

Monday, 10 June 2024

*Te Hui o Te Kaunihera ā-Rohe o Heretaunga*

**Hastings District Council**

**Hastings District Rural Community Board Meeting**

*Kaupapataka*

# Attachments Vol 1

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*Te Rā Hui:*  
Meeting date: **Monday, 10 June 2024**

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*Te Wā:*  
Time: **9.00am**

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*Te Wāhi:*  
Venue: **Council Chamber  
Ground Floor  
Civic Administration Building  
Lyndon Road East  
Hastings**

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ITEM	SUBJECT	PAGE
5.	<b>RURAL TRANSPORTATION ACTIVITY REPORT</b>	
	Attachment 1: Transport - Roads General - RCB Photos - February 2024 to May 2024	3
6.	<b>RURAL STRATEGY SCOPING REPORT</b>	
	Attachment 1: Rural Resource Strategies - Rural Strategy Scoping Report Final Allen and Clarke	41





Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Apley Rd: Watertabling		Apley Rd: Watertabling	
			
Apley Rd: Rockwall Installation		Apley Rd: Rockwall Installation	
			
Apley Rd: Tree Removal		Apley Rd: Tree Removal	
			



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Anaroa Rd: Culvert Repair		Anaroa Rd: Rockwall Installation	
			
Anaroa Rd: Watertabling		Anaroa Rd: Watertabling	
			
Aorangi Rd: Headwall Installation		Aorangi Rd: Headwall Installation	
			



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Aropaoanui Rd: Aropaoanui Low Level Bridge: Inspection



Aropaoanui Rd: Aropaoanui Low Level Bridge: Inspection



Beattie Rd: Sign Installation



Beattie Rd: Sign Installation



Big Hill Rd: Tomo Repair



Big Hill Rd: Tomo Repair





Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Breckenridge Rd: Culvert Installation</b>	<b>Breckenridge Rd: Apron Installation</b>
	
<b>Crownthorpe Rd: Crownthorpe Bridge: Slash Removal</b>	<b>Crownthorpe Rd: Crownthorpe Bridge: Slash Removal</b>
	
<b>Crystall Rd: Chip Sealing</b>	<b>Crystall Rd: Chip Sealing</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Dartmoor Rd: Scour Repair</b>	<b>Dartmoor Rd: Scour Repair</b>
	
<b>Dartmoor Rd: AC Repair</b>	<b>Dartmoor Rd: AC Repair</b>
	
<b>Dartmoor Rd: Graffiti Removal</b>	<b>Dartmoor Rd: Graffiti Removal</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Dartmoor Rd: Vegetation Removal</b>	<b>Dartmoor Rd: Vegetation Removal</b>
	
<b>Dartmoor Rd: Dartmoor Bridge: AC Repair</b>	<b>Dartmoor Rd: Dartmoor Bridge: AC Repair</b>
	
<b>Ellis Wallace Rd: Site Inspection</b>	<b>Ellis Wallace Rd: Site Inspection</b>
	

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Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Ellis Wallace Rd: Site Inspection	
	
Ellis Wallace Rd: Culvert and Sock Installation	
	
Endsleigh Rd: Sweeping	
	

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Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Glengarry Rd: Bollard Installation		Glengarry Rd: Sign Installation	
			
Glengarry Rd: Watertabling		Glengarry Rd: Watertabling	
			
Glenross Rd: Watertabling		Glenross Rd: Watertabling	
			



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Glenross Rd: Sight Rail Installation</b>	<b>Glenross Rd: Sight Rail Installation</b>
	
<b>Hendley Rd: Watertabling &amp; Scour Repair</b>	<b>Hendley Rd: Watertabling &amp; Scour Repair</b>
	
<b>Huiarangi Rd: Scour Repair</b>	<b>Huiarangi Rd: Scour Repair</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Hukanui Rd: Scour Repair</b>	<b>Hukanui Rd: Scour Repair</b>
	
<b>Kahuranaki Rd: Slip Clearing and Watertabling</b>	<b>Kahuranaki Rd: Slip Clearing and Watertabling</b>
	
<b>Kahuranaki Rd: Hill Side Clearing</b>	<b>Kahuranaki Rd: Hill Side Clearing</b>
	

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Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Kahuranaki Rd: Culvert Installation	
	
Kahuranaki Rd: Culvert Installation	
Kereru Rd: Sign Installation	
	
Kereru Rd: Sign Installation	
Kereru Rd: Watertabling	
	
Kereru Rd: Watertabling	
Kereru Rd: Stabilising Watertable	
	
Kereru Rd: Stabilising Watertable	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Mangatahi Rd: Mangatahi Low Level Bridge: Wheel Guard Installation



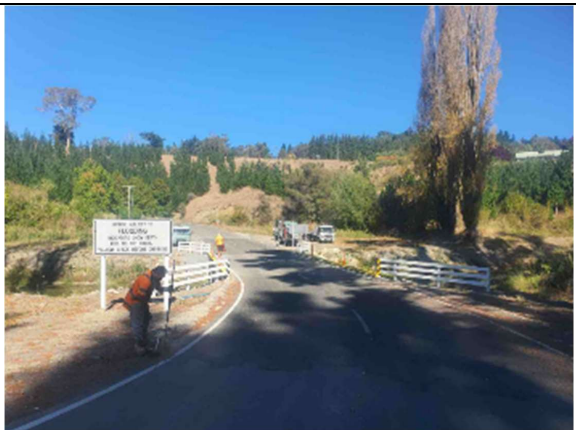
Mangatahi Rd: Mangatahi Low Level Bridge: Wheel Guard Installation



Mangatahi Rd: Mangatahi Low Level Bridge: Sign Installation



Mangatahi Rd: Mangatahi Low Level Bridge: Sign Installation



Maraekakaho Rd W: Broken Headwall Removal









Maraekakaho Rd W: Broken Headwall Removal





Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Maraetotara Rd: Detritus Collection</b>	<b>Maraetotara Rd: Detritus Collection</b>
	
<b>Matapiro Rd: Bollard Installation</b>	<b>Matapiro Rd: Bollard Installation</b>
	
<b>McVicar Rd: Fencing</b>	<b>McVicar Rd: Fencing</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Middle Rd: Papanui Bridge: Scour Repair	Middle Rd: Papanui Bridge: Scour Repair
	
Ngatarawa Rd: Tree Removal	Ngatarawa Rd: Tree Removal
	
North Shore Rd: Detritus Removal	North Shore Rd: Detritus Removal
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Ohurakura Rd: Lopdells Bridge: Guard Rail Installation	
	
Omarunui Rd: AC Repair	
	
Price-Cockburn Rd: Culvert Maintenance	
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Pukekura Settlement Rd: Sight Rail Installation</b>	<b>Pukekura Settlement Rd: Sight Rail Installation</b>
	
<b>Puketapu Rd: Sign Installation</b>	<b>Puketapu Rd: Sign Installation</b>
	
<b>Puketitiri Rd: Kay's Culvert Bridge: Maintenance</b>	<b>Puketitiri Rd: Kay's Culvert Bridge: Maintenance</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Puketitiri Rd: Sight Rail Repair</b>	<b>Puketitiri Rd: Sight Rail Repair</b>
	
<b>Puketitiri Rd: Slip Clearing</b>	<b>Puketitiri Rd: Slip Clearing</b>
	
<b>Puketitiri Rd: Culvert Extension &amp; Rock Wall Installation</b>	<b>Puketitiri Rd: Culvert Extension &amp; Rock Wall Installation</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Raukawa Rd: Scour Repair</b>	<b>Raukawa Rd: Scour Repair</b>
	
<b>Raukawa Rd: Watertabling</b>	<b>Raukawa Rd: Watertabling</b>
	
<b>Ridgemount Rd: AC Repair</b>	<b>Ridgemount Rd: AC Repair</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

River Rd: AC Repairs	River Rd: AC Repairs
	
Salisbury Rd: Yarrow Bridge: Maintenance	Salisbury Rd: Yarrow Bridge: Maintenance
	
