HURUNUI
District Council

2026 ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN



Introduction

The environment is typically defined through three domains: natural, built, and human. Managing the interactions between these three domains is a key function of the Hurunui District Council as we deliver on the future ambitions and goals of the District. This Environmental Scan (the Scan) provides a high-level overview of relevant information, providing a shared understanding of current issues and opportunities facing the Hurunui District.

The scope of the Scan considers both the national and regional contexts, with the primary focus on how these might impact local decisions. The Scan has been developed through a desktop analysis, with information obtained from a wide range of sources. Footnotes provide references to all cited content, allowing readers to directly access key information.

Relationship with Other Documents

The Scan assists in the early identification of key drivers to help the Council's strategic and operational directions. It will provide guidance for the Long-Term Plan as well as Activity/Asset Management Plans. It also serves as a set of standardised statistics which apply to all other planning documents for the Hurunui District Council.



Our District

The Hurunui District covers an area of 8,641 square kilometres, amounting to New Zealand's seventh-largest district. It borders the Selwyn, Westland, Grey, Buller, Tasman, and Marlborough districts near the Main Divide of the Southern Alps. To the east, the District is situated between the Waimakariri and Kaikōura districts, placing it firmly within the North Canterbury region.

The District is a mosaic of agricultural land, conservation areas, and moderate to small urban settlements. The main urban centers are Amberley, Culverden, Cheviot and Hanmer Springs, with many smaller settlements scattered around the landscape. The pattern of settlements is closely aligned with the construction of a railway line in the latter half of the 19th century, leaving a legacy of people and places that still hold true to this day.[1]



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Recreation, Parks and Reserves

The interior of the Hurunui District is incredibly popular for outdoor recreation. Several large conservation areas offer world-class tramping and hunting opportunities in a range of ecosystems including alpine lakes, native beech forests and open tussock covered tops. Mountains lead to foothills and stunning vistas such as Maukatere (Mount Grey), Weka Pass, and the Culverden and Hanmer Springs Basins. Two large rivers, the Waiau and Hurunui demarcate the center of the District and provide for white water sports and angling.

In the north, Hanmer Springs boasts the renowned Thermal Pools and Spa, a popular attraction for locals and tourists. Further south, the Waipara Valley produces some of New Zealand's award-winning wines from its sheltered microclimate, long growing season and diverse soil types.
A dynamic, rugged, and unmistakable coastline completes the Hurunui District. Stunning cliffs and secluded beaches lie between the small coastal settlements of Gore Bay, Leithfield Beach, Amberley Beach and Motunau Beach.



Hanmer Springs Soldiers' Block

The Soldiers' Block at Queen Mary Hospital in Hanmer Springs holds a significant place in the history of our District. Opened in 1916, the Soldiers' Block features a unique architectural design of two octagonal rooms conjoined by a hall. Soldiers from both World Wars received treatment at the facility, with its innovative design providing high levels of natural light and fresh air as patients recovered in the tranquility of the Hanmer Basin.[2]

After World War II, the Soldiers' Block became a fully specialised treatment centre for nervous disorders. Led by the visionary Dr Robert Crawford and the groundbreaking Taha Māori treatment programme, treatment included family focused therapy and reconnection of patients with their cultural identity. The building closed in 2003 with the Ministry of Health ceasing the drug and alcohol programme. In 2010, the Hurunui District Council acquired part of the site and in 2023 secured funding to earthquake strengthen and restore the Category One listed building. The restored Soldiers' Block was formally reopened on Anzac Day 2025.[3]

Ngāti Kurī holds strong cultural ties to the Soldiers' Block and the healing qualities of the hot springs found throughout the Hanmer Basin. To celebrate these connections a new whare was built within the complex. Named Te Aroha o te Hauangiangi, the whare will provide a space for conferences and wānanga. The restored Soldiers' Block marks a significant moment not just for the relationship between the Hurunui District Council and Ngāti Kurī but to all of New Zealand.[4]



Mana Whenua

Ngāi Tahu

Ngāi Tahu is the largest Iwi of Te Waipounamu. The Hurunui District holds great significance to the Iwi, reflected by numerous nohoanga, Statutory Acknowledgement areas and Statutory Acknowledgement sites recognised in the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998. The Waipara River, Hokakura (Lake Sumner), Kōwai River, Huruhurunui Awa (Hurunui River), and Tūtae Putaputa (Conway River) are all Statutory Acknowledgment areas, recognising the special relationship Ngāi Tahu holds with these places.

Over 100 archaeological sites are located throughout the District with many more that have not been publicly recorded. Included in these are pā, cultivation areas, pits, middens, urupā, and rock art sites. Nohoanga are temporary dwelling sites that entitle exclusive occupation for seasonal mahinga kai traditions. Nohoanga sites are located near the Hurunui River, Waipara and Waiau River mouths, as well as Lake Sumner.[5]

Te Ngāi Tūahuriri Rūnanga

The takiwā of Ngāi Tūahuriri extends from the Hurunui to the Hakatere rivers and inland to the Main Divide. Kaiapoi Pā was established by the first Ngāi Tahu tīpuna and was the first major capital, commerce hub and point of expansion, holding great significance for all Ngāi Tahu whānui.[6]

Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura

The takiwā of Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura extends from Te Parinuiowhiti to the Hurunui River and inland to the Main Divide. Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura is the tribal council for Te Hapu o Ngāti Kurī, representing their authority and interests in relation to environmental effects.[7]

Relationship and Obligations of Hurunui District Council

The Hurunui District Council is committed to engaging meaningfully with Ngāi Tahu in a way that reflects partnership aspirations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and relevant stautory obligations. The Council recognises Ngāi Tūahuriri and Ngāti Kurī as mana whenua and is guided by the Memorandum of Understanding that shapes our ongoing relationship.[8]



POPULATION

New Zealand

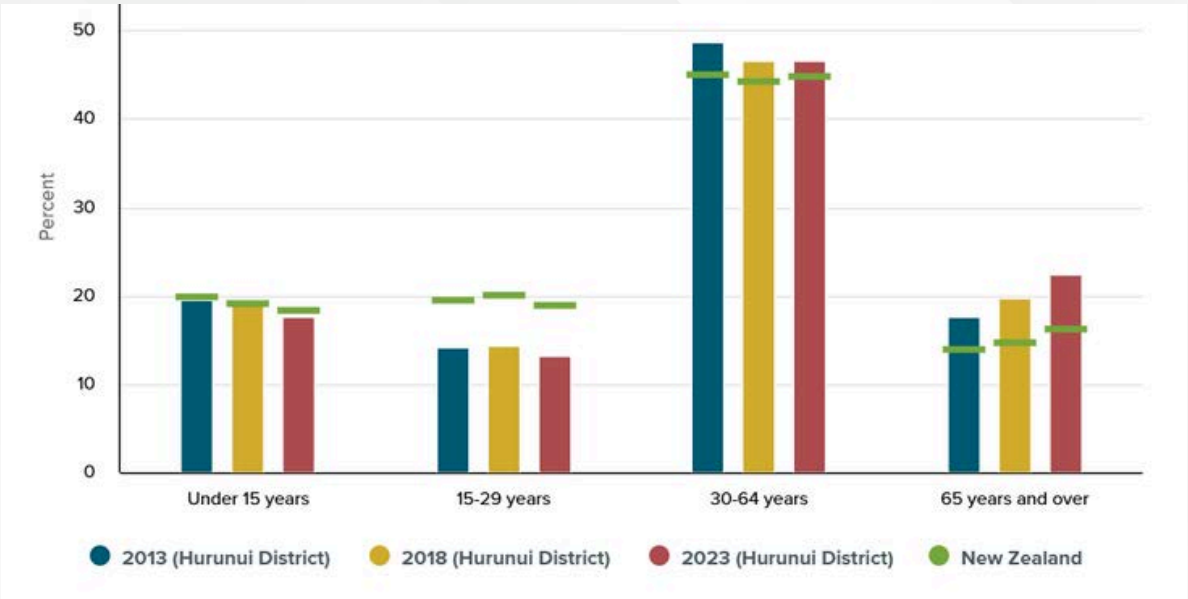
As of 30 September 2025, New Zealand has an estimated population of 5,334,200. Population growth has been on a downward trend from 2.3 percent in 2023, to 1.7 percent in 2024, to 0.7 percent in the year to June 2025.[9&10] The downward trend is attributed to a significant slowdown in net migration (fewer immigrants arriving, more New Zealanders leaving) and a falling natural increase (births minus deaths) driven by lower fertility rates (1.6 births per female) linked to women's education, participation in the workforce, high living costs and housing affordability issues. Population growth is now confined largely to the regions with major cities – Auckland, Waikato and Canterbury, with Canterbury being the fastest growing region in the June 2025 year (1.1%).

New Zealand's population continues to become more culturally diverse, with the European ethnic group (67.8%) being the largest group, followed by significant populations of Māori (19.6%), Asian (17.3%), and Pacific peoples (8.9%), alongside a growing Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African (MELAA) group (1.9%). Among the country's resident population, 3.5 million individuals were born in New Zealand, while 1.4 million were born overseas.[11]

The age profile of New Zealand is changing, with the average age set to reach 46 years old and with an estimated 25 per cent of the population to be aged 65 or older by 2051. By the mid-2030s it is expected that 19 to 21 per cent of New Zealanders will be aged 65 or older, compared with 17 per cent in 2024.

