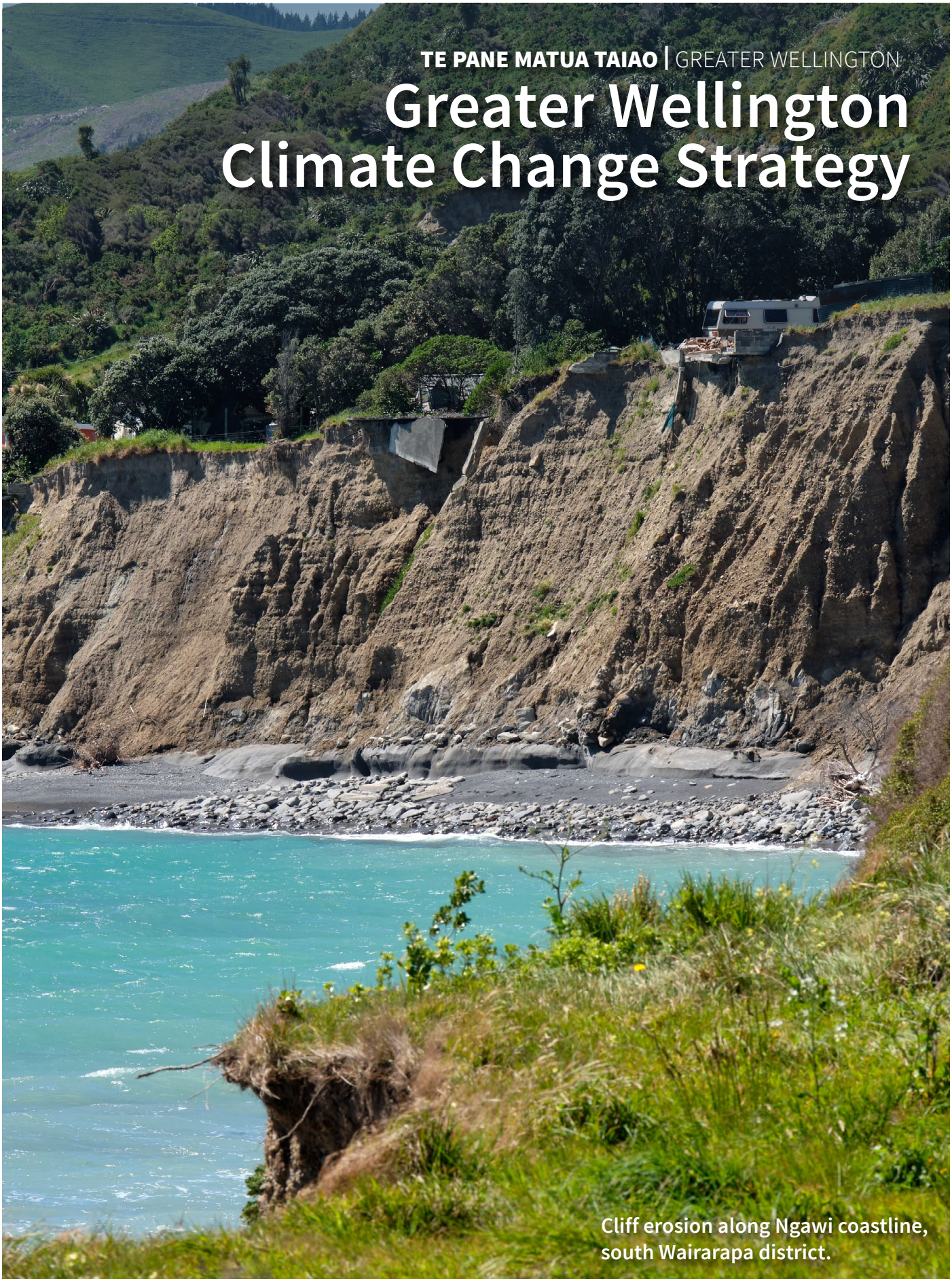
TE PANE MATUA TAIAO | GREATER WELLINGTON

Greater Wellington Climate Change Strategy



Cliff erosion along Ngawi coastline, south Wairarapa district.

Greater Wellington
Te Pane Matua Taiao

Greater Wellington Climate Change Strategy

Strategy Purpose

Greater Wellington Regional Council's (Greater Wellington) Climate Change Strategy sets out an enduring framework for Greater Wellington's response to climate change. It provides a foundation to guide decision making, investment, advocacy, and partnership over time, while being adaptable to shifts in policy settings, climate projections, technologies, or national and international targets as required.

Strategic Context

Climate change presents growing and compounding risks to the Wellington region. While uncertainty will remain about the timing and scale of impacts, the direction of change is clear. Delaying action will increase long term costs and risks.

Greater Wellington has a critical role in responding to climate change through responsibilities for:

- Natural hazard management and flood protection.
- Regional planning and policy.
- Transport planning and public transport services.
- Environmental management – freshwater, marine, and terrestrial ecosystems and their biodiversity.
- Regional resilience and emergency management.
- Partnership with councils, mana whenua, communities, and central government.

