Waihi Beach is a special and unique place. This community planning process gives a chance to chart a course for the future - community choice, community voice.
This Community Plan (the Plan) for Waihi Beach sets out a vision and direction for where we want to be by 2029.

We start our journey with a sense of pride, ambition and optimism. The Connectors Group are committed to shaping Waihi Beach into the best that it can be.

The Connectors know that there is so much to be proud of in Waihi Beach and you, our local community, have told us what you care about in this area and see it as a thriving community. In putting together this Plan, the Connectors recognise our strengths - the richness and diversity of our landscape and cultural and natural heritage, but we’re also made aware of the things which need to be improved. Using what you’ve told us from our engagement process, this Plan has developed four main objectives and a list of actions for us to implement over the next 10 years.

While we have identified the key issues and objectives we want to see achieved, this is only the start of a long process. Next will be the delivery of the action plan which will set specific targets and timeframes.

The Connectors will continue to listen and engage with the community to ensure that we achieve this Plan by working together.

“"Our plan will be an important tool to determine our future for Waihi Beach in a unified and all-inclusive way....kotahitanga”

Reon Tuanau, Ngāi Te Rangi Iwi Trust and Co-Chair Connectors Group

“This is your plan, based on what you’ve told us, designed to achieve positive outcomes for all who live in, work and visit the Waihi Beach area.”

Dame Peggy Koopman-Boyden, Co-chair Connectors Group

The Connectors Group

This is a group of community representatives dedicated to driving the Plan towards completion and implementation. Members of this group have been selected as they understand the context of the community, belong to a range of interest groups and can network for opportunities and partnerships.

Members
Reon Tuanau (Co-Chair)
Peggy Koopman-Boyden (Co-Chair)
Alan Kurtovich
Allan Sole
Andrew Kennedy
Don Fraser
Jim Cowern
John Mutlow
Kelly Moselen
Marilyn Roberts
Ross Goudie
Sue-Ellen Parker
Trish Coates

Portia McKenzie (Independent Facilitator)
Te rāpopotonga pou matua - Executive Summary

Waihi Beach is a special and unique place, with a rich natural landscape and a diverse and vibrant cultural heritage. In order to protect what makes it so special, and to chart a course for our future, the Community Planning process has given the community an opportunity to share their voice.

This Plan is for the entire Waihi Beach ward and includes Bowentown and Athenree. A process has been charted that has been driven by interest group representatives within the community – known as the Connectors Group. The group took into consideration research and statistics, the previous plan and what is happening regionally so they are aligned. Gauging an understanding of the community aspirations from the public workshops the challenges and opportunities have been identified. This has led to four key objectives and a list of actions.

This Plan is the outcome of this initiative – “Community Choice, Community Voice”, together with an invitation to check if the aspirations are correct and to partner to get it done.

“This Plan is a collaborative process, where the community have the chance to take ownership of the actions. We are ambitious for the changes we want to see in Waihi Beach now and in the future.”

Allan Sole, Connectors Group
1.1 He aha tēnei mea te mahere hāpori? 
What is community planning?

Community Planning is about local people working together with public, private and voluntary organisations to plan and deliver better services that make a real difference to their lives. In essence, it is a process that focuses on developing and achieving long term objectives for improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of a community.

Community Planning - by community, for community.

1.2 Kei hea te mahere e noho ana? 
How is a community plan used?

- Helps a community to signal to regional and national bodies what is important to the local people so that these aspirations and actions can be integrated into their respective planning too.
- Helps inform and guide priority projects that the community want to lead and progress.
- Signals opportunities for collaboration and partnerships between iwi, community organisations and businesses.
- Can be used for submissions into Annual Plans, Long Term Plans, Reserve Management Plans and District Plans.
- Helps inform new residents of the key projects the community is working on.
- Helps give guidance and clarity to funding and grant applications.

1.3 Te rohe takiwā o Waihi Beach? 
What area does the plan cover?

This Plan covers the Waihi Beach ward boundary. It includes the North End to the end of Orokawa Bay, Waihi Beach itself (including the commercial village), Pio Shores, Bowentown and Athenree, as well as the rural area adjacent to the Bay of Plenty regional boundary. Where this Plan refers to Waihi Beach it includes the entire ward.
1.4 Te anga whakamuri?  
What has already been done?

The previous Community Plan was completed in 2007 and many of the actions have been completed while others have been parked for various reasons.