Salisbury Rd: Shoulder Trimming	Salisbury Rd: Sight Rail Installation
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Salisbury Rd: Sign Installation</b>	<b>Salisbury Rd: Sign Installation</b>
	
<b>Salisbury Rd: Sign Installation</b>	<b>Salisbury Rd: Safety Netting Installation</b>
	
<b>Salisbury Rd: Slip Clearing</b>	<b>Salisbury Rd: Slip Clearing</b>
	

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Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Salisbury Rd: Sign Installation</b>	<b>Salisbury Rd: Sign Installation</b>
	
<b>School Rd: Detritus Collection</b>	<b>School Rd: Detritus Collection</b>
	
<b>Springfield Rd: Dropout Repair</b>	<b>Springfield Rd: Dropout Repair</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Soldiers Settlement Rd: Peka Peka Culvert Bridge: Guardrail	
	
Strome Rd: Trimming Overhanging Branches	
	
Swamp Rd: Detritus Removal	
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Swamp Rd/Taihape Rd Intersection: Footpath Installation	
	
Taihape Rd: Falled Tree Removal	
	
Taihape Rd: Truck Accident	
	

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Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Taihape Rd: Road Closure for Truck Accident</b>	<b>Taihape Rd: Road Closure for Truck Accident</b>
	
<b>Taihape Rd (Kawera Bridge): Scaffolding Installation</b>	<b>Taihape Rd (Kawera Bridge): Guardrail installation</b>
	
<b>Taihape Rd: Sign Installation</b>	<b>Taihape Rd: Sign Installation</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Clearing Water Channel	Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Guardrail Installation
	
Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Guardrail Installation	Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Guardrail Installation
	
Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Guardrail Installation	Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Guardrail Installation
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024







Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Guardrail Installation	Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Guardrail Installation
	
Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Guardrail Installation	Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Guardrail Installation
	
Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Guardrail Installation	Taihape Rd: Kawera Bridge: Guardrail Installation
	

Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Tait Rd: Shoulder Maintenance		Tait Rd: Shoulder Maintenance	
			
Tait Rd: Culvert Installation		Tait Rd: Headwall Installation	
			
Tauhara Rd: Tree Removal		Tauhara Rd: Tree Removal	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

	
Te Aute Rd: AC Overlay	Te Aute Rd: AC Overlay
	
Te Aute Rd: AC Repair	Te Aute Rd: AC Repair
	
Te Aute Rd: Membrae Laying	Te Aute Rd: Membrae Laying

Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024



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Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Te Aute Trust Rd: AC Repair</b> 	<b>Te Aute Trust Rd: AC Repair</b> 
<b>Te Aute Trust Rd: Sign Installation</b> 	<b>Te Aute Trust Rd: Sign Installation</b> 
<b>Te Onepu Rd: Watertabling</b> 	<b>Te Onepu Rd: Watertabling</b> 



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Te Onepu Rd: Tree Removal		Te Onepu Rd: Tree Removal	
			
Te Ranga Rd: Watertabling		Te Ranga Rd: Watertabling	
			
Te Waka Rd: Te Waka Bridge: Inspection		Te Waka Rd: Te Waka Bridge: Inspection	
			



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

Tiakitai Rd: Detritus Collection



Tiakitai Rd: Detritus Collection



Waihau Rd: Sign Installation



Waihau Rd: Sign Installation



Waihau Rd: Horgans Bridge: Rail Repair.



Waihau Rd: Horgans Bridge: Rail Repair.





Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Waihau Rd: Horgans Bridge: Scour Repair</b>	<b>Waihau Rd: Horgans Bridge: Scour Repair</b>
	
<b>Waimarama Rd: Detritus Collection</b>	<b>Waimarama Rd: Detritus Collection</b>
	
<b>Waimarama Rd: Overhanging Branch Removal</b>	<b>Waimarama Rd: Overhanging Branch Removal</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Waipoapoa Rd: Shoulder Maintenance</b>	<b>Waipoapoa Rd: Shoulder Maintenance</b>
	
<b>Waipunga Rd: Temporary Sign Installation</b>	<b>Waipunga Rd: Safety Netting Installation</b>
	
<b>Waipunga Rd: Scour Repair</b>	<b>Waipunga Rd: Scour Repair</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Waipunga Rd: Sign Installation</b>	<b>Waipunga Rd: Sign Installation</b>
	
<b>Waipunga Rd: Culvert Installation</b>	<b>Waipunga Rd: Sock Installation</b>
	
<b>Waiohiki Rd: Flushing</b>	<b>Waiohiki Rd: Watertabling</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Waitara Rd: Fallen Tree Removal</b>	<b>Waitara Rd: Fallen Tree Removal</b>
	
<b>Waitara Rd: Slip Removal</b>	<b>Waitara Rd: Slip Removal</b>
	
<b>Waitara Rd: Watertabling</b>	<b>Waitara Rd: Watertabling</b>
	



Rural Community Board Photos – Feb - May 2024

<b>Waitara Rd: Culvert Installation</b>	<b>Waitara Rd: Rockwall Installation</b>
	
<b>Waitara Rd: Watertabling</b>	<b>Waitara Rd: Scour Repair</b>
	
<b>Whanawhana Rd: AC Repair</b>	<b>Whanawhana Rd: AC Repair</b>
	









# Scoping Report

Scoping for a Rural Strategy – Hastings District Council

26 February 2024









Allen + Clarke  
Rural Strategy Scoping Support – Hastings District Council



Document status:	Final Report
Version and date:	V 5; 26/02/2024
Author(s):	Toby Black & Wayne Murphy
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Verification QA changes made:	Toby Black & Wayne Murphy
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Formatting:	Toby Black
Final QA check & approved release:	Jacqui Haggland

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## Executive summary

Rural communities are an important group for district councils all over New Zealand. Rural communities, especially around provincial centres, often represent a core part of the district's population and economic activity. Given the size and importance of Hastings' rural communities, the Council saw the importance of including these communities in its vision for the future, which is outlined in strategic and planning documents. As there is currently no distinct rural strategy developed by the Hastings District Council (HDC), *Allen + Clarke* were engaged through its annual pro-bono programme to undertake a scoping study as a preliminary step to developing a rural strategy. This scoping study will assist the Council in understanding the unique needs of these rural communities and identify gaps in the Council's existing strategies.

*Allen + Clarke* completed a document review to understand where rural communities are currently served and underserved in existing strategies. *Allen + Clarke* reviewed seven reports and strategies that were written by or for the HDC, including the Great Communities Strategic Overview and contextual documents such as a Rural Discussion Document, developed by the HDC in 2010. *Allen + Clarke* also reviewed two rural community strategic plans developed by the Whanganui Rural Community Board (RCB). These documents were used as a reference to how rural strategies might be developed and presented.

Our document review found that HDC's existing strategies consistently outlined priorities for its people and places in an urban context. While some documents acknowledged the importance of rural businesses and production for the local economy, they fell short of addressing the unique context, needs and priorities of its rural communities. Where focus areas that exist in other strategies can be applied to rural communities, these have not been tailored to address the unique challenges and priorities for rural communities. Our gap analysis concluded that a rural strategy could leverage the HDC's existing overarching community outcomes while also reflecting the voice and aspirations of rural communities.

*Allen + Clarke* also conducted two forms of community engagement: two online interviews – one with members of the Hastings RCB and one with a respondent from a mana whenua organisation; and an online survey that was distributed to a range of stakeholders in and around the rural communities of Hastings.

Feedback from these engagements were often very similar and echoed the findings of our gap analysis. A **strong economy** and **healthy environment** were consistently ranked the two most important priority areas for rural communities. The survey respondents and the respondent from a mana whenua organisation ranked a healthy environment as the most important area.

The RCB said that a **strong economy** is a necessary foundation for the other two priority areas (safe spaces for all community members and promotion of tourism). There was also a clear consensus that tourism and attracting tourists to rural communities was less important than other priorities. Stakeholders also noted that rural communities should focus more on attracting and retaining people that want to live and work in rural communities. There was some divergence across the engaged groups about attracting more people in rural communities. Some said that it was important that these communities grow while others noted that population growth should be carefully managed to protect the environment, resources, and level of production.

