

Te Waihanga New Zealand Infrastructure Commission - Māori Engagement

He pūrongo mōhiotanga whai wāhi mō ngāi Māori ki te ao tūāhanga

Māori in infrastructure engagement insights report

Te Waihanga New Zealand Infrastructure Commission

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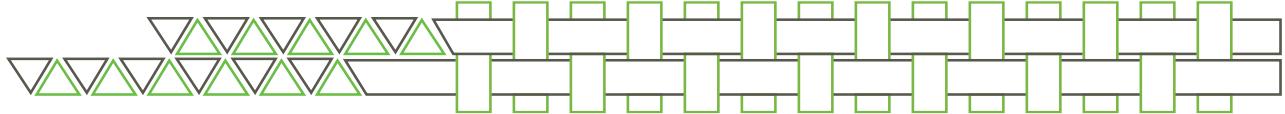
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He mihi | Acknowledgement

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E ngā rangatira o ngā iwi, o ngā hapū, o ngā rōpū Māori i manaaki mai i tēnei kaupapa, he mihi mutunga kore tēnei ki a koutou katoa. Kei taumata kē ngā whakaaro, ngā kōrero i tukua mai ki te kaupapa nei me te nui hoki o ā koutou pukumahi ki te ao tūāhangā. I tino rongo tēnei kaupapa i te tirohanga whānui e hāngai pū ana ki te taiao, ki te whenua, ki ngā reanga kāore anō kia hua mai. Ka āwhinatia aua kupu tautoko te tirohanga ki mua a te taha hoahoa, te taha whakamahere mō ngā kaupapa tūāhangā. Nei rā mātou e tūpou ana ki a koutou katoa.

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Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa

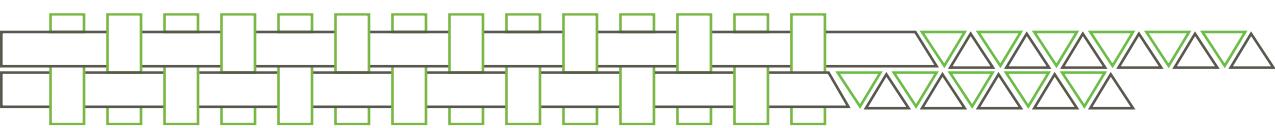
Enduring acknowledgements are extended to traditional guardians. Ranginui above, Papatūānuku below, and all of their many offspring.

It is correct to acknowledge those who have passed on to the gathering place of the deceased, who now rest within the care of our ancestors. To the departed belongs the dead, to us belongs the living. Behold, the breath of life!

As the proverb says: Ko te amorangi ki mua, ko te hāpai ō ki muri. To an esteemed leader of the Māori world, to the leader of the Kīngitanga Movement, to the Māori Queen Ngā Wai hono i te pō warm greetings to you. We also acknowledge all of your words delivered at your first Coronation: the call for unity, and for supporting your people within the economy. Our gratitude is everlasting

To the leaders of iwi, hapū, and Māori groups who supported this kaupapa, we extend our gratitude to you all. The thoughts and discussions you contributed were very important, as is the great effort you bring to the infrastructure sector. We heard your perspectives and advice that was directly relevant for the environment, the land and future generations. Those thoughts can help to shape the design and development of future infrastructure projects. We extend our appreciation to you all.

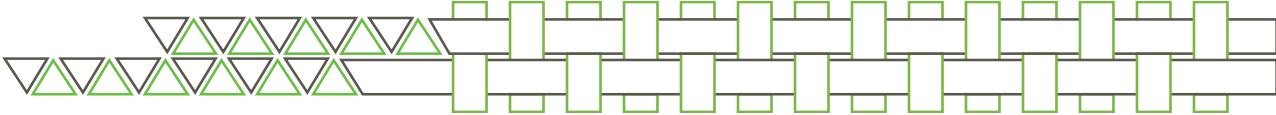
We acknowledge the genuine commitment of everyone at The Infrastructure Commission for this important kaupapa, this was clearly demonstrated in every aspect of your work. It is also fitting to acknowledge the leaders and experts who strongly supported the kaupapa — Geoff Cooper, Peter Nunns, John Summers, and Shelly Biswell.



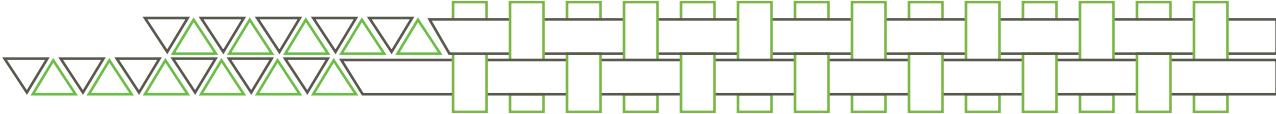


Kuputaka | Glossary

Māori kupu	English meaning
Aotearoa	<i>New Zealand (literally: land of the long white cloud)</i>
Hapū	<i>Sub-tribe, clan, a large family grouping, part of an iwi</i>
Hui	<i>Gathering, meeting, assembly</i>
Iwi	<i>Tribe</i>
Iwi / Māori Rōpū	<i>Māori groups or collectives</i>
Kaitiaki	<i>Guardian, steward, protector</i>
Kaitiakitanga	<i>Guardianship, stewardship, environmental and cultural responsibility</i>
Kanohi ki te kanohi	<i>Face to face (meeting in person)</i>
Kaumātua	<i>Elder; respected leader of a whānau, hapū, or iwi</i>
Mana motuhake	<i>Self-determination, autonomy, independence</i>
Manaaki	<i>To show care, respect, hospitality, generosity</i>
Māori	<i>Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand</i>
Mātāpono	<i>Principles, values, underlying concepts</i>
Rangatahi	<i>Youth, younger generation</i>
Rohe	<i>Region, territory, tribal area</i>
Rōpū	<i>Group, collective, organisation</i>
Takatāpui	<i>Traditionally “intimate companion of the same sex”; now reclaimed to mean Māori LGBTQIA+</i>
Takiwā	<i>District, area, region</i>

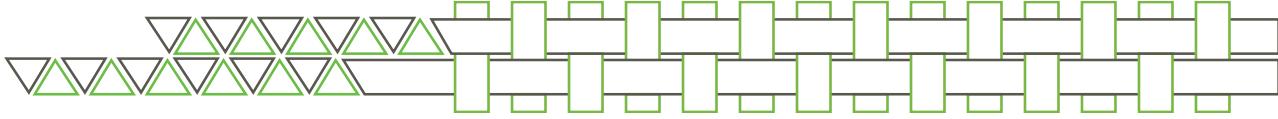


Tangata	<i>Person, people</i>
Tangata whenua	<i>Indigenous people of the land; literally “people of the land”</i>
Te ao Māori	<i>The Māori world, worldview, Māori perspective</i>
Te Āhanga Māori	<i>The Māori economy</i>
Te reo Māori	<i>The Māori language</i>
Te taiao	<i>The natural environment, nature</i>
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	<i>The Treaty of Waitangi (foundational treaty between Māori and the Crown)</i>
Tino rangatiratanga	<i>Absolute sovereignty, self-determination, chiefly authority</i>
Tūpuna	<i>Ancestors (singular: tipuna or tupuna)</i>
Whakaaro	<i>Thought, idea, opinion, perspective</i>
Whakataukī	<i>Proverb, wise saying</i>
Whakawhanaungatanga	<i>Process of building relationships, kinship, sense of belonging</i>
Whare	<i>Home, house</i>
Whenua	<i>Land</i>
Wai	<i>Water</i>



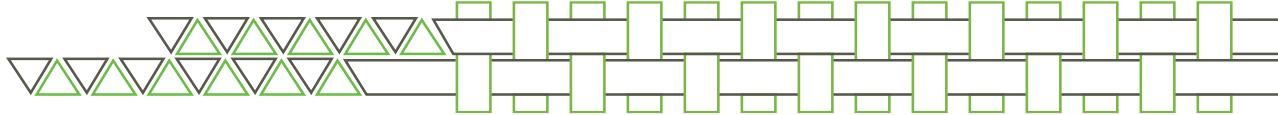
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1 Tīmatanga Kōrero | Introduction

1.1 Tō mātou aronga | Our purpose

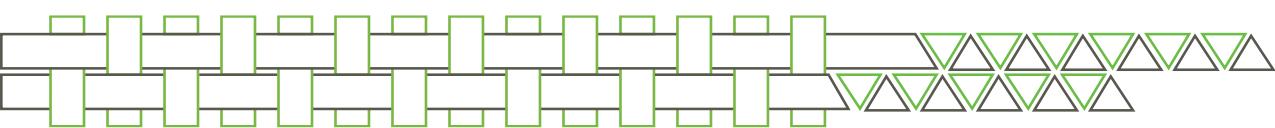
Aurecon has been engaged by Te Waihanga – The New Zealand Infrastructure Commission ('Te Waihanga' or 'the Client') to support iwi/Māori engagement to build relationships and gain insights into iwi perspectives on infrastructure. Engagement occurred between January and September 2025 and will inform Mahere Tūāhangā ā-Motu | the National Infrastructure Plan (NIP), the wider work programme of Te Waihanga, and help shape and strengthen advice on major infrastructure projects, policy, and the long-term needs of Aotearoa New Zealand's infrastructure system.

