



Council Workshop

01 October 2026



RANGITIKEI
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Agenda

Update on Legislative Changes, covering the main ones:

- Planning Act and Natural Environment Act 2026
- Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Act 2026
- Emergency Management Act 2026
- Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2026

Other Updates on:

- Rates Capping
- Simplifying Local Government (Headstart / Backstop)

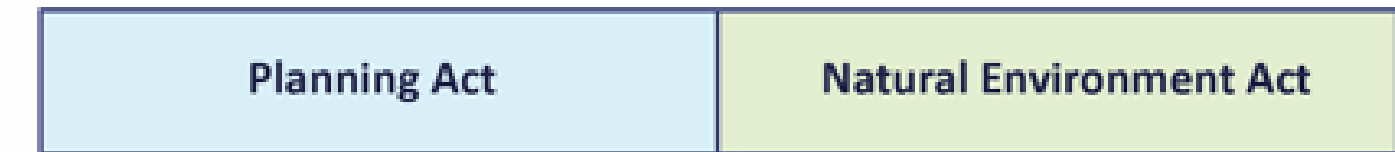
Planning Act and Natural Environment Act

- Replaces the Resource Management Act
- Came into law on 30 September 2026.
- A phased transition to full implementation.
- The new system intends to reduce duplication and litigation, and provide greater certainty for communities, councils, developers and investors.
- How the new system works

Central
government

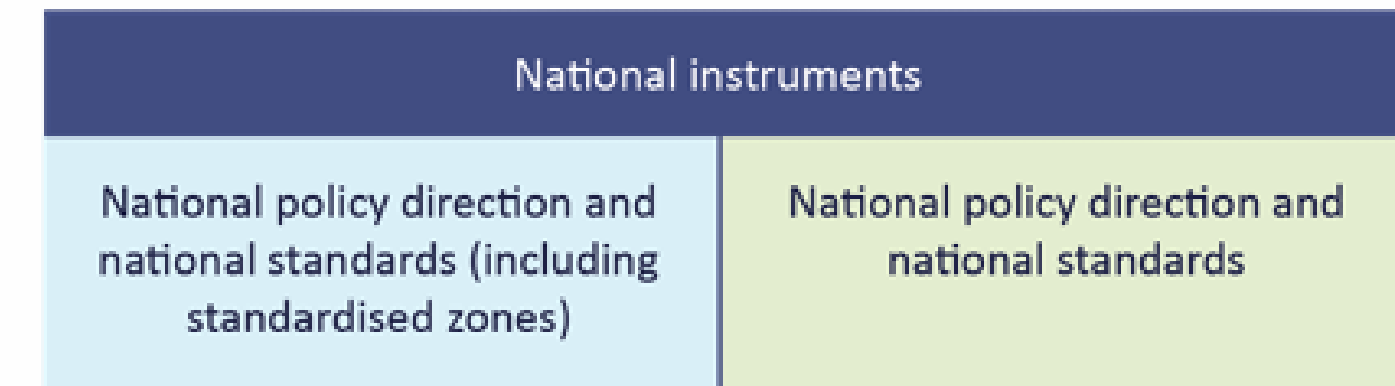
Legislation

sets the overall scope of the new planning system



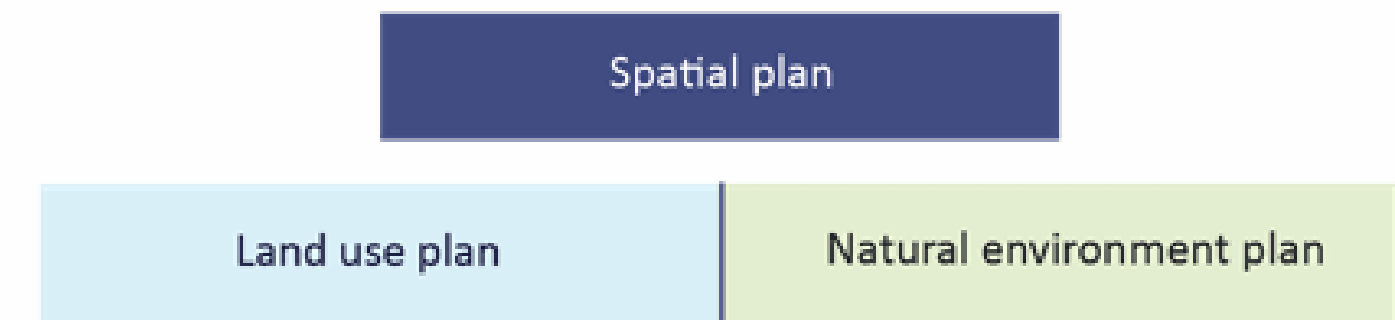
National instruments

provide direction and help turn the goals into planning rules and decisions



Regional
and local
government

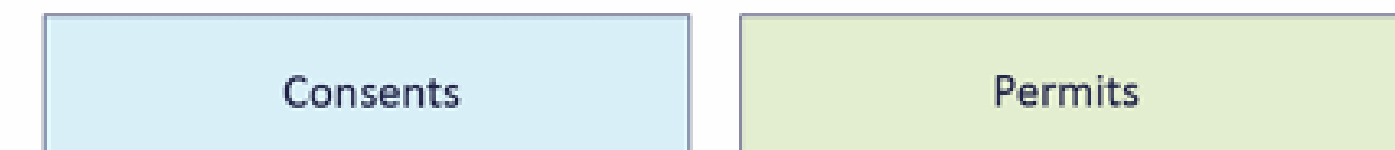
Combined plans for each region
bring regional planning together together and include a