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There was also clear consensus that connectivity and accessibility is an important issue for rural communities. Improving core infrastructure such as roading and bridges enable and enhance the connectivity of rural areas. There was also consensus on the importance of community assets such as halls, schools and pubs that allow rural communities places and spaces to come together as a group. Different groups had different experiences with local and central government approaches to managing and assisting rural communities. The openness and willingness of the HDC to hear the voice of all people – and the involvement of the RCB and Māori representative groups in council processes were cited as examples of the Council's commitment, which was acknowledged and appreciated.

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If HDC decides to develop a rural strategy, there are two potential ways forward:

- **Option 1:** HDC could run its own consultation process to sense check *Allen + Clarke's* findings and add further context to decide on the content of a strategy.
- **Option 2:** Alternatively, HDC could use this report and existing material to develop a draft strategy which is then distributed for feedback from the rural community. This is likely to be a more efficient approach.

Actual costs of either approach would vary, depending on whether HDC undertakes these next steps internally or uses independent consultants to support the work from either option.

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*Allen + Clarke's* document review and community engagement produced several key findings which could be useful for the Council to consider for informing the scope and focus when developing a bespoke rural strategy. These findings demonstrate the shared and diverging priorities of members of rural communities and are outlined on the next page.





Figure 1: Key Findings



**Finding 1** – There is currently a lack of rural focus within existing HDC policies. This is a risk to the district's future planning and development as these communities represent approximately 15 percent of the district's population and a large proportion of the district's economic activity.



**Finding 2** – The needs and issues affecting rural communities in Hastings are distinct and not necessarily addressed in existing policies and strategies.



**Finding 3** – There was broad consensus across all groups that recognised the importance of the primary industries and rural communities to the district's economy.



**Finding 4** – All groups recognised the importance of promoting sustainable practices that protect the environment. They expressly identified a tension between the costs of sustainable practices and the economic viability of primary industries.



**Finding 5** – Environmental sustainability was important to all respondents. However, what promoting sustainability meant for farmers and growers' abilities to produce compared to current levels, varied greatly between different respondent groups.



**Finding 6** – Rural communities identified the importance of services and infrastructure that support connectedness such as roads, bridges and community assets that provide safe spaces for all. While there is considerable resilience across rural communities already, improving connectivity would enhance this resilience.



**Finding 7** – The appetite for increased tourism in rural communities is variable. There is greater interest in attracting new residents of rural communities for a permanent shift, rather than short-term tourism.



**Finding 8** – Greater support from local and central government was identified by community members as a prerequisite for any positive change. This support varied from increased funding to incentivising sustainable practices, to more long-term infrastructure investment into assets as well as investments in the development of safe spaces in rural communities.



**Finding 9** – People in rural communities, especially producers such as farmers and growers, need support to deal with rising rates, costs of compliance, and the general increase in cost of living. Farmers and growers disproportionately feel the effects of rising costs due to compliance costs often being based on the amount of land or infrastructure.

# 1 Introduction

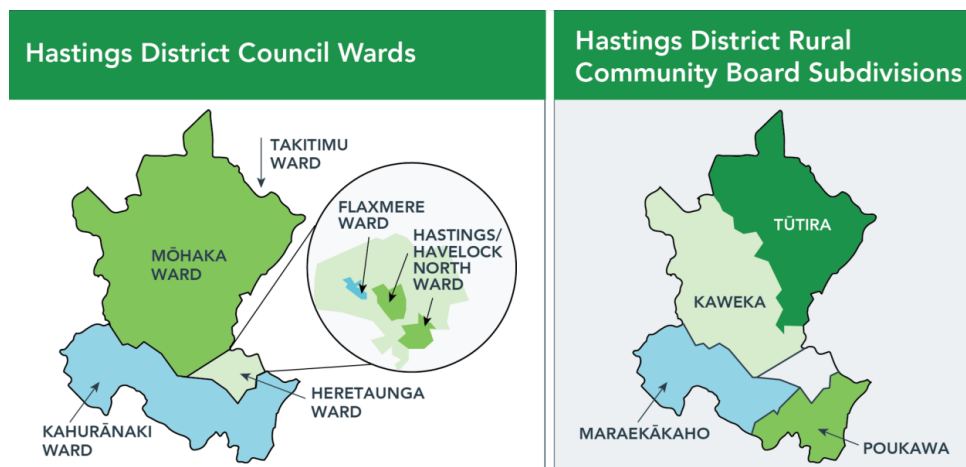


## 1.1 Context

Most of the Hastings District's land area can be described as rural whereas most of its population lives in urban areas. Information from the 2018 census shows that approximately 30 percent of the District's general electoral population lives in one of the three non-urban wards (Heretaunga, Kahurānaki and Mōhaka). When the Heretaunga Ward is excluded, the population of the Kahurānaki and Mōhaka Wards is approximately 15 percent of the District.

The Hastings District also has a Rural Community Board (RCB) which comprises of four members, each elected from one of the four subdivisions of the Kahurānaki and Mōhaka Wards shown below (including Māori electors within these two general wards). One councillor is also appointed from each of the Takitimu, Kahurānaki and Mōhaka Wards. The RCB is involved in setting the vision for the rural community within council documents such as the Long-Term Plan and Annual Plan, and also hears submissions on rural subjects. The RCB acts as the official voice of the rural community, and is responsible for many rural matters that exist under the council's remit.

**Figure 2: Hastings District Council Wards**



## 1.2 Aim and objectives of a rural strategy

The HDC and the RCB see the need for an over-arching strategy to address the longer-term sustainability of rural resources and communities. A rural communities and resources strategy would provide a framework for managing long-term changes that supports a well-functioning and sustainable rural sector.

A rural strategy would also provide clarity and direction for members of rural communities. Council strategies and policies aim to serve and represent the people that they affect, and the HDC's current policy suite has limited representation of rural communities.



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If members of rural communities feel they are seen and represented by the strategies and direction of their council, they are more likely to engage with council decisions, activities, and initiatives.

To ensure that the development of a rural strategy appropriately addresses the needs, concerns, and unique characteristics of Hastings' rural communities, the Council saw the need for a scoping study before developing a rural strategy. This scoping report will assist the Council to identify whether to proceed to develop a rural communities and resources strategy as a project in a Long Term Plan (LTP) or Annual Plan.

## 1.3 Subject matter to be included

The purpose of a council-developed strategy is to provide clarity and direction to a specific group of people. A rural strategy should include clarification of priority areas for the HDC and rural communities. The priority areas of existing strategic infrastructure (such as that which is included in the document review below) should not be contradicted by the rural strategy. Rather, some of the themes of existing strategies may require an adjustment of scope to be relevant for rural communities.

A rural strategy should also include resources and asset management information and decisions. In particular, resources relevant to rural communities such as water storage/supplies, land use, and core infrastructure such as roading and bridges.

## 1.4 Methodology

Allen + Clarke applied a mixed-methods approach to gathering information to inform this scoping exercise. We have integrated a combination of our own research and findings alongside findings from direct engagement with affected people in the Hastings rural community.

Allen + Clarke conducted a document review of other HDC strategies and policies alongside rural strategies from Whanganui region given the similarities between the two regions rural populations.

Alongside the document review, Allen + Clarke conducted two different forms of engagement. A survey was developed in collaboration with HDC, which was sent to 30 individuals who are engaged in Hastings' rural community. Responses were received through an online survey portal (SurveyMonkey) and analysed by Allen + Clarke. HDC also supported Allen + Clarke in identifying and arranging two online interviews. The first interview was held with members of the RCB, and the other was from a mana whenua organisation. The findings from this engagement and document review were developed into a findings report, which was shared with HDC. Key findings from our discovery process are also included in this report ([3.3 Findings](#)).

Analysing these findings, Allen + Clarke presented the current state of HDC's policy infrastructure and the needs and concerns of rural community members, which will help to inform the next steps in the Council's work towards a rural strategy.