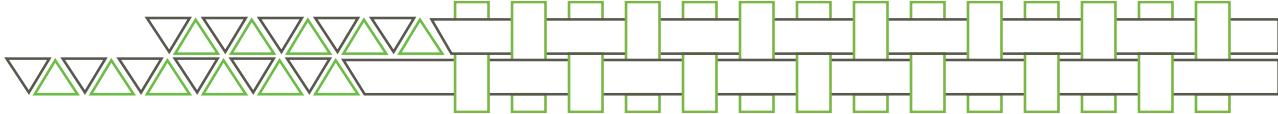
1.2 Te horopaki: Ngā tirohanga me ngā wawata a ngāi Māori mō te tūāhangā | The context: Māori in infrastructure aspirations and perspectives

Iwi and Māori are increasingly taking on a strategic role in infrastructure investment and long-term whenua (land) development. Some iwi and rōpū Māori have already established infrastructure investment portfolios, while many others are looking to expand their participation in ways that align with cultural values, sustainable growth and intergenerational wellbeing. This investment growth reflects a wider shift in Te Āhangā Māori (the Māori economy), which now contributes around 17% of Aotearoa New Zealand's economic activity, with its asset base nearly doubling to \$126 billion since 2018 (BERL, 2024).

Te Waihanga recognises both the current and growing role of iwi and Māori in the infrastructure sector, and the importance of ensuring that planning and investment reflects shared aspirations for both economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing.

This report presents insights gathered through engagement with iwi and rōpū Māori. While it does not claim to represent all iwi/ Māori rōpū voices, it reflects the whakaaro (thoughts, ideas, opinions and perspectives) of those who participated, providing an indication of the directions they see as critical for the future of infrastructure in Aotearoa New Zealand.





1.3 Tō mātou aropā | Our Approach

From January to August 2025, Te Waihanga, with support from Aurecon Māori Advisors, engaged with iwi and rōpū Māori (representative Māori groups). This engagement was conducted in recognition of Te Waihanga's role as a Crown entity and Treaty partner and is intended to both inform the development of the NIP as well as establishing enduring relationships with iwi and rōpū Māori. The engagement approach was guided by Te Arawhiti Guidelines and supported by cultural confidence workshops, which strengthened Te Waihanga's understanding of te ao Māori (the Māori worldview) before direct interaction. Aurecon Māori advisors played a key role in ensuring that every engagement was conducted appropriately and respectfully.

The scope of the engagement included:

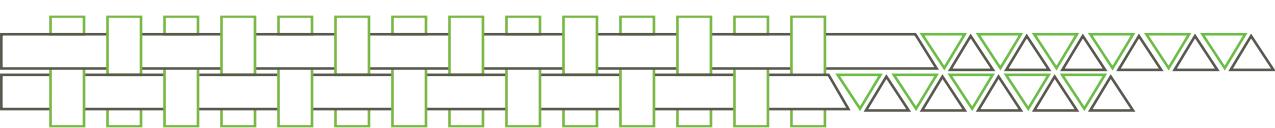
- Cultural confidence workshops to support Te Waihanga in deepening their understanding of te ao Māori.
- Careful consideration to which groups were able and willing to participate within the timeframe, while making efforts to engage nationally and across iwi, acknowledging the limits of feasibility and scope.
- Engagement with iwi and Māori rōpū representatives to understand their infrastructure priorities and aspirations, laying the foundation for enduring relationships.
- Summary of findings through workshops with Te Waihanga (including Te Waihanga Te Tī - Māori Advisory Group. This advisory group was being formed as engagement was being implemented.
- Completion of an engagement report that captures engagement insights and makes recommendations to help Te Waihanga embed iwi and Māori rōpū perspectives into the NIP and its future work.

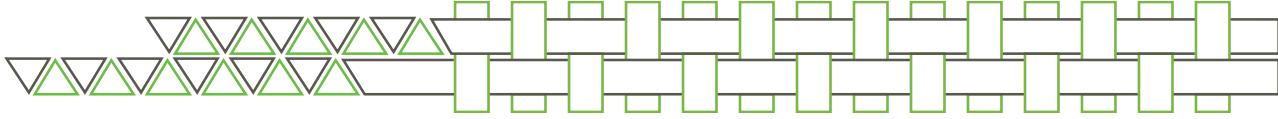
Engagement methods included kanohi ki te kanohi hui (face to face meetings), virtual discussions, and written submissions, all underpinned by te ao Māori principles such as whakawhanaungatanga — recognising that trust and mutual understanding takes time to build.

This approach was further guided by four mātāpono:

- **Rangatiratanga** - Recognising the status of the iwi and Māori being engaged with as Treaty partners.
- **Manaakitanga** - We respect Māori tikanga and strive to deepen our understanding. We exercise care and the work we do should be mana-enhancing and supportive
- **Whanaungatanga** - We foster meaningful, and enduring relationships based on good faith, mutual respect, understanding and trust.
- **Rangatira ki te Rangatira** - We understand and value each other's positions, roles and expertise. We encourage leaders working with leaders.

The relationship-building process prioritised mana-to-mana connections that are intended to extend beyond the scope of the NIP.

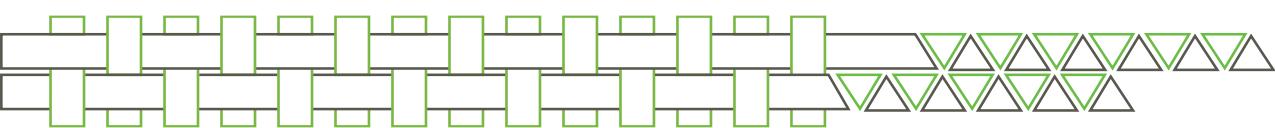


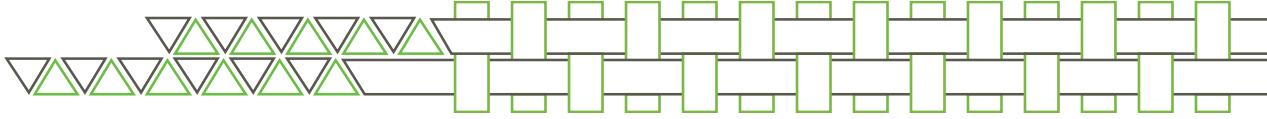


1.4 Ngā tepenga | Limitations

Limitations to this engagement included:

- **Timeframe** – The schedule set by the NIP requirements limited the number of interactions. As a result, only a small pool of iwi and Māori rōpū were available to participate. While the timeframe for this initial engagement was limited, Te Waihanga has committed to engaging with iwi to build enduring relationships that extend beyond the development of the NIP.
- **Representation** – Māori communities are diverse, with perspectives shaped by tikanga, te reo, and different social and economic contexts. In this engagement, most insights came from iwi leaders, with fewer voices from rangatahi, kaumātua, takatāpui, and others.
- **Scope** – This report provides a high-level overview that reflects the collective insights shared by the iwi and Māori rōpū who participated. It does not provide detail into individual experiences. Conversations sometimes extended beyond the remit of Te Waihanga. This report includes only those matters relating to infrastructure that the client can directly influence. It is acknowledged that many insights raised are interconnected with a Māori worldview and not easily separated from infrastructure. We acknowledge other insights shared with us, but for the purpose of this report we have only added matters related to infrastructure.



