane with the low operating cost of a boat. The seaglider begins its journey with the hull in the water, rising onto foils as the speed increases, before eventually generating lift so that the seaglider begins to fly in-ground-effect at about 10m above the water. Though travelling at speeds of around 300kph and flying above the water, these craft will operate as if they were ferries and be regulated by Maritime New Zealand rather than by the Civil Aviation Authority (Ocean Flyer, 2025). This creates the ability for services to depart from town wharves and ferry passengers direct into Auckland's central business district waterfront. This overcomes a long-standing criticism of air travel that it requires departure and arrival at airports on the outskirts of towns and cities, airports that are not always well connected by public transport and often require excessive time for check-in and baggage claim. It also overcomes the limited speed capabilities of conventional watercraft. That said, seaglidors remain confined to routes over water as they are not certified to operate over land as aircraft are. The present commitment to fully electric battery powered vehicles by both Regent (the only manufacturer of seaglidors to date) and Ocean Flyer (the only New Zealand operator to date) also limits the distance over which they can offer services to around 300km with present day battery technology – though battery technology is continuing to improve.

Ocean Flyer are proposing to begin with a Whangārei to Auckland service with an estimated flight time of 30 minutes and a ticket price considerably cheaper than that currently offered by airlines on the same route. Fifteen 12 seater and ten 100 seater seaglidors have been ordered for service in New Zealand so far. Ocean Flyer state that the low operating cost of these vehicles and basic supporting infrastructure requirements (i.e. they can depart and arrive at existing town wharves) might see services brought to areas that currently do not have airline services (Ocean Flyer, 2025). Aspirationally, this could come to include Mangawhai and the Kaipara Harbour, though such offerings remain well into the future.



6.1.4 Air

Auckland Airport is the closest international airport to Northland. In addition to receiving passengers from overseas and acting as a hub for domestic flights, Auckland Airport is also used to export high value and time critical exports from Northland, such as cut flowers (NZTA, 2018).

Northland is connected to Auckland Airport (and via connecting flights, other destinations beyond) by three domestic airports, none of which are in Kaipara.

Whangārei Airport is located in the suburb of Onerahi, a 10 minute drive from the Whangārei city centre. The airport is currently certified to take aircraft of around 50 seat capacity. Apart from the services provided by airline operators, the airport also caters to many recreational users.

Issues associated with Civil Aviation rules, runway length, and significant costs for extending the existing runway, mean the current airport may have to close to airline services in about 10 years. Whangārei District Council is currently investigating a site at Ruatangata, near Kokopu Road, as its preferred location for a future Whangārei District airport, should this be required. Domestic air travel is currently undergoing significant changes with new aircraft, electric airplanes and even ground effect seaglidars potentially about to appear on the scene. Relocating Whangārei airport may therefore not be necessary, depending on aircraft runway length requirements. However, Whangārei District Council want to be prepared by identifying and protecting an alternative site. If the airport does shift to this location, it will move airline services about 10 minutes closer to Dargaville.

Bay of Islands Airport is a 10 minute drive from Kerikeri and is connected to Auckland Airport by regularly scheduled passenger flights. The Bay of Islands Airport has a modern terminal which opened to passengers in June 2019.

By comparison, Kaitaia Airport is small, with limited passenger facilities and is typically only staffed 30 minutes before each scheduled flight. That said, the airport is serviced by regular flights to Auckland Airport operated by Barrier Air. As such, Kaitaia Airport could be a model for establishing other provincial services, with limited infrastructure investment still achieving fast passenger connections.

While Kaipara does not have any airports, it does have a number of airfields, the largest of which is located in Dargaville and operated by the Dargaville Aero Club. Dargaville Aerodrome has a 1,000m runway paved in rolled limestone and a second 931m runway that is maintained in grass. Dargaville Aerodrome has refuelling facilities and regularly receives recreational flights from around New Zealand, particularly on weekends. In its present form, the aerodrome would be capable of accommodating commercial airline services offered by some of the more capable providers such as Barrier Air. However, to provide a regular service, a certain level of passenger demand in and out would be needed to make the route financially viable.

As mentioned previously in this section, the domestic aviation sector is expected to face some changes over the coming decade. This is driven by a desire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from aircraft, the emergence of small first-generation electric aircraft, and

increased competition from other modes of transport – particularly improved highway connections and Ocean Flyer’s seaglidors. First generation electric aircraft are small and limited in their range, but have lesser operating costs compared to conventional fuelled aircraft. Seaglidors are significantly cheaper again but will be limited in what routes they can challenge conventional aircraft on due to their requirement to operate over water e.g. a Dargaville to Britomart Ferry Terminal service would not be possible due to the need to fly over land, though a Dargaville to Onehunga wharf service would be possible. Conversely, the electric sea planes being trialled by Harbour Air in Canada can fly over land and would be able to offer the Dargaville to Britomart service (Harbour Air, 2023). However, the proximity of Dargaville and most parts of Kaipara to Auckland via the improving state highway network will limit the competitiveness of any airline connection.

While first generation electric aircraft are still a few years from operating commercially, it appears likely that opportunities to improve short distance domestic air travel will open up over the coming decade – provided they operate on routes not serviced by seaglidors or competitive state highway connections.

6.2 Electricity

Most of New Zealand’s electricity (88.1% in 2023) is generated from a range of renewable sources, with non-renewable sources such as coal and gas being called on when renewable supplies are insufficient. Hydro generation typically accounts for over half of all generation or >5,000 MW. However other renewable sources are increasing their share. Wind capacity has nearly doubled over the past five years, rising from 691 MW in 2020 to 1269 MW in 2024. Capacity gains in solar and geothermal generation are also helping to support generation from renewables.

Once generated, electricity is moved around the country via the “national grid”; the high voltage transmission network connecting areas of generation with towns and cities across New Zealand, before being distributed to households and businesses via local distribution networks. The national grid is owned and operated by the state-owned enterprise Transpower.

The distribution of electricity from the national grid to individual homes and communities is undertaken by Northpower in the Whangārei and Kaipara districts and Top Energy in the Far North. These local distributors operate and maintain the local distribution networks. Northpower’s electricity distribution network includes 6,244km of overhead lines and underground cables, including 4,180km of high voltage lines and cables.

Northpower’s electricity network is supplied from three Transpower “grid exit points” (points where electricity is taken from the national grid). These are Bream Bay, Maungatapere and Maungatūroto. In addition, the Northpower network is also fed by locally generated electricity from the Wairua hydro power station, Mercury’s diesel peaking plant and Northpower’s Te Puna Mauri ō Omaru Solar Farm at Ruawai. In addition, as of September 2022, there were approximately 1,698 small, privately owned solar photovoltaic generators (average installed capacity 3.7kW) connected to the local network (Northpower, 2023). Meridian Energy has also established a 100-megawatt battery energy storage system (BESS) at Ruakākā. This is used to manage peaks and troughs in demand on the



Northpower network (Meridian Energy, 2025). It can store energy when generation exceeds demand and release it when demand exceeds generation. The Ruakākā BESS can store enough electricity to power around 60,000 average households during winter for two hours. It is connected directly to Transpower's Bream Bay substation at 33kV (Meridian Energy, 2025).

Northland has traditionally been an importer of electricity, reliant on electricity transported long distances through Auckland with limited generation within the region. In recent years however, Northland and the Far North in particular has become a significant producer of renewable energy. This growth in generation has increased Northland's resilience to power outages as its dependence on electricity being brought in across Auckland is decreasing. However, the number and scale of generation projects in the pipeline is building the potential for Northland to emerge as an electricity exporter to Auckland and the national grid (New Zealand Government, 2025).

However, before this can be achieved, existing power lines will need to have their capacity upgraded to send that electricity south. An "energy bridge", consisting of high-voltage transmission lines between the Kaikohe substation and Marsden Point, has been mooted to resolve this. High-capacity power lines are already in place between Marsden Point and Auckland, a legacy of oil-fired power stations built near North Port in the 1970s but long since decommissioned (New Zealand Government, 2025).

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is investing up to \$2m from the Regional Infrastructure Fund to investigate the feasibility of upgrading Northland's electricity infrastructure to act as an 'energy bridge' between Northland and Auckland (New Zealand Government, 2025). More detailed work needs to be done into the feasibility of expanding Northland's power generation before further government funding can be considered. This is a long-term project and there is a lot of investigation to be done yet, but if it goes ahead, full commissioning could be achieved by 2029 (New Zealand Government, 2025).

Meanwhile, investment into renewable electricity generation in Northland is continuing. Top Energy operates a major geothermal power plant at Ngāwhā near Kaikohe, and Lodestone's solar farm on the outskirts of Kaitāia was the biggest in the country when it opened in 2024. Mercury Energy is presently constructing a wind farm near Ōmāmari, north of Dargaville. The new wind farm will supply electricity to Northpower's Dargaville substation via a new 66kV line, and then on to the national grid at Maungatapere (Mercury, 2025). First generation is planned for mid-2026, reaching full generation by the end of 2026. Maximum Capacity: Up to 77MW, generating up to 221 GWh per year (refer to the map in Figure 39).

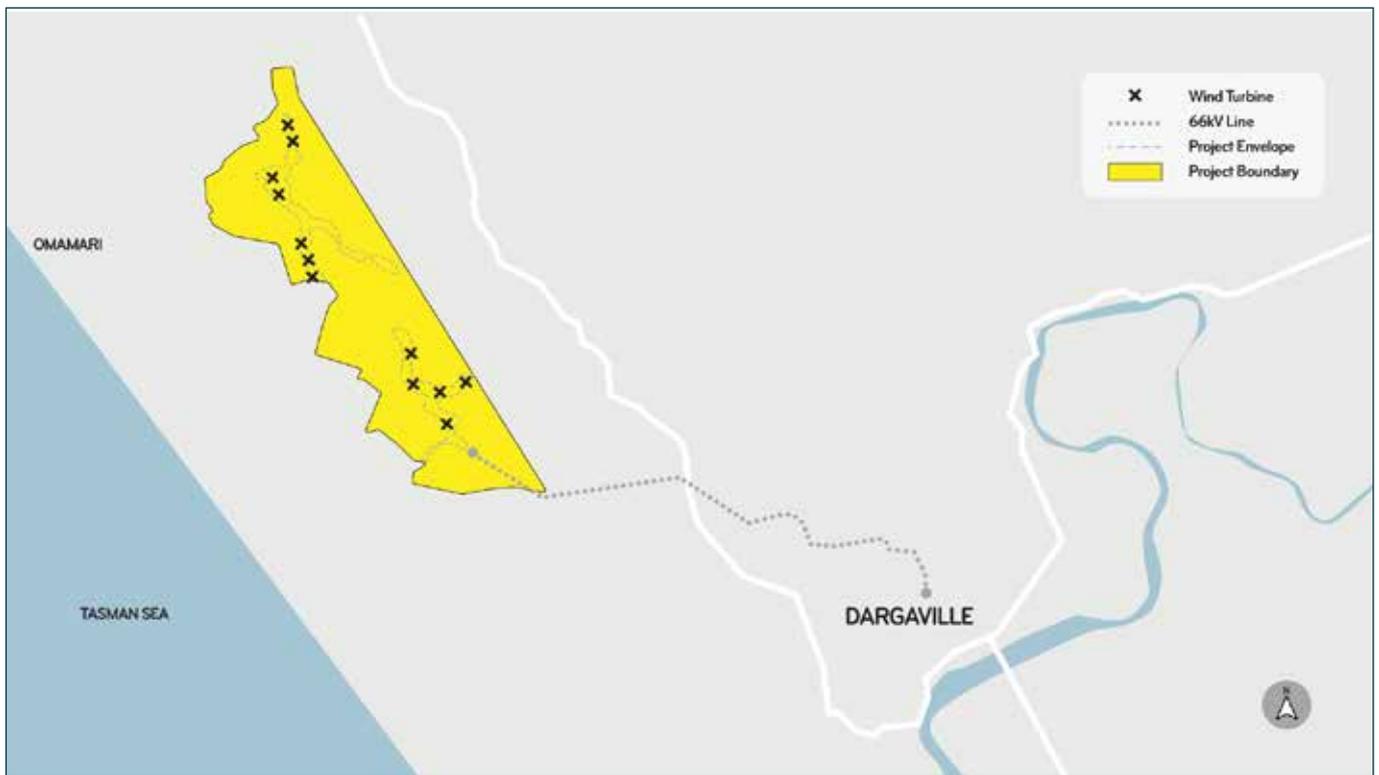


Figure 39: Layout of Mercury Energy's new wind farm north of Dargaville, including turbine and transmission line locations (Mercury, 2025).