Hurunui District

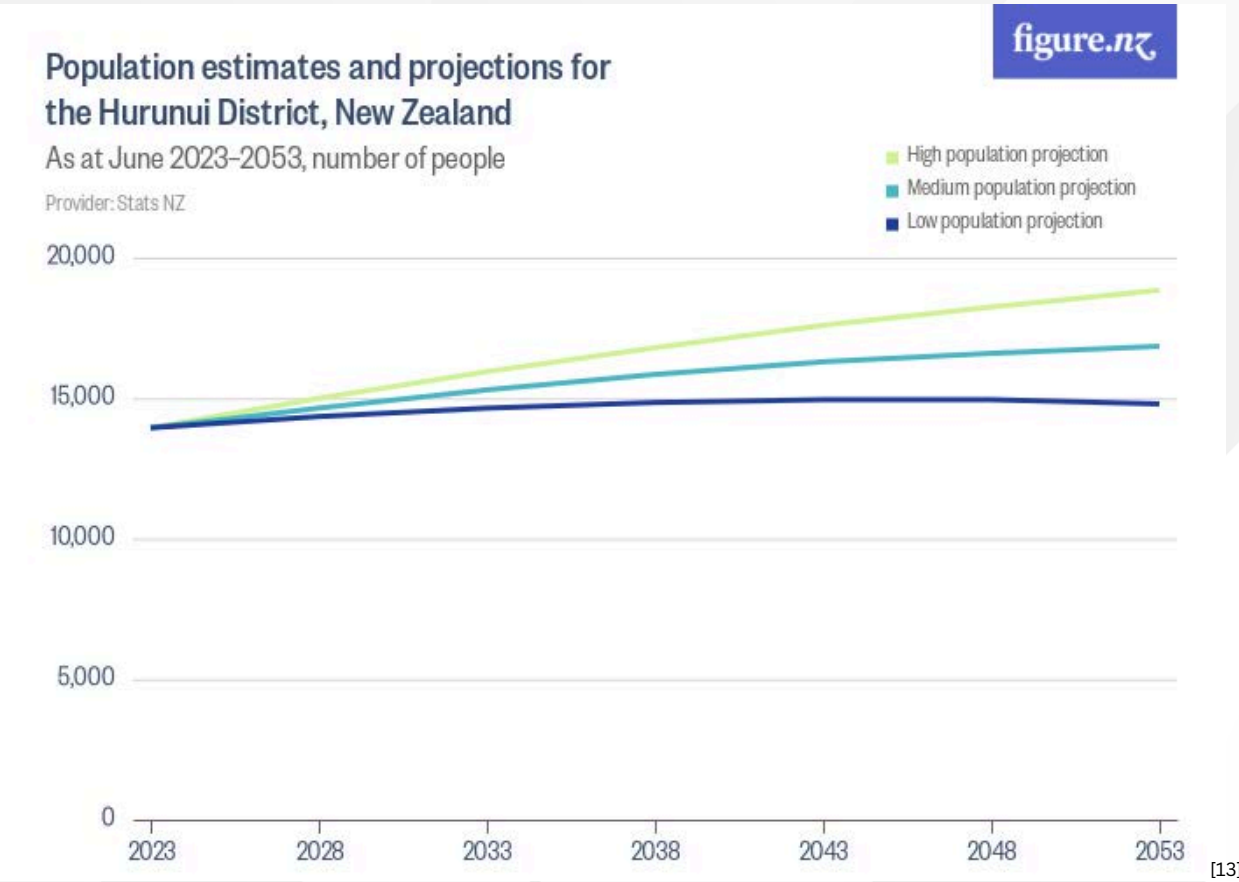
The population of the Hurunui District was 13,608 in 2023. This reflects a growth rate of eight per cent since the 2018 Census, exceeding national population growth which was 6.3 per cent for the same period. The District's population continues to age and diversify. The median age in 2023 was 46.2 years up from a median of 44.4 years in 2018. In addition, there is an increase in ethnic diversity with a decreasing percentage of people identifying as European.[12]



[12]

Predicted Growth

The District's population continues to grow steadily. Population projections for Hurunui reflect a higher than anticipated rate of growth over the last few years and it is expected that this will continue for several more years before the growth rate tapers off to earlier levels. Net migration is likely to be more significant than natural change, with projected natural change decreasing into negatives up until 2048, and net migration remaining constant.[13]



[13]

Factors for Population Growth

- Proximity to Christchurch
- Comparative affordability of living
- Construction of retirement village in Amberley
- Working from home policies post COVID
- Rezoning of land for urban development (Amberley private plan change)
- Increased density within existing zoning through subdivision approvals
- Standardised zoning nationally may increase residential density
- Proposed State Highway 1 Belfast to Pegasus Motoway and Woodend Bypass project may make the south of the District more accessible
- Strong rural economy creates jobs

! Challenges

- Increased demand on existing infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer networks
- Growth putting pressue on health, education, emergency and social service
- Increased waste production, including sewage, pollution, and carbon emissions
- Loss of productive land through rezoning and development

Increasing Ethnic Diversity

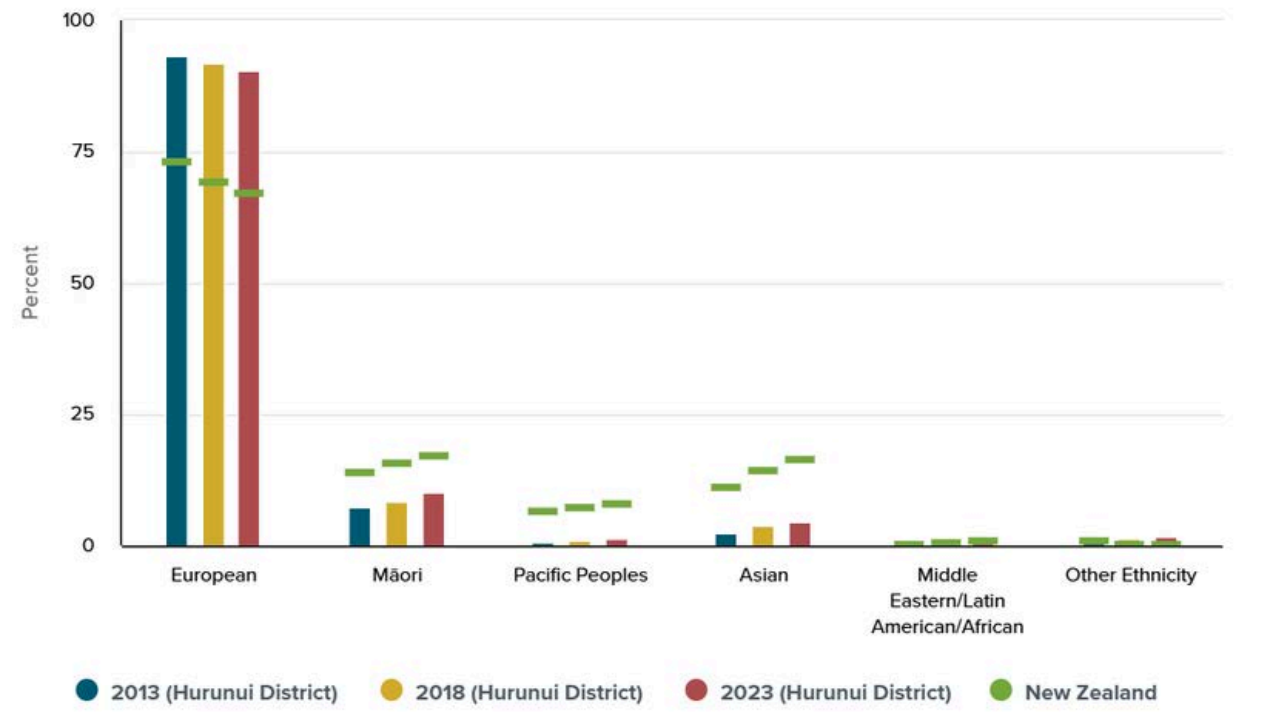
Hurunui's population continues to become more culturally diverse, with the 2023 Census indicating that the percentage of the population that identified as European (90.5%) as the largest group, followed by populations of Māori (10.1%), Asian (4.7%), Pacific peoples (1.3%), and MELAA group (1.9%).[12]

There has been an overall decrease in the percentage of the population that identify as European of 2.9 per cent between 2013 and 2023. Conversely, those identifying with the Māori ethnic group has increased 2.8 per cent from 2013 (7.3%) to 2023 (10.2%).[12] It is noted that people can identify with more than one ethnic group and that ethnicity is different to descent. Māori descent refers to a person who is biologically descended from Māori, whereas Māori ethnicity refers to a person's self-perceived cultural affiliation to the Māori ethnic group. The number of people identifying as Māori is rising rapidly, driven primarily by a young population structure, higher birth rate and increased cultural pride that encourages reporting as Māori ancestry.

It is anticipated that ethnic diversity will continue to increase until at least 2048. To support this, the Hurunui District Council has joined the Welcoming Communities programme. This programme creates more welcoming, inclusive, and resilient communities where every resident can belong and thrive. A Welcoming Communities Stocktake Report in 2024 identified opportunities for the future across the outcomes of the programme.