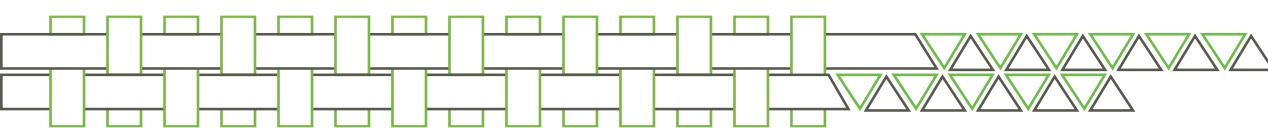


2 Ngā kaikōrero | Engagement participants

The selection of iwi and Māori rōpū for this engagement was guided by several factors including geographic distribution, readiness to participate in infrastructure initiatives, existing involvement in infrastructure, and commercial aspirations. Representation included groups with both settled and unsettled Treaty claims. Other Māori rōpū engaged with included Māori Workforce Development Teams of Waihanga Ara Rau and Hanga Aro Rau due to their established connections to the infrastructure sector. Given the timeframe, a targeted and strategic approach was necessary to ensure that engagement captured a breadth of perspectives while remaining feasible within project constraints. Levels of engagement varied throughout the project - some iwi contributed through multiple face-to-face hui, while others began their relationship with Te Waihanga through workshop attendance. Te Waihanga recognises and values all contributions and welcomes the opportunity to strengthen and broaden these relationships. Future would ensure an even wider range of iwi and Māori voices are reflected.

Table 1 Engagement with iwi between March and September 2025

	Attended NIP Workshop/ hui (2024)	Engagement with Testing our thinking for NIP (2024)	Hui kanohi ki te kanohi (Virtual or in person)	Engaged in Consultation of Draft NIP
Iwi				
Te Hiku Iwi				
Ngāpuhi				
Waikato Tainui				
Ngāti Pāhauwera				
Tamatea Pōkai Whenua (Heretaunga Tamaatea)				
Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga				
Ngā Iwi o Taranaki				
Te Kaahui o Rauru				
Ngāti Raukawa				
Te Āti Awa				
Ngāti Toa Rangatira				
Ngāi Tahu				
Rōpū Māori				
Waihanga Ara Rau				
Hanga Aro Rau				





3 Te tirohanga whānui whai wāhi | Engagement overview

This section summarises the themes emerging from participating iwi and rōpū Māori regarding their perspectives on infrastructure, grounded in te ao Māori. The summary includes:

- **Key infrastructure priorities**
- **Key infrastructure drivers**
- **Key infrastructure concerns**
- **Key infrastructure aspirations**

Each key summary is structured into two parts: 'What we heard,' which captures the direct feedback shared by iwi during our conversations, and 'Insights,' which provide further context and explanation of these discussions.

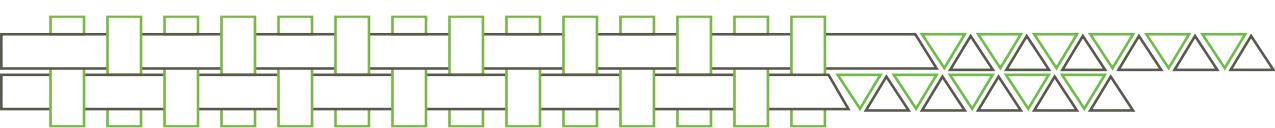
3.1 Ngā whakaarotau mātua| Key priorities

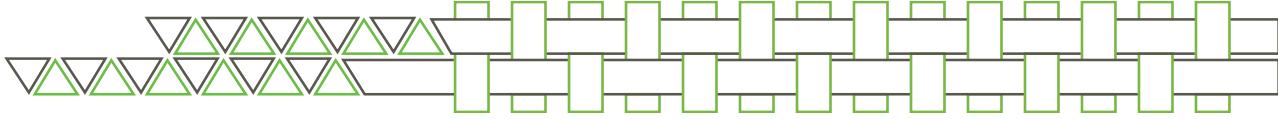
The priorities of participating iwi and Māori rōpū on infrastructure reflect their aspirations for development within their rohe or regions, and for infrastructure designed to meet their community needs.

3.1.1 What we heard

Iwi/ Māori rōpū shared their key priorities in participating in infrastructure, and we have identified the following emerging themes:

Emerging theme	Insights shared
Kaitiakitanga	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>As kaitiaki of the whenua and tangata.</i>• <i>Looking after te taiao, it doesn't need to be compromised when commercial is involved.</i>• <i>Enhance the wellbeing, prosperity and mana of its people and through manaaki to the manuhiri across its rohe.</i>





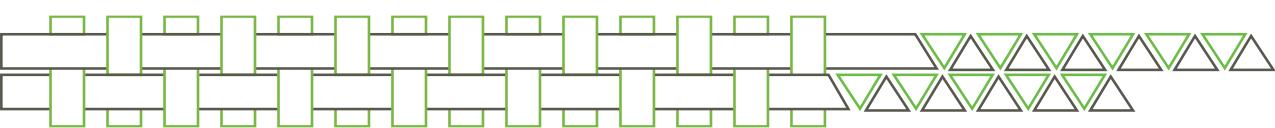
3.1.2 Insights

A strong theme throughout the engagement was the importance of being good kaitiaki — caring for both their people and the environment. Iwi shared that when they build, or plan to build, infrastructure, it is always done with and alongside the environment, ensuring the wellbeing of both their people and the taiao.

At the heart of this view is their whakapapa, or genealogy, which forms the foundation of the deep connection of tangata whenua to the natural world. Māori made it clear in conversations, rivers, mountains, and the land are not just physical features; they are tūpuna (ancestors) with whom they share an ongoing, living relationship. This is captured in the whakataukī, “Ko au te whenua, ko te whenua ko au” (I am the land and the land is me) expressing the inseparability of people and place.

This connection is not abstract, it is lived and affirmed every time Māori introduce themselves, beginning with their mountain and river, situating themselves within the landscape and their ancestral heritage and we heard this in their introductions during the engagements. Such introductions ground individuals in their whakapapa and serve as reminder of responsibilities to their whānau, community, and environment. From this foundation comes a strong sense of stewardship. Tangata whenua embrace their role as kaitiaki of the taiao, acting as guardians entrusted with protecting and nurturing the natural world. This responsibility is woven into the Māori worldview, shaped by creation narratives that honour the sacred relationship between earth, sky, and all living things. Iwi reiterated they assert their rangatiratanga by working to enhance the wellbeing, prosperity and mana of its people and through manaaki to the manuhiri across its rohe.

Recognising and upholding these connections is vital in the context of infrastructure development. Iwi reiterated the importance of prioritising the wellbeing of all people in their rohe and taking a holistic approach to planning and infrastructure, and the benefits across Aotearoa, supporting communities, New Zealanders, environment, and future generations. Projects that reflect Māori values and acknowledge the mana of the environment ensure that development is about building for the future, but about preserving the relationship between people, place, and whakapapa





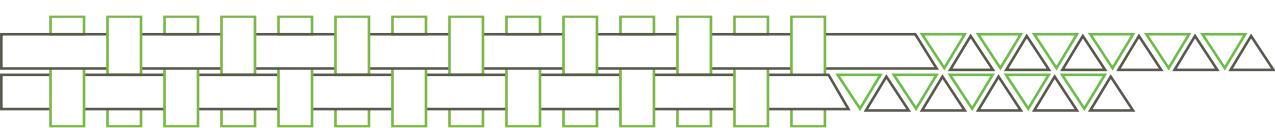
3.2 Ngā aweawe mātua | Key drivers

We understand when designing and planning infrastructure within iwi and Māori rōpū rohe, it is essential to understand their key drivers. These drivers reveal the underlying reasons and motivations for iwi/ Māori rōpū engagement in infrastructure projects, and they highlight the critical considerations the Crown must account for when designing, planning, and engaging with Māori. Identifying key drivers helped shape our engagement with iwi and Māori.

3.2.1 What we heard

Participating iwi/ Māori rōpū shared valuable insights into the key motivations driving their investment in and participation with infrastructure projects, the following reoccurring themes arose during our engagements with participating iwi/Māori rōpū.