System users

Consents and permits

manage activities that need approval



Planning Act and Natural Environment Act Cont ... Impacts for RDC

- **Councils still have a significant role – particularly territorial authorities like us.**
RDC will continue to be responsible for **land-use planning, consenting, compliance and enforcement.**
- **Regional spatial planning becomes much more important.** Regional spatial plans will look **30 years and beyond** and bring together decisions about where growth, housing and infrastructure should occur alongside natural hazards, environmental constraints and long-term investment. Central government will also participate directly in regional spatial planning, bringing national priorities into the process.
- **The first change happens quickly – 30 October 2026.** From **30 October**, transitional consenting provisions apply. We will still process applications under the RMA, but there will be changes to how some applications are considered, including new procedural principles, matters that are out of scope.
- **The next few years will mean running the existing system while building the new one.** We must maintain our existing statutory functions **at the same time as** preparing for regional spatial planning, and the development of land use plans.

Planning Act and Natural Environment Act Cont ... Impacts for RDC

- The key message for us is that this is not an overnight change. For the next few years we will effectively be operating two tracks – continuing to deliver our existing RMA responsibilities while helping design and prepare for the new regional planning system.
- The immediate focus for RDC needs to be readiness: our capability, our involvement in regional spatial planning, and making sure the Rangitīkei voice is represented as the new system is developed.
- MCERT have established a new website which provides clear and consistent information about the new planning system – planning.govt.nz

Implementation roadmap

2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
• Planning Bill and Natural Environment Bill – expected to be enacted September 2026 • Government consideration of Head Start outline proposals • Transition period and transitional consenting begins • Establishment of spatial plan committees, secretariats and process agreements • RMA plans and consenting stay in place until the new system takes over • Public engagement on illustrative national policy direction in August 2026	• National policy direction issued no later than 12 months after the Bills become law (September 2027) • National standards, providing direction on the structure and form of regional spatial plans finalised within 12 months of enactment (e.g. September 2027) (but not before national policy direction)	• National standards relating to environmental limits finalised within 18 months after the Bills become law (e.g. March 2028) • National standards on standardised plan provisions finalised within 21 months after the Bills become law (e.g. June 2028) • Councils notify draft regional spatial plans within 21 months of the Bills becoming law (e.g. June 2028)	• Regional spatial plans must be decided within 9 months after they are publicly notified (e.g. March 2029) • Councils notify natural environment plans and land use plans within 9 months of regional spatial plan decisions (e.g. December 2029) • Once all plans are notified, the Minister will recommend an Order in Council be made specifying the date the new legislation will apply (the specified transition date)	• From the specified transition date, all notified plans have legal effect and the new system is fully ‘switched on’ • Councils must decide land-use plans and natural environment plans within 12 months of notifying them.

Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Act 2026

- **Received Royal Assent on 18 September and is now law.** Its purpose includes refocusing local government, prioritising core services, strengthening performance reporting/accountability and providing regulatory relief.
- **There is a new purpose of local government:**
Section 10 says the purpose of local government is:
“to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities”
and to meet current and future community needs for good-quality, cost-effective and local infrastructure, public services and regulatory functions, while also supporting local economic growth and development through those activities.
- That is a change in emphasis. The previous statutory purpose referred to promoting the **social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities** — the “four well-beings”. Those references have now been removed from the purpose provisions.

LG (System Improvements) Amendment Act Cont ...

- **“Cost-effective” now has a statutory meaning:**

ensuring the public receives **value for money** by using resources effectively, economically and without waste, while considering the total costs and benefits of decisions or actions.

- **Core services are explicitly identified**

- A new **section 11A** says councils must have **particular regard** to the contribution of these core services:

- network infrastructure;
- public transport;
- waste management and minimisation;
- emergency management; and
- libraries, museums, reserves and other community and recreational facilities.

this is **not a statutory list of the only things councils may do**. The wording is that councils must have *particular regard* to the contribution these core services make.

- **Financial decisions must connect to the new purpose and core services**

- Section 101 has been amended so that when a council determines its approach to **financial management**, it must have particular regard to both:
the new purpose of local government and the statutory core services.

For RDC, this is one of the most significant practical changes. When Council considers budgets, service levels, new spending or competing priorities, there is now a clearer statutory connection between **financial management → core services → value for money**.

- **Stronger performance reporting and benchmarking**

- The Act strengthens the framework for measuring council performance. It allows performance measures to be set for council activities and enables regulations to prescribe the groups of activities councils must include in their LTPs, annual plans and annual reports.
- The Government has described the objective as giving communities clearer information about **council performance and spending**, including more regular reporting and easier comparison between councils.