Factors for Increasing Ethnic Diversity

- Slower population growth for the 'European or Other' group
- High levels of natural increase (more births than deaths), driven by higher birth rates and younger age structure for non-Europeans
- Net migration (migrant arrivals minus migrant departures) for other ethnic populations.
- Increasing rates of self-identification with Māori ethnicity



[12]

Challenges

- Differences in values, beliefs, practices, and customs can sometimes lead to misunderstandings, cultural clashes, and social conflicts if not managed with inclusive policies and dialogue
- The process of integration can be challenging, involving language barriers and differing social norms
- Ethnic minorities often face challenges such as stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination in employment, housing, and social interactions, leading to potential social and economic disadvantages
- Some members of the majority population may express concerns about losing their original cultural identity and lifestyle due to the influence of foreign belief systems and practices



Aging Population

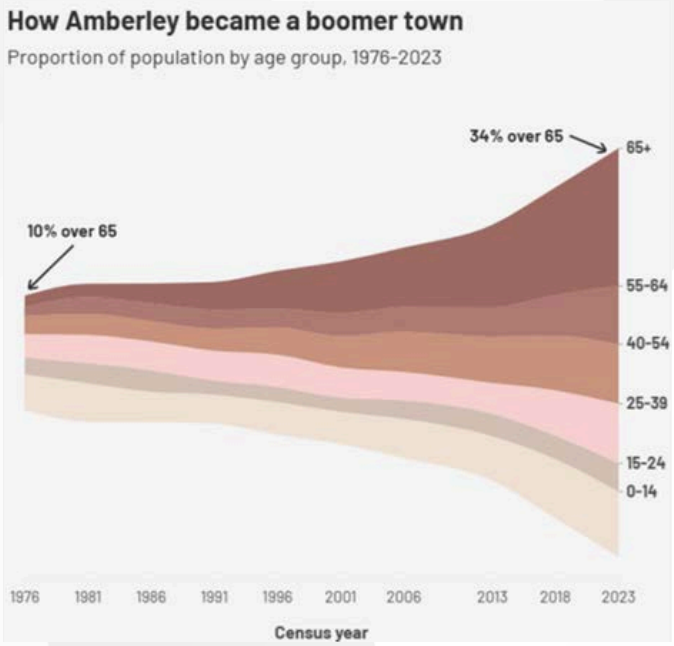
As Hurunui's population steadily grows, so does the median age which sits at 46.2 years compared to 38.1 for New Zealand. Amberley has the highest median age in the District at 52.7 years. Recent census data shows that 34 per cent of Amberley's residents are 65 or older. That makes it significantly older than New Zealand (16.6%), Canterbury (17.5%) and the Hurunui District (22.5%). Nearly half of Amberley's population is projected to be aged 65 or older within two decades. This is significantly higher than the projected national average in 2043 at 30 per cent.[14]

The high median age in Amberley is driven by a combination of factors, including its popularity as a retirement destination, the "grey wave" of an ageing population, and the town's attractive lifestyle. The development of a large—scale, modern, and high-quality retirement village (Amberley Country Estate) and the provision of smaller independent senior living units, has specifically drawn older people from around the South Island. In terms of lifestyle, Amberley is located near Christchurch and is viewed as a relaxed "small, friendly town" that offers amenities without the bustle of a city, making it attractive for retirees or those looking for a slower pace of life. It also has a rural appeal being surrounded by countryside and other attractions such as Amberley Beach, the golf course, the Waipara Wine Valley with its vineyards and restaurants and local walks.[14]

There was also a steady increase in employment for those aged 65 years and over. In 2013, 22.1 per cent of adults aged 65 years and over were employed in part-time or full-time work. This increased to 24.1 per cent in the 10 years to the 2023 Census. This was driven by an increase in employment across all age groups for the population aged 65 years and over, with the largest increase being for people aged 70 to 74 years (up 2.8 per cent from 2013). With a greater number of people retiring in good health, there is the opportunity for these people to volunteer and support the community.

Factors for an Aging Population

- Youth move into cities for study or employment
- Older adults move to the District for lifestyle or cheaper housing
- Presence of a retirement village
- Existing ageing adults stay where they are for retirement



[14]

Challenges

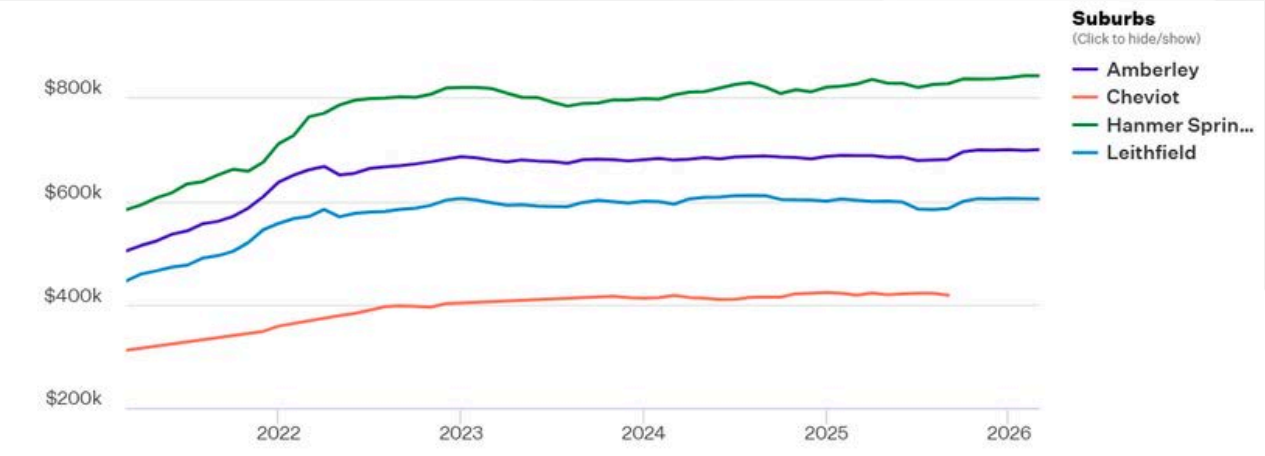
- The percentage of adults aged 65 years and over employed in the workforce is increasing which could reduce the jobs available for younger people
- Increased pressure on medical care and home care service
- Lack of public transport for those no longer able to drive
- The community bus that runs once per week between Amberley and Rangiora relies on the availability of volunteers



HOUSING AND INCOME

Hurunui vs New Zealand

The Hurunui District is a relatively affordable place to live. In 2025 the average house cost around $652,157 with a median house price of $550,000 compared to a median house price of around $808,000 for New Zealand. Hurunui property prices increased 5.80% per year (on average) in the 20 years between October 2005 – October 2025. However, as for most of New Zealand, house prices in the Hurunui soared after the COVID-19 pandemic began.[15&16]



[16]

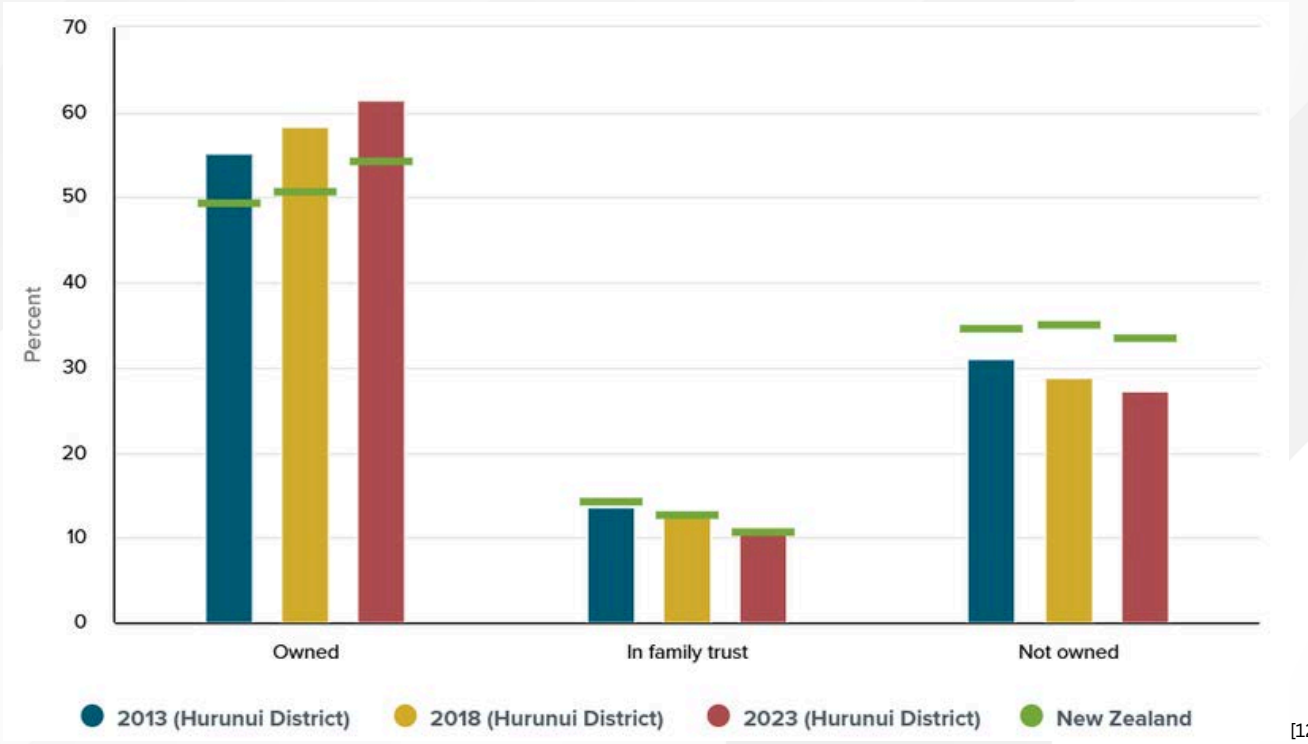
The average weekly rent in the Hurunui District is $400 per week, well under the national average of $610.[17]In 2023, the median household income was $77,400 compared to the national average of $97,000. Unemployment is traditionally very low, sitting at 1.4 per cent in 2023, with 49.7 per cent of residents employed full time.[12]



Housing in the Hurunui

Home ownership in the Hurunui is above the national average, at 61.5 per cent compared with 54.9 per cent in New Zealand. A further 11.2 per cent of households are held in a family trust and 27.3 per cent of households are not owned by the occupier. The predominant housing typology is three to four bedroom stand-alone dwelling.[12]

The vast majority of private dwellings (98-99%) have access to basic amenities such as cooking facilities, shower, toilet, and electricity supply. A further 95 per cent of private dwellings have tap water that is safe to drink. In terms of telecommunications, 93.7 per cent have access to a mobile phone with 87.4 per cent having access to the internet.[12]



[12]



Deprivation

Deprivation can be defined as "a state of observable and demonstrable disadvantage relative to the local community or wider society or nation to which an individual, family or group belongs". [18]

Individuals can experience multiple forms of deprivation. Material deprivation is a lack of access to goods and services and the physical conditions in which people live and work. Social deprivation refers to societal structures, culture, community and interpersonal relationships. The New Zealand Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) allows one to look at disadvantage in overall terms, as well as in terms of seven domains of deprivation: employment, income, crime, housing, health, education and access to services.