Meridian is building a 130-megawatt solar farm next to its afore mentioned battery storage system at Ruakākā. This will cover about 163ha of the 201ha project site and produce up to 230GWh of energy per year from about 250,000 solar panels. That's enough to power over half of Northland's homes in an average year. Construction started in late 2025 (Meridian Energy, 2025) (New Zealand Government, 2025).

Be it from local generation or electricity imported from the national grid, once Northpower has obtained the electricity, it then distributes this power to smaller "zone substations" via its "sub-transmission network" before redistributing it to customers, via a network of smaller local power lines. Northpower's sub transmission network is shown schematically in Figure 40, it comprises regional substations and zone substations interconnected by 110kV, 50kV and 33kV lines and cables (Northpower, 2018).

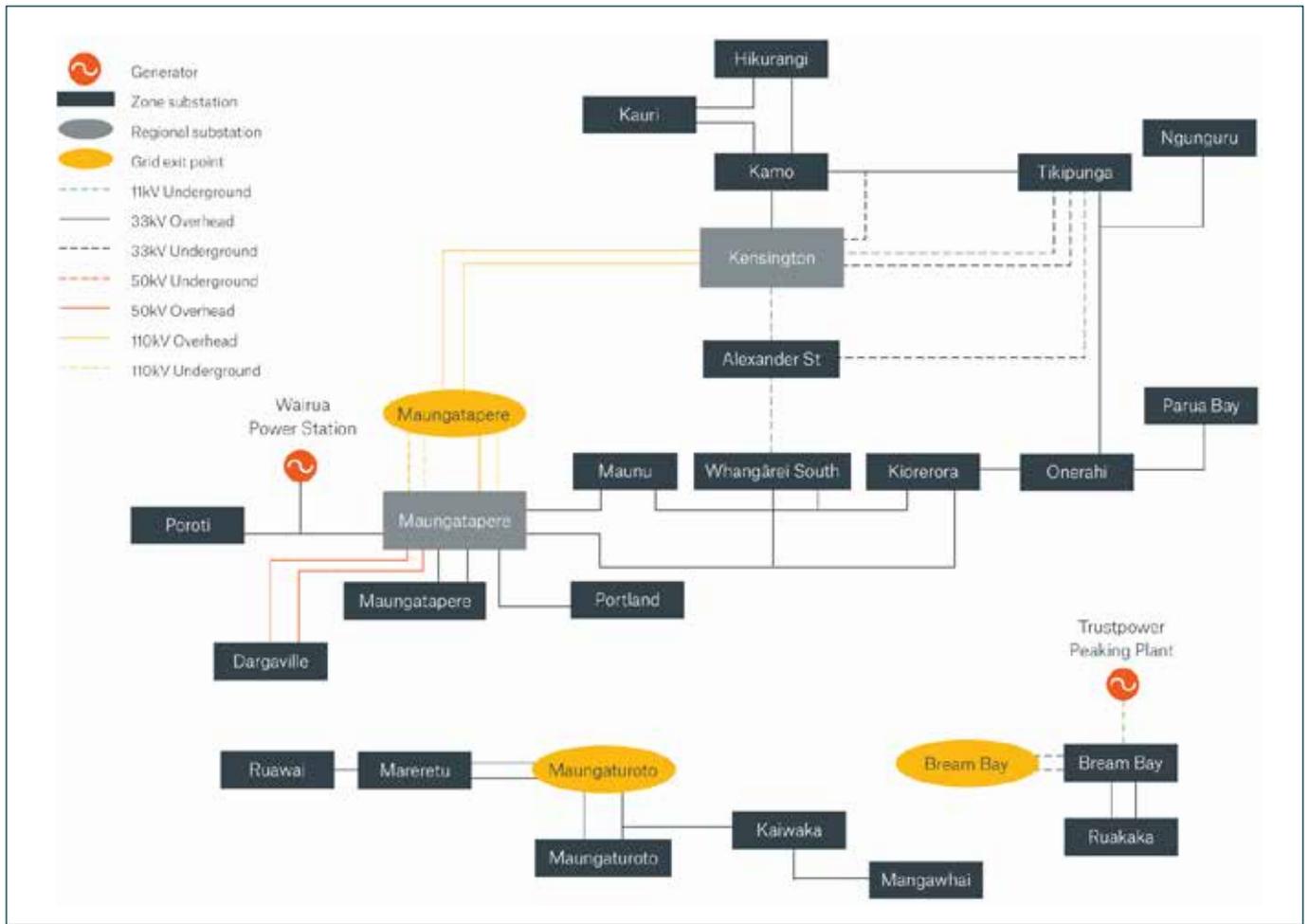


Figure 40: Northpower sub-transmission network (Northpower, 2018)

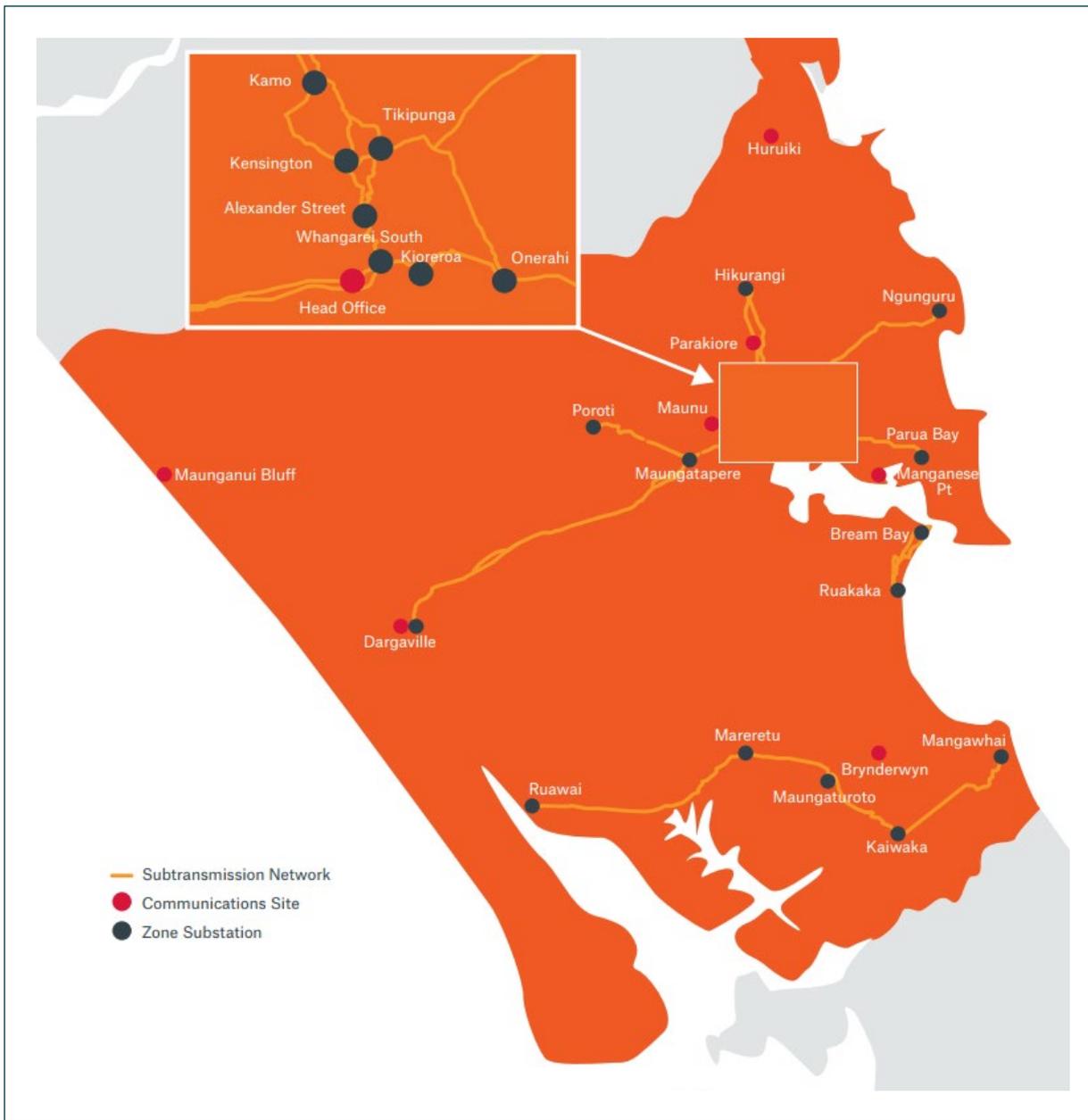


Figure 41: Northpower sub-transmission network, site locations (Northpower, 2018)

Figure 41 shows the Northpower distribution area and geographic location of sub-transmission network and zone substations (Northpower, 2018).

From the zone substations, the high voltage distribution network feeds power to the Northpower low voltage (LV) network (Northpower, 2018). The LV network is a mixture of overhead and underground circuits operating at 400/230V. The LV feeders distribute power from distribution transformers (connected to the 11kV network) to individual properties, generally from poles or pillars near property boundaries (Northpower, 2018).

As the population, industry and demand for electricity grow, Northpower need to ensure its assets continue to be operated within their designed operating limits and appropriate security of supply is maintained. This includes progressively upgrading the network to keep up with the projected demand.



In response to the unexpected surge in electricity connection applications in the Mangawhai area, Northpower constructed a second Zone Substation, named Mangawhai Central, with a capacity of 15 MVA. Completed in 2024, the new substation has significantly improved the area's supply capacity and overall reliability, delivering meaningful benefits to the community.

In addition, following projects are also currently underway:

- a) A new 28km, 33kV circuit from the Maungatūroto Substation to the new Mangawhai Substation is underway. This project will improve the reliability and security of supply to the Kaiwaka and Mangawhai Zone Substations. It will also support the growing demand in the Mangawhai area and provide contingency supply during planned and unplanned outages.
- b) A conductor upgrade project on the existing 33kV line supplying the Mangawhai area is planned for future works. This upgrade will improve supply security and ensure the network can meet the future demand in the Mangawhai area.

The weighted average domestic electricity price in Northland was 45.3c/kW in August 2025. This is 4.2c/kW (10%) higher than in August 2024. During the past five years, the average domestic electricity price in Northland has risen by 4.1% per annum, slightly slower than the 5.2% increase in the national average. Despite the slightly lower level of increase in recent years, electricity prices in Northland are 15% higher than the national average. Assuming 8030kW of power is used per year, the current price equates to an annual household power bill of \$3,372 in Northland compared to a national average of \$2,867. This is equivalent to an additional \$9.72 per week.

6.3 Telecommunications

Northland has historically had poor telecommunications infrastructure with limited broadband coverage and extensive areas of mobile phone 'black spots' (areas with no mobile phone reception). This has particularly plagued areas along Kaipara's west coast including Pouto, Ripiro Beach and adjoining settlements, and the Kai Iwi Lakes. This is because rural and remote areas are generally more expensive for commercial telecommunication network providers to serve than cities and suburban areas due to difficult terrain, geographical isolation and low population/customer densities (Crown Infrastructure Partners, 2019).