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We have used our professional experience, coupled with our knowledge of the subject matter, to outline next steps should the Council decide to develop a Rural Strategy. While the findings from this report provide direction to the Council, [Appendix A](#) highlights the limitations of the research and recommendations from *Allen + Clarke*.

## 2 Document Review



As part of *Allen + Clarke*'s research to determine the appropriate context for a rural strategy, we reviewed relevant documents provided by the Hastings District Council. These documents showed the HDC's policy architecture that a rural strategy would sit within, the current focus of the HDC, and how existing, priorities across the suite of HDC strategies and policies would be integrated in a new, distinct rural strategy.

### 2.1 Documents reviewed

*Allen + Clarke* reviewed several key reference documents to inform the current policy suite relating to HDC's regional planning and strategy. These documents were:

- Hastings District Council Transport System Resilience (2023)
- HDC Great Communities Strategic Overview (2021)
- Heretaunga Plains Urban Development Strategy (2017)
- HDC Rural Resource Strategy (2010) – this is an updated section from the 2003 Hastings District Plan.
- HDC Rural Resource Proposed District Plan Review Rural Discussion Document (2010)
- HDC Proposed District Plan Rural Discussion Document – Summary of Submissions (2010)
- HDC Resource Management and Tangata Whenua (2003) – this is a section from the 2003 Hastings District Plan.
- Tangata Whenua and Mana Whenua – this is a section from the 2023 Hastings District Plan.

While most of the reviewed documents were developed by or for HDC, some documents from another territorial authority (Whanganui) were used as a reference to how rural strategies might be presented and developed:

- Whanganui Rural Community Board Strategic Plan 2017-2027 (2017)
- Whanganui Rural Community Board Strategic Plan 2010-2020 (2010).

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## 2.2 Findings

Documents such as the **Great Communities Strategic Overview** demonstrate the HDC's vision and priorities for the whole community. These areas of focus are currently only explicitly applied to urban areas and spaces. However, if a rural strategy is established, for it to be effectively integrated into the HDC's suite of strategies, the values would need to be consistent with those outlined in the Strategic Overview.

The Great Communities Strategy has four key priority areas:

1. Hastings alive – CBD development/planning, “getting more people into the city”
2. pathways for people – Youth and professional development, creating professional pathways to recruit and retain highly-qualified people
3. enhancing where we live – Central rejuvenation, enhancing community safety, planning and protecting coastal development/protection
4. a better way to work – Encouraging and improving community collaboration, iwi partnerships, central government partnership.

A rural strategy could be designed to align with all priorities of the Great Communities Strategic Overview, however, the findings from *Allen + Clarke's* community engagement suggests that an effective strategy should focus on priorities 3 & 4.

The **Heretaunga Plains Urban Development Strategy** (2010 and 2017 Review) was the only document produced by HDC reviewed by *Allen + Clarke* explicitly relating to an area largely rural in nature. However, this strategy is mainly focused on managing the impacts of urban growth and development. The future development mentioned in this document forecasts intensification of activity in large areas of the region, including rural areas. Growth opportunities were identified through the primary production and other sectors, including:

- ✓ agribusiness
- ✓ boutique food processing
- ✓ freight services
- ✓ infrastructure construction and support
- ✓ health and aged care
- ✓ tourism
- ✓ wine
- ✓ farm services and equipment manufacturing.

These possible growth drivers relate, to a considerable degree, to the industry and services that will be impacted by a future rural strategy. Acknowledgement of these growth drivers in a rural strategy would provide consistency across related documents and increase the effectiveness for implementation.

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The document **HDC Resource Management and Tangata Whenua** provided important context to the Council's relationship with iwi and the land which makes up Hastings. There are four traditional whakatauki that describe the region's relationship with mana whenua:

#### **Kaitiakitanga (Stewardship)**

*Heretaunga Haro Te Kahu – Heretaunga gleaned through the eyes of a soaring hawk.* The Hawk is the symbolic kaitiaki over lands, waterways, forests, fisheries and people resources. Tangata whenua have kaitiakitanga over these resources. The Hawk transcends both the physical and spiritual realms therefore also protecting the spiritual values of the environment.

#### **Te Whenua, Te Wai, Te Tangata (Land, Water And People)**

*Heretaunga Haukunui – Heretaunga of the Life Giving Dew.* Good management over land and water resources have ensured that people have thrived due to the richness of the soil and the quality of water that is symbolised by the dew.

#### **Mahi, Matatini (Industry, Diversity)**

*Heretaunga Ararau – Heretaunga of Converging Pathways.* Industry and diversity are key factors as all roads lead to Heretaunga to take advantage of the attributes of the Haukunui products, also offering access to national and international peoples and markets.

#### **Toi Te Whenua (Sustainability)**

*Heretaunga Takoto Noa – Heretaunga of the Departed Chiefs.* Only the land endures while people come and go therefore strong leadership is needed to ensure that the land is safe for generations to come.

Any rural strategy must be developed cognisant of these values and principles. To ensure thriving and harmonious communities, these principles should be maintained in the context of rural growth and strategy.

The **Hastings Transport Network Resilience** report was the most recent document reviewed by the *Allen + Clarke team*. This document was published in August 2023, and was updated to include consideration of the effects of Cyclone Gabrielle which struck the region in February 2023. It is worth noting that this business case was predominantly drafted prior to Cyclone Gabrielle. It was updated to reflect the impact and changed investment requirements following that event, however it has not been comprehensively rewritten.

The report outlined that HDC manages approximately 1,600 kms of local roads. The combined replacement value of these assets is estimated to be \$1.47b (2018 valuation). Prior to Cyclone Gabrielle, HDC spent around \$900,000 per annum responding to storm related damage on the local road network. The cost of Cyclone Gabrielle in 2023 on Hastings' transport infrastructure is estimated to be approximately \$800 million. Roothing has been identified as a key area of concern for rural communities, and the likely cost of roading repairs and building in resilience and connectivity will have a clear and measurable impact on the region.

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### 2.2.1 Gap Analysis

The findings from our document review illustrated a lack of rural focus within the policy architecture for Hastings. While there are focus areas in other strategies, such as the Greater Communities Strategy that can be applied to rural communities, these have not been designed or tailored to address the unique challenges and priorities for rural communities. A rural strategy would be able to leverage the existing overarching community outcomes, but with an emphasis on how to reflect the aspirations of rural communities.

The Heretaunga Plains Urban Development Strategy illustrates how HDC can develop bespoke, region or community-specific strategies.

A rural strategy would align the overall visions of existing policies and strategies and show how these would apply to rural communities in a similar way to the Heretaunga Plains Urban Development Strategy.

## 2.3 Conclusions

These documents clarify the current landscape and policy architecture that the HDC and its residents/landscapes are subject to. A rural strategy should expressly reflect the aspirations and needs of Hastings' rural communities rather than having these subsumed from the existing suite of strategies. A rural strategy should also provide more targeted direction towards rural land and communities. However, the principles of this strategy should not contradict those that have been outlined across multiple existing policies and strategies. The existing focus areas that were identified in HDC strategies were also used by the *Allen + Clarke* team to guide our discussions with key stakeholders and informed the focus of the survey for the wider population.

Integration and cohesion across the strategies published by the HDC and the residents of rural areas is integral to the development and implementation of an effective rural strategy.

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### 3 Consultation Findings

Allen + Clarke conducted multiple forms of targeted engagement with different representative groups from the rural Hastings area, using a mixed-method approach of surveys and interviews. The different forms of engagement yielded different levels of detail in responses, although there were clear themes which featured across all the respondents and participants. The focus of both the survey and the conversations we had with leaders were informed by the existing strategic focuses of HDC policies and other related material that we reviewed to find the priority areas for the region.

#### 3.1 Survey Results

A short survey was developed by Allen + Clarke in collaboration with HDC representatives and was shared by direct link to approximately 30 different locally based representatives of Hastings rural communities. These representatives included staff of local schools, industry corporations such as farming and primary industry, and local government employees<sup>1</sup>. There was a total of 14 responses to the survey, and the results and themes from these responses are explored below.

