

Navigating transition

Planning strategy for New Zealand's new resource management system

New Zealand's resource management system is being rebuilt. The Planning Act and Natural Environment Act establish a new framework based on stronger national direction, regional spatial plans, land use plans and natural environment plans. The intention is to create a clearer and more consistent system, with land-use planning separated from management of the natural environment.

The change will not happen overnight. The new system will be progressively developed through to around the end of 2030. Until then existing RMA plans and RMA consent and designation processes will remain while new national instruments and the regional spatial plans and subsequent land use plans and natural environment plans are developed. Separately, the Fast-track Approvals Act will also remain available for qualifying projects.

Opportunity during the transition

For anybody with an interest in land, infrastructure, development, or natural resources, the transitional period brings both risk and opportunity. **Where you sit on this profile will be determined by:**

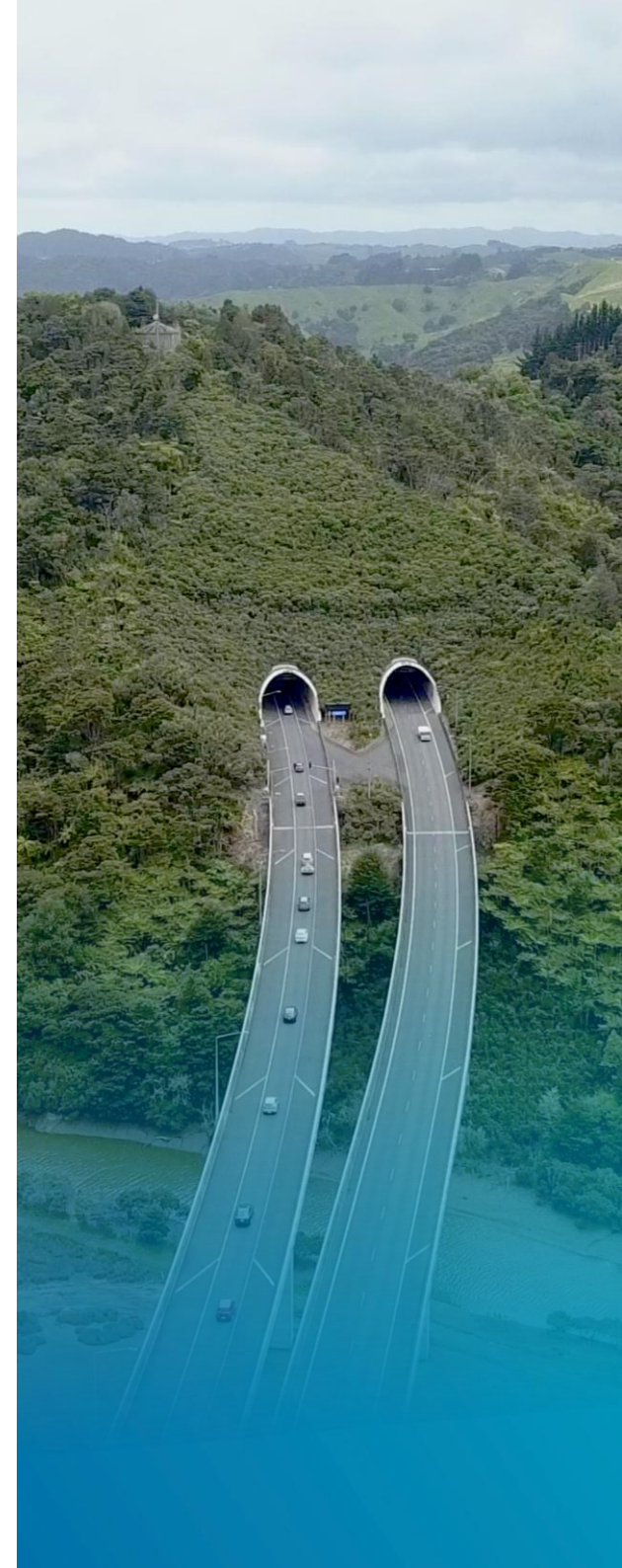
- How the existing RMA regional and district plans provide for your interests, and whether the certainty of the existing regime outweighs the uncertainty brought through change and transition. In this scenario, progressing a project via the RMA during the transitional period may be appropriate. For many, this may be the case regardless as waiting for the new legislation to take full effect will not be an option.
- Whether the Fast-track Approvals Act may prove a suitable pathway for progressing qualifying projects during the transitional period. In this scenario the Fast-track Approvals Act process may give the certainty of outcome needed.
- Whether an asset owner's plans are longer term and investment in influencing the policy framework through participating in the development of regional spatial plans and the subsequent land use and natural environment plans, may provide for future flexibility.

In this regard, many of the decisions that will shape future projects will be set in national instruments and combined regional plans, well before the consenting stage.

Regional spatial plans will bring together planning for land use, infrastructure investment, environmental capacity, climate resilience, and the interests of mana whenua into a single framework and will provide binding direction to the subsequent land use plans and natural environment plans.

For those with a longer-term interest in land, infrastructure, development, or natural resources, early engagement in the development of the new system's policies and plans presents opportunity to secure long lasting outcomes – protecting your interests, removing avoidable constraints and positioning for the future.

But the window for influencing the policy settings during the transitional period is limited. A strategic approach will be needed to ensure your long-term interests are protected and you are best positioned for the future.



Our services

Securing your outcomes

Mapping your exposure

Understanding how RM reform affects your projects, assets and investment:

- Assessing the implications of national direction, regional spatial plans, land use and natural environment plans for your assets, operations and investment programmes.
- RM reform briefings for boards, executives, project teams and asset managers.
- Policy monitoring, issues identification and targeted alerts on national direction and combined regional plan developments.

Choosing the right pathway

Comparing options and advising on timing and sequencing:

- Statutory pathway and consenting strategy, including timing and sequencing advice.
- Comparative assessment of proceeding under the RMA and transitional provisions, the new Acts or Fast-track Approvals Act.

Engaging to shape outcomes

Engaging in the policy development process to shape future planning outcomes:

- Engagement strategies for participating effectively in the policy development process.
- Preparation of submissions, planning and supporting technical evidence and hearing support.

Project delivery under the new regime

Connecting policy, project design and technical evidence at key decision points:

- Independent review at key project gateways to ensure project delivery aligns with policy development.
- Specialist planning, engineering design, and environmental inputs.
- Preparation of applications and consenting support under the most appropriate approval pathway.
- Navigating project approval pathways and regulator relationships during this period of transitional change.



Why choose us?

T+T has been engaged in RM reform from the outset - tracking legislative developments and advising clients across the public and private sectors on the practical implications.

Our planners understand policy development and project delivery, and how decisions made during the transition can affect future consenting, investment and implementation.

Our planning advice is supported by specialists in infrastructure, transport, water science, ecology, hydrogeology, geotechnical and civil engineering, contaminated land, acoustics, natural hazards, climate resilience, air quality, landscape, and Te Ao Māori advisory. This allows a planning strategy to be grounded in credible evidence and real-world delivery considerations.

While transition to the new legislation will take several years, the windows for influence will be short — we help you understand your exposure, prioritise action and make your engagement count.



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