To address this infrastructure short fall, central government through Crown Infrastructure Partners has partnered with the private sector to build additional cell phone towers in rural areas, thereby reducing mobile phone black spots and extending access to mobile broadband. Importantly, all three New Zealand mobile operators (2degrees, Spark and One NZ) have services available from these new, government funded towers. This allows locals, tourists and the travelling public to have reception in areas serviced by these towers, regardless of which company they are with (Crown Infrastructure Partners, 2019). The towers themselves are being constructed, maintained and operated by the Rural Connectivity Group, an independent entity established to be the infrastructure provider for this new open access network (Rural Connectivity Group, 2019).

The Rural Connectivity Group, through completion of the Mobile Black Spot Fund programme and Rural Broadband Initiative, will make enhanced broadband available to approximately 99.8% of New Zealand's population, improve mobile coverage to ~1,400km of State Highways and ~168 tourism sites nationwide (Crown Infrastructure Partners, 2019). There will also be increased broadband availability to 271 marae. This work is scheduled to be completed in 2023 (Crown Infrastructure Partners, 2019).

Improving mobile phone coverage in these rural areas is not only important for business opportunities, tourism and social connectedness but also for safety, allowing persons in distress to contact emergency services when needed.

The Government has also been contributing funds to the expansion of fibre-optic infrastructure to facilitate ultra-fast broadband (UFB) access in the regions (Northpower, 2026). Whangārei's UFB network was completed in May 2014 by Northpower Fibre and now has one of the highest uptake levels among New Zealand UFB networks with more than 22,700 end users now able to connect (Northpower, 2026).

The Government has since chosen Northpower Fibre to build UFB fibre networks in 11 towns throughout the Kaipara and Whangārei districts between April 2017 and the end of 2021 (Northpower, 2026). Fibre optic broadband infrastructure has been installed in Dargaville, Mangawhai, Mangawhai-Kaiwaka Road, Kaiwaka, Maungatūroto, Paparua and Ruawai providing access for another 9,000 Northlander's (Figure 42) (Northpower, 2026). In 2022 Northpower were awarded six additional build stages, construction is underway which will allow 400 more customers to connect when works are completed in 2023.

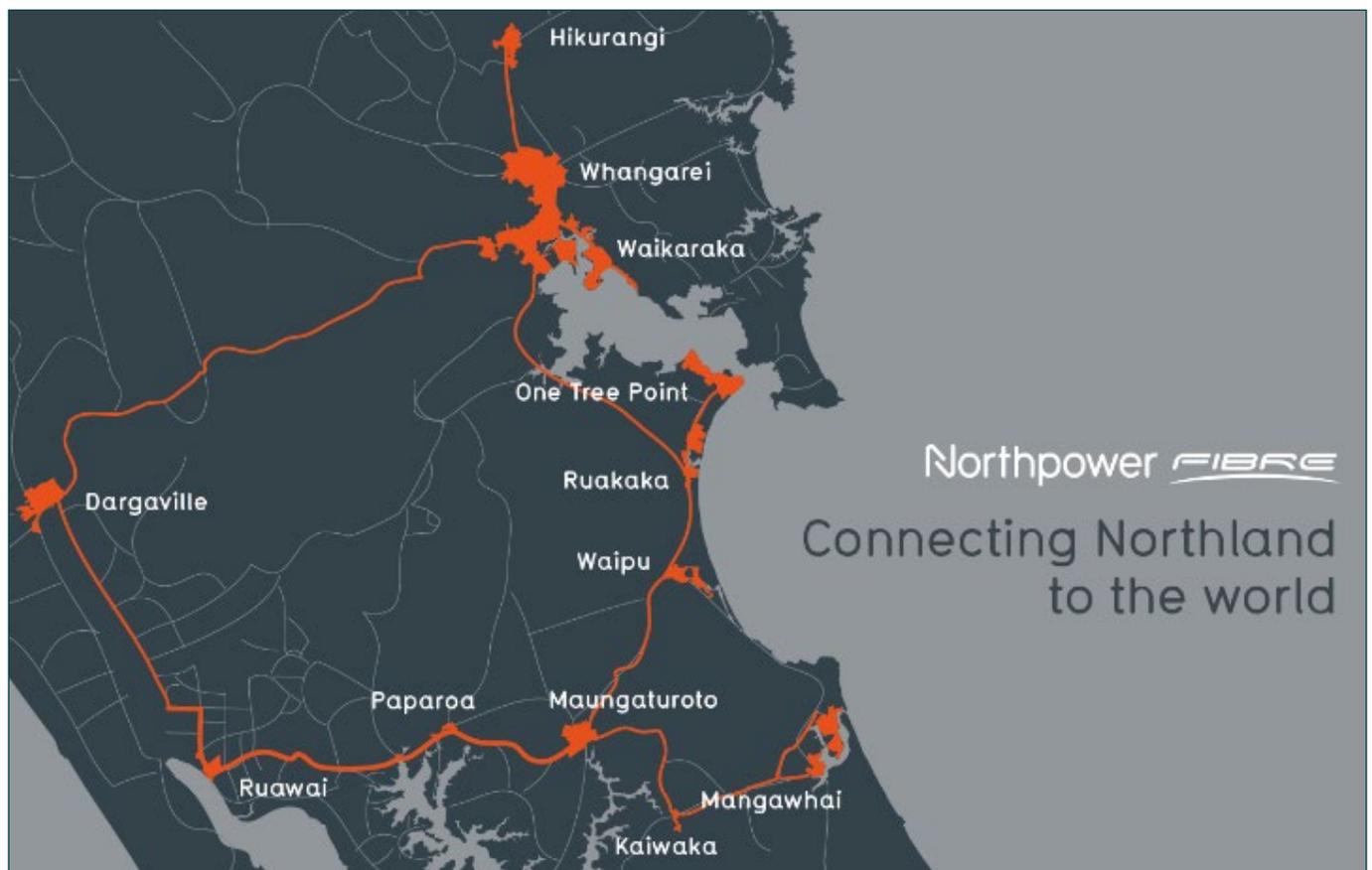


Figure 42: Northpower Fibre's expanding network (Northpower, 2023)



As well as increased coverage the entry level product speed on Northpower's fibre optic network has increased from 30/10 to 300/100 Mbit/s (Northpower, 2023).

In light of the above it can be concluded that, while Northland's telecommunications continue to have their limitations, they are steadily improving with black spots decreasing and broadband coverage increasing.

Finally, no review of Kaipara's telecommunications infrastructure would be complete without mentioning the Hawaiki submarine cable which comes ashore at its Mangawhai landing station. This is a new fibre-optic cable linking Australia, New Zealand, American Samoa, Hawaii and the United States West Coast, with branching units in place to further connect the Pacific Islands of New Caledonia, Fiji and Tonga (Hawaiki, 2020). It is presently the largest and fastest telecommunications link between Australasia and the United States (Hawaiki, 2020).

Commercial operations started in July 2018, with a guaranteed design life of 25 years, meaning the cable will be in service until at least 2043. The cable is carrier-neutral and independently owned, with capacity to double New Zealand's international communications capacity (Northland Inc., 2020).

Having both the Hawaiki submarine cable landing station and local UFB network infrastructure creates opportunities for digital industries to establish in Mangawhai and Maungatūroto.

6.4 Water

In a subtropical area like Kaipara, the careful management of water is key. Water services are essential to ensure people have access to clean, safe water for drinking, cooking and washing, are provided with sanitation and protected from flooding. As such, of all the services offered by local government, these are perhaps the most significant in protecting quality of life. Without the effective provision of water services, our communities would suffer from water born illnesses, poor hygiene, degradation of our living environment and the risk of homes and crops flooding.

Kaipara District Council is presently the key agency responsible for the delivery of four different kinds of water services in the district. These are potable water (also called drinking water or municipal water supply), wastewater (also known as sewage), stormwater and land drainage. Of these, potable water and wastewater are in the process of being transferred to a Northland wide Council Controlled Organisation (CCO) as part of the central Government's Local Water Done Well reforms. Stormwater will remain with the individual Northland district councils, at least initially. The land drainage activity is excluded from the process to establish the CCO and will remain a core function of Kaipara District Council. That said, a major review of Kaipara's land drainage activity is currently underway and could potentially see some responsibilities transferred to the Northland Regional Council. Nationally, it is more common for regional councils to take the lead in providing land drainage, flood protection and river management functions. Northland Regional Council is responsible for most river management in the Kaipara District, though the Kaipara District is responsible for managing some river channels that are closely associated with land drainage works.

Water for irrigation and watering stock is another important consideration and is provided independent of local government, typically by individual farmers or by consortiums of farmers and growers.

The following sections look more closely at these different areas of water infrastructure provision.

6.4.1 Potable water

Council operates separate municipal water supply schemes in the Dargaville (including Baylys), Glinks Gully, Ruawai, Maungatūroto and Mangawhai communities. In addition to supplying potable (treated) water, there are also a number of connections to the raw water pipelines for agricultural purposes on the Kaihu (Dargaville) and Maungatūroto raw water mains.

Dargaville and Baylys townships are predominantly supplied with water from the Waiparataniwha Stream near Kaihu which is piped to a water treatment plant in Dargaville and then distributed to Baylys, Dargaville township and Silver Fern Farms' Dargaville meatworks (the latter uses about one fourth of the water and is also an anchor local employer). During periods of prolonged dry weather, the Waiparataniwha Stream experiences low flows and Council begins taking water direct from the Kaihu River at Rotu. As the weather becomes drier still and the river level begins to fall, Council is able to release water from its Waitatua Reservoir to supplement river flows. The water released



Figure 43: Schematic showing the layout of Council's current raw water network for Dargaville (Awa, 2021)



from the reservoir does not provide water to the town directly, however by providing water to the river for ecological benefit, the Council is able to meet the conditions of its resource consent and continue taking water from the river despite the low flow conditions. This system is shown in Figure 43.

The Dargaville/Baylys Beach water supply has experienced regular water restrictions during prolonged dry periods. These issues are presently being corrected by three initiatives:

- Firstly, Council is undertaking a series of improvements to its water supply infrastructure. These include upgrading pump stations, increasing the capacity of the Waitua Dam and improving river flow monitoring and telemetry to better manage water collection.
- Secondly, Council has worked with the Northland Regional Council to review the water restriction triggers in its Drought Management Plan to ensure they are aligned to the improved understanding of this catchment and the improved infrastructure.
- Thirdly, the Council has entered into a deal with the Te Tai Tokerau Water Trust that will see the Trust supply the raw (untreated) water needs of industrial customers connected to the Dargaville/Baylys municipal supply. This will relieve pressure on the municipal supply, leaving more treated water available for residential customers. This deal also preserves the ability for Council to source water directly from the Trust to feed into the municipal supply. However, exercising this option would require further work between the parties and is not presently required.

Maungatūroto's water is sourced from two streams in the Brynderwyn Hills and from the Brooklands Dam. The Brooklands Irrigation Dam is currently compromised due to an algal bloom. As the Maungatūroto water treatment plant is unable to treat water contaminated by algae, this makes Brooklands Dam unavailable as a water source at present.

The Maungatūroto Water Supply Scheme provides water to three groups of users:

- Private Farm irrigation and stock water users via the raw water network – approximate demand of 40m³/day
- Fonterra Maungatūroto dairy factory via the raw water network – demand of 1,200 to 2,400m³/day (with 2,400m³/day required during peak operational periods)
- Maungatūroto township via the Maungatūroto water treatment plant – average daily demand in the order of 650m³/day

The existing arrangement allows for raw water to be extracted from any one of the three takes described above (while noting the Brooklands take has been offline since 2020 due to algal blooms). Raw water is then conveyed via a trunk raw water main to the Maungatūroto water treatment plant. Along this pipeline, a series of offtakes supply raw water to a number of private farms, and Fonterra Maungatūroto. Following treatment at the water treatment plant, treated water is distributed to households and businesses in Maungatūroto via a reticulated pipe network. This local distribution network consists of approximately 35km of pipes. The Maungatūroto municipal supply scheme is shown in Figure 44.