##### 3.1.1 Priority areas

Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of different issues from one to five, with one being “not at all important” and five being “incredibly important to me”. The averaged results of these issues were:

Table 1: Stakeholder priority areas

Priority area	Average rating by survey respondents (1-5)
A strong economy for rural Hastings	4
A healthy environment that promotes sustainability	5
Safe spaces for all community members	4
Attracting new and maintain current tourists to the rural Hastings area	3

While responses suggested that these four areas were important to respondents, the data suggests that a healthy environment is the most important issue for respondents, and the attraction and retention of tourists to rural areas is the least important.

<sup>1</sup> The survey was sent to representatives from several Central Government agencies but they did not provide a response.





### 3.1.2 Visions of the future

Survey respondents were asked what their vision for the future would be, 20 years from now. Respondents provided a range of visions for what a positive future for Hastings rural communities would look like. While there was variation across respondents, consistent themes included:

- a thriving rural economy
- farming and horticultural practices and success do not come at the unreasonable expense of a healthy environment
- primary industries are supported and advocated for
- harmonious relationship between primary and non-primary industries/workers
- connectivity for rural communities, roading as an essential aspect of this
- land and water resources are appropriately managed with long-term allocation and scarcity measures considered.

A clear theme across the responses received was the importance of primary industries as a cornerstone of the rural communities' economy and success. Respondents said that this needed to be acknowledged by local government and non-farming members of rural communities so that these industries could operate in a way that will bring the most success without concern about attitudes held by non-farming rural community members. Most respondents that mentioned a thriving primary sector also said that this would have to operate within a framework of environmental responsibility and sustainability. Environmental concerns were identified as a key issue but would have to be balanced with economic viability of primary industries.

### 3.1.3 Barriers and opportunities

In the survey, respondents were asked about the strengths and weaknesses for their communities relating to key areas. The number of responses relating to each area is included in this report, demonstrated with "n=".

#### Economic (n=7)

Survey respondents said that rising costs for farmers that come with additional or continued regulation, coupled with inflation, are key economic barriers for rural communities. The consequences – and costs – associated with climate change and the increased regularity of severe weather events were also identified as challenges that are unique to the Hastings' rural area. To address these challenges, respondents said that local and central government could support by "reducing the red tape" for all businesses, but specifically reducing the compliance costs faced by primary industries. Another respondent suggested that the Hastings rural area should transition to future-focused diversified practices to overcome the economic barriers that come with over-reliance on traditional primary industries. There should also be a greater focus on resilience – both in infrastructure and the workforce and its people.

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Respondents also provided a range of economic strengths unique to the rural Hastings area. Some said that the area has a strong mix of horticultural, agricultural and arable farms which represented a significant strength for the region. One respondent also said that Hastings and its rural communities have strong industry associations which are a clear strength and economic opportunity for the region. Another respondent said that access to transport such as railways and the port demonstrated a significant strength for the region.

### Environment (n=5)

When identifying the key environmental challenges unique to Hastings' rural communities, respondents identified a range of different issues that relate broadly to climate change, severe weather events, and the unsustainable nature of key industries within the region. Forestry and the effects of this industry – namely the environmental impact of 'slash' from forestry activities were identified as a specific environmental challenge that is a result of region-specific industry. One respondent said that water shortages and pollution were also an environmental issue that specifically effects the Hastings rural area. The ongoing impact of Cyclone Gabrielle were specifically mentioned by one respondent as a clear environmental challenge.

To address these challenges, respondents said that farmers should adopt a more flexible farming system and diversify their income streams so their industry has fewer intensive impacts on the environment. Two respondents mentioned the need for greater resilience across the community to deal with the increasing impact of climate change and severe weather events in the area. One submitter said that resilience planning needed to be implemented at a community and local government area.

The strengths of Hastings' rural communities' environment had a limited response from respondents. One respondent said that a strength of the area were the available locations that were a "good size for water storage". The same respondent said that the natural qualities of the soil mean that many things can grow in the area. The respondent also said that the variable nature of the climate – ranging from coastal to mountainous – meant that there is ample diversity across the region to harness the different economic benefits that come with this variation.

### People (n=5)

Respondents said that there were multiple barriers relating to the priority area of the people of rural communities in Hastings. Some respondents said that the isolation of rural communities in Hastings presented an issue for the people of the area. One respondent said that it can be difficult to attract people who "want to work rurally", and the skills of specific farmers are not easily transferrable across other industries. Another respondent said that there is division across different members of the community around how to approach climate change and the causes of climate change. Namely, farmers and non-farmers are divided on how farming activity is impacting (necessarily or unnecessarily) the environment disproportionately. One respondent also said that lack of access to services such as health support was a barrier to the wellbeing of the people of rural communities in Hastings.

Respondents said that increased upskilling of farmers in rural areas would help manage some of these challenges, as well as increased access to facilities such as medical centres and health support.

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There were few respondents that mentioned strengths of Hastings' rural communities' people, however one respondent said that it is the people of these communities that present the greatest opportunity. They said that there is an "innate personal resilience" amongst people that live in these rural communities, and that there is currently a strong desire to strengthen community capability and resilience which should be acted on.

### Infrastructure (n=5)

Access to quality and reliable roading networks was identified by respondents as a key infrastructure challenge for Hastings rural communities. They said that roading issues have been exacerbated due to lack of funding and support from local and central government to ensure resilience of this infrastructure. The isolated nature of some parts of the rural Hastings means a reliable roading network is necessary to ensure the connectivity of different rural communities and enabling rural communities to link with major centres.

### Support for rural communities (n=4)

Respondents were asked what local council and central government agencies do well and what they could do better to support Hastings' rural communities. Respondents said that these groups are generally supportive of rural issues and promoting a rural voice. One respondent said that existing processes such as "rural round tables" are an effective tool to provide an outlet for rural voices to be heard and addressed by Council. Another respondent said that the RCB (which Allen + Clarke interviewed) provides effective connections between council processes and rural voices. Respondents said that there has recently been a renewed focus on rural communities in Hastings, which acknowledges the importance of these communities to the district.

While respondents said that existing mechanisms are a positive step in providing support for rural communities, they also said that there needs to be a clearer direction for, and greater resource provided to rural communities to ensure they are appropriately supported. One respondent said that there needed to be greater council investment to support the development of emergency infrastructure.

## 3.2 Interviews

Allen + Clarke conducted multiple long-form interviews from a small collection of stakeholders to understand their priorities and concerns about their rural communities in greater depth.

### 3.2.1 Mana whenua

Allen + Clarke also engaged with an individual, who is involved in an environmental planning department of a mana whenua organisation. The objective of this interview was to identify the priorities of mana whenua organisations within the district. Understanding these priorities assists the scoping of a rural strategy as it ensures that a strategy serves different groups within the Hastings area. This interview also assisted in identifying if there were any clear differences in priorities across different groups in the Hastings area.

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### 3.2.1.1 Priority areas

In line with the interviewee's role in an environmental planning group, they said that the environment is the most important focus area for rural communities in the Hastings district. When asked how priority areas would be ranked in terms of importance, the interviewee ranked these areas:

- environment
- economy
- safe spaces
- tourism

The interviewee said that areas such as tourism were important generally, but the other areas mentioned were more important – specifically for rural communities. Without factors such as a healthy environment, strong economy, and ample safe spaces, a successful tourism market would be very difficult to achieve.

### 3.2.1.2 Vision of the future

The interviewee said that dealing with the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle would lead to decisions about how the region could adapt to changing climatic conditions in a way that would maintain economic viability. Without adaptation, residents of these rural communities will end up being forced from their land and leave the district. While the interviewee had a vision of the future which promotes economic success for the region, they were clear that there should not be a large number of new people entering the region. Areas such as the Heretaunga plains are already strained due to the growth and increasing urbanisation. The interviewee also cited the need for mechanisms to manage growth and protect food production in this area as a reason to be cautious about wider growth in the Hastings rural community.

Overall, the interviewee said that the most important thing that should be protected in the future is the ability to grow and produce in rural communities. The interviewee said that growing locally is better for the environment and the economy, and this should be a focus for the future of the region.