Deprivation in the Hurunui District, based on the New Zealand Index of Socioeconomic Deprivation ("NZDep") data, generally shows it as being less deprived than the national average, with lower scores on the Socioeconomic Deprivation Index (e.g., 4.7 in 2018 vs. 5.6 NZ average) and fewer areas in high deprivation quintiles, though some specific pockets can still be more deprived, highlighting differences within the District.[18]

In 2018, Canterbury ranked as 3/20 in terms of overall deprivation. Smaller areas within the Hurunui consistently rank as decile 1 – 5 on the deprivation scale; however, there were some areas that ranked low in terms of education. The whole district ranks Decile 10 in terms of access to services, while Waikari ranks Decile 7 in Health.[18]

Challenges

- Limited low-cost accommodation is available for seasonal workers in agriculture and tourism related industries and as such they may need to live in dwelling with less services
- Proportionately, older people are more likely to be widowed and live alone yet may have similar household expenses in terms of rates, insurance, electricity and telecommunication services
- Home ownership is declining, and an increasing number of people are retiring with mortgages or renting
- Smaller and more affordable housing is required; however, this means the Council receives less rates but is still required to provide the same services such as core and community infrastructure
- Access to services is consistently a challenge throughout the District due to a small population over a large area

Climate Change

Climate change is a long-term shift in weather patterns, induced from greenhouse gas emissions trapped within our atmosphere. In the last 100 years our climate has warmed by 1.1°C, with 2021 being New Zealand's hottest year on record.[19] There will be more hot days, prolonged periods of drought, and disruptions to once stable precipitation patterns.[20] These changes bring forth complex, significant challenges with high degrees of uncertainty for the Hurunui District Council as we collectively adapt to our changing climate.

Uncertainty for Decision Makers

In 2025, a Local Government Funding Agency working group provided three scenarios for local governments: Net Zero Emissions by 2050 (SSP1), a delayed transition model (SSP2) and a model based on current policies (SSP3).[21] Depending on the level of emissions reduction achieved will greatly alter the decisions that must be made. The tables below display each scenario, climate characteristics, primary risks, and the broader implications for the Hurunui District.[22]

Climate Scenarios

SSP1: Net Zero by 2050			
Temperature Outcomes	Climate Characteristics	Primary Risks	Broader Implications
+1.7°C global temperature averages	More frequent extreme weather events. Coastal and riverine flooding more common. Increased landslide, wildfires and high-wind events. Sea level rise causing inundation, groundwater salination and erosion.	Pressure on service costs and rates affordability (short-medium term). Decreases in Central Government funding by 2030. Volatile demand for services.	Challenges for social cohesion and equity. Need for adaptation investment despite lower long-term warming. Potential strain on local government capacity.

[22]

Climate Scenarios

SPP2: Delayed Transition			
Temperature Outcomes	Climate Characteristics	Primary Risks	Broader Implications
+2.7°C global temperature average	More severe extreme weather events impacting urban areas. Heatwaves threatening health and energy systems. Increased wildfire frequency during droughts and sea level rise up to 0.5m.	Significant pressure on service costs and affordability. Reduced access to funding and disruptions to supply chains.	Changing job market and rising unemployment. Social inequity and unrest. Economic uncertainty and reduced service provisions.

[22]

SSP3: Current Policies			
Temperature Outcomes	Climate Characteristics	Primary Risks	Broader Implications
+3.9°C global average increase	Extreme weather events become highly destructive. Widespread wildfires, severe droughts, extreme flooding.	Increasing costs of physical climate risks. Disruptions to supply chains. Declining Central Government support. Infrastructure abandonment in some areas.	Social cohesion breaks down. Council struggles with rapid policy shifts. Service costs rise significantly across all time periods. Severe economic impacts. Disaster prevention and response dominate priorities.

[22]

Changing Land Use for a Changing Climate

While challenges persist, they are not insurmountable. Our changing climate requires a coordinated effort with communities as we plan for the future of the District.

The economic viability of our land use will change. A shifting climate will change the wine growing and making industry in North Canterbury. Projections suggest significantly earlier flowering, ripening and harvesting dates will impact quality in several ways.[23]

Modelling suggests that areas of North Canterbury currently have a similar climate to that of Motueka in the 1970s, and some landowners are already capitalising on these projections. Hops, apples, pears and cherries have been planted on Okuora Farms, near the Hurunui Mouth, in an attempt to develop an industry in the District. Hops and apple harvests have been promising and offer opportunities for other landowners to transition away from traditional practices.[24]

✓ **Opportunities**

- The changing climate will continue to provide opportunities as new land uses become viable
- Disruptions to weather patterns can result in more summer rain when we are not in periods of drought

! **Challenges**

- High levels of uncertainty for all modelled scenarios
- More frequent and severe weather events
- Increasing pressure on service costs and rates affordability
- Disruptions to supply chains, social equity and social cohesion



Natural Hazards

The Hurunui District Council plays a key role in natural hazard management. We have legislative responsibilities to reduce our communities' vulnerabilities, be ready and respond to events, and assist in recovery. These key roles are nested inside a wider planning framework of the Canterbury Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Plan 2022. The Hurunui District Council holds a position on the Joint Committee, integrating our emergency management responsibilities with the wider Region. Above the district and regional level is the National Disaster Resilience Strategy. This strategy outlines the Central Government's emergency management objectives and targets as well as the organisational structure for local responders.[25]

Earthquakes

Numerous faults are located throughout the District and pose a serious risk to human life, utilities, and private property. Damaging earthquakes have occurred in 1888, 1901, 1922, 1951 and 2016.[26]The Alpine Fault is also located near the western boundary of the District, with a high probability of rupturing in the next 50 years. In a major earthquake, communities can become isolated from landslides and damaged roads.[27]



Flooding

Severe surface flooding can pose threats to populated areas and infrastructure. Leithfield Township and the State Highway 1 bridge over the Kowai River are particularly vulnerable in heavy rainfall events. Our coastal settlements of Amberley, Leithfield, and Motunau Beaches have also experienced significant floods. Amberley Beach residents have been evacuated on two separate occasions, in 1992 and 2008.[26]

High Wind Speed Events

Strong winds also wreak havoc in the Hurunui District. In October 2025, an extreme wind event triggered a local state of emergency. Widespread power outages were experienced for most of the upper South Island as trees and power poles were flattened in strong gusts. There was also significant damage to private property, including hundreds of spans of irrigator pivots that were toppled in the event.[28]



Wildfires

Hot dry summer conditions make the District particularly susceptible to wildfires. In 2024, a fire from a forestry block north of Waipara burned for almost a week. Exacerbated by high wind speeds, the fire spread to 105 hectares and required three ground crews and five helicopters to bring it under control.[29]

Tsunami

New Zealand's location in the South Pacific places us at risk of tsunami. Local and regional sourced tsunamis can be created by various geological processes such as in the Hikurangi, Puysegur, and Kermadec subduction zones. The time before a tsunami reaches our shores can range from one to three hours depending on the location. Distant-source tsunamis will come from Central or South America and will usually take more than 12 hours to cross the Pacific Ocean.[30] The Council and other emergency response agencies recently conducted an exercise, ensuring a coordinated response if a real tsunami emergency was triggered.[31]

Coastal Hazards

Our coastal communities face the greatest range of natural hazards in the Hurunui District. In 2020, the Hurunui District Council initiated the Coastal Conversations Project. The aim was to assess the current coastal hazards and how the risk may change over the next 100 years. The Project followed the Ministry for the Environment's Coastal Hazards and Climate Change Guidance 2017 but was adjusted to reflect the appropriate size of six settlements within the District (Amberley Beach, Conway Flat & Claverley, Gore Bay, Leithfield Beach, and Motunau Beach). As of August 2025, three final Coastal Adaptation Plans (CAP) have been published, most notably the Amberley Beach CAP.[32]

The Amberley Beach CAP is a result of two and a half years of robust best-practice planning. A plethora of technical reports, including citizen science initiatives were conducted before a lengthy engagement process of nine community meetings, seven resident meetings, two drop-in sessions and three formal rounds of engagement. In 2024, the Amberley Beach CAP received the New Zealand Planning Institute Best Practice Award for Climate Change. This award recognised the ongoing effort to address coastal hazards and highlights the Council's successful community engagement throughout the Project.[33]



Amberley Beach Land Banking and Proactive Relocation

One of the options identified in the Amberley Beach CAP is to proactivly relocate the settlement if the need arose. In 2023, the Council agreed to purchase an area of land large enough to develop 200 residential lots. Amberley Beach residents will have the option to enter a contract with the Council that secures them a title at the new site.

