



Waikato-Tainui Proposed Collective Framework

Protecting Treaty Partnerships Through Reform | Workshop for Councillors | 29 April 2026

Understand

Waikato-Tainui framework and underlying intent

Clarify

How this relates to other regional work underway

Test

Councillor appetite for continued engagement and alignment

Surface

Opportunities, concerns, and potential risks

Inform

Next steps including 5 May workshop with Waikato River Iwi

Workshop Purpose and Context

- No decisions sought today—this workshop informs future Council reports based on feedback from both councillor and iwi sessions
- Recent engagements include 4 March hui with councils holding Joint Management Agreements and 10 March hui with Waikato River Iwi governance representatives
- Co-Governance Committee supported this direction on 8 April and requested this workshop to broaden councillor understanding beyond committee membership

The Reform Environment We're Navigating

Simultaneous legislative reforms create both risk and opportunity for our Treaty settlement partnerships

Current Challenges

Resource Management Act replacement with Natural Environment and Planning legislation

Local government restructuring discussions occurring nationally and regionally

- Legislative change proceeding ahead of detailed implementation design, creating transition uncertainty
- Potential inconsistencies if region respond in uncoordinated manner
- Risk that longstanding partnership arrangements could be weakened by nationally uniform approaches

Strategic Opportunity

- Settlement legislation remains in force but tools like JMAs require protection through transition
- Waikato can demonstrate leadership by articulating how settlement-grounded arrangements can be preserved and future-proofed
- Council's previous submissions consistently emphasized Treaty settlement obligations while recognising statutory responsibilities

What This Framework Is and Isn't

Focused on maintaining Treaty settlement-grounded partnership arrangements during legislative reform

Aligned with positions Council has previously advanced on partnership continuity

- Framework maintains continuity, durability, and clarity of existing Treaty settlement partnerships during system change
- Approach focuses on coordinated implementation and managing risk through legislative transition period
- Does not redefine or assume Crown responsibilities—works within existing statutory obligations and settlement frameworks

Four Core Actions of the Framework

- Action 1: Agree a Regional Position establishing shared principles to guide how councils give effect to Treaty settlement obligations during reform
- Action 2: Preserve Partnership Through Agreements by maintaining and strengthening existing JMAs, memoranda of understanding, and partnership protocols
- Action 3: Advocate for Targeted Amendments jointly advocating for legislative settings that recognize existing settlement arrangements including mana whakahaere
- Action 4: Establish a Regional Design Function creating a leadership forum to support coordinated thinking and align responses over time

Position

Agree shared regional principles



Preserve

Strengthen existing JMAs and protocols



Advocate

Joint advocacy for targeted amendments



Design

Establish regional leadership forum

Regional Position Action: Engagement vs. Inaction Implications

Engagement Benefits

Shape shared regional principles

Early alignment with Treaty settlement obligations

Stronger, more consistent regional advocacy

Inaction Risks

Fragmented or inconsistent regional positions

Reduced collective influence during reform

Source: [WT Framework.docx](#)

Engagement vs. Inaction: Regional Position

- Opportunity to shape shared regional principles creates foundation for coordinated response across councils
- Early alignment with Treaty settlement obligations positions region ahead of legislative implementation curve
- Without engagement, councils may develop fragmented positions that reduce collective influence when it matters most

Engagement vs. Inaction: Partnership Preservation and Advocacy

Preserve Partnership Through Agreements

- Engagement enables continued reliance on established JMAs during transition with opportunity to strengthen where needed
- Inaction creates greater exposure to legislative uncertainty and increased risk of inconsistent application of statutory obligations
- Relying on future statutory clarity alone without active agreement maintenance heightens transition risk

Advocate for Targeted Amendments

- Engagement enables coordinated engagement with central government and clearer articulation of Waikato-specific needs
- Inaction means individual parties advocating separately with increased risk that regional arrangements are overlooked
- Joint advocacy carries significantly more weight than fragmented individual council submissions to government

Engagement vs. Inaction: Regional Design Function

- Regional design function provides structured forum for sustained leadership and coordination as reform unfolds over multiple years
- Adaptable approach allows responses to evolve with implementation details rather than locking into fixed positions too early
- Without this mechanism, councils default to reactive mode addressing crises as they emerge rather than shaping trajectory

Engagement Benefits

Ongoing forum for leadership, coordination, future-proofing

Adaptable responses over time to emerging issues

Proactive capacity to shape long-term outcomes

Inaction Risks

Reactive, issue-by-issue responses

Reduced capacity to shape long-term outcomes

Regional Application and Inclusivity Considerations

Waikato Regional Council rohe includes multiple iwi with diverse settled and unsettled Treaty claims

5 May 2026 workshop with Waikato River Iwi scheduled

- While framework principles may be broadly relevant, they are not universally transferable across all iwi without adaptation
- Wider regional application requires tailored approaches reflecting local context and specific interests of individual iwi groups
- Further Council workshop with Waikato River Iwi scheduled for 5 May to enable similar discussion and inform subsequent advice
- Multiple iwi governance frameworks exist including Waikato-Tainui, Raukawa, Te Arawa River Iwi Trust, Te Nehenehenui, and Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board

Complementary Regional Initiatives Comparison

Aspect	Details
Mayoral Forum Focus	Local government functions and institutional design
Mayoral Forum Focus	Future local government form
Waikato-Tainui Framework Focus	Treaty settlement obligations continuity
Waikato-Tainui Framework Focus	Protecting existing partnership arrangements
Shared Characteristic	Both involve collaborative engagement between councils and iwi
Shared Characteristic	Both seek to position Waikato for leadership through change

Source: [WT Framework.docx](#)

Relationship to Mayoral Forum Work

- Mayoral Forum oriented towards future local government form while Waikato-Tainui framework focuses on settlement-grounded relationships and mechanisms
- Both arise from same reform environment and reflect shared aspiration for proactive rather than reactive regional response
- Initiatives are complementary rather than competing—this paper does not pre-empt or substitute Mayoral Forum discussions

Discussion Points and Next Steps

Discussion Questions for Councillors

- Is there appetite for Waikato Regional Council to continue engaging in and exploring this proposed approach going forward?
- What opportunities do councillors see for regional leadership in this reform context and partnership protection?
- What concerns or risks should be addressed early in the engagement process before proceeding further?
- What information or assurance would councillors need before any future decision-making occurs?

No decisions required today

Future direction subject to separate Council report

Immediate Next Steps

- Feedback from workshop will inform staff advice on recommended next steps for Council consideration
- Further engagement with Waikato Tainui and others
- Any future direction or endorsement will be subject of separate report to Council following both workshop outcomes