The 2007 Community Plan identified eight focus areas:

- Potential Growth Areas
- Culture, Heritage and Events
- Economy
- Social and Community
- Recreation
- Getting Around
- Development
- Environment, Beach and Harbour

Now, twelve years later, it’s time to revisit the plan and to confirm the vision and direction for the next decade to 2029.

1.5 I pehea te waihanga o te mahere?  
How was the plan developed?

The drafting of the Community Plan has been a Community Board and community led initiative which started in July 2019 and included a series of public workshops in September 2019. Key points include:

- The consultation has been a non-technical process so that people felt comfortable to participate and contribute.

- Participants were provided key information on the area, population trends, a history of our cultural heritage and a profile of the regional government environment, so that they could provide contextualised and informed feedback.

- Drafting of this Plan has included a review of existing reports and research available.

- No government organisations have been involved in the Plan’s development. This means that the outcomes represent a true and authentic community voice.

“The previous Community Plan was written over a decade ago and it is now time to work on developing our aspirations together for the next 10 years.”

Trish Coates, 2007 Connectors Group Member and Connectors Group for this Plan
1.6 Te mata o to tātou hāpori
Community profile

The Statistics New Zealand census shows that the Waihi Beach resident population rose from 3,150 in 2013 to 3,671 as of the end of March 2018, or an increase of 521 people. By comparison, in the 17 years from 1996 to 2013 the population growth in Waihi Beach was only 165 people. This puts the population growth of Waihi Beach of over 15% increase (in the 2013-2018 period) whereas Auckland was just 11%.

The population aged 65 and over has increased from 25% in 2013 to 30% in 2018.

There were 259 building consents issued by Western Bay of Plenty Council for new dwellings from 2013-2018, 63 of these have been during 2018.

Visitor population however is quite different and difficult to measure. Anecdotally there are anywhere between 20,000-25,000 visitors during peak periods. This puts pressure on public services often designed for the residential population alone.

With Waihi Beach being identified as a significant residential growth area in the regional SmartGrowth strategy, population growth is projected to continue which reinforces the need for this community plan.

"Up till 2013 we really had no noticeable growth, but people are now valuing their recreational time more and spending more time in Waihi Beach more consistently throughout the year."

Andy Kennedy, owner Flatwhite and member of Connectors Group
1.7 Te horopaki o te rohe nui
The regional context

While community plans must be driven by local people, aligning with regional strategies will help partners integrate the actions into business plans.

Waihi Beach is part of the Western Bay of Plenty Council which develops a Long Term Plan (LTP) every three years (each plan has a ten year window meaning it can link with activities and decisions of the past, but keep iterating its future based on new information and activities).

While the LTP provides the overarching direction for us, each individual community (including Waihi Beach) has the opportunity to capture aspirations and to implement their own actions.

In addition, there is a need to consider SmartGrowth which was launched in 2004 to provide a unified vision, direction and voice for the future of the wider Western Bay of Plenty. By way of example of impact, Waihi Beach is listed as a growth area where future residential developed is expected and where support will be required to help develop a great place to live, learn, work and play.

SmartGrowth provides a unified vision, direction and voice for the future of the Western Bay of Plenty as we help develop a great place to live, learn, work and play.
1.8 Ngā wāriu me ngā tūtukitanga ahurea?
Cultural values and goals

Waihi Beach is a rich landscape of Maori and European history. The area has sustained tangata whenua for centuries and supported the early mining industry. There are many sites of cultural and historical significance, including the harbour with its plentiful fish stocks, and the adjacent light sandy soils which are favourable for crops and the Athenree Homestead. The pa at Te Kura a Maia and Mananui (Bowentown Heads) which stand as sentinels, and Koutunui and the impressive Puketoki pa (at Athenree) which are further testament to the rich cultural history. Equally significant is Ngā Kurī a Wharei at Waiorooro (Three Mile Creek), with landmark sites that pre-date the arrival of one of the first waka to New Zealand.

To support the development of our Community Plan, iwi have been essential contributors to the vision and recognise the value of their participation in this Plan.

Hapū (sub-tribe) - Te Whānau a Tauwhao
Rohe (district) - Mātaatua
Rūnanga (tribal Council) - Ngāi Te Rangi

Te Whānau a Tauwhao are the tangata whenua who reside at Waihi Beach and their marae, Otawhiihi is located on the harbour shore at Bowentown. They are part of Ngāi Te Rangi Iwi.