### 3.2.1.3 Barriers and opportunities

The second half of this interview focused on hearing from the interviewee about the unique barriers and opportunities that are present in the rural community. We asked the interviewee about the barriers and challenges relating to the four overarching themes that are present in existing HDC strategies. The four areas were economic and investment; environmental and climate; people, sustainable and resilient communities; and enablers, primarily infrastructure.

#### Economic

The rising costs of adapting to climate change and recovering from the effects of increased severe weather events in the area was seen as a significant economic challenge. These costs – alongside increasing compliance due to evolving regulations or environmental standards – mean that farmers and growers can come under significant financial strain.

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Increasing financial strain and pressures that are restricting producers in rural communities from carrying out their business was identified as a significant economic challenge for the area. Similarly, the interviewee said that these costs – and the unpredictability of primary industry – mean that farmers and growers in the region are often reliant on bailouts from central or local government to stay afloat. They said that this has become more obvious when these industries are faced with the costly aftermath of significant weather events, such as Cyclone Gabrielle. The interviewee said that there needed to be greater financial management and continuity present in the area, so rural communities are not reliant on government bailouts to continue to function.

When asked about the strengths of the economy in rural communities in the Hastings district, the interviewee said that the availability of land parcels for profitable industries such as viticulture, horticulture, and agriculture was a clear strength. The interviewee also said the presence of manufacturing and processing plants that deal with locally grown produce in the area is another strength for rural communities, as these provide a level of economic certainty and consistency for the area. The industry in rural communities that are a result of their geographic and environmental characteristics provides the basis for an economy that is resilient and can provide the basis for a thriving economy in these areas, according to the interviewee. The opportunities that come from this industry, however, are contingent on other factors such as adequate management, innovation in the face of a changing environment, and the presence of the appropriate skills and knowledge in the area.

### Environment

The management and security of water resources in the Hastings district was a key environmental challenge for rural communities identified by the interviewee. The reliance on primary industry output for rural communities means that the protection, longevity and preservation of adequate water supplies which are an asset for the region are currently not appropriately managed. The contemporary unpredictability of water management and quality was identified as the most fundamental challenge facing rural Hastings communities' environment. The interviewee also said that a key environmental challenge for rural communities was the variable nature of water levels. As extreme weather events become more common due to climate change, there is greater variation across the amount of rainfall that affects water levels across rural communities. This issue can result in there being too much water through flooding, or insufficient water through drought. These events have disproportionately large impacts on those that work and make their livelihoods from the land, and this is a core issue for many people and communities in the rural areas of Hastings.

While the dependence on primary industry makes rural communities susceptible to being affected by environmental events, it is also indicative of the communities' greatest environmental strength, according to the interviewee. The prevalence of incredibly productive and fertile land within these rural communities was identified by the interviewee as a significant strength. The fertility and diversity of the soil and land in these rural communities allows large-scale growth of a range of products, which drives the economy and secures a population across these communities.

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## People

The mana whenua respondent said that limited accessibility between rural communities – and from rural communities to other, more urban areas – was a significant challenge facing the region. They said that current infrastructure meant that people in rural communities can be cut off from services with concerning regularity. For the people living in these rural communities, this creates frustration, anxiety and uncertainty that makes day-to-day living difficult and presents a barrier to encouraging new people to move to these rural communities.

The amount of maintenance that is currently required on key infrastructure such as roading and bridges – particularly following the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle – was identified by the interviewee as a clear indication that accessibility and isolation is a primary concern for the people living in rural communities in Hastings.

Despite the issues around accessibility and isolation for members of rural communities in Hastings, the interviewee said that a clear strength for these people is the resilience that these communities have already shown and will continue to display. They said that the resilience of people in rural communities is unlike that of urban areas, and this allows them to thrive in communities that are often subject to extreme weather events and other kinds of hardship by “sticking together”.

## Enablers

We asked the interviewee how government (both local and central) support is currently serving (or not serving) the people of rural communities in Hastings. They said that the issues of connectivity and isolation are caused by a continued lack of investment in core infrastructure such as the roads and bridges. The limited connectivity in the region through telecommunications is a contributing factor to the isolation that some residents feel. Another challenge faced by the rural communities is the time that it takes for key permissions such as resource consents from territorial authorities.

When asked about the strengths of current processes and enablers for people of rural communities, the interviewee said that the relationship between Māori and council is positive in Hastings. They said that there is a Māori partnerships team that works across all council activities, which is incredibly important to promote a Māori lens to land use and other activities. The interviewee also acknowledged the work of the regional council in the area, which has a Māori relationships manager, which is also a positive aspect of the local government's commitment to Māori involvement in governance.

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### 3.2.2 Rural Community Board

Allen + Clarke conducted a group interview with four members of the Hastings RCB.<sup>2</sup> This interview revealed the priorities identified by rural community leaders and how different rural communities held slightly different perspectives on the importance of different factors relating to a thriving community. This interview was conducted with the intent of revealing what a rural strategy would need to include for the affected communities to feel represented and served.

#### 3.2.2.1 Priority areas

Mirroring the style of the survey designed for wider circulation, the first half of this interview explored how the four RCB members prioritised the four key issues that align with existing HDC priority areas.

They were asked to rate these issues between one and five (one being not at all important and five being incredibly important), and then we asked them to justify their answer.

#### Strong economy for Hastings

The sense of importance of a strong economy for Hastings, and specifically rural communities, was a sentiment shared by all RCB members. All members said that a strong economy scored either four or five in terms of importance. The interview participants acknowledged that a strong rural economy is closely interlinked with a strong economy for Hastings generally. One interviewee said:

*Without a vibrant, strong, rural economy, what have we got? In the Hawkes Bay, that's where the majority of our production lies.*

Interviewees said that businesses in rural communities also needed to be successful and productive to retain people in the community. They said that people staying in the community meant that local rural schools could stay open, which is integral to a thriving rural community. A healthy rural economy is also has a varied and diverse workforce. Interviewees said that in a rural community, this diversity would include farm workers living and working alongside young business owners and CEOs.

There was an acknowledgement that for some residents of rural communities, the health of the economy within the rural community is less of a concern. There are some communities that are close enough to more urban centres such as Hastings and Napier that residents may commute into these centres to work. This means that some people that choose to live in rural communities do not necessarily rely on or use the services and businesses that are in the communities that they live in. These people are not totally reliant on the community economy, but it still drives everything they do. These interviewees said that the other priority areas are all important, however a strong economy allows for all other areas of a community to thrive.

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<sup>2</sup> Interviewed RCB members were Jonathan Stockley, Abby Morely, Vicki Scoular, and Isabelle Crawshaw.

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### A healthy environment that promotes sustainability

The RCB members said that this was a priority that was becoming more important, in light of extreme climate events such as Cyclone Gabrielle. Ratings of this priority area ranged between three and five across the interview participants.

There was an acknowledgement that, for many members of rural communities, it is particularly important to care for the environment, as it is closely linked to where the community members live and make their livelihood.

With this in mind, there is the perspective that respecting and looking after the environment that these rural communities interact with will come with long-term reward for these communities. Caring for the environment will future proof these rural communities' economies and ensure they are a desirable place to live.

The RCB members were quick to clarify that it is important that rural communities do all that they can to protect the environment that they live in, but they do not want to imply that local farmers and growers are doing anything other than the best for their environment. The environment represented farmers and growers' livelihoods, and the RCB members said that this can be forgotten in more nationally focussed environmental rhetoric.

One RCB interviewee acknowledged that rural communities' relationship with the environment has room to integrate more of a Māori world view on sustainable relationships with the land, however they acknowledged that they were not in the best position to comment on that issue further.

### Safe spaces for all community members

Safety for all rural community members was unanimously rated as incredibly important by the RCB members. RCB members said that if communities are not made safe for people, then people will not want to stay there, and the communities will be lost. One member said that everyone in every community has the right to be and feel safe. Another RCB members said that one of the key words used in this priority is "space". They said that this can be demonstrated in rural communities as having safe spaces to go and be protected with their views, without fear of judgement or retribution.