Emerging theme	Insights shared
To retain and gain infrastructure sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Iwi/ Māori rōpū see sovereignty in infrastructure access. It ensures people have power, kai and other needs.</i><i>Iwi/ Māori rōpū are also looking at assets that offer opportunities to regenerate the land.</i><i>Iwi are leaning into infrastructure provision and self-sufficiency to ensure their people are not leaving.</i>
Changing populations and demographics, and regional concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Population and demographic changes where iwi acknowledge Māori population growth with younger demographic is changing their needs in infrastructure.</i><i>For example, Te Waipounamu is forecast to have a smaller proportion of New Zealand's population, but Ngāi Tahu will form a greater proportion within this.</i><i>The lack of population density makes infrastructure challenging, as iwi are having to compensate for those regional areas with low Crown investment.</i><i>Infrastructure needs to actively be designed for rural realities, where 3G shutdowns and underinvestment continue to isolate communities.</i>
Pathways to opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Infrastructure and housing developments create pathways, giving rangatahi opportunity for possibility.</i>
Retaining culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Iwi/ Māori rōpū want to have more say in infrastructure, having representatives on projects could ensure influence on outcomes.</i><i>Through educating and training their people in their reo, culture, and tikanga in iwi led infrastructure training, means they and their people can design in their way.</i>



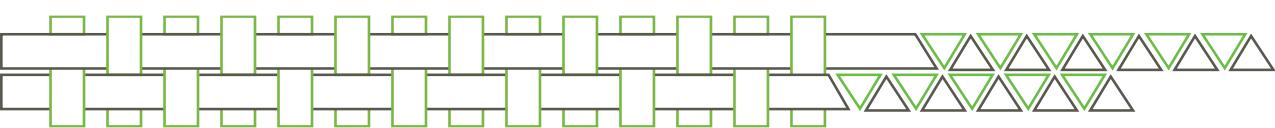


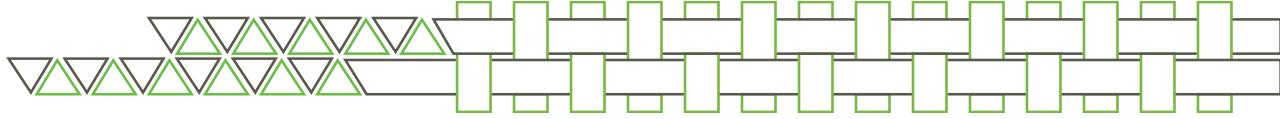
Health outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Dry, safe healthy homes, lead to positive Māori health outcomes.</i><i>Wai is a taonga and the source of life. The state of wai is directly connected to the health and wellbeing of iwi and their people, culture, and environment. When wai is protected and its mauri upheld, their whānau thrive.</i>
Te Tiriti o Waitangi and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>The right of first refusal has helped ensure some iwi are engaged with on infrastructure and has helped facilitate many of those early conversations.</i><i>Misconception on projects about engaging with iwi is that iwi are going to pull the handbrake on projects, rather the attitude should change, as iwi need to be looked at as an asset of knowledge.</i><i>The legacy of infrastructure development, often implemented without Māori input or consent, has left both visible and intangible marks. Roads, dams, rail corridors, and transmission lines were placed through whenua frequently enabled by legislation such as the Public Works Act, which facilitated the compulsory acquisition of Māori land. These developments resulted in the forced removal of Māori communities, the fragmentation of whenua, and the degradation or destruction of sites of cultural and environmental significance.</i>
Climate impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Resilience is a high priority for many iwi and there are some big challenges ahead in maintaining infrastructure that is grounded in resilience, sustainability, and cultural responsiveness. Without a clear understanding of the condition and risks of assets, government agencies and communities cannot plan effectively or make informed decisions about whether to relocate, reinforce, or decommission infrastructure.</i>

3.2.2 Insights

These drivers show that iwi/ Māori rōpū are motivated to participate in infrastructure development, planning, and design to have a stronger voice in what happens within their rohe. iwi bring a forward-planning mindset, grounded in intergenerational thinking. This was clear in our engagements, where iwi were already considering population growth and demographic shifts within their takiwā. They recognise that while some areas are expanding, infrastructure is not being designed or sufficiently invested in by the Crown in particular areas which impact their people. As a result, iwi are stepping in to plan and build in these spaces. A common example is housing developments, where iwi are investing to ensure their people have warm, healthy homes, in turn supporting positive health outcomes and taking preventative action that, over time, will ease pressure on health systems. Iwi are also actively planning for climate change adaptation and resilience, not only in the design of their infrastructure but in how they mobilise and protect their people. With deep knowledge of their lands, iwi have seen first-hand the impacts of climate change, particularly following events such as Cyclone Gabrielle, impacting marae, homes, and their communities.

At the same time, it was acknowledged the long history iwi and Māori have experienced with infrastructure, from the impacts of the Public Works Act and land confiscations (New Zealand Infrastructure Commission | Te Waihanga, 2024) to more recent projects that excluded iwi as genuine partners. Iwi/ Māori rōpū shared Treaty settlements position iwi as partners, the infrastructure system has not always operated in a fair or equitable way.





In response, iwi are increasingly taking matters into their own hands - planning and designing infrastructure to address the legacy of poor Council and Crown planning, to protect their whenua, and to break cycles of infrastructure decisions which impact them. Iwi were clear that participation in infrastructure decision-making is essential to protect the wellbeing and health of their people. Iwi raised concerns about digital infrastructure in rural locations that still face unreliable connectivity due to geography, infrastructure gaps, and high costs (Tech users Association NZ, 2025). Connectivity is essential for education, employment, healthcare, and social participation. In effect the same challenges impacting the social and economic growth of rural areas is also experienced by iwi. Iwi also shared concerns about underinvestment in aging infrastructure leaving drinking water, wastewater connections to papakāinga, and stormwater systems fragile. Discharges into awa threaten their mauri, undermining both environmental integrity and the health of whānau. These realities drive iwi to assert their role in infrastructure planning and delivery.

These realities drive iwi to assert their role in partnering in infrastructure planning and delivery. Through efforts, iwi are working to realise tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake.

Iwi want the first right to develop and invest in projects within their rohe. The Right of First Refusal (RFR) means that when the Crown wants to sell or lease certain land (often for 50 years or more), iwi who hold that right through their Treaty settlement must be offered it first. If iwi choose not to take up the offer, the Crown can then sell or lease the land to others, but never on better terms than what was offered to iwi (Toitū Te Whenua, n.d.). Many iwi Treaty settlements already include a RFR, yet iwi have shared that this is not always honoured in practice. For iwi, RFR is about more than land sales, it is about upholding Treaty commitments, ensuring whenua is not lost again, and creating opportunities for iwi to invest and lead in development before overseas or outside investors are considered. Honouring this right strengthens the opportunity for iwi in exercising rangatiratanga in infrastructure.

A key theme emerging from the engagement was that iwi often have distinct infrastructure needs, alongside local values, interests, and sites of cultural significance that must be recognised. For iwi, ensuring these factors are taken into account is essential in making sure infrastructure is both designed and placed appropriately.





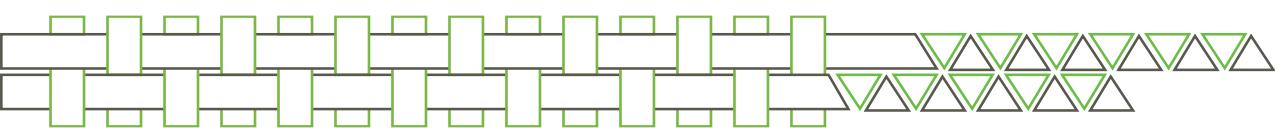
3.3 Ngā āwangananga mātua| Key concerns

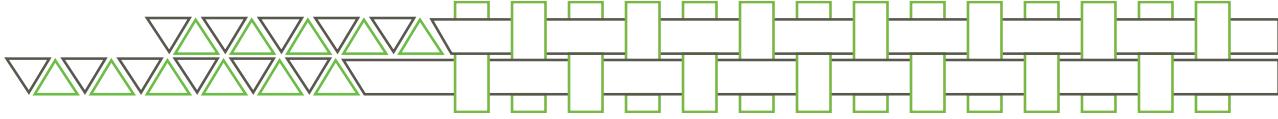
We recognise iwi have rarely been given the full opportunity to express their specific challenges and concerns and too often these conversations have been limited to project-by-project rather than enabling iwi to share their challenges and priorities through a holistic, long-term systemic approach. Through this engagement, we were able to hear firsthand about the infrastructure issues within their rohe. These concerns provide valuable insight into their fears, barriers, and ongoing challenges.

