

He Huarahi Whai Oranga
Tairāwhiti Economic Plan

Annual Progress Report



Whakakitenga

Mana motuhake - Investing in ourselves for economic sovereignty

December | 2025





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Executive summary

Tairāwhiti, like the rest of Aotearoa, is navigating a slow and uneven economic recovery after the pandemic and Cyclone Gabrielle. Our core indicators show the region's challenge clearly: GDP remains at 0.7% of NZ's economy, average wages sit at 86% of the national level, and manufacturing remains just under 5%.

A constraint is the shape of our economic base. Forestry, logging and wood products make up 32% of our tradable economy, and the sector has faced significant headwinds over the past year. Cruise activity has also softened. At the same time, our region is under-leveraged in post-harvest and value-add production, even though food production and processing account for 39% of our output. Lifting the value of what we already produce remains essential to generating higher wages and stronger GDP.

These challenges should not deter us. We are only in the first year of delivering the Tairāwhiti Economic Plan, and the path forward is clear: strengthen the sectors where we hold natural advantages, and deliberately diversify into new areas that reduce risk and build resilience.

Achieving growth ahead of the national rate, and increasing our share of New Zealand's GDP requires a well-aligned, energised regional strategy. This includes clear ownership of investment streams, coordinated pursuit of central government funding, and consideration of foreign investment where it supports our values and goals.

The Tairāwhiti Economic Strategy Steering Group is committed to leading this work and positioning the region to attract the investment needed to realise our ambitions.

This Report highlights progress across key projects that, while only a portion of what is underway, represent the initiatives with the greatest potential to shift our economic trajectory.

We acknowledge and thank all partners, iwi, businesses and stakeholders for their continued contributions. Together, we are building the foundations for long-term prosperity in Tairāwhiti.



Tairāwhiti Economic Strategy Steering Group

The Tairāwhiti Economic Strategy Steering Group is a collective of regional leaders made up of the Chief Executives from Rongowhakaata Iwi Trust, Te Aitanga a Mahaki, Te Rūnanganui o Ngāti Porou, Tāmanuhiri Tūtū Poroporo Trust, Gisborne District Council, Gisborne Holdings Ltd, and Trust Tairāwhiti.



Our strategic priorities



Pou Tuarongo: Taiao — Te Taiao is thriving

- **Maximise land potential** use to unlock inter-generational value and biodiversity outcomes through whenua catchment planning and initiatives like Recloaking Papatūānuku.
- Invest in the **circular economy** (waste minimisation and management) to repurpose waste materials into renewable resources.
- Invest in **sustainable timber practices** that create sound taiao outcomes and contribute to decarbonisation and economic outcomes.



Pou Tokomanawa: Tāngata — Our communities are resilient

- **Amplify business growth** by developing capabilities, enabling innovation and encouraging productivity gains.
- Ensure that there are an adequate number of comfortable **homes** to support our peoples' health and productivity while also contributing to broader economic outcomes.



These eleven strategic priorities mark the initial steps in our regional strategy, each contributing uniquely to our four economic ambitions and guiding pou. We recognise that other initiatives will offer their own valuable contributions to these ambitions and guiding pou, and we look forward to discovering how they can further enrich our collective vision, as part of this Tairāwhiti Economic Plan.



Pou Tāhu: Ōranga — Our people can achieve their ambitions

- Reignite and grow our tourism industry by maximising the benefits of our **destination** by offering high quality cultural products that enhance visitor experiences.
- Developing our **technology economy** through investment in the actions arising from the Manutukutuku Tairāwhiti Technology Strategy.
- Strengthening our **health technology economy** by continuing to make groundbreaking science and innovation gains through the ongoing development of the Mātai Campus.



Pou Āwhā: Ōhanga — Our economy is diversified

- Adopt a **water for the economy** approach by investing in water infrastructure systems to provide access to commercial water unlocking the productivity potential of our whenua.
- Ensure regional **energy** security by implementing the Eastland Generation investment plans.
- Enable the construction of **Te Ara Tipuna** while supporting hapū, iwi and marae to weave their stories into the cultural narrative of the project. (Note: Project currently on hold.)



— Maximise Land Potential

Programme → Optimise land use for productivity and biodiversity outcomes through catchment planning and enhanced land classification and investment.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
<p>Transition Advisory Group (TAG) – Land use and forestry consent conditions</p> <p>Lead → Gisborne District Council</p> <p>The TAG was established to develop guidelines and assist in preparing a business case for the permanent transition of highly erodible land into permanent vegetation cover.</p>	<p>\$359m</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Guideline (Version 1) developed and released across the region.— Business Case finalised and submitted by TAG and Council for Budget 2026.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Further refine the Guideline.— Finalise the Business Case and secure commitment from Council and external partners.— Sustainable Land Use Plan change which includes Land Overlay 3b provisions and mapping being developed with a view to securing Ministerial exemption.