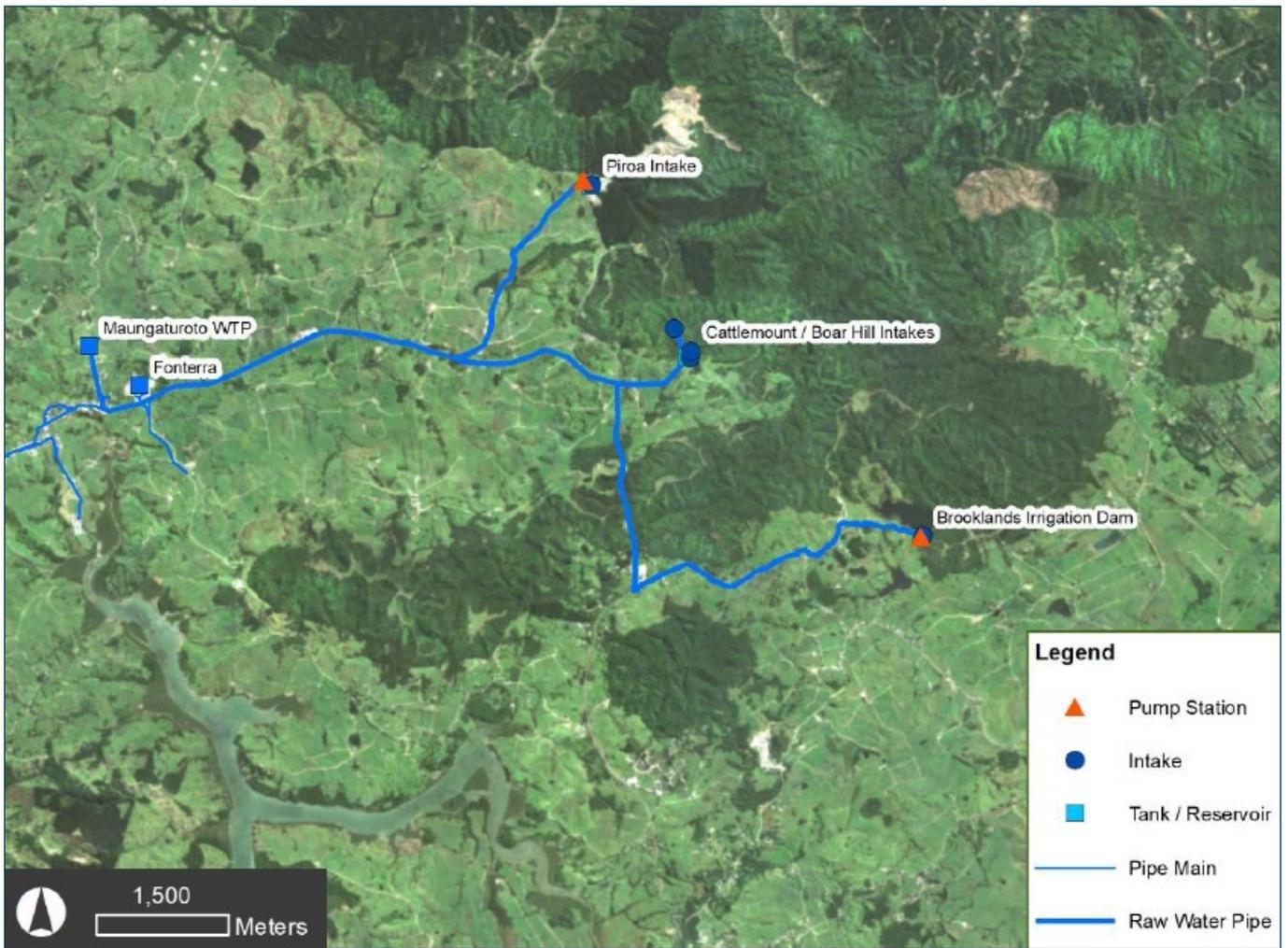


Figure 44: Schematic showing the layout of Council's water network for Maungatūroto (Awa, 2022a)

Thanks in part to co-investment in raw water infrastructure by Fonterra, Maungatūroto is much less prone to water restrictions than Dargaville, though the town still experienced restrictions during the severe drought of 2019/20.



Ruawai is supplied with water from a series of bores located next to the Wairoa River. Water is treated and distributed to local residents via approximately 6.7km of pipes.

The extent of Ruawai's water supply network is shown in Figure 45.

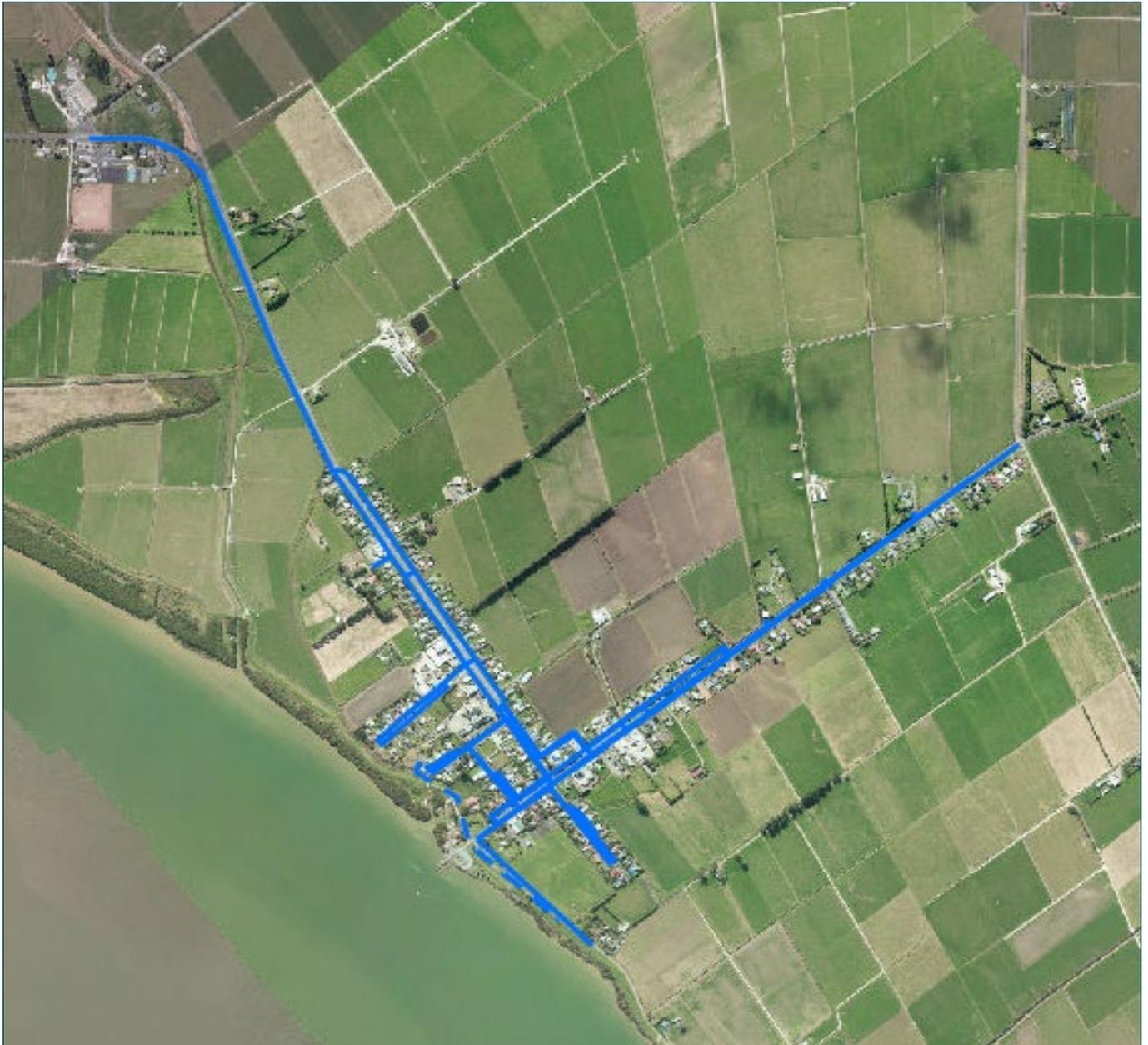


Figure 45: The extent of Ruawai's water supply network

The Glinks Gully scheme supplies water to 85 properties. The scheme takes water from a local stream, pipes it to a small water treatment plant and then distributes it to households. The extent of the Glinks Gully water supply scheme is shown in Figure 46.



Figure 46: The extent of Glinks Gully's water supply network

Mangawhai has a small water scheme that primarily provides potable water to Mangawhai Heads Campground, Wood Street shops and community housing at Fagan Place. Maintaining water services for a small number of users means high costs with relatively little benefit for the wider community. Mangawhai is a relatively new system, has an acceptable asset profile and is not an issue at this current stage.

The extent of the Mangawhai water supply scheme is shown in Figure 47.

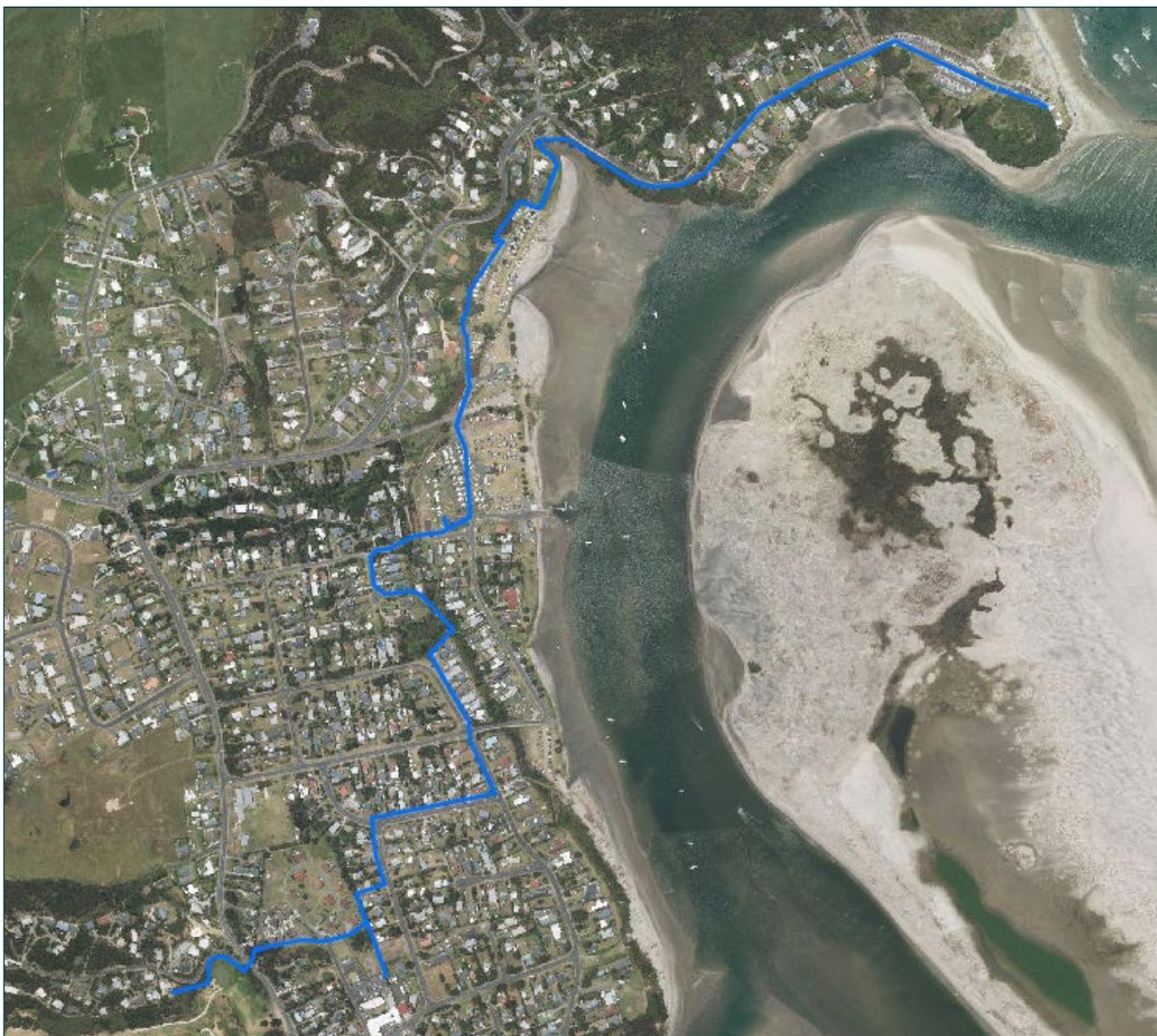


Figure 47: The extent of Mangawhai's water supply network

By far the majority of Mangawhai, along with much of the district, are therefore dependent on private rainwater tanks and to a lesser extent bores for their potable water needs. This means many households must take responsibility for the provision and quality of their own water supplies.