### Attracting new and maintaining current tourists to the rural Hastings area

This priority area had the lowest rating of importance amongst all the RCB members interviewed. They acknowledged that the rating of this priority would vary greatly across certain rural communities that rely more on tourism activities.

The RCB members that participated in this interview said that it's more important that new residents are attracted and retained to rural communities, as opposed to "tourists". One RCB member said:

*Our rural community could manage without tourism, but attracting new people into our community is incredibly important, we want and need different skills, different ideas, different views. These people could also become involved in volunteer community groups, which is incredibly important.*



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The RCB members said that for a rural strategy, there should be less of a specific focus on attracting tourists to rural communities, and instead the focus should be broadened to people. They said that this would allow for a focus on tourist activities in rural communities where this is important. However, it could also apply to rural communities that are targeting new permanent residents, either from local surrounding urban areas or larger centres around the country.

This is a clear example of where the vision and values of rural communities differs with HDC's wider vision for growth in tourism. In these instances, there is a strong argument for the development of a bespoke rural strategy.

### 3.2.2.2 Barriers and opportunities

The second half of this interview focused on hearing from RCB members about the unique barriers and opportunities that are present in their rural communities. Revolving around four overarching themes that are present in existing HDC strategies, RCB members told us about the challenges and opportunities that relate to thriving in these distinct areas. The four areas were economic and investment; environmental and climate; people, sustainable and resilient communities; and enablers, primarily infrastructure.

#### Economic

Rates were identified as a significant challenge facing Hastings rural communities' ability to thrive economically. RCB members also said that there are significant fixed costs for the producers in the area, namely growers and farmers. They said that these costs are subject to the decisions of central government, and there's little ability for community members to influence these costs or regulations.

To manage these challenges, RCB members said that the current focus on diversification of land use in rural communities was a positive step and this should continue to take place. They also said that there should be increased regional long-term planning that is not as reliant or dependent on government changes.

Industry was identified as a clear economic strength for Hastings' rural communities. The industry of these communities feeds the world, and the land that community members own and work on is the strength of these communities.

#### Environment

RCB members said the widespread damage of Cyclone Gabrielle and the disproportionate effect of this event on rural communities – made it demonstrably clear that climate change and severe weather events present a very real challenge to rural communities in Hastings.

One member also acknowledged the focus on farmers in national discussions regarding climate change and sustainability. Farmers often "take the brunt of being the issue" in discussions about climate change. The RCB member said that whether this is real or perceived for the farmers, it has a very real impact on their behaviour.

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To attempt to manage these challenges, the RCB members said that climate change adaptation planning was already underway by HDC. They said that this was a positive development, but they are currently unsure if there is enough of a rural focus in this document currently.

The RCB members said that farmers and growers in Hastings rural communities were very progressive in terms of land management and sustainable practices, and this was a significant strength for the region. Natural climate and soil fertility for the region was also identified as a strength, nearly everything that grows across New Zealand, will grow in Hastings.

### People

Connectivity across rural communities was identified by RCB members as a key challenge for the region. Disconnected communities are a “huge problem”, and the absence of community halls or spaces to come together within these rural communities reinforces and perpetuates this issue.

There was also concern raised about the affordability of living costs in rural communities. Property is becoming more expensive, and so are essentials such as fuel. If there is not affordability in rural communities for people such as first home buyers, then these RCB members said the communities will struggle to survive and grow.

These RCB members said that the current attitudes of the people that live in Hastings’ rural communities is a clear strength of the region. Recent experiences have demonstrated the willingness to help others and resilience that is present across the community.

### Enablers

The greatest infrastructure challenge for Hastings’ rural communities according to RCB members are roading and social infrastructure such as community halls and schools. The RCB members said that whatever the social asset is, is largely irrelevant, it’s just important that there are spaces where rural communities can gather.

Roading was identified as a significant priority for rural communities and are essential to ensure there is an appropriate level of connectivity between rural communities that can otherwise become significantly isolated.

The presence and strength of the rural community board was noted by RCB members and was identified as an enabler for positive change in rural communities. They said that it is an effective mechanism that is treated with respect by HDC. Relationships with national organisations such as MPI were also identified as positive enablers, but the strength of these relationships varied across different rural communities and were largely impacted by the personal relationships that existed.

RBC members were also excited by the prospect of further engagement with HDC during the development of possible rural strategy documents.



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### 3.3 Findings

Through both qualitative and quantitative data collected by *Allen + Clarke* capturing a range of rural community perspectives, there are several findings for HDC to consider when exploring the possibility of developing a bespoke rural strategy.



**Finding 1** – There is currently a lack of rural focus within existing HDC policies. This is a risk to the district's future planning and development as these communities represent approximately 15 percent of the district's population and a large proportion of the district's economic activity.



**Finding 2** – The needs and issues affecting rural communities in Hastings are distinct and not necessarily addressed in existing policies and strategies.



**Finding 3** – There was broad consensus across all groups that recognised the importance of the primary industries and rural communities to the district's economy.



**Finding 4** – All groups recognised the importance of promoting sustainable practices that protect the environment. They expressly identified a tension between the costs of sustainable practices and the economic viability of primary industries.



**Finding 5** – Environmental sustainability was important to all respondents. However, what promoting sustainability meant for farmers and growers' abilities to produce compared to current levels, varied greatly between different respondent groups.



**Finding 6** – Rural communities identified the importance of services and infrastructure that support connectedness such as roads, bridges and community assets that provide safe spaces for all. While there is considerable resilience across the members of rural communities already, improving connectivity would enhance this resilience.



**Finding 7** – The appetite for increased tourism in rural communities is variable. There is greater interest in appealing to new residents of rural communities for a permanent shift, rather than short-term tourism.



**Finding 8** – Greater support from local and central government was identified by community members as a prerequisite for any positive change. This support varied from increased funding to incentivising sustainable practices, to more long-term infrastructure investment into assets as well as investments in the development of safe spaces in rural communities.



**Finding 9** – People in rural communities, especially producers such as farmers and growers, need support to deal with rising rates, costs of compliance, and the general increase in cost of living. Farmers and growers disproportionately feel the effects of rising costs due to compliance costs often being based on the amount of land or infrastructure.

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Table 2 - Summary of Challenges, Potential Agency Roles, and Rural Strategy Benefits

Focus Area	Challenges	Potential Agency Roles	Potential Strategy Benefits
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Generally, primary industries are price takers rather price makers. This makes them vulnerable to external cost pressures, such as increased costs of compliance.</li> <li>➤ Significant fixed costs associated with primary industry.</li> <li>➤ Rising costs for farmers and growers due to shifting compliance requirements.</li> <li>➤ The impact and costs of responding to severe weather events create significant financial strains for rural communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hawkes Bay Regional Council and Hastings District Council – their decisions on budgeting (i.e. rates, fees and charges) and policies can have an economic impact on the primary sector, which affects rural communities.</li> <li>➤ Hastings District Council – have the ability to advocate for the people and farmers in rural communities to government to encourage greater economic support for these groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Confirm the advocacy role for HDC and outline their position on supporting rural communities faced with rising costs.</li> </ul>



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**Table 3 - Summary of Challenges, Potential Agency Roles, and Rural Strategy Benefits**

Focus Area	Challenges	Potential Agency Roles	Potential Strategy Benefits
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A range of different issues that relate to climate change, severe weather events, and the unsustainable nature of key industries within the region.</li> <li>➤ Extreme weather events have a disproportionate impact on rural communities, especially for primary industry that rely on the land use activities.</li> <li>➤ Management and security of water resources in the Hastings District.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hastings District Council – resilience preparation resources for workers and people in rural communities and addressing potential trade-offs between economic activities and their associated impact on the environment.</li> <li>➤ Hawke's Bay Regional Council – in the course of managing biosecurity issues (e.g. pests) and the effects of activities using water resources and discharges to air, land and water.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A strategy provides a voice to a major part of the HDC community which isn't covered by existing strategies.</li> <li>➤ HDC and Hawkes Bay Regional Council can use the strategy to guide decision-making when making policies or decisions that affect rural communities.</li> <li>➤ Provide plans and approaches that give greater resilience in the event of severe weather events that affect rural communities.</li> </ul>