Ngāi Te Rangi is a unified, sustainable, thriving, innovative and culturally successful iwi, positioned and resourced to determine its own destiny. They have clear aspirations for Waihi Beach and have recently developed their strategic plan and identified five goals:

1. Develop cultural competence and confidence
2. Heighten awareness and involvement in a pristine environment
3. Seek excellent quality of life
4. Resource to realise our economic wellbeing
5. Leadership is accountable, visible, connected and responsive

Modern Waihi Beach is characterised as a beachy, relaxed community that is friendly where local craft and produced and valued. Community celebrations are varied and events are important to the social cohesion and fabric.
1.9 Ngā patapātai
Challenges

- As the population changes, health and social services will also need to meet the changing needs.
- Waihi Beach is isolated, bound by a harbour and forest land at each end and only two entrances.
- There are poor transport connections to neighbouring towns.
- Athenree is severed and disconnected from the beach and the rest of the community with one only one entranceway.
- The tourism and hospitality sector dominate the employment market.
- There is growing concern about the effects of climate change and the potential impact.
- There is lack of land to develop that is environmentally and economically suitable to ensure we are catering for future growth.
- There are a significant influx of visitors during the summer period.
- The library is disconnected from the village, and there are limited spaces to collaborate.

1.10 Kōwhiringa
Opportunities

- Ngāi Te Rangi have a clear vision and interest to lead cultural initiatives.
- There are a large number of cultural and historic sites of significance that could be shared by locals to visitors.
- The community includes a large number of highly skilled and experienced residents.
- There is a large voluntary base and a real willingness to contribute and make a difference.
- The village is compact and at the heart of the community with high quality goods and services.
- The two entrances provide clear gateways to welcome visitors.
- The beach is one of the safest and most beautiful swimming beaches in New Zealand enjoying picturesque views to Tuhua (Mayor Island).
- The community is very environmentally aware and natural boundaries make it easy to implement environmental initiatives.

“While the residents of Athenree feel socially connected to Waihi Beach, it is physically difficult to access and children can only access the beach by car”

Sue-Ellen Parker, Athenree Action Group Chair and Connector Group

Waihi Beach Primary School often use the beach as their “playground”
2. Ngā whakaaro o te tangata - What people think

2.1 Ngā whakaaro o te tangata
Feedback from the workshops

Children
There is a need for widespread provision, opportunities and support for children and young people including sport, creativity and green spaces.

Older People
Older people would like to age in place, supported by spaces that encourage mobility and social connection. There is a need for safe and accessible beaches and better transport to neighbouring towns for quality medical care.

Valuing the Beach
The beach is the largest, most used natural asset and is considered the main playground. This to be accessible for those less mobile and include facilities that support us to use it.

Connectivity
Connectivity was high on the agenda – both physically and socially. Better walking, cycling and facilities for horse riding was mentioned. Physically there are three distinct neighbourhoods, that are disconnected but identify as one. The concept of a ‘Community Hub’ was a popular one – creating a facility for collaborative services such as library, health, education, childcare, training, business, enterprise and social connection.

Safety
The speed of cars was discussed a number of times and the lack of safety that comes with it.

Cultural Identity
There was a recognition that there is little knowledge of history and that this could give a better sense of place and respect to both visitors and locals. The aspirations of Te Whānau a Tauhawo ki Otawhiwhi align directly with this.

Environmental Enhancements
The natural environment was recognised as one of the key reasons why people live and invest in Waihi Beach and that this needs to be protected for future generations. Protection of the marine environment was mentioned often. Protecting indigenous environments from pests was discussed by many.

“"The beach is our biggest community playground, we need better accessibility, furniture and facilities so we can enjoy it more”

Kelly Moselen, Connectors Group
2.2 Ngā kaupapa matua
The Objectives and Action Items

Taking into consideration the community profile and what was heard, four high level objectives have been defined into the wellbeing areas of social, economic, environment and cultural.

Not all suggestions raised in the workshops could be included. Some matters are subject to other processes and therefore to avoid duplication have been omitted here. Others are operational and have been forwarded onto other agencies to address.

“We need to hear from you, do the objectives represent our aspirations for the future or do they need tweaking?”

Marilyn Roberts, Waihi Beach Community Board and Connectors Group Member
While the community is supportive, friendly and welcoming, there is a desire to remain connected both physically and socially as well as feeling safe while doing so.

While much work has already been done on cycleways, there is a need for better physical connection between neighbourhoods and homes to places of interest (such as the beach, village, school and recreation spaces).