The Northland District Health Board has submitted to Council that they would like to see Council increase the public water supply to more properties.

When private water tank supplies run low, residents call on water carters to truck water to their properties to refill their tanks. Engagement with these water carters suggest that some in the Mangawhai area have their own water supplies from which to cart water while others depend on filling up from a Council supply. However, regardless of the supply they use, they can struggle to meet peak demand during dry periods, not because of the lack of water, but because so many properties require water all at once. This issue is made worse as many households do not monitor their tank water supplies effectively and so do not order a load of water until they actually run out of water and require it urgently.

6.4.2 Irrigation water

While Kaipara enjoys high average annual rainfall, a lack of storage means much of this valuable resource cannot be retained for use in times of shortage (Te Tai Tokerau Water Trust, 2025). By creating water reservoirs and piped distribution schemes, landowners with access to them are able to plan and implement future land use change with greater confidence (Te Tai Tokerau Water Trust, 2025). There are a number of irrigation schemes in Northland, most of which are focussed on supporting horticulture. These schemes include Kerikeri, “Mid-North” near Kaikohe, Maungatapere, “Kaipara” near Te Kōpuru and Brooklands (also called Baldrock) near Kaiwaka (which unlike the others is focused on pastoral irrigation).

The Kaipara Water Scheme is based on a newly built 3.3 million cubic metre reservoir, named, Te Waihekeora, situated at Redhill on the northern Pouto Peninsula (Te Tai Tokerau Water Trust, 2025). It holds enough water to support around 1,100ha of new horticultural development. Its distribution network is being progressively expanded both north and south of Te Kōpuru and is anticipated to reach Dargaville in late 2026 (Te Tai Tokerau Water Trust, 2025). The distribution network is designed to flow both ways; carrying water to customers, but also carrying water from water sources to the reservoir to replenish it. The reservoir itself has almost no catchment, so is dependant on being recharged from pump stations on a number of streams at times when these streams are experiencing ample flow.

While the scheme is being built by the Te Tai Tokerau Water Trust, the long-term plan is for control of the scheme to transition to a water company, controlled by its shareholders (Te Tai Tokerau Water Trust, 2025). The groundwork to allow this to occur is underway. To date, the Trust has primarily been funded by central government through Kānoa - Regional Economic Development and Investment Unit as part of a government initiative to increase productivity and employment in Northland (Te Tai Tokerau Water Trust, 2025).

A map of the scheme is shown in Figure 48.

The Brooklands Dam (also sometimes referred to as the Baldrock Dam) is a private 21ha, 1.3 million cubic meter irrigation reservoir created by the construction of an earth dam on private farmland to the east of Maungatūroto Township. The dam provides water to irrigate a number of farms to the east of Baldrock Road. These farms are near to the Council’s Brown Road Farm which is irrigated with water recovered from the Mangawhai wastewater treatment plant. It is possible to make this recovered water available to other landowners for irrigation too, however no such opportunities have so far been realised.

As mentioned previously, Council also has a connection to the Brooklands Dam to support its Maungatūroto municipal water supply.

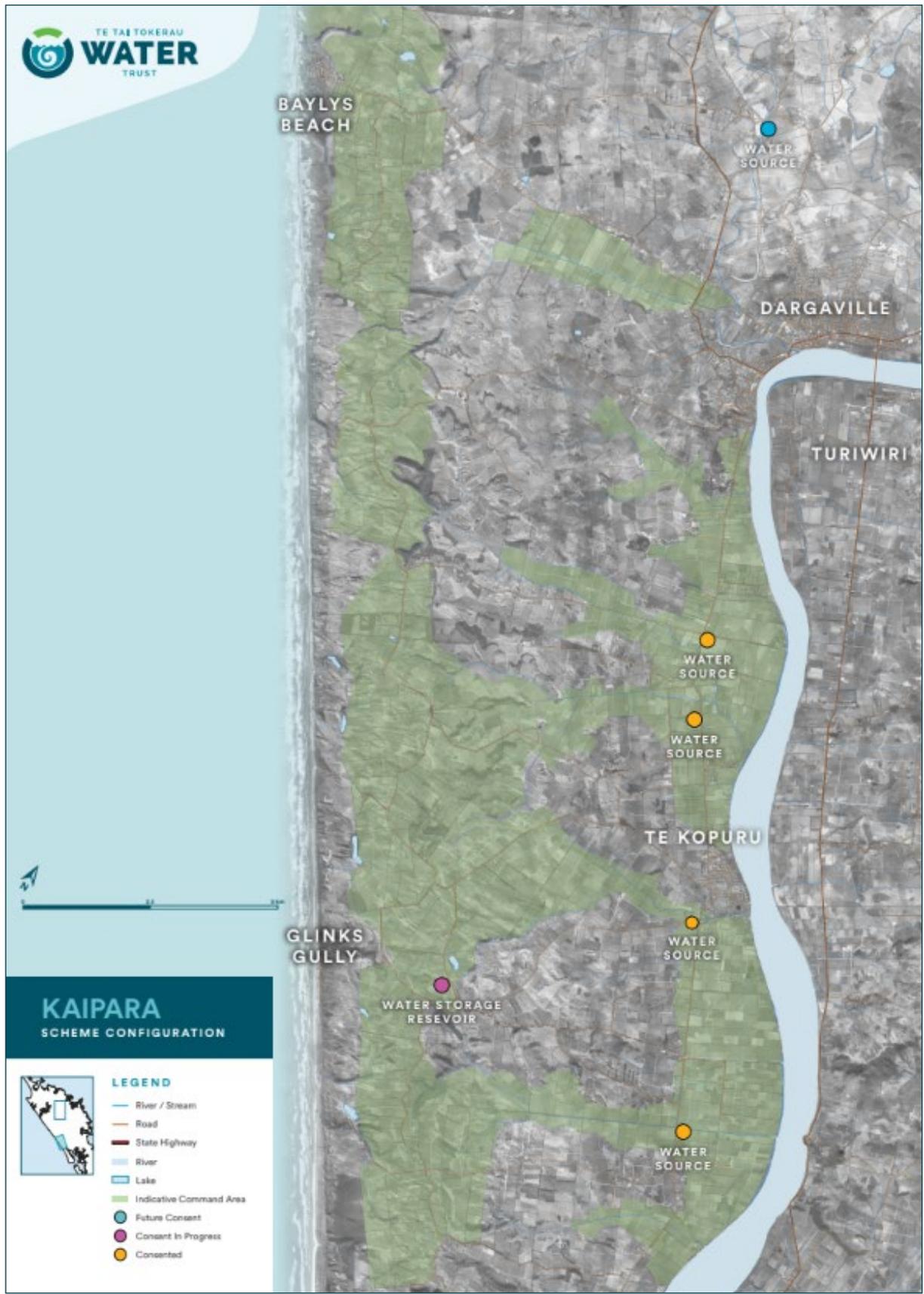


Figure 48: The proposed extent and layout of the developing Kaipara Irrigation scheme (Te Tai Tokerau Water Trust, 2025)

6.4.3 Wastewater

Council operates six community wastewater schemes in order to protect public health and the environment. These schemes service the communities of Dargaville, Glinks Gully, Kaiwaka, Maungatūroto, Te Kōpuru and Mangawhai.

Dargaville services a population of just under 5,000 people and also receives a significant amount of wastewater from the Silver Fern Farms meatworks. The wastewater collection network in Dargaville is aged and subject to frequent blockages, overflows, and extremely high levels of Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) of stormwater, groundwater and potentially river water entering the wastewater pipes.

The existing scheme is made up of approximately 40km of gravity pipes, 14 pump stations and 9km of pressure pipes, conveying wastewater flows from the town to the Dargaville Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). The majority of the system operates by gravity, with wastewater flowing down to a series of pump stations near the Northern Wairoa River. These then pump the wastewater parallel to the river to reach the treatment plant on the town's east. Treated effluent is discharged to the Northern Wairoa River by irrigating it onto the riverbanks. The extent of Dargaville's wastewater network is shown in Figure 49.

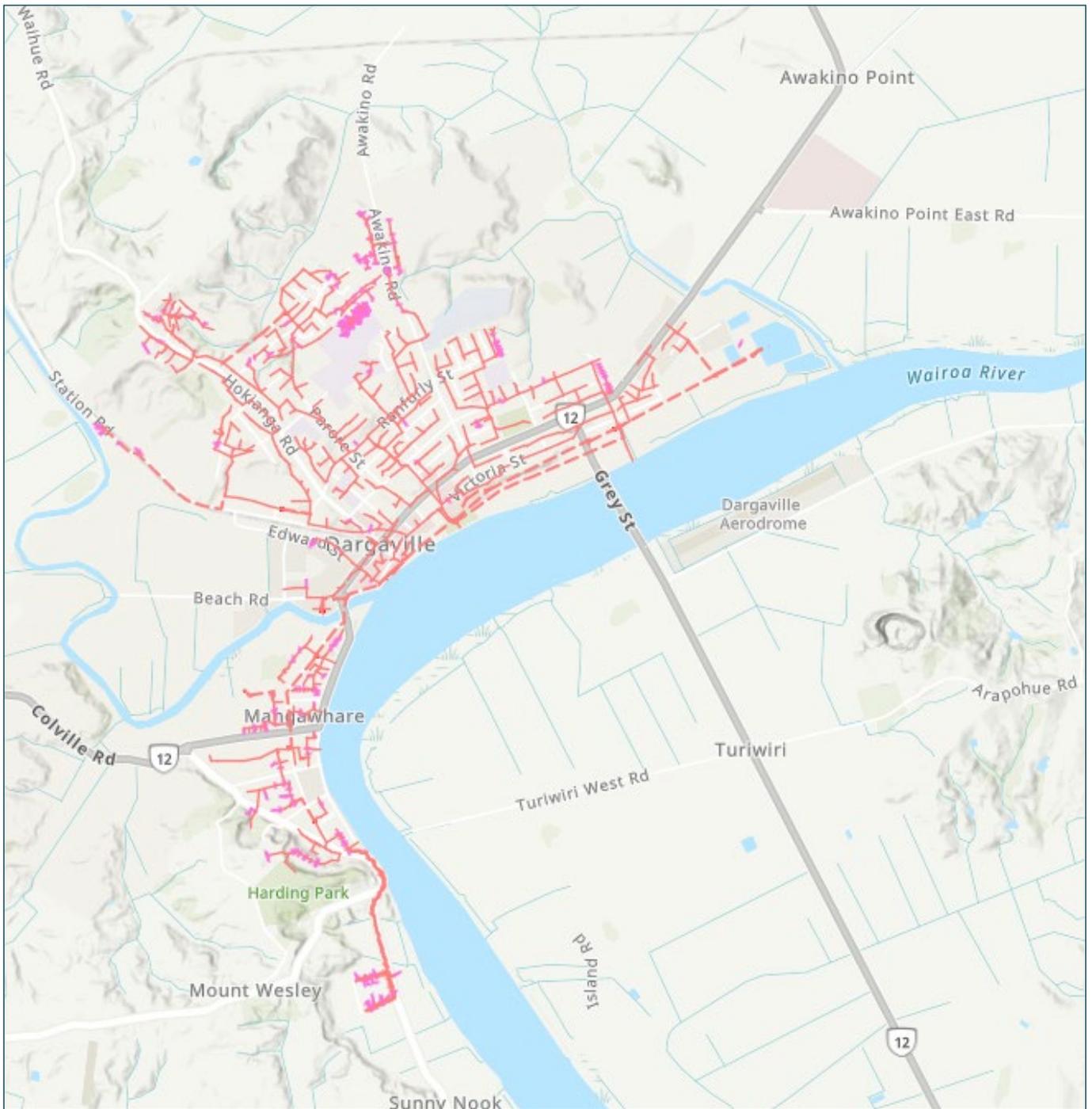


Figure 49: The extent of Dargaville’s wastewater network

Te Kōpuru's wastewater treatment system and pipelines are also examples of older systems. To its benefit, the township is built on a revetment above the Northern Wairoa River and the wastewater system uses the benefit of the elevation of the revetment to develop a reticulation network that discharges to the treatment plant without the need for pump stations or rising mains. The extent of Te Kōpuru's wastewater network is shown in Figure 50.