Property owners choosing to enter this contract will be subject to targeted rates of $1 per day for the next 30 years or be required to pay a one-off fee of $11,000. This rate will pay for the planning and infrastructure required to establish and fully service each lot. Contract holders will account for 109 lots, with the remainder being sold on the market to help fund the initiative.[34]

A plan change and subdivision consent will inevitably be required to allow this new development as the site is currently zoned Rural. In April 2025, the Council purchased a suitable 85-hectare property at 185 Ashworths Road for $3.8m.[35]



✓ **Opportunities**

- Maintaining a proactive approach to natural hazard risks
- Continue to reduce our emissions to minimise the frequency of extreme weather events
- Learn from previous natural hazard events and exercises to reduce our vulnerability
- Increase our readiness to respond and help our communities recover

! **Challenges**

- The timing and severity of natural hazard events are always uncertain
- Natural hazards jeopardise our core infrastructure
- Adapting and mitigating natural hazards has high associated costs
- Community and industry understanding and acceptance of natural hazard risks

Legislative Changes

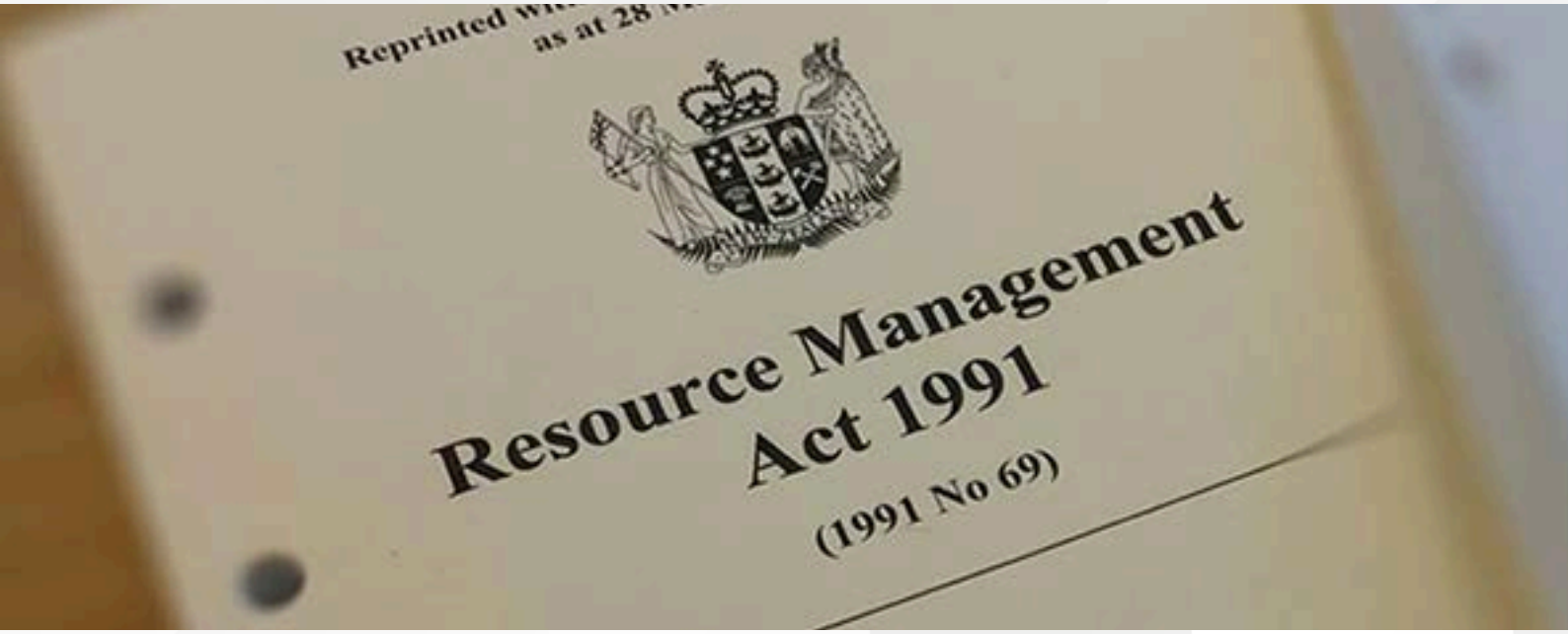
Significant and complex reforms are underway concurrently across a wide range of areas which affect the powers, duties and functions of the Council. Changes create opportunities but also create additional pressures as local governments conform to new standards. It is important to note that the Scan considers legislative changes only up to December 2025 Anticipated legislative changes include the following:

- Resource Management Reforms
- National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land Amendment 2025
- New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement Amendment 2025
- National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management Amendment 2025
- National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity Amendment 2025
- National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards 2025
- National Policy Statement for Infrastructure 2025
- National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation Amendment 2025
- National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Amendment 2025
- DMRU Regulations and SSAD Amendment Acts 2025
- Fast-Track Approvals Act 2024
- Rates Caps Proposals
- Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Scheme – Forestry Conversion) Amendment Act 2025
- Climate Change Response (2050 Target and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2026
- Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025
- Government Policy Statement on Land Transport (2024 – 2034)



Resource Management Reforms

In December 2025, the Government introduced two new Bills that will significantly reform the resource management system and replace the Resource Management Act 1991; The Planning Bill and the Natural Environment Bill.



The Planning Bill and the Natural Environment Bill provide distinct, but consistent, approaches for land use planning and environmental management, respectively. The development of the new planning and environmental management system created by these Bills has been guided by the following objectives:

To make it easier to get things done by:

- unlocking development capacity for housing and business growth
- enabling delivery of high-quality infrastructure for the future, including doubling renewable energy
- enabling primary sector growth and development (including aquaculture, forestry, pastoral, horticulture, and mining)

The intention is that these objectives will be done while also:

- safeguarding the natural environment and human health
- adapting to the effects of climate change and reducing the risks from natural hazards
- improving regulatory quality in the resource management system
- upholding Treaty of Waitangi settlements and other arrangements

The proposed system reforms are intended to create a system that will operate like a funnel, starting with clear goals that narrow what can be considered at the top and each level of the system.

The system architecture in the Bill comprises:

- a set of goals that tightly define the scope of the system
- a set of national instruments, comprising:
- national policy direction (NPD) that particularises the goals
- national standards that provide further detailed direction for implementing the NPD and clearer and more standardised direction for decision-making and plans
- a single combined plan for each region made up of 3 integrated components:
- a regional spatial plan that implements the national instruments to support urban development and infrastructure provision within environmental limits; and
- a land use plan under this Bill that implements spatial plans by applying nationally standardised zones, rules, and methodologies; and
- a natural environment plan under the Natural Environment Bill that implements spatial plans by applying standardised overlays, rules, and methodologies; and
- consents under the Planning Bill and permits under the Natural Environment Bill

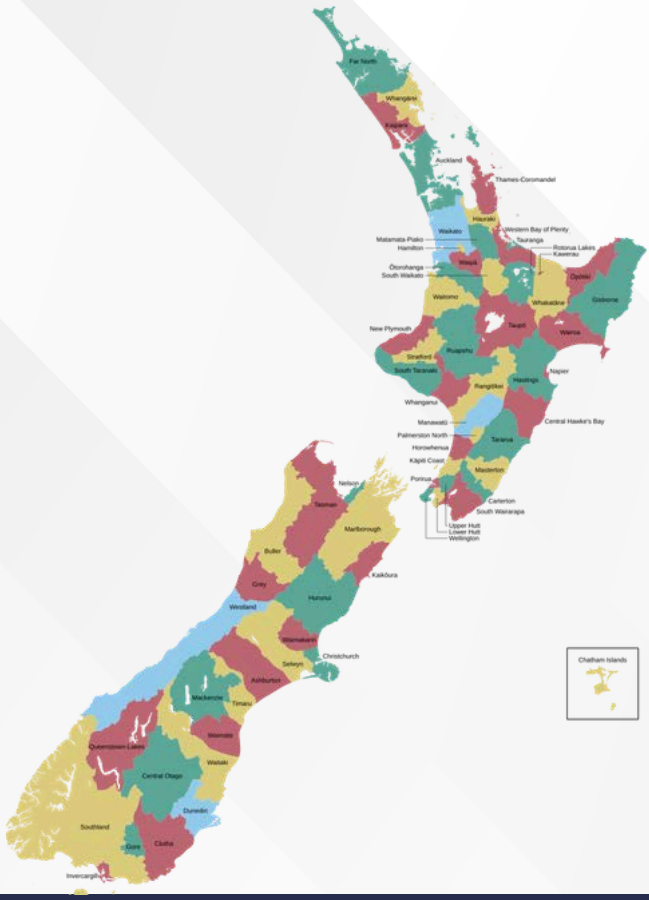
At the consenting level, councils will manage fewer effects using a higher threshold, reducing the number of consents required. Community engagement is intended to primarily occur during the spatial and land use plan development rather than at the consenting level. This is intended to make the system simpler and more efficient, reducing relitigation of matters that have already been decided higher in the system and reduce the number of consents needed.[36]

✓ **Opportunities**

- A simplified consenting system
- Greater levels of certainty for specific resource consents
- Improved natural hazard management
- Prescribed limits to safeguard environmental and human health
- Tools for communities to allocate resources

! **Challenges**

- Separation of our interconnected urban and natural areas
- Loss of local autonomy from standardised zoning
- Removal of amenity values and local identity
- The risk that the reforms do not create substantial change



National Direction Changes

There are a range of instruments that are used to develop a nationally consistent approach to resource management issues under the Resource Management Act 1991. These instruments include National Policy Statements (NPS), National Environmental Standards (NES), National Planning Standards, the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement and several Regulations made under section 360 of the Resource Management Act 1991.[37]

In December 2025, ten national direction instruments have been either amended or introduced. Many of these national direction changes directly affect the obligations of the Hurunui District Council and any person engaging with our current resource management system.



NPS for Highly Productive Land Amendment 2025

Instrument	Key Changes	Opportunities	Challenges
National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022	2024 changes expanded activities not considered inappropriate, including intensive indoor primary production (fungi, livestock, poultry), horticulture, and critical infrastructure. 2025 amendment paused regional mapping and clarified district council responsibilities, allowing LUC 3 land to be rezoned for urban development. Quarrying with significant national or regional benefits exempt from restrictions.	Increased potential for intensive primary production and horticulture activities. Infrastructure maintenance and upgrades may be less complicated. Rezoning and development of LUC 3 land becomes less complex.	Ongoing competition between production systems and urban development for highly productive land. Paused regional mapping reduces clarity and limits land-use change scope.