3.3.1 What we heard

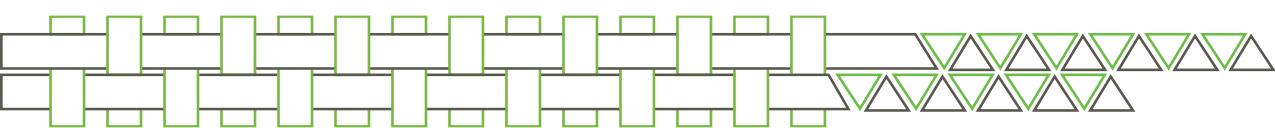
Iwi/ Māori shared insights to their concerns, challenges and barriers of investing in and participating in infrastructure.

Emerging theme	Insights shared
Governance, decisions, and spatial planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Frequently decisions on infrastructure projects are made without talking to people with local and historical knowledge.</i><i>Many projects go across takiwā. An understanding of tribal areas is needed.</i><i>When bringing in Māori members into boards to help inform projects, developers, designers, planners, Councils and Crown need to consider a true representation of the area not just one person for the entire area made up of a variety of hapū.</i><i>Iwi are ready to co-lead infrastructure delivery, but are not yet resourced to do so.</i>
Crown and politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Too many layers of local government and lack of clarity around responsibilities.</i><i>Local and central government need to be better joined up and be clear on touchpoints for iwi and hapū.</i><i>Frequent churn in decisions due to changes in government policy, which is seen as wasteful and can lead to distrust and consultation fatigue.</i><i>Short political cycles disrupt long-term infrastructure planning and decision-making. The laws around the development of Māori land need to be fair and equitable.</i><i>The need for infrastructure to be depoliticised and a recognition that the decisions made through short political cycles have big implications for future generations.</i>
Engagement approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Engagement consultation periods are often too short and are not clear on expected outcomes.</i><i>Engagement happens too late, with short time frames and is transactional.</i><i>The way engagement is done - visualisations are a good communication tool.</i><i>Cultural upskilling for government, developers and those engaging.</i>





Valuing expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Expectations that iwi and hapū will engage, but very few incentives - frequently expected to provide a range of technical expertise with little or no support (and a lack of understanding of limited time and other commitments).</i> <i>Relationships are often based on individual projects, as opposed to building ongoing relationships focused on strategic outcomes.</i>
Crown obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Understanding that government want a relationship with iwi – but iwi have their own kaupapa, so more consideration is needed of what can be offered to iwi.</i> <i>Infrastructure does not go far enough to embed the Crown's obligations to iwi under existing Treaty settlements.</i> <i>National Infrastructure Plan needs to reflect the obligations of the Treaty relationship, acknowledges the lived experience of iwi, and delivers infrastructure that upholds intergenerational wellbeing, not just economic productivity.</i> <i>Treaty settlement instruments, legislation, or enduring commitments are not abstract principles but legally binding commitments that form the foundation of our relationship with the Crown. Despite their legal status, these instruments are at risk of being diluted or bypassed under the current infrastructure settings.</i>
Different project priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Projects lacking intergenerational and long-term thinking and integrating the long-term consequences of spatial, environmental, and climate-related infrastructure impacts in rohe.</i> <i>There are challenges are in connecting papakāinga to wastewater.</i> <i>Theres can be digital inequities in regional rohe, including access and digital infrastructure.</i>
Under investment and asset decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Maintaining what we have before building new — this is particularly relevant in places, where basic water, roading, and wastewater infrastructure has been under-maintained for decades.</i> <i>Regional experience of underinvestment, asset decline, and infrastructure stress — particularly on freshwater, whenua, and rural transport.</i>
Funding and financing barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Funding and financing - difficulties in accessing capital and frequently need to look offshore for project funding.</i> <i>Investment borrowing rate concerns as iwi partners, post settlement iwi should have access to the same rates as government entities.</i> <i>Independence and transparency from Crown when it comes to project selection and funding.</i>
Environmental concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>In some places, the development of the whenua is happening at a rate that other ecosystems cannot keep up.</i> <i>The impacts of climate change on whenua Māori require targeted infrastructure responses — including drinking water resilience, wastewater reform, and transport access — all of which must be designed with whānau at the centre.</i>





Contributing to the Māori economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Smaller Māori contractors can lack capability and time needed to apply for larger tier 1 and tier 2 tenders. Health and safety requirements, while important, can be prohibitive for many.</i><i>Pastoral care and training are important for developing people in these businesses.</i><i>Iwi need the time to mobilise and prepare, there needs to be investment in iwi to build capability for infrastructure development in their rohe.</i><i>There is commonly an expectation and responsibility on Māori business owners that their successes are shared within the community. These are costs these employers must own, they are not able to factor them into their pricing if they want to stay competitive. Māori employers have expectations from their whānau to support others.</i>
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3.3.2 Insights

We found that there are widespread concerns about current infrastructure and the way it is planned, concerns shared across many communities, groups, and sectors involved in infrastructure. Engagement in infrastructure projects was a recurring theme in feedback from iwi and Māori rōpū. A major concern raised was that engagement is often too short-term and transactional. Iwi emphasised they are not stakeholders, but Treaty partners under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Iwi described relationships with infrastructure project teams as limited in scope, focused solely on individual projects, rather than fostering enduring, meaningful partnerships. This approach, they noted, rarely considers intergenerational impacts, leaving long-term planning and community benefits underdeveloped. Often in the infrastructure industry, 'good' engagement with iwi and Māori is described to require genuine and respectful collaboration. However, iwi shared that the way engagement is currently framed often overlooks the critical elements that make it meaningful.

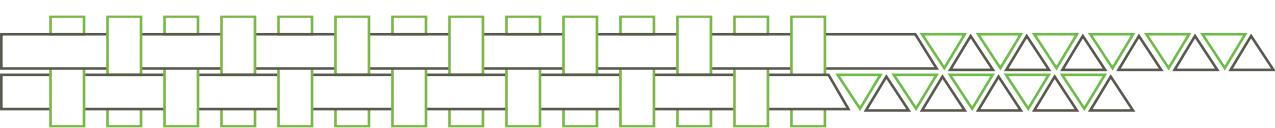
These include:

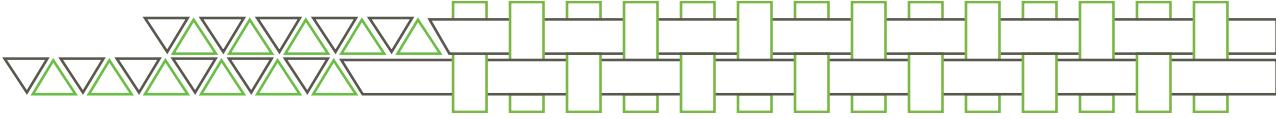
- engaging as early as possible,
- being clear with the purpose of engagement,
- maintaining clear and consistent communication,
- recognising the relevant context such as rangatiratanga status and Treaty settlement commitments,
- being open to exploring strategic alignment with iwi-led projects.

It is essential for Māori involvement in decision-making and spatial planning. Iwi recognised that some infrastructure developers may face challenges when engaging with iwi and Māori. From the perspective of iwi and Māori rōpū, these challenges often stem from a lack of understanding, poor preparation, and a transactional approach where engagement is delayed or treated as a compliance exercise.

“Iwi are more than ‘stakeholders.’”

Part of submission by iwi on draft NIP





These are not issues of iwi capacity, but of the development sector failing to acknowledge the value, legal authority (through Treaty settlements) and insights iwi bring to infrastructure decision-making. Iwi shared when this is overlooked, engagement feels disingenuous and misaligned.

“...obligations are not abstract principles but legally binding commitments.”

Part of submission by iwi on draft NIP

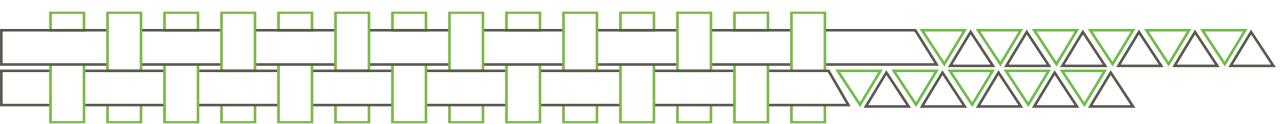
A consistent concern raised through our engagements was the limited recognition of Treaty settlements and the Crown’s obligations to iwi within infrastructure planning and development. Many expressed that the commitments made through settlements, legislation, and enduring agreements have not been realised to their fullest potential, despite their status as legally binding instruments that shape how infrastructure should be planned, developed, and delivered.