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Transition Programme Business Case

www.gdc.govt.nz

— Circular economy

Programme → Invest in regional waste management systems for municipal waste.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Anaerobic digester Lead → Gisborne District Council Council is developing a business case for an anaerobic digester that will convert regional biomass into high-grade digestate fertiliser and biomethane, refined into natural gas for regional use.	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — MoU signed with strategic partners. — Regional industrial gas consumers database under development. — Key relationship formed with Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Capture and analyse the regional gas landscape. — Complete the business case for the Anaerobic Digester facility. — Identify funding streams.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Alternatives to current landfill and recycling options Lead → Gisborne District Council Council's investigation into the solid waste system identified key projects to support a circular economy transition, including a new Regional Transfer Station and Recovery Resource Centre (RTS/RCC).	\$22m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — High-level investment case completed, demonstrating significant regional savings from a Council-owned RTS/RRC. — Purchase of 275 Lytton Road as a potential site (leased in the interim). — Engagement with mana whenua. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Develop masterplan and concept design for Lytton Road and potential alternative sites. — Progress ownership and operational models (with private and regional partners). — Council decision on proceeding with full development. — Align kerbside waste contract renewal with new RTS/RRC services. — Explore closer landfill disposal options to reduce costs and emissions.



— Sustainable Timber Practices

Programme → Invest in wood waste technologies that create sound taiao outcomes and contribute to decarbonisation and economic activity.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Wood pellet plant Lead → Private enterprise Comprehensive engagement with enterprise on the development of a white wood pellet manufacturing plant in Gisborne. The proposed plan aims to produce 200,000 tonnes per annum for domestic and export markets.	\$80m	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Site secured.— Power supply pathway confirmed.— Fibre supply agreements negotiated (pending finalisation).— Pre-application consent hearing held.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Finalise fibre supply agreements.— Confirmation of investment.— Site consenting.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Containerisation Lead → Eastland Port Eastland Port is progressing containerisation to support wood pellet and other industry goods for export.	\$5m	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Secured Government grant for \$5m to purchase equipment to support the containerisation objective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Containerisation infrastructure built by 2026.

— Amplify Business Growth

Programme → Provide practical business support that develops capabilities, enables innovation, workforce development, productivity gains and strengthens businesses.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Regional Business Partner Programme Lead → Trust Tairāwhiti Local delivery partner for RBP, providing capability, innovation and specialist business support.	\$1.2m over 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — More than 200 businesses accessed support through Trust Tairāwhiti. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Complete business leaders workshops to identify existing barriers for business and map out interventions. — Regional economic data and insights reporting.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
City Centre Revitalisation Leads → Trust Tairāwhiti, Gisborne District Council, Rongowhakaata Iwi Trust Partnership between Gisborne District Council, Trust Tairāwhiti Rongowhakaata Iwi Trust to develop a long-term plan to revitalise the City Centre.	\$3m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — City Centre Catalysts Project initiatives and governance established, implementation underway. — Heritage Façade Incentive Fund is open. — Art in the City collaboration launched with local artists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Deliver placemaking initiatives. — City Centre Property investment. — City Centre Action and Investment Plan

— Homes

Programme → A sufficient supply of housing to slow rent inflation and provide adequate houses to support growing the workforce.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Toitu Tairāwhiti Housing Leads → Toitu Tairāwhiti Affordable housing programme to support whānau.	\$75m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — 150 homes scoped with capital secured. — 22 homes delivered on site. — Stage 1 infrastructure completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Complete build programme by December 2026. — 37 homes tenanted by April 2026. — 110 new homes for Tairāwhiti confirmed by Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Consenting advocacy Lead → Gisborne District Council The consenting advocacy function liaises with customers and supports the Council consenting team's continuous improvement programme to streamline consenting, reduce costs, and achieve better housing outcomes.	In kind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Established Key Account Manager role. — Strengthened external relationships. — Supported Consenting Team's Continuous Improvement Programme. — Developed Quality Partner Programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Finalise the Quality Partner Programme. — Meet key consent processing metrics.