LG (System Improvements) Amendment Act Cont ...

- **Governance changes — voting is restricted**

One of the more significant governance changes is the restriction on **non-elected members voting on council committees**.

Councils can still appoint people who bring expertise or represent particular communities, but generally those appointees will not have voting rights or count towards the quorum.

There is a transition period (March 2027), so this is something RDC will check against its **committee structures, appointments, delegations and terms of reference**.

- **Better access to information for elected members**

The Act also strengthens the position of elected members in obtaining council information and adds a governance principle supporting the **free exchange of information and expression of opinions between elected members**.

Earthquake-prone buildings

- Received Royal Assent on Thursday 24 September 2026.
- The new system will focus requirements on buildings considered to pose the greatest risk to life, with most changes **taking effect from 1 July 2027**.
- Further implementation guidance (by MBIE) is still being developed.
- The existing system largely continues in our area until 30 June 2027. The building team will need to work through what the changes mean for our processes and affected buildings before the new system takes effect.

For RDC, this means:

- The earthquake-prone building system is moving to a more risk-based approach, focused on medium/high seismic zones and higher-risk building types.
- Entries will still remain on the Earthquake Register
- Can provide more detail on the Taihape Town Hall and Marton building projects.

RDC impact: review affected buildings, update public communications, and manage expectations from building owners.

Emergency Management Act 2026

- Received Royal Assent on **3 September** and most provisions commenced **4 September 2026**.
- The new Act replaces the CDEM Act and strengthens system oversight, regional emergency management planning standards, roles for emergency management committees, local authorities, controllers and recovery managers.
- There are new statutory arrangements around regional Emergency Management Committees, regional plans, council responsibilities, controllers and recovery managers.
- Some provisions commence later, including compliance orders in March 2027 and certain CE powers in September 2027.
- *For RDC: Reinforces that emergency management is not just an operational function — it is whole-of-council readiness.*

Not Yet Law – 1. Rates Capping ...

- Government has introduced a statutory rates-capping framework, but the final settings are not yet settled.
- The Rates Capping Bill has passed first reading. Submissions are currently open and are expected to close in December 2026.
- Proposed annual rates increases must sit within an initial **2–4% target range**, with councils to consider the range from **1 July 2027** and full caps from **1 July 2029**.
- Water services are proposed to be excluded.
- It is still a bill and not law.
- *RDC impact: Will need to consider as part of the 2027-37 Long Term Plan*

Not Yet Law – 2. Simplifying Local Government

- Simplifying Local Government was proposed to ensure regional governance became simpler and more effective over time.
- Headstart and Backstop have been ‘paused’, if the current Government is re-elected they intend to relook at this in 2027.
- For RDC We do not have a Head Start proposal waiting for a Government decision. So there is **no immediate change to Council’s structure or day-to-day work** as a result of the September 2026 announcement. Councils across our region will continue conversations about collaboration, shared services and what future reform could look like - inline with the letter of intent we signed with our neighbours. We need to keep watching the wider Government reform programme, particularly development of the “backstop” process that could apply to us. More clarity is expected in 2027.

Not Yet Law – 2. Simplifying Local Government

- **Decision (??) on Head Start – MCERT Advice:**

The Government has decided that it will not be making decisions on Head Start proposals at this time. The intention is that decisions on the next steps for local government reorganisation will be made after the 2026 general election. The Government remains committed to local government reform, which is aligned with the new planning and environmental management systems

Regional councillors will not be elected at the 2028 local elections, and the backstop process for regional reorganisation will still commence following the elections.

- **What has been signalled by the Government post-election?**

The Government continues to expect proposals endorsed by Cabinet to be developed in detail and considered for final approval in 2027, with Head Start changes intended to be in place ahead of the 2028 local government elections.

Work will continue on the backstop process for areas that do not progress through Head Start. Decisions on that process will be informed by lessons from the Head Start pathway, consultation feedback and further advice from officials.

This is not one reform – it is a system reset

The rules councils operate under are changing at the same time as expectations on affordability, infrastructure, regional collaboration and emergency readiness are increasing.



For RDC, the challenge is sequencing: meeting new statutory obligations without overloading capacity or losing sight of local priorities.

Reform dashboard

A simple view of what is settled and what is still moving.

Reform	Status	Why it matters for councils
Local Government System Improvements	LAW - largely in force	Council purpose, core services, governance and accountability
Emergency Management	LAW - largely in force	New statutory emergency management system and roles
RMA replacement	LAW – transitional regime	Planning Bill + Natural Environment Bill transforms the resource management system over time
Rates Capping	BILL	Proposed framework to limit annual increases to rates
Local Water Done Well	IMPLEMENTATION	Water delivery plans, monitoring and future delivery model
Simplifying Local Government	POLICY PROGRAMME	Potential structural reform and Head Start / Back Stop pathways.
Earthquake-prone buildings	LAW - phased commencement	Act passed 25 Sept; risk-based system from 1 July 2027



Ngā mihi, Thank you



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DISTRICT COUNCIL