[38]

New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement Amendment 2025

Instrument	Key Changes	Opportunities	Challenges
New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010	First update since 2010, with changes to policies guiding sustainable management of the coastal environment. Amendment affects subdivision, use, and development of coastal land, and reinforces Treaty obligations. Policy changes relate to infrastructure, renewable energy generation, electricity transmission, aquaculture, mineral extraction, and terminology updates.	National recognition for the importance of infrastructure, renewable electricity generation, and transmission in the coastal environment. Stronger national direction for consenting works in the coastal environment.	Unclear provisions to ensure mineral extraction activities genuinely support infrastructure.

[39]

NPS for Freshwater Management Amendment 2025

Instrument	Key Changes	Opportunities	Challenges
National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020	A 2023 Order in Council removed the requirement for consenting authorities to have regard to the hierarchy of obligations under Section 104 of the RMA. 2025 amendments made minor terminology changes but retained the substantive effects of the 2023 changes. Implications for the Hurunui District Council particularly affect consents involving significant earthworks near waterways.	Fewer barriers for developers undertaking significant works near waterways. Reduced complexity during resource consent processing.	Council officers are no longer required to prioritise the health of water bodies over human and community needs. Safeguards previously embedded in the consenting process have been removed.

[40]

NPS for Indigenous Biodiversity Amendment 2024

Instrument	Key Changes	Opportunities	Challenges
National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity 2023	2024 amendment suspended the requirement to identify and notify new Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) until at least 2027 to allow for a policy review. Coal extraction removed as an activity that must be avoided. 2025 amendment introduced exemptions for quarrying activities with national or regional benefits.	Temporary relief for landowners with SNAs while the NPS is under review. Decreased regulatory barriers for coal and mineral extraction in SNAs.	Reduced environmental safeguards due to the removal of coal mining avoidance requirements. Ongoing complexity within the RMA, as significant vegetation and habitats remain protected despite suspended SNA identification.

[41]

NPS for Natural Hazards 2025

Instrument	Key Changes	Opportunities	Challenges
National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards 2025	Introduces a risk-based approached to managing natural hazards with a standardised matrix. Activities with high levels of risk or increase the risk of other parties must be avoided or mitigated proportionately. Decision-makers must use the best available information even if it is uncertain or incomplete. Requires the consideration of climate change impacts at least 100 years into the future.	Provides a nationally standardised approach to assessing risk. Improved clarity for natural hazard management decisions where uncertainty is high.	A top-down approach may overlook local knowledge and modelling. Decisions made with limited or uncertain information may create long-term adverse effects.

[42]

NPS for Infrastructure 2025

Instrument	Key Changes	Opportunities	Challenges
National Policy Statement for Infrastructure 2025	Elevates the recognition of infrastructure as an interconnected public good. Provides clear national direction and a coordinated approach that is resilient to climate change. Requires councils to recognise and provide for significant infrastructure and the risks of asset neglect, regardless of location or environment. Requires councils to regard infrastructure in strategic, spatial, and master plans.	Improved clarity for core infrastructure decisions. Elevates the societal benefits of infrastructure. Integrates infrastructure considerations across planning documents to improve outcomes.	Local communities may be negatively affected by regionally or nationally significant proposals. Councils must recognise and provide for infrastructure regardless of the underlying location or environment.

[43]

NPS for Renewable Electricity Generation Amendment 2025

Instrument	Key Changes	Opportunities	Challenges
National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011	Updates the original 2011 NPS to align with modern infrastructure and electricity needs. Requires decision-makers to enable significant increases in renewable electricity generation capacity and output. Highlights the importance of electricity supply resilience and our obligations under the Climate Change Response Act 2002. Requires decision-makers to regard incompatible land use and subdivision, acknowledging that renewable electricity generation assets often need specific locations and environments.	Enables new renewable electricity generation proposal within the District. Removes barriers for landowners wanting to integrate renewable electricity generation into production systems. Improves clarity for renewable electricity generation decisions.	Operational and functional needs of renewable electricity generation make the Hurunui District an attractive location for new proposals. Rural communities and competing land uses may be adversely affected by new renewable electricity generation activities.

[44]

NPS for Electricity Networks Amendment 2025

Instrument	Key Changes	Opportunities	Challenges
National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks 2008	Updates the original 2008 NPS to reflect modern electricity network needs. Recognises the significance of the national grid. Establishes a national framework for councils to follow when assessing transmission line proposals. Elevates the importance of transmission and distribution within legislation to support long-term strategic planning. Requires decision makers to consider the NPS when drafting plans and processing resource consents.	Improved clarity for electricity transmission decisions through a national framework. Reinforces the importance of electricity transmission in our modern society. Supports the integration of electricity transmission into long-term strategic planning.	Three 220 kilovolt lines within the District travel through Outstanding natural Landscapes, agricultural operations, and residential areas. Balancing community and environmental impacts against national benefits of transmission infrastructure.

[45]

DMRU Regulations and SSAD Amendment Acts 2025

From 15 January 2026, two pieces of legislation have been enacted that enables the supply of small residential dwellings (colloquially known as 'granny flats') with the intention being to give homeowners more options and to increase housing supply.

The new Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Detached Minor Residential Units) Regulations 2025, bypasses many District Plan rules and permits one Detached Minor Residential Unit (DMRU) per site, provided they meet specific criteria. Floor area, site coverage and setback requirements are all specified in the Regulations and can vary depending on a proposal's zoning. Amenity values such as locating them in a front yard, design standards and restricting neighbour's access to sunlight no longer apply. DMRUs must still comply with natural hazard standards, infrastructure requirements, reverse sensitivity provisions and matters of national importance under section 6 of the RMA.[46]

Under the Building and Construction (Small Stand-alone Dwellings) Amendment Act 2025, Small Stand Alone Dwelling (SSADs) that meet certain criteria do not require a building consent under the Building Act 2004. An exemption is provided if you comply with size, cladding and framing material requirements, as well as providing records of work from Licensed Building Practitioners.[47]



✓ **Opportunities**

- Removal of planning and financial barriers
- Greater supply of small residential dwelling
- Legislation that reflects the current needs and wants of our society

! **Challenges**

- A disregard for District Plan rules removing local decision-making
- Loss of amenity values and local identity
- Confusion from the media failing to accurately communicate the dual nature of our consenting system

Fast-Track Approvals Act 2024



The Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 is a permanent streamline consenting system for developments and infrastructure projects that aim to deliver significant regional and national benefits.

This Act is a 'one-stop-shop' that provides projects with an alternative to current processes for the resource consents, notices of requirement, and certificates of compliance usually required under the Resource Management Act 1991, or other Acts. Under the Fast-track pathway, expert panels will consider required approvals as a single application package. This creates a more streamlined system than current processes, which require separate applications for different types of approvals.

Schedule 2 of the Fast-Track Approvals Act identified and listed 149 projects that allow for applicants to proceed directly to an Expert Panel. Any project that is not listed in Schedule 2 needs a referral application which is assessed by the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Infrastructure prior to a substantive application.[48]

✓ **Opportunities**

- A streamlined consenting system for significant infrastructure proposals
- Economic benefits from regional and national developments
- Decision-making on complex proposals taken away from the Council

! **Challenges**

- Potential negative effects on the District for regional or national benefits
- A large degree of Ministerial power and loss of local decision-making

Rates Caps 2026

Since 2020, the cost to build bridges, sewage systems, roads, and water supply systems have increased by 38, 30, and 27 per cent respectively. The costs to maintain existing assets and services are also impacted by inflation, debt, and increasing insurance costs. Local government's overall tax revenue has remained at a constant 2 per cent of GDP for half a century while the level of service expected from them continues to grow.[49]

In December 2025, the Central Government proposed a rates cap on local government to keep increases under control and reduce pressures on household budgets. The proposed model will establish a target calculated off long-term indicators such as inflation and GDP growth. Initial estimates suggest that increases will be between 2 to 4 per cent per capita, per year, with a maximum limit of 4 per cent. The cap will apply to all sources of rates, from general to targeted, as well as uniform annual charges. Councils can exceed the 4 per cent cap with central government approval for extreme circumstances such as natural disaster events and infrastructure requirements. The transition period will begin from 1 January 2027. From this date, councils will be required to consider the impact of rates caps within their long-term plans and report on remunerations, rates in consideration of local house prices, and predicted local infrastructure deficits. Targeted consultation has been conducted to February 2026, and the completed regulatory model will take effect by 2029.[50]



✓ **Opportunities**

- Reduced pressure on rate payers
- Greater transparency with how the Council charges rates
- Discussions with communities on what levels of service are expected

! **Challenges**

- Increased financial pressure on the Council to maintain existing levels of service
- The risk of underinvesting in communities as core infrastructure is priortised

Climate Change Response (Emission Trading Scheme - Forestry Conversion) Amendment Act 2025

The New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (NZ ETS) was implemented in 2008 to enable New Zealand to meet its international obligations in reducing human-induced greenhouse gases.[51] Over the last 18 years, the NZ ETS has instigated rapid land use change. As of April 2025, New Zealand has approximately 1.818 million hectares of planted forest.[52]

The implementation of the Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Scheme – Forestry Conversion) Amendment Act 2025 will change the eligibility criteria for new forestry conversions that can be included within the NZ ETS. Regulations will be introduced to LUC class 6 land, as well as a ballot system to limit farm-to-plantation conversions. Restrictions and a permit system have been introduced on 1 January 2026.[53]

The most predominant LUC class in the Hurunui District is class 6 at 299,300 ha (including conservation land).[54]The NZ ETS amendment will potentially reduce the rate and volume of land converted into forestry operations. It is important to note that this amendment only changes the eligibility criteria for landowners who wish to enter the NZ ETS.