Connection from Athenree to the beach and the adjacent neighbourhoods is only via the main road where there are high speeds and no footpath or cycleway provisions. Travel is via vehicle only. Connection of this community to the beach and the village centre is vital to encourage older and young people to live healthier lives. This will encourage more housing growth in Athenree as it becomes a more livable community.

A cycleway connection is also important from Waihi Beach North End to Waihi.

High car speed throughout Waihi Beach is noticed by many in areas frequented by older and young people. A safety review in high activity areas (and in particular through the village centre) and creation of a plan to include reduced speeds and traffic calming measures will provide for a safer community and encourage people to walk and cycle more.

Accessibility to the beach is important to many - both old and young. To ensure the community is inclusive, access to the beach needs to be enhanced in a number of key locations, with a staged plan in place to achieve it.

The library is separate and disconnected from where many people gather. Libraries are the heart of a community, they provide spaces to gather, places for people looking to connect with others, community information and are free, warm and dry places to gather. A new location for the library could be explored and pairing it with other services. Co-location could include a business hub, information centre, shared office space, medical centre or day care centre.

“"The need for a community hub central to the village that encourages business development and social cohesion just kept coming up in the workshops, this is a project that is achievable”

Don Fraser, Residents and Ratepayers Association and Connectors Group

Views to Tuhua (Mayor Island) is one of Waihi Beach’s best natural asset
To create a diverse economy priority will be given to job creation, upskilling and training in a range of industries. Support for small to medium sized enterprises must continue across all sectors. Enterprise and innovation in agriculture must be driven forward.

Planned and proposed major capital projects must be implemented.

Previous work on the town centre plan needs to be revived with a focus on putting people first. Included in this is support for a community or business hub.

Entranceways to the ward will give a sense of arrival for visitors and the creation of a destination management plan will help to get the most out of them.

The natural environment can be capitalised more as tourism assets by bringing to the surface cultural and historical heritage features. This could be in partnership with local historical groups and tangata whenua. The core objective here is of creating jobs and getting more people to visit and stay overnight in the low season.

The community needs its own brand to pitch to national and international tourists and to give cohesion to marketing, information, signage and interpretation panels.

Events at Waihi Beach are important to the economy as well as providing opportunities to celebrate, gather and connect with others in the community. However, infrastructure is needed to encourage interest groups to lead events effectively and efficiently with a focus on providing outdoor events at Wilson Park.

“The village look, feel and layout needs to be updated to support the busy summer season and growth of the businesses”

Alan Kurtovich, Hammer Hardware and Connectors Group
While being predator free is ambitious, it is achievable with a range of community initiatives and working in partnership with various organisations.”

Jim Cowern, Environmental Society and Connectors Group
Enhancing the cultural identity of Waihi Beach runs as a thread through all actions listed.

Any capital infrastructure project requires a cultural design and detailing that has respect and reinforces cultural values.

Development of a Hapū Resource Management Plan will describe resource management issues of importance to them as tangata whenua. The plan may also contain information relating to specific cultural values, historical accounts, descriptions of areas of interest (hapū/iwi boundaries/rohe) and consultation/engagement protocols for resource consents and/or plan changes.

Te Whānau a Tauwhao ki Otawhiwhi wish to strengthen their papakaianga and this requires critical infrastructure to be put in place to support and encourage people back to their land.

There needs to be processes for documenting of local stories from both tangata whenua and historical groups and this could then be used in various locations, information and interpretation panels and in a digital context. This will give richness to the visitor and local experience.

Mapping and connecting agreed historical sites of significance could then create a historic walkway tour.

Allowing for additional cultural tourism activities will create jobs for mana whenua.

Support for the annual Matariki festival hosted by Otawhiwhi Marae and held at Bowentown Heads will grow the celebration each year and encourage others to participate.

“There are so many untold cultural stories that can bring to the surface that will enrich our community, tell our story and give an authentic experience for our visitors.”

John Mutlow, Otawhiwhi Marae Trust, Connectors Group

Papakaianga land surrounding Otawhiwhi Marae could sustain more housing with an uplift in infrastructure

He moana pukepuke ka ekengia te waka
A choppy sea can be navigated
3. Māhere Rautaki - Action Plan

**01 SOCIAL**

**OBJECTIVE:** SUPPORT A CONNECTED AND SAFE COMMUNITY

- Connect Athenree to Bowentown with a cycleway/walkway
- Create and implement a plan for mobility of the young and old to access the beaches
- Explore options for a community hub that co-locates public and community facilities
- Connect and extend existing cycleways within the community
- Review car speeds and develop a plan for traffic calming measures to be implemented
- Connect Waihi Beach to Waihi with a cycleway/walkway