Figure 50: The extent of Te Kōpuru's wastewater network



The wastewater scheme servicing Glinks Gully is designed to service a peak period population of 72 people and the system connects to 18 septic tanks serving 24 houses located on private properties. The wastewater treatment system and pipelines are ageing and replacement work will be needed. The small population and small number of properties mean a high level of investment per property will be required.

The extent of Glinks Gully's wastewater network is shown in Figure 51.



Figure 51: The extent of Glinks Gully's wastewater network

The wastewater scheme for Maungatūroto consists of a piped collection network which conveys wastewater to the Maungatūroto Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) prior to discharging to the Otamatea River. The system is made up of around 11km of gravity pipes, 3 pump stations and 1km of pressure pipes. A schematic overview of the system is presented in Figure 52.

Much of the Maungatūroto wastewater system has high levels of inflow and infiltration of stormwater and/or groundwater. Whilst the system largely meets the demands of the town in its current state, there are several capacity issues which have the potential to result in overflows during wet weather. The network is predominantly in 'average' to 'good condition'. Network projects are therefore driven by capacity constraints rather than condition.

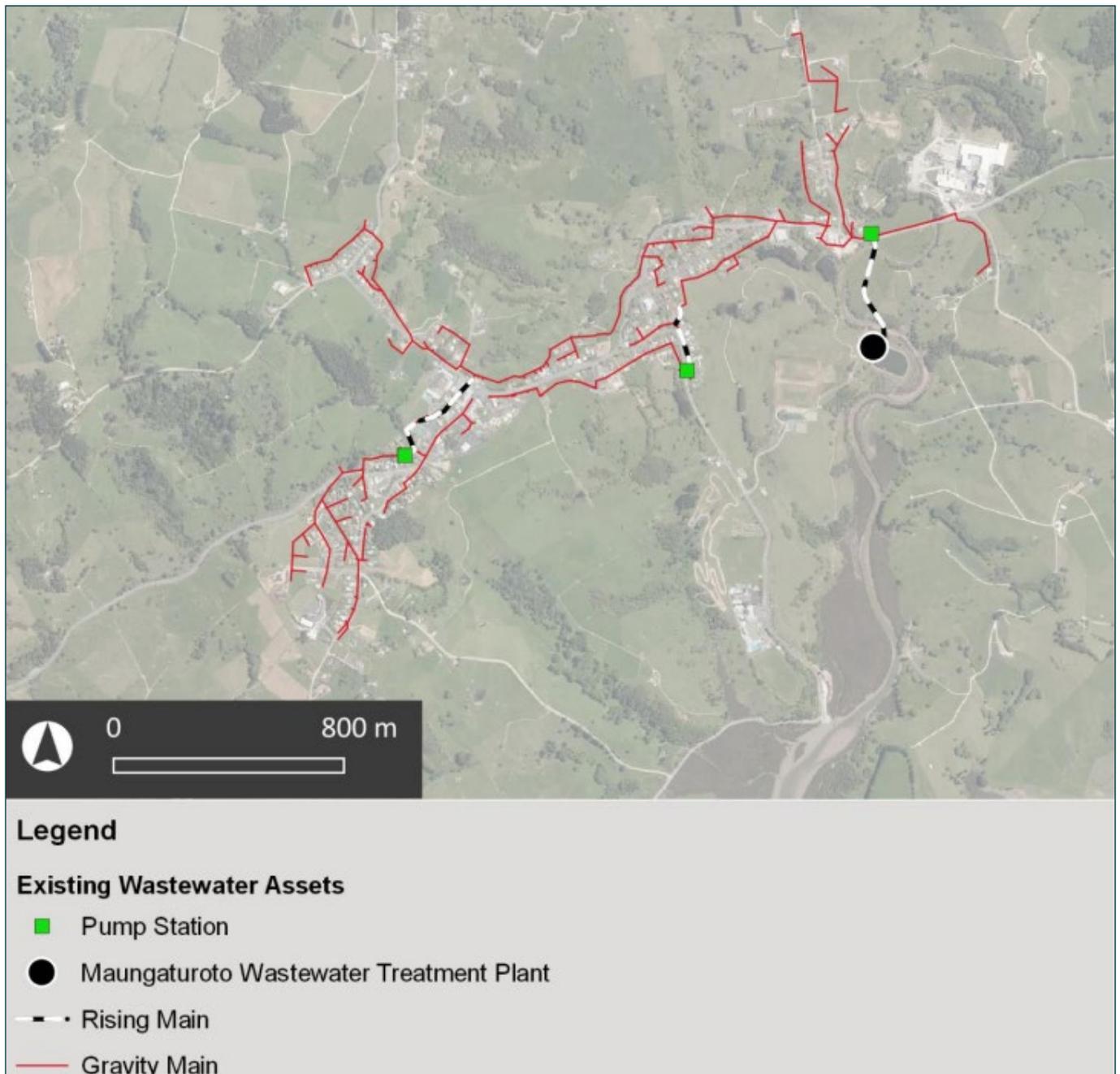


Figure 52: The extent of Maungatūroto's wastewater network (Awa, 2022b)



Maungatūroto Station Village is serviced separately by a small scheme comprised of a series of septic tanks which discharge to a wetland that drains to a stream.

The Kaiwaka wastewater system consists of 4km of gravity pipeline, 1 pump station and a treatment plant. The majority of the network operates by gravity, draining to a pump station from where it is pumped to the wastewater treatment plant. A significant upgrade to the treatment plant was constructed in 2019. Nonetheless, Kaiwaka's wastewater system is ageing and will require further upgrades. The extent of Kaiwaka's wastewater network is shown in Figure 53.



Figure 53: The extent of Kaiwaka's wastewater network

Mangawhai's wastewater system is comparatively new, having been opened in 2010. This 'state of the art' collection, treatment and reuse system treats wastewater to a very high standard before irrigating it over a council-owned farm.

As Mangawhai continues to grow, the wastewater treatment plant can be progressively upgraded and expanded to accommodate the additional flows. However, disposal of the treated wastewater is a constraint, having reached the capacity of the Brown Road Farm. The solution to this, presently being constructed, is to irrigate the Mangawhai Golf Course with the treated wastewater as well. This will both greatly increase the capacity of the wastewater system and ensure that the golf course will never want for irrigation. Golf course irrigation with water recovered from wastewater treatment is a common approach to providing for golf course irrigation internationally. Reuse of wastewater in this way requires a very high standard of treatment. This is achieved at Mangawhai but is unusual in New Zealand generally. The present extent of Mangawhai's wastewater network is shown in Figure 54.

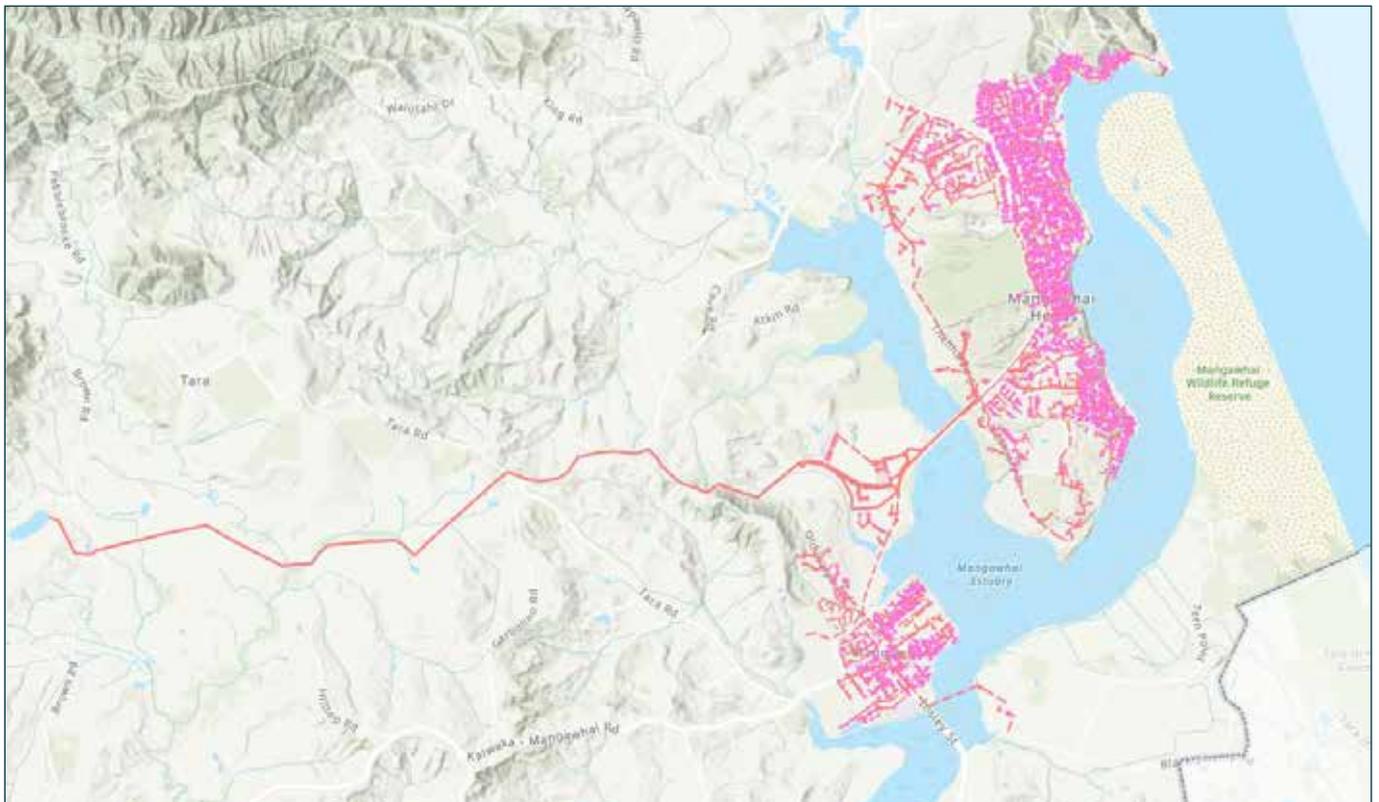


Figure 54: The extent of Mangawhai's wastewater network



6.4.4 Stormwater

The five council-operated community stormwater schemes in Baylys, Dargaville, Te Kōpuru, Kaiwaka and Mangawhai protect the communities from localised surface flooding by managing and removing stormwater, in a manner that protects the environment and public health.