This strategy recognises that climate change is both a risk management challenge and a long term transformation challenge. Resilience is not about preserving the status quo, but about enabling communities and ecosystems to adapt and thrive over time. Greater Wellington also has a critical role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to achieving Aotearoa New Zealand's emissions reduction targets.

Vision

Greater Wellington strengthens the long term resilience and sustainability of the Wellington region through partnership, climate action and awareness.

This vision is grounded in:

- Resilience: the capacity to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from climate impacts, while maintaining essential functions and services.
- Sustainability: improving quality of life while living within environmental limits and safeguarding opportunities for future generations.
- Adaptability: recognising that change is inevitable, uncertainty persists, and flexible pathways are needed.

This is an updated version of the Climate Change Strategy first adopted by Council in 2015. Updates were adopted by Council on 3 Sept 2026.

Guiding Principles

Greater Wellington's approach to climate change will be guided by the following enduring principles:

Act for the long term while responding now:

Balance immediate needs with long term resilience thinking, recognising that today's decisions affect future generations.

Make decisions in the face of uncertainty:

Accept that uncertainty is inherent and not a reason for inaction. Use risk based approaches and adaptive pathways rather than waiting for perfect information.

Embed climate considerations across the organisation:

Treat climate change as a core consideration across all relevant functions, not as a standalone issue.

Lead through partnership and influence:

Work collaboratively across jurisdictions, sectors, and communities, recognising shared responsibilities and different levers for change.

Hutt River (Te Awa Kairangi), Kaitoke Regional Park.

Overarching Objectives

Greater Wellington's climate change response is structured around four interconnected objectives.

1. Reducing emissions and supporting a low emissions economy

Greater Wellington will act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across all areas of influence, including its own operations, while helping to create the conditions that will support and enable a resilient, low emissions regional economy.

This objective recognises that:

- Emissions reduction is essential for limiting long term climate change and associated risks.
- Local government influence is exercised through planning, investment, procurement, infrastructure, transport, land management, and partnerships rather than direct regulation of emissions.
- Leadership by example is important, especially through Greater Wellington's own assets, services, and investments.

Greater Wellington's role is to enable, promote, influence, and demonstrate low emissions outcomes within its statutory remit and partnerships.

2. Managing climate risks and increasing resilience

Greater Wellington will work to reduce and manage risks from climate related impacts and increase resilience through consistent, evidence based adaptation planning and action.

This objective acknowledges that:

- Many climate impacts are already locked in and will intensify over time.
- Climate change must be treated as a core risk driver, not a separate environmental issue.
- Adaptation decisions often involve difficult trade offs and long timeframes.
- Working with uncertainty is essential when managing climate risk.

Greater Wellington will:

- Integrate climate change considerations into all relevant planning, policy, investment, and asset decisions.
- Promote approaches that are flexible, staged, and responsive to new information.
- Prioritise solutions that reduce long term exposure and vulnerability rather than transferring risk to the future.
- Use the most up-to-date and locally relevant climate change projections to guide risk management and resilience planning.

Adaptation is both a technical and social challenge that needs robust processes, transparent decision making, and long term partnerships to achieve effective and equitable outcomes.

Commuters in Wellington City

3. Increasing awareness, capability and collective action

Greater Wellington will increase community awareness of climate change risks and solutions, and support organisations and individuals to contribute to the long term resilience and sustainability of the region.

This objective reflects that:

- Most emissions and many adaptation decisions sit outside direct council control.
- Long term success depends on shared understanding, trust, and coordinated action across sectors and communities.
- Public engagement is essential for building support for complex and sometimes confronting adaptation and mitigation choices.

Greater Wellington's role includes:

- Sharing credible, accessible information.
- Supporting evidence based conversations about risk and change.
- Facilitating collaboration across councils, iwi, communities, and central government.
- Advocating for regional interests where national decisions affect local outcomes.

4. Work in partnership with mana whenua

Greater Wellington will recognise and work in partnership with mana whenua to support and advance climate objectives and policies.

This objective acknowledges that:

- A strong partnership approach reflects commitment to our Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and will strengthen regional resilience and effective climate actions.
- Mana whenua bring deep connections, unique rights and interests to support climate resilience efforts.
- Mātauranga Māori knowledge and te ao Māori (Māori world view) perspectives are enablers for climate change actions.

Greater Wellington's role includes:

- Enabling meaningful partnership with mana whenua in climate-related planning, policy, and decision-making.
- Integrating mana whenua priorities to support initiatives relating to climate change.
- Incorporating mātauranga Māori alongside other evidence to inform adaptation and resilience approaches.
- Recognising and providing for cultural values and sites affected by climate impacts.
- Building organisational capability to engage effectively with mana whenua.

Te Wā o te Taiao (Restoration Day) planting, Waikanae

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