✓ **Opportunities**

- A controlled rate of new forestry plantations from stricter regulations
- Reduction in farm-to-plantation conversions and associated environmental and social effects
- Greater emphasis to directly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions

! **Challenges**

- Potential barriers for landowners who want to diversify their land use practices
- Reduced profits for landowners if forestry plantations are not eligible for the NZ ETS

Climate Change Response (2050 Target and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2026

In 2019, the Zero Carbon Amendment was introduced to align our targets with the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global average temperatures below 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Ultimately, this was to be achieved by reducing biogenic methane emission to 24-27 per cent below 2017 levels and all other greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.[55]

In 2025, the Central Government introduced the Climate Change Response (2050 Target and Other Matters) Amendment Bill. The Bill came from recommendations of the Methane Review Panel on what our national targets should be to achieve the goal of no additional warming from 2017 levels. The following changes have been proposed: reducing target levels to between 14-24 per cent below 2017 levels, requiring the implications for food production to be considered by the Climate Change Commission and the Minister of Climate Change, and several changes to reporting requirements and NZ ETS functions.[56]



✓ **Opportunities**

- Reduced pressures on farmers to achieve methane reduction targets
- Greater recognition on the value food production has for our society

! **Challenges**

- The risk of not meeting our international climate change obligations
- Diminishing our reputation for climate policy which could impact tourism and trade markets

Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025

The Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025 brings another iteration to our three waters reforms. This Central Government direction is an attempt to address historic underinvestment and inefficiency across all New Zealand districts. The purpose of this Act is to establish a framework for local government to manage and deliver water services. For local government to achieve the purpose of the Act, district councils must prepare water services delivery plans, be transparent in their decisions, follow specific processes, and are subject to ministerial interventions.[57]

In May 2025, after community consultation and submissions, both the Hurunui and Kaikōura District Councils voted in favour of delivering water services through a joint Water Services Council Controlled Organisation (WSCCO), which has the preliminary name 'Kaikōura Hurunui Water Services Limited'.

A water services delivery plan was developed and approved by the Department of Internal Affairs in September 2025. It details how the water services entity will be 100 per cent owned by the two Councils. A board of five members, three appointed jointly and one by each council will govern the WSCCO. Board members cannot be elected councilors or employees of either council. Once the WSCCO is established, transfer and service level agreements will be made before assets and personnel are transferred. These final changes are expected to occur by July 2026.[58]



✓ **Opportunities**

- Decision making from a board of people who hold the relevant skills and experience for the roles
- Greater long-term outcomes
- Transfer of current debt to a Council Controlled Organisation

! **Challenges**

- Significant increases in water rates on local communities, although this was predicted as per the Long-Term Plan 2024-2034

Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2024 - 2034



The Government Policy Statements (GPS) on Land Transport provides national direction for our transport system under the Land Transport Management Act 2003. It details strategic priorities, outcomes, and the allocation of funding bands through the National Land Transport Programme. The GPS 2024-34 brings a significant increase in funding at the national level compared to the GPS 2021-31 with total target expenditure from the National Land Transport Fund increasing from $4.5b to $6.8b. These national level documents trickle down to Regional Land Transport Plans (RLTP) which outline where funding is needed within districts.[59]

Regional Programme for the Hurunui District

Maintenance, operations and renewal activities account for over 40 per cent of land transport investment by the Central, Regional and district governments over the next 10 years. Everything from signage to drains, footpaths to cycleways, and roads to bridges are included in the RLTP. The following table displays the proposed activities for funding to maintain and improve levels of service in the Hurunui District.[60]

Category	Activity	Investment
Ongoing programmes (2024-2034)	Create a well-maintained network (maintenance, operations, renewals)	$198m
	Manage risk of exposure to extreme events	$16.6m
Locally important improvements (2024-2034)	Manage risk of exposure to extreme weather events	$4.6m
	Safer systems	$9.1m
	Freight systems	$1.4m
Regionally significant improvements	Conway Bridge	$10m

[60]

Activities for Future Investment

As part of the Regional Transport Committee, the Hurunui District Council has a legal requirement to present feasible and affordable proposals. However, the current level of funding is insufficient to meet all our needs. The following table outlines proposed activities should the funding become available.[60]

Category	Activity	Investment
Ongoing programmes (2024-2034)	Manage risk of exposure to extreme events	$16.6m
	Freight systems	$8.3m
Locally important improvements (2024-2034)	Safer systems $13.7m	$13.7m
	Freight systems	$2.1m
Regionally significant improvements	Carters Road, Amberley	$1.5m

[60]

✓ **Opportunities**

- Increased national expenditure from $4.5b to $6.8b
- Funding targeting key areas such as maintenance, freight systems and safety improvements
- Anticipated regionally significant improvements such as Carters Road and the Conway Bridge

! **Challenges**

- Current levels of funding are still insufficient to meet the needs of the Hurunui District
- Potential rates caps limiting the local share of funding and impacting levels of service
- Local Government Reforms creating uncertainty on the current structure and functions of roading departments
- Uncertainty in central government decisions and co-funding levels

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

Technology-driven expansion of the renewable energy sector has experienced rapid growth, reaching a record high of 45.5 per cent in 2024.[61] With an aspirational goal of 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2030, New Zealand is shifting from a reliance on traditional hydro to a more diversified portfolio featuring solar, wind, and geothermal, alongside emerging green hydrogen and battery technologies.[62]

Wind Farms

Locally, the Mt Cass Wind Farm has commenced construction in early 2026. As the largest wind farm in the South Island, Mt Cass will help meet New Zealand's growing demand for renewable energy. With a maximum generation output of 95MW, Mt Cass could provide electricity for 40,000 homes. Featuring 22 wind turbines with a maximum height of 150 metres, the wind turbines will generate electricity up to wind speeds of 122 kilometres per hours and will be able to withstand gusts up to 350 kilometres per hours.[63]



Solar Farms

Solar technology has also advanced significantly, improving the economic viability of solar farms. The greatest improvement has come at a reduction in the financial costs of photovoltaic solar panels. In the year 2000, solar panels cost $6.29 USD per watt compared to $0.26 USD per watt in 2024.[64] The Hurunui District Council has received two resource consents applications for solar farms in the District. The first of these proposals is for a 181-hectare site that can generate a peak output of 143 Megawatts. The second proposal is for a 76-hectare site to be developed into a solar farm with approximately 81,000 solar panels generating a peak of 57 Megawatts.[65]

Several key factors make the Hurunui District a desirable and strategically important location for future solar farm developments. The abundance of drystock farms is a key driver, offering low intensity agricultural operations diversification opportunities. Our proximity to the national grid is also a significant variable. Some solar farm providers will trade-off efficiency for an easy connection, as this reduces the initial costs significantly![66] Climatic factors such as hours of sunlight and levels of solar radiation are also high in the Hurunui District.[67]



INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hurunui District Council provides a wide range of infrastructure for communities. Most notably are local roads, three waters services, and waste and recycling management.

Roading and Footpaths

The road network is the backbone of Hurunui's infrastructure. Council is responsible for approximately 1,500 km of roads of which 672.6 km is sealed, and 801.75 km is unsealed. Our network connects to State Highways 1, 7, and 7A which pass through the District and includes Route 70, an important inland connection and alternative route to State Highway 1. Other infrastructure includes approximately 280 bridges and major culverts, 75 km of footpaths and cycleways, and 8475 traffic signs.[68]

Roading Network Pressures

The pressure on our roading network is likely to change over the next 50 years. Some of the factors that might influence this are:

Changing Land Use

Our ability to use land productively is dependent on the ability to access the labour force and access markets to sell the product. Without an adequate roading network, both can pose significant challenges. As land use changes, the demand and location for those roads will change with it. Commercial forestry operations are often associated with the degradation of public roads, and the sector can have significant impacts by generating a large volume of traffic over a short period of time during harvesting.[69]

Climate Change

The changing climate will impact our roads and footpaths. Prolonged hot temperatures, heavy localised flooding and sea level rise will all reduce the resilience of our network. Extreme weather events can impact the road service and the viability of some of the District's 280 bridges. Disruptions have significant effects on anyone using our network, from commuters and tourists to the inward and outward flow of goods.

Tourism

With increasing levels of tourism, safe, easy to drive roads are essential. Our narrow-unsealed roads can be challenging for vehicles towing caravans or drivers unfamiliar with these conditions. Some tourists are becoming more adventurous and seeking out remote areas serviced by roads maintained to a very low level.

✓ **Opportunities**

- Maintaining a proactive approach to increase resilience from the effects of climate change
- Continuing to improve our roading network for necessary safety upgrades
- Supporting regional growth for freight operators who use our local roads

❗ **Challenges**

- Potential abandonment and reestablishment of transport linkages due to extreme weather events and coastal inundation, in particular Golf Links, Claverley and Conway Flat roads
- 23 per cent of roadings structures will be nearing their end of life over the next 30 years increasing the number of works as replacements and renewals are required



Three Water Services

The term ‘three waters’ refers to drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater. They are a fundamental part of modern life, with their importance to a well-functioning society often overlooked.