In addition, stormwater systems predominantly incorporated into the road network are provided in Glinks Gully, Kelly's Bay, Pahi, Whakapirau, Tinopai, Paparoa, Matakoho and Maungatūroto. There is also a Ruawai scheme that is operated under the Raupō Land Drainage scheme.

Stormwater management in other areas is fully integrated with road and land drainage infrastructure and is not included among Council's stormwater assets.

Baylys township is serviced by a reticulated system consisting of a piped network with manholes and kerbside sumps discharging to the streams that flow onto the beach. It is also at the lowest point of a larger catchment which reaches back towards Baylys Basin Road. This has the ability to add a large amount of water runoff into the existing streams and flow paths causing scouring and other issues at the lowest point which is the Baylys Township. Many properties discharge to soakage and open drains. There is approximately 3.2km of stormwater pipeline in Baylys, and 10m of open drains.

Dargaville's urban area is serviced by a stormwater network containing 36km of piped and 35km of open drains. It is protected from river flooding by 66 floodgates and various stopbanks. A series of floodwalls were installed to protect low lying areas in the southernmost part of Dargaville exposed to the Northern Wairoa and the Kaihu Rivers. Investigations are currently underway to assess what upgrades will be needed to improve Dargaville's flood protection works to offer a higher level of resilience in the face of more extreme storms. This will include looking at both the height of the flood walls and the capacity of the stormwater network which delivers water down to the river. Stormwater collecting in this network is not able to drain to the river at high tide due to the floodgates which prevent back flow from the river. Rather, stormwater must accumulate within the system until the tide and the river level drop sufficiently to allow the gates to open. To achieve greater resilience, it is possible that pumping may become necessary. Presently, it is understood that, if a flood flow, storm surge and king tide occur simultaneously, Dargaville's floodwalls will be overtopped and the central business district flooded.

Te Kōpuru's stormwater is primarily managed through the 4.7km of open drains associated with the roading network. There is also around 43m of stormwater pipeline in Te Kōpuru.

Kaiwaka has approximately 1.65km of stormwater pipeline, and 262m of open drains.

Mangawhai has over 24.8km of stormwater pipeline, and 7.3km of open drains. A challenge facing stormwater management in Mangawhai is that urban expansion and intensification is resulting in greater impermeable surfaces, increasing stormwater generation. In some cases, the path for these greater stormwater flows to reach the harbour is via older residential areas. These areas either have no formal stormwater

infrastructure (i.e. they rely on soakage) or have stormwater infrastructure that is sized for the original development of that area i.e. not for all of the further development now taking place up stream. These issues came to the fore in the 2023 North Island weather events, in which Mangawhai was subjected to high intensity rainfall over a short period of time. This resulted in damaging flooding in localised parts of the residential area. Following this event, Council identified a number of key stormwater improvements and has been proactively working to increase the capacity and resilience of the network.

6.4.5 Land drainage

Much of the most productive land in Kaipara is located on the alluvial flood plains around the Northern Wairoa River and its tributaries. Protecting this land from inundation and flooding is achieved by a series of land drainage schemes consisting of drains, stopbanks, floodgates and one flood pump. The schemes were designed and built in the early to mid-1900s to a high standard for the time, as is demonstrated by their resilience to this day. Kaipara now has the second largest area of land protected by land drainage schemes in New Zealand (after the Hauraki plains). Figure 55 shows the land drainage areas in Kaipara.

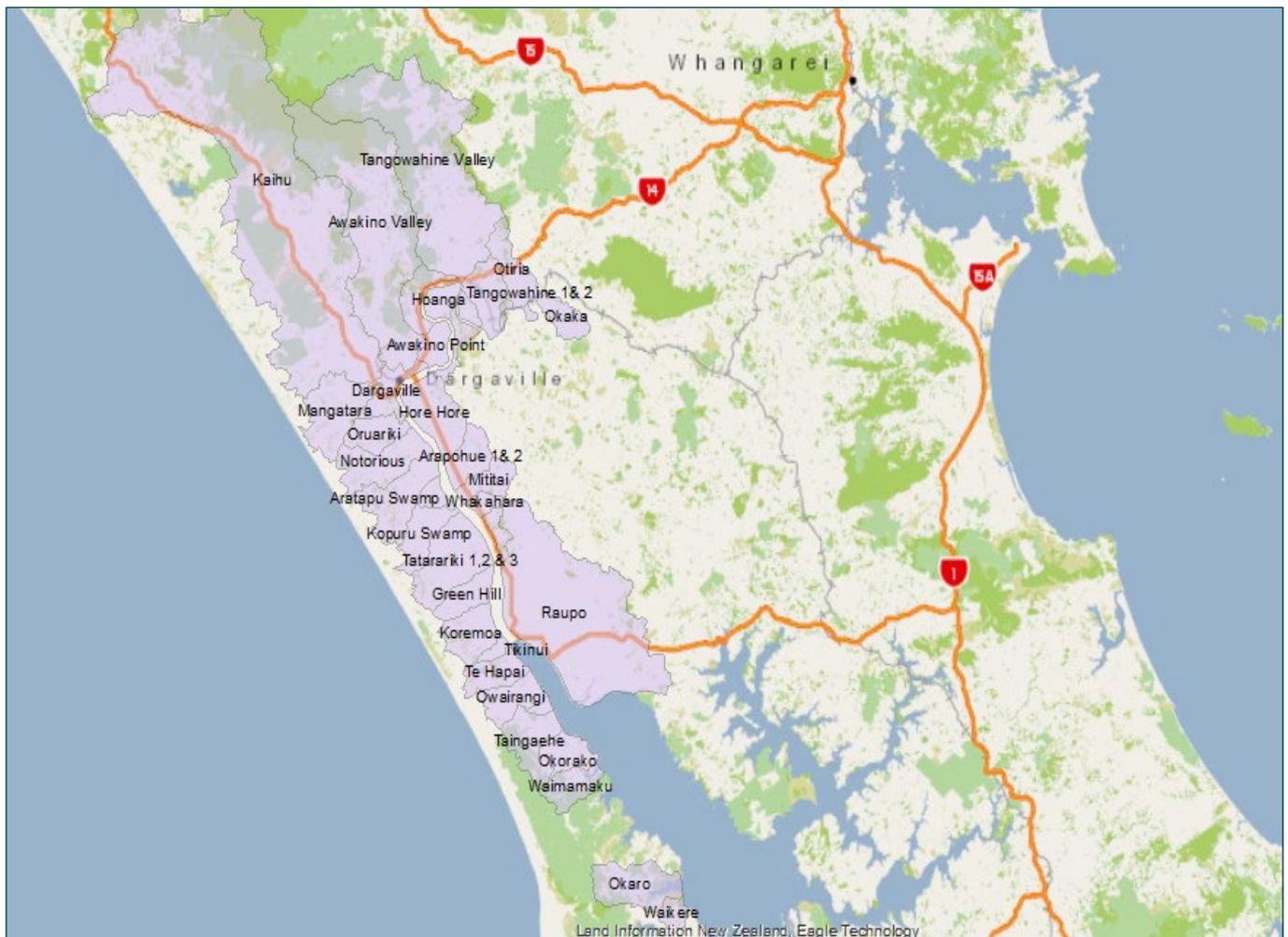


Figure 55: Spatial extent of land drainage districts in Kaipara



Council does not operate but rather facilitates the operation and maintenance of 30 land drainage schemes within the Kaipara district. Governance of these schemes is via a number of drainage committees comprised of representatives from the landowners protected by each scheme, with support from Council. Funding is likewise provided by the beneficiaries of each scheme via a targeted rate which Council levies on the local drainage committee's behalf. This means both the cost and governance of each scheme rests directly with those whose properties are protected by it. However, while these arrangements have proven effective to address the day to day maintenance and operation of these schemes (e.g. occasional machine cleaning of drains, weed spraying etc.) they have faced challenges with funding larger capital upgrades to the systems. The land drainage areas vary in the number of properties that comprise them, with some being much more capable of raising the funds required for such projects than others. To address this, Council is presently undertaking a review of the land drainage activity and its governance with a view towards consolidation.

Collectively, the 30 drainage schemes include not less than 255km of drains (not counting adjoining private drains) and 123 floodgates (not counting the many private floodgates). The largest of the land drainage schemes is Raupo which alone consists of about 55km of tidally affected stopbanks, 52 floodgates, 137.6km of drains and canals and 1 pump. It should be noted that the drainage of individual paddocks is the responsibility of the property owner. Drainage network drains provide a connection to the drainage network only. Likewise, all floodgates located on the boundary between drainage committee drains and private drainage are the responsibility of the property owner. These figures therefore greatly understate the total extent of the land drainage infrastructure in Kaipara.

The schemes work by using stopbanks to prevent water from the river overflowing onto the land behind. Concurrently, rain falling on the land or flowing down from the catchment behind the stopbanks is channelled to the river via drains and released to the river at low tide via floodgates. These gates close as the tide rises to prevent water flowing back onto the land.

However, this system becomes less effective the lower the land becomes relative to the river. Land movements, oxidation of peaty soils, changing river morphology and sea level changes can all affect this balance. The stopbanks already overtop in some places when peak flows occur. Heightening the stopbanks often requires them to be re-engineered and comes at a considerable cost. Furthermore, as river levels rise relative to the land, the period of time at which the tide is low enough to allow the floodgates to open and water to flow out of the drains will decrease. This could eventually require water to be pumped over the stopbanks, resulting in both a capital cost as pumps are installed and an operational cost as the pumps draw power.

Improving the resilience and ongoing sustainability of this infrastructure is therefore a major challenge facing the drainage committees and is of critical importance to the wider district, with much of Kaipara's most productive land lying just above or just below present sea level, together with a considerable length of State Highway 12, Pouto Road, Ruawai township and Dargaville's central business district.

The land drainage schemes represent a major investment by the community and are of vital importance to the district's economy and the quality of life of the district's residents. The community's expectation is that this investment in land drainage assets is secure and will be maintained into the future. However, the investment in land drainage is likely to need to increase dramatically if this is to be achieved. Council has been working with its communities and central government in this respect. Recent projects completed or underway include a major new floodgate in Ruawai's G Canal, upgrading the stopbanks to the north of Ruawai township, heightening the full length of the stopbank from Dargaville to Te Kōpuru and constructing a new length of stopbank along the railway line where the Dargaville Branch crosses the Awakino Valley.



Stopbank maintenance Aratapu



6.5 Social Infrastructure

Schools, medical centres, halls, parks and cinemas are some examples of the social infrastructure which enrich our lives and wellbeing. This section looks at what social infrastructure and services are available in Kaipara.

6.5.1 Libraries

The role of public libraries has changed significantly over the first decades of the 21st century, reflecting wider societal, technological, and demographic shifts. Contemporary public libraries are now widely recognised as essential social infrastructure that supports community wellbeing, lifelong learning, literacy, and social connection. While libraries continue to fulfil their traditional roles in reading, information provision, and access to knowledge, they have expanded their focus to include learning facilitation, community development, and digital inclusion.

Over the past 20–25 years, public libraries have increasingly delivered programmes and activities that foster learning, creativity, and community participation. They have also developed a strong emphasis on supporting people to navigate and engage with the digital world, including access to technology, digital literacy skills, and online services. As such, libraries are now positioned as integral components of a broader learning, literacy, and leisure ecosystem within communities.

Within the Kaipara District, there are five libraries. Dargaville Library and Mangawhai Library operate as public libraries, while Paparoa, Kaiwaka, and Maungatūroto libraries are community libraries operated by volunteers. These community libraries receive financial support from Kaipara District Council through grants and provide basic book lending services to their local communities.

Both the Dargaville and Mangawhai libraries are grossly undersized when considered against current and projected population growth and community needs. Mangawhai Library has only recently transitioned from a community library to a public library, reflecting rapid population growth and increasing demand for library services in the area.