— Destination

Programme → Invest in infrastructure and systems to support the expected increase in visitors through sustainable tourism growth.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Cruise tourism Lead → Trust Tairāwhiti, Eastland Port	\$30k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Engagement with New Zealand Cruise Association and cruise lines to build relationships and attract more ships to Gisborne. — Funding distribution to Gisborne City Vintage Railway for new passenger platform, future-proofing cruise passenger experiences. — Re-established volunteer cruise ambassador programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Expand onshore experiences through destination development programme. — Targeted Inbound Tour Operator famils.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Regional rebrand Lead → Trust Tairāwhiti Refresh the branding to reflect our distinct Tairāwhiti cultural identity.	\$600k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Business case for change completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Regional rebrand launches in 2027.

— Technology Economy

Programme → Invest in the actions aligned to the Manutukutuku Tairāwhiti Technology Strategy.

Enabler → Trust Tairāwhiti

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Aerospace sector development Lead → Trust Tairāwhiti This project includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Operations and manufacturing — Airspace — Ground based infrastructure — Drone technology. 	\$5m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Scoping of Airport infrastructure to enable aerospace opportunities. — Deployment of drone technology to local industry. — Tertiary education programme support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Work with partners to develop commercial opportunities.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Business adoption of digital technology Lead → Trust Tairāwhiti	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Tairāwhiti AI Workshops delivered to 100 businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Digital technology programme.




— Health Technology Economy

Programme → Ongoing development of the Mātai Campus

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Matai Research Institute Lead → Mātai Medical Research Institute, Gisborne Holdings Limited, Trust Tairāwhiti Supporting Matai Campus development.	\$58m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Economic assessment and development plan and financials completed. — Regional Infrastructure Fund application submitted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Secure co-investment. — Campus infrastructure and building development.

— Water for the Economy

Programme → Investing in water infrastructure systems to provide access to commercial water for the Poverty Bay Flats.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Water for Economy report Lead → Trust Tairāwhiti Commissioned report assessing economic potential of irrigable water in Tairāwhiti.	\$50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Assessment completed. — Summary report released, highlighting potential in region for Business Cases to Regional Infrastructure Fund or private investment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Complete.



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Water for Economy report

www.trusttairawhiti.nz

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Turanga Fast 5/Turanga Wai Māori Lead → Turanga Wai Māori Five Māori land blocks (70ha) irrigation pilot for high value horticulture.	\$18m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Secured \$11.9m loan through the Regional Infrastructure Fund for horticulture development on under utilised whenua Māori land blocks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — To complete pilot.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Managed Aquifer Recharge Lead → MAR Limited Use allocation rights in high flows to inject back into the Makauri aquifer as storage for summer use.	\$3m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured \$3m loan from Regional Infrastructure Fund to build water infrastructure to replenish the Makauri Aquifer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pending consent and commercial approach.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Pouarua Scheme Lead → Wi Pere Trust Water storage for approximately 11,000ha, 25Mm ³ .	\$200m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility study underway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed business case and consenting.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Awapuni Moana irrigation and wetlands Lead → Te Awapuni Moana Trust Restoring and developing the Awapuni Moana lands to improve wastewater treatment, climate mitigation, aquifer recharge and explore potential for a aquatic sports facility.	\$100m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial feasibility study undertaken and completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek funding for phase 2 of feasibility funding. Start phase 2 feasibility funding.



Programme → East Coast investment plans.

Enabler → Eastland Generation

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Uawa and Wairoa Solar Lead → Eastland Generation Solar farms to unlock 37MW of power.	\$60m	— Feasibility study underway.	— Design and build in 2027.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
East Coast wind farm Leads → Eastland Generation Wind farm looking for 113MW power.	\$600k	— Feasibility study underway.	— Business case to Regional Infrastructure Fund.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Marae Solar Project Lead → Trust Tairāwhiti Create community centres with energy capacity for resilience during severe weather events.	\$2.6m	— Installed solar panels and battery banks to 22 Marae across Tairāwhiti. — Rolled out education resources to ensure Marae have capability for maintenance, repairs.	— Scope phase 2 covering an additional 30 marae.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Network capacity investment Lead → Powerco Create capacity and resilience for the East Coast supporting supply and demand growth.	TBC	— Stakeholder engagement to align on regional needs.	— Business case to Regional Infrastructure Fund.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Te Karaka Solar Lead → Toitu Tairāwhiti Builtsmart Building solar farm with capacity to power 200 homes.		— Funding secured through Māori Climate Platform and Toitu Tairāwhiti Builtsmart.	— Complete build programme.

Key project	Indicative investment	12 month progress	Next steps
Te Araroa Solar Farm Lead → Te Rimu Trust More than 500 kW of solar generation installed on Te Rimu Trust Whenua.	\$1.5m	— Solar Farm installed and commissioned.	— Complete.



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