These partnership obligations are not abstract principles; they form the foundation of the relationship between iwi and the Crown. Yet under the current infrastructure settings, there is a real risk that these commitments may be diluted or bypassed. There is currently a lack of mechanism to properly recognise and give weight to settlement instruments in national infrastructure planning processes.

Some iwi highlighted the risk that fast-track consenting and nationally significant infrastructure policies could override settlement obligations. They noted the absence of consistent mechanisms to embed Treaty commitments within investment and regulatory frameworks. In the long run, iwi expect a predictable and stable policy environment, one that honours Treaty obligations and provides certainty that Māori rights and interests will not be compromised by short-term legislative or policy shifts.

Iwi emphasised that any plan influencing infrastructure decisions must meet the standards required of regulatory or decision-making instruments. This includes ensuring alignment with existing Treaty settlements, redress agreements, which provide the foundation for enduring relationships and certainty for both iwi and the Crown. There was also strong acknowledgement that stable and coherent infrastructure policy settings are necessary to give infrastructure investors’ confidence and reduce the risk of disruption. However, iwi are clear that stability cannot come at the expense of rights and responsibilities guaranteed through formal settlements. True stability must be built on integrity, by designing policy frameworks that uphold, rather than marginalise, existing commitments.

The absence of dedicated policy and regulatory tools in infrastructure for Māori has long been a barrier to economic growth and to the aspirations of Māori communities. While a system-wide approach, such as the National Infrastructure Plan, is a step in the right direction, iwi stressed that it must go further. A notable result for Māori would be the recognition of responsibilities the Crown entities, and both public and private sectors hold as Treaty partners. This includes ensuring alignment with existing Treaty settlements and redress agreements. Only then can infrastructure development in Aotearoa genuinely reflect the obligations, partnerships, and opportunities embedded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and subsequent settlement agreements.





Some of the most influential long-term investors are iwi. They shared they have a direct and growing interest in infrastructure across housing, transport, renewable energy, property development, three waters, logistics and trade, and digital connectivity. Iwi/ Māori rōpū expressed a clear interest in being more actively involved in infrastructure development. Some iwi welcome the recognition of the Māori-Crown partnership under Te Tiriti and strongly back investment models that enable iwi-led development. They highlighted significant challenges in accessing funding and capital to support these projects, while some iwi shared, they would like to see investment borrowing rates be the same for iwi as they are for Crown entities. Some iwi have had to seek offshore investors to bring projects to fruition, like Waikato-Tainui.

Other iwi shared they want to be seen as strategic partners; iwi like Ngāi Tahu highlight their track record as a proven delivery partner, strategic investor, and experienced developer of whānau-centred, commercially successful projects that reflect cultural values and navigate complex planning frameworks. The Wigram Skies development in Christchurch highlights this capability, transforming the former Wigram Aerodrome into a vibrant community of over 2,000 homes, integrated infrastructure, and a thriving commercial hub (Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, 2021). The project reflects the values of Ngāi Tahu in intergenerational stewardship, cultural respect, and sustainable urban design, demonstrating iwi leadership in shaping resilient, future-focused developments.

Iwi shared that they are ready to co-lead the delivery of infrastructure and bring forward approaches grounded in long-term stewardship. Iwi noted that currently New Zealand spends heavily on infrastructure, yet too often this investment does not deliver the outcomes communities need. The issue is not simply about spending more, but about addressing deeper structural and governance settings. They noted that current ownership models, governed by central and local government, are not always designed for whole-of-life asset management, innovation, or intergenerational planning iwi expressed a clear message: “We need to look after what infrastructure already exists before building new”.

CASE STUDY

Waikato-Tainui Partnership

This case study is an example of an iwi partnering with offshore investors to develop infrastructure.

Waikato-Tainui, through Tainui Group Holdings (TGH) has partnered with global alternative asset manager Brookfield Asset Management (Brookfield) in a long-term joint venture to drive the development of Ruakura Superhub in Hamilton, New Zealand.

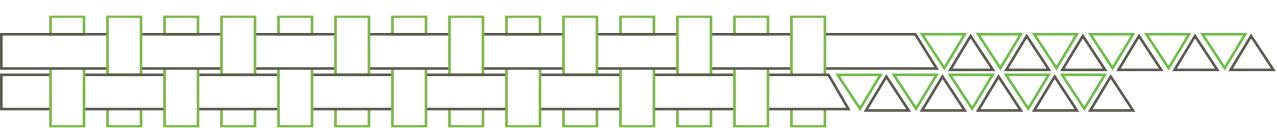
This joint venture demonstrates how iwi are making strategic investment decisions and forming partnerships to realise their infrastructure aspirations.

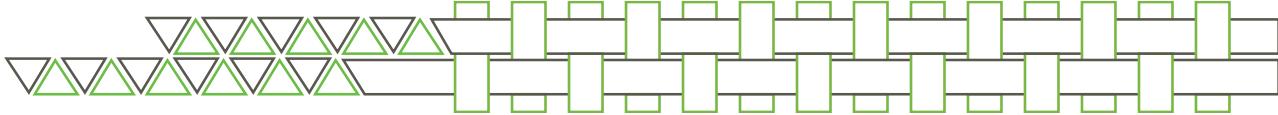
Waikato-Tainui will retain ownership of all 610 hectares of land across the Superhub precinct while TGH provides investment, development, and property management expertise to the venture. The partnership will develop a further 70-hectares of intermodal logistics assets, with a forecasted completion value exceeding NZ\$1 billion (Tainui Group Holdings, 2025).

This partnership illustrates how iwi are overcoming financial barriers and forming strategic collaborations to develop infrastructure on their terms, guided by their values.

“We need to fix the leaks, not just keep buying bigger mops.”

- Shared in hui by Helmut Modlik - Tumu Whakarae, Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira



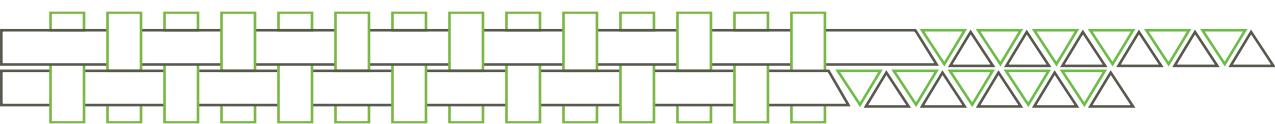


They called for a stronger focus on repairing, strengthening, and making better use of existing assets, while ensuring that planning rules and intensification strategies do not override regional aspirations or Māori land interests. Iwi also called for independent audits and transparent reporting on the true condition of infrastructure, so communities can trust that decisions are made with honesty and accountability. The current user-pays model for network infrastructure (fuel taxes, rates, etc.) does not consistently capture value, particularly from high-use, high-profit private sector users. In practice, these costs are often passed on to the average consumer, while larger commercial users are not paying their fair share. Some iwi supported a more consistent cost-recovery model. Iwi support fairer and more consistent funding models, including:

- Mechanisms to prevent cost-shifting by private sector operators.
- Tiered or progressive charging that reflects the scale and intensity of benefit.
- Investment rules that protect vulnerable communities and guarantee equitable access to essential services.