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**Table 4 - Summary of Challenges, Potential Agency Roles, and Rural Strategy Benefits**

Focus Area	Challenges	Potential Agency Roles	Potential Strategy Benefits
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Rural communities' social cohesion, accessibility and connectivity - from rural communities to each other, and from rural communities to urban areas.</li> <li>➤ Retaining contributing members in rural communities. Making communities a desirable place to live which promotes their social vibrancy and supports local businesses.</li> <li>➤ Reconciling existing district-wide focusses on diversifying the local economy (e.g. tourism) with rural communities' priorities where land-use is already strictly controlled.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hastings District Council – makes decisions on investment priorities for hard and soft infrastructure.</li> <li>➤ Rural Community Board – has an advocacy role and can act as an intermediary between rural communities and HDC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A strategy can amplify the aspirations of rural communities and leverage existing community outcomes by identifying what is needed to improve the quality of life and provision and maintenance of community assets.</li> <li>➤ Creates a mechanism that represents rural communities and informs the perspectives and priorities of the relevant decision makers.</li> <li>➤ Reconciles the rural communities' development aspirations with other goals such as growing tourism as outlined in the existing Great Communities document.</li> </ul>

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**Table 5 - Summary of Challenges, Potential Agency Roles, and Rural Strategy Benefits**

Focus Area	Challenges	Potential Agency Roles	Potential Strategy Benefits
<b>Enablers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Investment that supports connectedness within communities and with urban areas.</li> <li>➤ Roading and social infrastructure such as community halls and schools are important hard and soft infrastructure for rural communities.</li> <li>➤ Safe spaces require investment, and how this investment is funded is highly uncertain.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hastings District Council – development and implementation of LTPs serve a core role in outlining how rural communities' needs will be met and the priorities for investment / future funding.</li> <li>➤ Hawkes Bay Regional Council and Hastings District Council have important roles in setting policies and making strategies.</li> <li>➤ Central Government – core infrastructure that sits outside of the direct jurisdiction of Hastings District Council require buy-in and sign-off from relevant agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provide a framework for managing long-term changes that supports a well-functioning and sustainable rural sector.</li> <li>➤ Enhances cohesion and alignment with other strategies that influence decision makers.</li> <li>➤ Provide an overarching commitment to the provision of safe spaces, through rural communities' input into prioritisation of future investment and funding decisions. Progress can be measured and monitored.</li> <li>➤ Establishes a clear rural focus and strategy that can represent all rural communities. This can act as a key step in connecting these previously disconnected and isolated communities.</li> </ul>

## 4 Next Steps

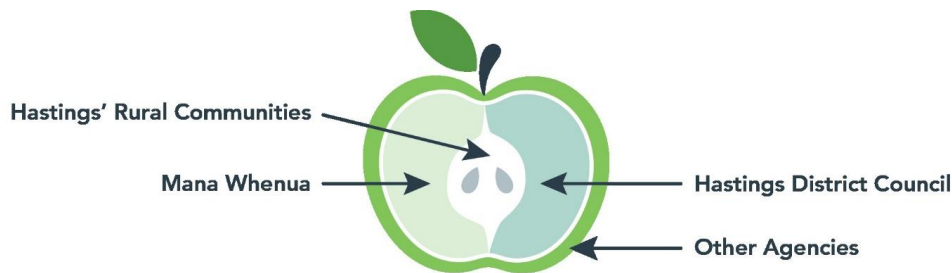


After considering the information and findings in this Scoping Report, the next step is to decide whether to develop a Hastings District Rural Strategy.

### 4.1 Beneficiaries

We see there being several distinctly identifiable stakeholders that would benefit from Hastings District developing a bespoke rural strategy:

**Figure 3: Potential beneficiaries of a rural strategy**



#### Hastings' Rural Communities

In its application for *Allen + Clarke's* 2023 pro-bono programme, Hastings District Council noted that there are potentially many issues facing its rural communities. However, as the current suite of Council strategies and plans has focused on other parts / sectors of the district, they cannot fully reflect the aspirations of Hastings' rural communities.

A rural communities and resources strategy would provide a framework for managing long-term changes that support a well-functioning and sustainable rural sector and the primary industries that operate in the district's widespread rural hinterland. It would expressly acknowledge and provide a basis for addressing the unique challenges and priorities of Hastings' rural communities and ensure that District-wide plans and strategies cater for these communities.

Our document review identified a lack of rural focus within the policy architecture for Hastings. While there are focus areas in other strategies, such as the Greater Communities Strategy that can be applied to rural communities, these have not been designed or tailored to address the unique challenges and priorities for rural communities. A rural strategy would be able to leverage the existing overarching community outcomes, but with an emphasis on how to reflect the aspirations of rural communities.

#### Mana whenua

A rural strategy could also further embed the voice of mana whenua in Council activities and strategies – a feature of HDC's operations which was highly valued by the respondent from the mana whenua organisation that *Allen + Clarke* spoke to. Mana whenua are likely to benefit from a rural strategy as it is likely to focus on the environmental impact of primary industries and the sustainable utilisation of water resources.



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### Hastings District Council

The Hastings District Council has already invested significant effort and resources in building a comprehensive suite of strategies and related planning documents.

A rural strategy would align the overall visions of existing policies and strategies and show how these would apply to rural communities in a similar way to other council strategies. However, the absence of a rural strategy stands out as noticeable gap that potentially risks degrading any future investment in updating existing strategies / plans or developing new ones because the specific needs and aspirations of a significant element have not been properly identified. Without a rural strategy, the HDC is less able to cater for the needs of its rural communities and is in a much weaker position to measure how its planning and investments in services and infrastructure are addressing the needs of its rural communities. A rural strategy also ensures that members of the rural communities are represented by their council which creates conditions more conducive to a productive relationship between a council and its people.

### Other Agencies

Government and local government agencies (beyond HDC) were identified as agencies that can assist and / or hinder the development and implementation of Hastings' rural communities' 20-year vision. As these agencies often have their own strategic plans, when these plans are updated, they would benefit from being able to consider and incorporate the relevant content of a rural strategy.

## 4.2 Developing a Strategy and Potential Costs

The Council has a couple of options available if it decides to develop a rural strategy.

1. **Option 1:** is to start from scratch and canvass stakeholders from its rural communities to develop the content of a strategy. This would involve initiating surveys and community forums, drafting a strategy, providing a process for feedback, considering and incorporating this feedback, revising the Strategy and finalising it to sit alongside the Council's other strategies.
2. **Option 2:** Given the material that is already available, and the engagement undertaken for this scoping report, an alternative and appropriate approach could be to undertake a desk-top exercise and draft a strategy from the information that is available and invite feedback on the draft Strategy. This feedback would inform the completion of a rural strategy. This second approach is likely to be quicker and less costly.

Actual costs would vary according to whether Council would use external resources or in-house resources to undertake the necessary steps in developing a draft strategy, run a consultation process and finalise the strategy.



## Appendix A: Limitations

There are some limitations to our findings and the recommendations that are made within this scoping report.

- During our online survey, we received a response from 14, out of a potential 30 respondents (47 percent) who received the survey email. The respondents represent a cross section of different industries and roles within the community. There were local government representatives, industry representatives, and community members and workers. This group provided a satisfactorily diverse range of perspectives, interests, and concerns to be representative of the group.
- For our targeted online engagement with specific representatives, we were only able to engage with one representative from a mana whenua organisation. Despite repeated efforts by HDC and Allen + Clarke, we were unsuccessful in contacting the range of mana whenua organisation representatives that were initially provided to us from HDC.
- While Allen + Clarke has undertaken stakeholder engagement with some relevant rural community members, this does not necessarily replace any further consultation with these groups, or wider engagement with those that did not respond to our invitation for engagement or those that were not initially recommended for engagement.
- While we provide general costing indications in [Section 4](#) of this report, as a specification hasn't been developed for preparing a rural strategy. More detailed costings could potentially be provided by Allen + Clarke when a specification is developed by the Council.





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