**02 ECONOMIC**

**OBJECTIVE:** CREATE A THRIVING AND DIVERSE ECONOMY

- Update the town centre plan
- Explore options for employment generation including a business hub
- Develop and install gateway features at the two entrances
- Develop a destination management plan
- Creation of a Waihi Beach brand to be used in marketing and signage
- Redevelop Wilson Park to be the core major events space for the community
- Support and encourage development of planned and proposed infrastructure

**03 ENVIRONMENT**

**OBJECTIVE:** PROMOTE A SUSTAINABLE AND NURTURED ENVIRONMENT

- Creation of an open space strategy and recreational facilities plan
- Develop a plan for installing a variety of beach furniture to support use of the beach playground
- Research and investigate the opportunities for protection of the marine environment
- Develop a biodiversity management plan in wetland and dune areas
- Develop a programme to work towards being predator free by 2025

**04 CULTURAL**

**OBJECTIVE:** ENABLE OUR STRONG CULTURAL IDENTITY

- Develop a Hapū/Iwi Resource Management plan with tangata whenua with a focus on housing
- Support the annual Matariki Festival at Bowentown Heads
- Document local cultural and historic stories and develop and install interpretive information panels throughout Waihi Beach
- Map and connect historical and cultural sites of significance to create a historic walkway
- Support additional cultural tourism activities
- Ensure all capital infrastructure projects include cultural design and detailing
3.1 Te mahi tahi
The partnership approach

The vision for Waihi Beach cannot be achieved by one organisation or individual working in isolation. Instead a partnership approach will ensure that there is collaboration with the community to get the best possible outcomes. By developing a partnership approach it puts the community at the heart of the plan.

It is acknowledged that there are already a wide and varied range of existing partnerships such as those with the Environmental Society, the Menz Shed and Otawhiwhi Marae. These groups are delivering positive change in the community, fulfilling community objectives and many of them are voluntary organisations. Implementation of this Plan must align with existing partnerships to add value and to be effective.

“The key to community planning is partnerships based on relationships of mutual trust and equality. Will you partner with us to achieve our aspirations?”
Ross Goudie, Chair Waihi Beach Community Board

3.2 Te whakahaumitanga
Partnership in action

WAIHI BEACH SURF LIFESAVING CLUB
The Surf Life Saving Club is an example of a partnership project within the community fulfilling objectives.

The Club is run by a small group of locals aimed at making the beach a safer place for their families and friends. They rely heavily on a number of different funding partners as well as generating income through membership, events and hospitality.

MATARIKI AT OTAWHIWHI MARAE
Matariki heralds the start of the Māori new year and celebrated annually in the middle of each winter.

To celebrate, Otawhiwhi marae invites the community to view the star constellation at dawn from Bowentown heads which is followed by hot soup and tea served on the marae grounds.
3.3 Te ahunga mai i konei
What happens next?

Once the feedback on the draft has been received and analysed, the final Community Plan will be published in 2020 and will include a Stage 1 Action Plan for the first three years (based on the feedback and information gathered).

After this it is proposed that the Waihi Beach Community Board will set up four working groups, one for each objective, with an appointed Community Board member to sit on each group to support the delivery of the Plan and ensure that the views and needs of the community are always held front and centre.

The Community Board will deliver a Communication Plan to ensure the public are kept up to date on the actions.

E hara taku toa he toa takitahi, engāri, he toa takitini
Leadership does not come in the form of one, it comes in the form of many

3.4 Te whakapūrongorongo
Reporting back

Because this is a working in-situ Community Plan, it will need to be revisited often so that it remains current and aligned with community aspirations. As such, the Action Plan will be updated and change over the lifetime of the Plan.

To ensure that the Plan stays on track and so that the process leaders are accountable, the Community Board will publish a Performance Statement by February 2023 which will be followed by a review of the Plan.

It will then publish follow up Performance Statements every three years thereafter, showing what actions have been implemented (and those that have not) and the outcomes achieved as a result.

Please note that this Community Plan is the first step in a long-term strategy for Waihi Beach over the next ten years. Many of the issues that are faced today cannot be fully resolved in the short term and some of the actions that are identified may take ten or more years to start showing results. It all starts with a single first step.
We need you to review these objectives and the action plan and tell us, if have got it right or if there is something missing.

We are seeking partnerships with individuals, interest groups and organisations to help drive the actions forward.

Go to waihibeach2029.co.nz to register your feedback and interest as a partner.