Water Supplies

The Council owns and operates 16 urban and rural water supply schemes, encompassing 26 source water intakes and 18 water treatment plants. These schemes are serviced by extensive reticulation networks comprising nearly 2,200 kilometres of pipelines. 65 booster pump stations and 105 reservoirs ensure consistent delivery and storage capacity across the District. Collectively, the water supply assets have an estimated total replacement value exceeding $87m.[70] All water supplies are chlorinated and utilise a range of other water treatment technology including rapid sand, cartridge and membrane filtration and disinfection with ultra-violet light. Requirements for treatment and monitoring are set by the Water Services Authority - Taumata Arowai in the Drinking Water Quality Assurance Rules. The Council adhere closely to these rules and are committed to providing safe drinking water through our water networks.[71]

Wastewater

A total of ten urban communities has access to seven reticulated sewerage schemes. 14 wastewater pump stations transport grey and black water through a total of 152.2 kilometres of pipes to various plants before they are treated and discharged to the environment.[72] Septic tanks and other disposal systems must be used by rural residents who cannot connect to a reticulated scheme. Regional Council approval is also required when installing a new septic tank or wastewater disposal system.[73]

Stormwater

Stormwater management is essential in developed areas where rainfall cannot naturally infiltrate into the ground. These hard or impervious surfaces, such as roofs, roads, carparks, and paved areas generate runoff that, if not properly controlled, can pose risks to public safety, property, and the receiving environment. A network of kerb and channel, catchpits, pipelines, and open drains collect and conveys stormwater away from urban areas to local waterways, which ultimately discharge to the coastal environment. Because stormwater can transport contaminants from urban surfaces, managing what enters and travels through the stormwater network is a key responsibility of Council.[74]

✓ **Opportunities**

- Increasing our capacity and supply of three waters assets
- Supporting and facilitating appropriate developments
- Investigating alternative approaches to three water management such as urban intensification and water sensitive urban design to reduce costs

! **Challenges**

- Population growth creating additional demand on existing assets
- Regulatory changes
- Adapting to the impacts of climate change
- Minimising the environmental impacts from our wastewater systems
- Limited availability of information about our stormwater assets



Waste and Recycling

The Hurunui District Council operates five transfer stations located in Amberley, Cheviot, Culverden, Hanmer Springs and Waiau. It also provides a kerbside collection service in several areas. A bag purchase system is the main method of waste and recycling collection, and these can be obtained from various distribution places. These are then picked up by the kerbside collection system and deposited at the transfer stations. The transfer stations also offer the opportunity to deposit waste and recycling directly during normal retail business opening hours.

Kate Valley Landfill

A blend of planning, engineering and waste management expertise resulted in the construction of the South Island's most comprehensive landfill site. Opened in 2005, the Kate Valley Landfill was designed and operates to stringent international standards for municipal waste, as well as being fully compliant with New Zealand landfill guidelines. This initiative was needed to address over 50 rubbish dumps that were not fit for modern standards. A joint venture partnership between Waste Management New Zealand Limited and the Hurunui, Waimakariri, Christchurch City, Selwyn and Ashburton councils created the largest public-private waste company in New Zealand.[75]

The Hurunui District Council plays a key role as a consenting authority and infrastructure provider. Transfer stations around the Region use our local roads to transport waste in specially designed sealed containerised pods. Additionally, all activities on the site are permitted by a list of consent conditions. The Council must ensure these conditions are abided by and hold the responsibility for assessing any proposed changes to operations.



Drivers for Change

Environmental Concerns
Climate change, pollution (plastics in oceans, GHG emissions), and resource depletion necessitate sustainable waste management to protect ecosystems and meet climate targets.

Transition from a Linear to a Circular Waste Economy
New Zealand generates very high levels of urban and electronic waste by international standards. In response, there is growing momentum globally toward a circular economy, where products are designed for durability, reuse, repair, and recovery, keeping materials in circulation for longer. While recycling remains important, it alone will not address waste generation. Meaningful reductions require waste to be designed out at source through longer-lasting, more sustainable products.[76]

Greater Emphasis on Sustainability by Individuals
Nationally there is a shift towards organisations and individuals living more sustainably. Some supermarkets are now offering refill stations for cleaning products or allowing deli meat to be put in reusable containers. Such actions reduce the total volume of waste produced.[77]

Economic Pressures
New Zealanders throw away 157,000 tonnes of food annually. This food is worth approximately $1.17 billion. An average family throws away approximately three shopping trolleys or $600 worth of food a year.[78]

✓ **Opportunities**

- Advocating for the Soft Plastic Recycling Scheme to be available in the District
- Providing education on our waste management practices
- Reducing the volumes of food product entering landfills by cooking the right amount of food, eating leftovers and storing food correctly
- Population increases could be offset by a greater emphasis on sustainability.

! **Challenges**

- As New Zealand looks to move from a linear economy to a circular economy, new methods for processing waste may be required
- Waste disposal at Kate Valley Landfill directly correlates to national GDP figures, highlighting consumer trends

Economic Profile

As of 2025, the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector employed the greatest number of people in the District at approximately 1,550. It is estimated that over 420 people from this sector are employed within the dairy industry, which includes the workforce involved in farming and processing operations.[79] The accommodation and food services sector employs the second largest number of people at 550, and education and training sits in third place at 390 employees. Other notable sectors that support the economic profile of the district are retail trade, manufacturing, and construction at 350, 300, and 280 employees respectively.[80]

This spread of workforce demographics highlights the District's reliance on agricultural production and the supply of goods and services. Tourism is not explicitly included in this dataset, but the figures suggest that the accommodation and food services sector supports tourism with the number of employees decreasing 10 to 20 per cent from pre-COVID levels.

Percentage of Working Age Population Employed per Sector 2025

Sector	Hurunui (%)	Canterbury (%)
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	19.05	4.0
Accommodation & Food Services	6.76	5.71
Retail Trade	4.30	7.72

[79]

GDP per Industry

The most recent useful dataset for Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the District is from 2023. Total GDP across all sectors for the year 2023 was $787m.[81] Unfortunately, some of these figures will not accurately reflect the current value created by the production of goods and services. Nonetheless, they provide an indication of each sector and serve as a reference point for the next Scan in 2029.

Agriculture bolsters GDP in the District, generating $282m in 2023.[81] The dairy industry provided the greatest contribution to agricultural GDP, with an estimated $106.9m in 2023. This equates to approximately 14 per cent of the total GDP across all sectors and has provided the dairy industry workforce an estimated $23.3m in wages.[79] Farm typologies are dominated by specialised sheep production at 333 farms, followed by sheep and beef operations at 135 farms. Specialised beef and dairy farming are the next most prevalent at 114 intensive beef farms and 96 dairy farms. Cropping operations constitute 63 farms, and vineyards contribute to the next most common farm type at 60.[82]

Forestry, fishing, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste services are grouped as a single industry from the available dataset. Their contribution to the District's GDP was $83m in 2023.[81] It is important to note that the harvesting of forestry plantations will decline over the coming decade. Data shows that over 15,000 hectares of forest are between 21 and 30 years old. There is then a drop to 7,600 hectares for forests aged 11 to 20 years, and a further reduction to 6,400 hectares for forests aged 1 to 10 years.[52] Even despite legislative changes that have promoted land use change, we will not experience the volumes of commercial forestry operations that occurred at the turn of the millennia.

Rental, hiring, and real estate services produce the next greatest GDP figures. Included in this industry group are property renting and real estate agency fees, as well as the hiring of tangible assets like machinery and equipment. This industry group contributed $64m in 2023 across the Hurunui District.[80]



International Tourism Expenditure

The international tourism sector has shown signs of recovery since the 2023 Scan. Disruptions due to the global pandemic saw electronic card transaction expenditure crash to under $3m for the years 2021 and 2022. After the borders were reopened, card transactions bounced back to 2019 figures of $14m per annum and steadily rose to $16.7m in 2024. As of November 2025, card transactions decreased slightly to $15.7m but still remain above pre-COVID levels.[83]



[82]

✓ Opportunities

- Growing international markets and new trade agreement with India
- A recovering economy means more people have disposable income
- Technological advancements for the agricultural sector to improve productivity
- Opportunities to establish food processing close to production adding value to products
- Renewable energy generation such as wind and solar
- Growing population increasing business growth

! Challenges

- Global instability
- Our small population reducing the number of suitable staff for employers
- The tourism and hospitality sectors suffering from high business costs
- An under-diversified economy that is heavily reliant on primary production and tourism

Affordability of Services

The Hurunui District Council provides a myriad of services to its people and communities. From providing infrastructure to various licenses and consents, these services come at a cost, and the affordability of such is often of great concern to Council and ratepayers alike. With a small population and rating base of around 8,000 properties, funding a high level of service is an ongoing challenge. This challenge is only exacerbated by our large jurisdictional boundary, resulting in high infrastructure costs as pipes and roads must provide services to vast and sparsely populated areas.

Core and Community Infrastructure

Assets are broken down into core infrastructure such as water supply, wastewater, stormwater and drainage, roads and footpaths. As well as community infrastructure such as municipal waste management, public toilets, halls, cemeteries, medical centres, libraries, pools, sports fields, reserves and playgrounds. Activity Management Plans guide the decisions made by Council to deliver an agreed level of service. Our policy is to fulfil our statutory obligations in a cost effective, sustainable, and coordinated manner.[84]



Fees and Charges

Fees and Charges relate to the recovery of costs for specific services. They are reviewed as part of the Annual Plan to ensure alignment with our budgetary requirements. These specific services include alcohol licenses, animal control, building consents, development contributions, roading, resource consents, and various public amenities.[85]

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In the 2024/2025 financial year, the Council recorded a total operating deficit of $7.4m. Anticipated revenue from Development Contributions, vested assets, and Fees and Charges were all lower than budgeted figures. Expenditure was greater than predicted, with operating costs and interest rates exceeding the budget by $1.6m and $969,000 respectively. Fixed assets were an additional $104m greater than the previous year, and the total debt balance was $87.1m, only $600,000 more than budgeted.[86]

✓ Opportunities

- Learning from other districts such as Selwyn who have experienced unprecedented growth and demand on services
- A wide range of reforms creating opportunities for local government
- Having frank and honest conversations with our communities on the expectations of the Hurunui District Council

! Challenges

- Demand on infrastructure from population growth exceeding available finances
- Expenditure on operating costs and interest rates exceeding budgets
- Adapting to the impacts of climate change
- Legislative changes creating additional pressure on local governments



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