Iwi have highlighted that a range of policy reforms such as water services reform, conservation law reform, resource management reform, and climate resilience and adaptation reform - are rapidly evolving and carry significant implications for infrastructure development. While these reforms are intended to strengthen environmental and community outcomes, iwi believe the policy interrelationship with Treaty settlements has not been clearly defined. In practice, implementation pathways often lack mechanisms to ensure place-based alignment with Treaty settlement instruments, iwi planning documents, or local environmental objectives. This gap creates uncertainty for iwi and risks undermining the integrity of existing agreements. Policy concerns and decisions made by the Crown continue to illustrate the absence of a coherent framework for recognising iwi as Treaty partners in infrastructure settings. In particular, the lack of clear infrastructure policy has stalled both wider economic growth and the aspirations of Māori communities. The short-term planning of many infrastructure projects and policies surrounding infrastructure poses practical challenges. Māori businesses frequently lack sufficient time to mobilise resources, develop capacity, and prepare for large-scale projects in their takiwā, limiting their ability to contribute effectively. Iwi expressed that economic growth and productivity should not outweigh other priorities in project decisions. However, many iwi strongly support growing a skilled, sustainable, and regionally based infrastructure workforce. True success in infrastructure lies not only in what is built, but in who builds and maintains it. For too long, workforce planning in Aotearoa has been centralised and short-sighted, failing to reflect demographic shifts or regional needs. Transparent infrastructure policies and Crown decisions, independent of short political cycles, offer an opportunity to reset the system — building a future-ready workforce that unlocks Māori potential, particularly for rangatahi. Across many iwi takiwā, traditional industries such as forestry and manufacturing are in decline, yet there is a young, capable workforce eager to train and work on their own whenua. Realising this potential requires targeted investment in reskilling, apprenticeships, post-redundancy support, and clear pathways into high-value roles. Iwi emphasised the need for more intentional, long-term engagement strategies and infrastructure planning to ensure Māori involvement is meaningful, enduring, and aligned with community aspirations. With greater visibility of long-term priorities, iwi and Māori businesses can prepare, position, and mobilise to contribute effectively to future infrastructure delivery.

Concerns were also raised around transparency in project selection and government investment processes. Māori rōpū noted that there is often limited clarity on how projects are chosen and the terms of investment, which can hinder trust and meaningful participation. Iwi shared the short political cycles undermine consistent, long-term infrastructure planning and make it difficult to deliver on and plan for intergenerational priorities.





3.4 Ngā wawata mātua | Key aspirations

Iwi/ Māori rōpū are long term thinkers and planners, with mokopuna at the heart of decisions. Many iwi have developed multi-decade plans to guide their futures. Through engagement, iwi shared their aspirations for infrastructure — some already reflected in existing plans, and others being woven into new iterations as their vision continues to evolve.

3.4.1 What we heard

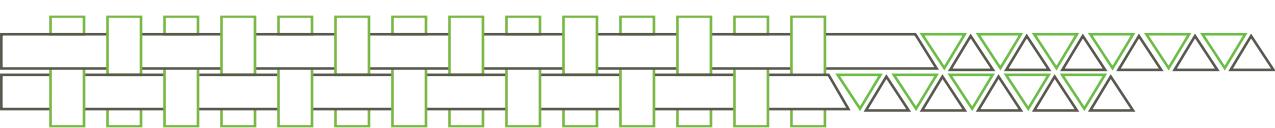
Iwi/ Māori rōpū shared the following aspirations for infrastructure in their rohe.

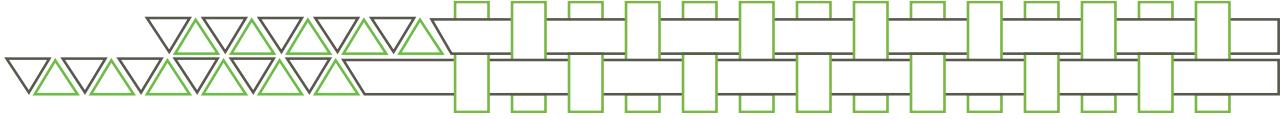
Emerging theme	Insights shared
Intergenerational and holistic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Holistic and intergenerational approach to development - Iwi bring an intergenerational perspective and a worldview of 'people in place'.</i><i>Iwi/ Māori rōpū would like to see government take a portfolio approach to social investment.</i><i>There's a need to break down silos and think more holistically about infrastructure services</i>
To hold a louder voice in infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Other indigenous communities around the world also watch New Zealand and iwi with interest, particularly how to take a holistic and partnership approach to projects and investment.</i><i>Iwi welcome the opportunity to have a greater voice on infrastructure, rather than through ad hoc mechanisms.</i><i>Iwi/ Māori rōpū are seeking overseas investors.</i><i>Iwi/ Māori rōpū have strong interest in ensuring that future infrastructure decisions do not repeat the mistakes of the past.</i>

3.4.2 Insights

Iwi hold a growing interest and involvement across multiple sectors of infrastructure, including housing, transport, renewable energy, property development, three waters, logistics and trade, and digital connectivity. In some regions, iwi have already established themselves as long-term, influential investors. The aspirations shared by iwi/ Māori rōpū during engagements demonstrate a strong desire to have a more influential and have a lasting voice in infrastructure development and planning. They expressed a clear willingness and enthusiasm to actively participate in shaping projects that affect their takiwā. Many are already taking proactive steps, including seeking their own investors, to support infrastructure initiatives that align with their communities' needs and values.

Beyond financial participation, iwi and Māori rōpū emphasised the need for holistic approaches to infrastructure. They want to see traditional silos broken down, with projects designed to deliver interconnected outcomes social, cultural, environmental, and economic, rather than treating each in isolation. This reflects a broader vision of infrastructure that not only addresses immediate needs but also strengthens intergenerational well-being and long-term community resilience.





4 Ngā āheinga mō te NIP | Opportunities for the NIP

This summary report brings together key insights and themes emerging from the engagements. We recommend that Te Waihanga continues nurturing the relationships formed and/or built during the engagement process. Sustained engagement will ensure that Te Waihanga can provide the Crown with independent advice that is informed, representative, and reflective of the diverse iwi across Aotearoa.

Key themes analysed following the engagements have informed some recommendations to be considered for the National Infrastructure Plan:

Embed long-term, intergenerational planning

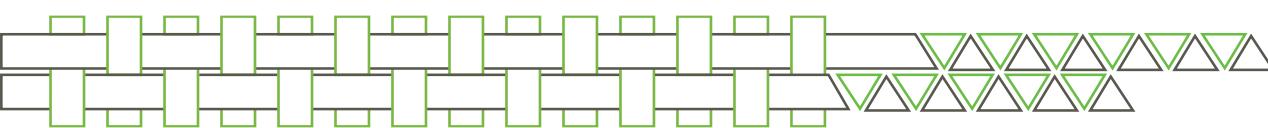
- Incorporate intergenerational thinking across all major infrastructure strategies, ensuring projects anticipate demographic shifts, climate impacts, and evolving community needs. Explicitly assess how Māori population change will affect demand for housing, transport, health, and social services to support sustainable growth and resilient infrastructure systems.

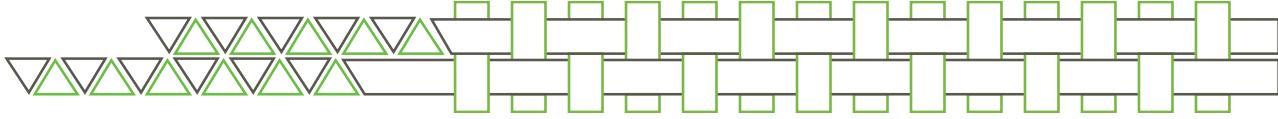
Strengthen Partnerships with Iwi/ Māori rōpū

- Move beyond transactional engagement to build long-term, collaborative relationships. Recognise iwi as genuine partners with influence across all stages of the project lifecycle, including planning, design, delivery, and monitoring.
- Ensuring Māori rights, interests, and aspirations are considered in planning.
- Consider iwi and hapū structured approaches to influence regional and national infrastructure, land use, and environmental decisions.

Enhanced recognition of Treaty settlements, legal commitments and obligations

- Explicitly recognise iwi as Treaty partners, investors, and experts in infrastructure, not just stakeholders.
- Embed Treaty settlements, legislation, and enduring commitments into national policy, regulation, and investment frameworks.
- Acknowledge iwi leadership in shaping outcomes, with expectations of early, sustained, and genuine engagement.
- Provide clear mechanisms for iwi participation in regional planning, consenting, and governance, ensuring iwi management plans align with the National Infrastructure Plan and spatial plans.
- Safeguard iwi rights by ensuring all infrastructure planning and regulatory frameworks uphold Treaty settlements and redress agreements.





- Honour and consistently apply the Right of First Refusal (RFR) provisions in Treaty settlements, ensuring iwi have the first opportunity to invest in and develop projects within their rohe. Extending the principle of Right of First Refusal (RFR) beyond land sales to include major infrastructure opportunities, strengthening iwi rangatiratanga and enabling iwi-led development before external investors are considered.
- Make project selection criteria, funding mechanisms, and investment terms transparent and accessible to support iwi and Māori businesses.
- Provide guidance, capacity-building support, and early visibility of pipelines to help iwi and Māori businesses prepare for large-scale infrastructure projects.
- Remove barriers to participation by establishing co-funding models, iwi–Crown partnerships, and public–private pathways, ensuring iwi have access to investment terms and rates comparable to those available to Crown agencies and local government.
- Publish project business cases, budget requests, and supporting evidence to restore trust and enable informed engagement.