To address service disparities and future-proof library provision, Kaipara District Council is planning to develop a new library and community hub facility in Mangawhai. Planning is underway; however, construction timeframes have not yet been confirmed. In Dargaville, the originally planned hub has been paused due to lack of funding, and work is currently underway to determine whether the library will better accommodate community needs if it operates from the ground level of the 32 Hokianga Road Council office, including consideration of a shared customer services and library model.

In addition to capacity constraints, the physical condition and suitability of existing library buildings varies across the district. Several facilities were not designed to support the breadth of services now expected of modern libraries, including the provision of safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for all ages and abilities. Limitations include accessibility, layout, building conditions, and the ability to accommodate programmes, technology, and community use.

The Maungatūroto community library is of particular concern, as the building is in poor condition and requires extensive repairs to remain functional. The current state of the facility limits its ability to provide a safe, comfortable, and inclusive environment for users, volunteers, and staff, and constrains the level of service that can be offered. Addressing the condition and fitness for purpose of library buildings is therefore an important consideration in ensuring equitable access to library services across the Kaipara District.

Looking ahead, the introduction of a mobile library service is being explored as a cost-effective and flexible approach to improving access to library services across the district. A mobile service would help address geographical barriers by delivering books, Wi-Fi connectivity, and a range of library-related services to communities that are currently underserved.

6.5.2 Education Infrastructure

The topography of Kaipara means that there are three distinct schooling networks; Mangawhai, Otamatea, and Dargaville (Ministry of Education, 2022). Figure 56 shows the schools available to service students in these areas. Not shown are supporting schools outside the district which also accommodate students from Kaipara. In particular, it should be noted that Otamatea High School and Rodney College are important for providing secondary school facilities to the Mangawhai area.

In addition a significant number of children travel long distances each day to attend the Blomfield Special School base site in Whangārei (Ministry of Education, 2022).

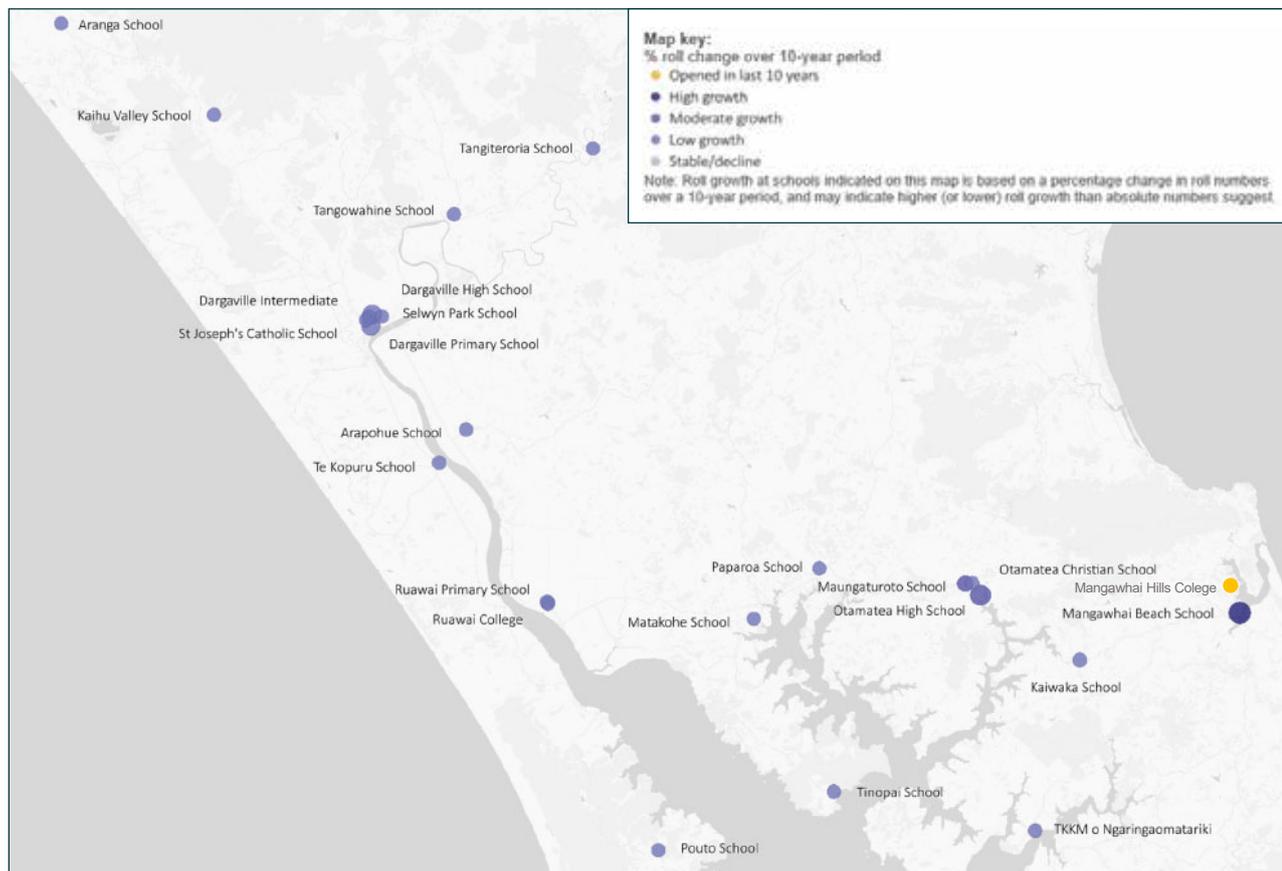


Figure 56: Locations of schools in the Kaipara District and changes in student rolls (Ministry of Education, 2022)



Recent population growth within the Kaipara schooling catchment continues to be concentrated in the east (Ministry of Education, 2022). This has led to the allocation of roll growth funding to schools in the Mangawhai area for additional teaching space. In contrast, potential rationalisation of surplus teaching space is being considered in other parts of the district (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Mangawhai Hills College, an independent secondary school, has been established in Mangawhai by the community amidst concerns from local residents over the distance children were needing to travel to attend either Otamatea High School or Rodney College (Mangawhai Hills College, 2025). However, high student fees at Mangawhai Hills College (a consequence of being an independent rather than a state funded school) mean most local students still remain dependant on Otamatea High School or Rodney College. The Ministry of Education's analysis of projected demand supports the continuation of the Otamatea and Rodney for most Mangawhai secondary students. This is because secondary schools require a certain number of students to support the full range of offerings expected from a modern secondary school e.g. shop classes, laboratory facilities etc. Attempting to provide the full range of services across multiple small schools is not viable.

Four of Kaipara's schools are geographically isolated. As a result, it is more difficult to attract and retain quality teachers, to attend professional learning and development opportunities, and to manage maintenance of school property (Ministry of Education, 2022). Rural Kaipara has a high proportion of teaching principals which places extra pressure on them to lead as well as teach. The Ministry of Education is working to provide more collegial support in relation to professional learning and development of staff across the catchment. They will continue to assist schools to strengthen governance, leadership and teaching capability, to improve engagement and student outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2022).

The Ministry of Education has acquired a site for the relocation of Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ngaringaomatariki as a new kura onto a permanent site in Kaiwaka (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Tertiary education opportunities are limited in the Kaipara District with most students leaving the district to pursue higher education. That said, there is a small NorthTec campus in Dargaville. NorthTec Dargaville's programmes are tailored to the needs of the community and have a focus on trades and land-based training (NorthTec, 2025).

6.5.3 Health Care

Kaipara District currently suffers from a lack of healthcare services with residents regularly required to travel to neighbouring Whangārei or Auckland to access the full range of services they require, particularly diagnostic and specialist appointments (Chiang & Exeter, 2019).

Kaipara is serviced by the Whangārei base hospital which is the key hospital servicing all of Northland. In addition, the Dargaville Hospital provides some services to the northern and western areas of the district. However, the range of services offered is limited.

Medical centres/doctors' clinics are located in most centres in the district but have limited

capacity and services. Other health care offerings such as dental services, optometrists etc. are also limited in the Kaipara District.

In recent years, Kaipara medical centres have struggled to attract and retain staff, leading to reduced outcomes for patients and a growing dependence on telehealth to maintain services.

6.5.4 Recreation and sporting facilities

Council manages and maintains a diverse range of open space and facilities assets, including public open space for aesthetic, passive and active uses, public cemeteries, campgrounds, playgrounds, coastal structures to access the rivers or coast, as well as public toilets to meet the needs of visitors and the travelling public.

The dispersed nature of the district's population makes it difficult to provide a consistent level of service and access to sporting opportunities across the district's communities (RSL, 2021). Relatively long travel times are required to access the full range of recreation facilities in the district and to access sport and recreation facilities in the wider Te Tai Tokerau region. Many Kaipara residents regularly travel to Whangārei for active recreation and sport opportunities, including for training (RSL, 2021).

The Kaipara District also has some specific challenges and opportunities (RSL, 2021). For example, a high number of non-Council owned sport and recreation assets such as sports fields and facilities that are owned and maintained by clubs or community organisations. This brings strong community input and feelings of ownership and value. However, it also creates challenges around inconsistent standards of maintenance and levels of access for different communities in the district (RSL, 2021).

Data on participation rates for the Kaipara population shows that most participation is through recreation rather than traditional team sports (RSL, 2021). This, along with demographic trends, indicates that provision of a variety of safe hiking, jogging and cycle routes is an important way to support people in the Kaipara being active. Access to both natural and built swimming facilities and demand for gym/work out options will continue to be important in the district (RSL, 2021).

The facility inventory of the district identifies 32 main sport and recreation sites, providing approximately 80 play, sport and recreation facilities including playgrounds, sports fields, pools, a variety of courts and club room buildings (RSL, 2021). It is positive that the district already has a large number of multi-use sport and recreation facilities, with 13 of the main sites providing for two or more sport and recreation facilities and activities. Overall, there are sufficient facilities to meet most identified needs in the district. The key challenge is maintaining play, active recreation and sport facilities at appropriate standards as they age. There are opportunities to maximise use of facilities through provision of features such as lighting (e.g. outdoor courts and sports fields) and increased partnerships between sport, recreation and community groups, including schools, both for multiuse facilities and also activation through locally led programming (RSL, 2021).



6.5.5 Halls, Theatres etc.

The district's halls (with the exception of the Northern Wairoa War Memorial Hall) are community rather than Council owned, having been handed back to community ownership between 2009 and 2015 (previously they were owned, operated and maintained by the Council). In addition, there are a number of hall and clubroom facilities available for hire for functions and events that are owned by sports clubs, interest groups and Churches e.g. the Lighthouse Function Centre at the Dargaville Museum. Most communities in Kaipara have access to a local community hall.

The Northern Wairoa War Memorial Hall (Dargaville Town Hall) has significant issues and planning is underway to demolish and rebuild it as a community hub. The adjoining municipal chambers building was built in the early 1920's by one of Council's predecessors and provides a heritage contribution to the civic area of Dargaville. Whilst it is no longer used directly by Council, it now houses a community cinema, gallery spaces and has some areas (upstairs) which are leased to the Dargaville Arts Association.

The district has insufficient performing arts spaces with the district's two main centres, Dargaville and Mangawhai, not having any adequate performing arts spaces.

Council supports the operation of 15 community halls. These are:

- a) Mangawhai Library Hall
- b) Mangawhai Senior Citizens Hall
- c) Mangawhai Domain
- d) Kaiwaka Sports Association
- e) Kaiwaka War Memorial Hall
- f) Archie Bull Hall Kaiwaka
- g) Arapohue Hall
- h) Maungatūroto Centennial Hall
- i) Tinopai Community Hall
- j) Paparoa War Memorial Hall
- k) Ruawai-Tokatoka War Memorial Hall
- l) Dargaville Dalmatian Hall
- m) Te Kōpuru Coronation Hall
- n) Tangiteroria Community Complex
- o) Matakohe War Memorial Hall

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