Improve transparency and access to investment

Promote holistic, integrated infrastructure approaches

- Encourage multi-disciplinary design that integrates environmental, cultural, social, and economic outcomes. Support infrastructure that reflects iwi values and contributes to intergenerational well-being.

Workforce development

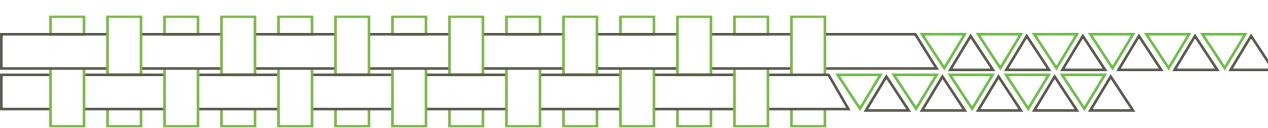
- Strengthen the ability of Māori businesses to participate in infrastructure projects through training, mentorship, funding pathways, and long-term capability development, enabling timely and meaningful contribution to project delivery.
- Recognise infrastructure needs to service the needs of a young and growing Māori population and address the education and workforce requirements for the population shifts.
- Establish regional workforce partnership agreements with iwi and embed iwi formally in the workforce development system.

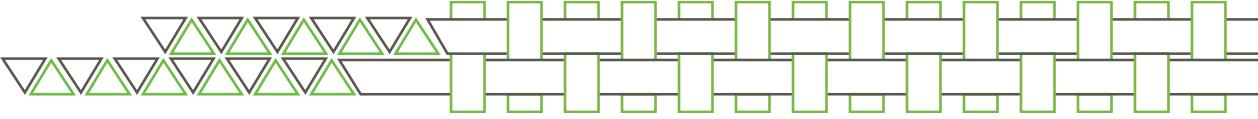
Ensure coherence across policy and regulatory frameworks

- Align infrastructure planning with rapidly evolving reforms (water, conservation, climate, consenting) to reduce fragmentation, provide certainty for investors, and ensure alignment with iwi planning and settlement instruments.

Recognise historical context and tino rangatiratanga

- Recognise historical impacts of infrastructure development and support projects that enable Māori self-determination (tino rangatiratanga) and mana motuhake, allowing iwi to actively shape infrastructure outcomes in their takiwā.





5 He whakarāpopotanga | Summary

Infrastructure planning presents a critical opportunity to recognise iwi and Māori rōpū exercise rangatiratanga, to bring deep expertise in understanding of the environment. Iwi/ rōpū Māori want to stand as delivery partners with capital, capability, and a proven record of successful projects. Iwi are more than ‘stakeholders’ they want infrastructure policies, systems, and processes that create genuine opportunities for iwi who are ready to invest.

Past experiences of infrastructure highlight the importance of not repeating the mistakes of previous infrastructure decisions. Iwi have distinct infrastructure needs, shaped by unique values, local priorities, and sites of cultural significance that must be recognised. Embedding these perspectives from the outset is essential to designing infrastructure that is not only technically sound but also culturally appropriate and located in the right places. For iwi, meaningful policy reform must deliver stronger infrastructure outcomes while embedding Treaty commitments providing certainty, respecting rangatiratanga, and enabling local solutions to thrive.

Engagement with iwi and Māori rōpū has revealed clear and consistent priorities for infrastructure planning, rooted in cultural values, intergenerational thinking, and a strong sense of kaitiakitanga. Future planning must reflect iwi roles as enduring stewards of the whenua and as partners in shaping Aotearoa’s long-term development.

Key themes, which emerged from the engagements, can help shape infrastructure that is inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to the aspirations of tangata whenua.

Kaitiakitanga – Place-based decision-making

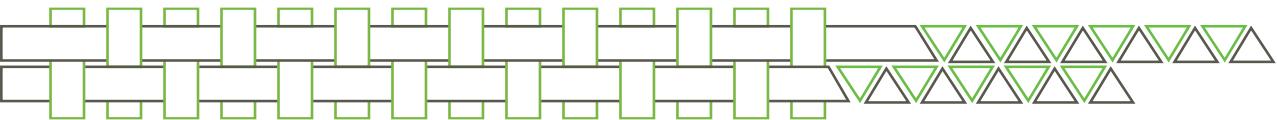
Iwi and Māori rōpū consistently emphasised their role as kaitiaki, or guardians, of the environment. Infrastructure projects are seen as inseparable from the natural world, reflecting deep whakapapa connections with rivers, mountains, and land, which are regarded as tūpuna. Any development must respect and uphold the mana of the environment, and expertise around the environment, ensuring that social, cultural, and ecological outcomes are valued alongside economic benefits. These outcomes extend beyond iwi and Māori, delivering benefits that will be shared and experienced by all New Zealanders

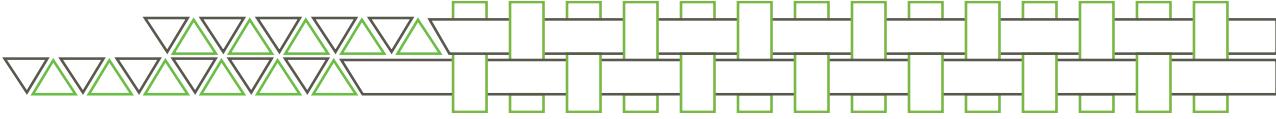
Forward – Thinking and intergenerational planning

There is a lack of transparency and clarity in how projects are selected, and investment terms are set undermines trust and limits meaningful iwi participation. Iwi bring a long-term, intergenerational perspective to planning. Māori are already preparing for population growth, housing needs, climate change adaptation, and resilience in ways that reflect their specific priorities and aspirations. Their proactive planning aims to safeguard whānau and communities, prevent future pressures on health and social systems, and respond to historic inequities in infrastructure provision.

Challenges in engagement and participation

Engagement in infrastructure projects is often too short-term, transactional, and project-specific, limiting the development of enduring, meaningful partnerships. Short planning horizons hinder iwi and Māori businesses’ ability to mobilise and build the capacity necessary to participate in large-scale projects. Additionally, limited transparency around project selection and investment terms creates barriers to trust and meaningful involvement.





Financial and investment constraints

Accessing capital is a significant barrier for iwi-led infrastructure initiatives. Some iwi have had to look offshore for capital; others lack time and resources to mobilise for large projects. Without adequate support, Māori communities' risk being sidelined in the infrastructure economy.

Holistic and integrated infrastructure vision

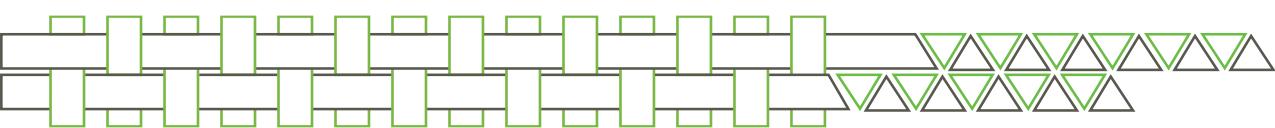
Iwi and Māori rōpū aspire to see traditional silos in infrastructure broken down, with planning and delivery that integrate social, cultural, environmental, and economic outcomes. They want infrastructure that is not only functional but contributes to long-term community well-being, resilience, and the maintenance of whakapapa relationships with the land.

6 Ngā ara ki mua | Next steps

The kōrero we captured provided valuable insights that have helped shape the direction of this report. However, there remains much to explore to ensure that Māori and iwi participation in infrastructure is equitable, meaningful, and truly representative. We have identified some areas for further investigation in future work.

- **Capture diverse voices:** Conduct further research to include a broader range of perspectives, with a particular focus on rangatahi, to understand the needs and aspirations of younger generations in the context of demographic and population changes, acknowledging Māori are a younger and fast-growing population.
- **Expand and deepen engagement:** Maintain and continue to build on engagement and relationships with iwi and Māori, ensuring the breadth and depth of participation is expanded beyond the current groups, involved in these infrastructure discussions.
- **Understand whānau and hapū experiences:** Increase engagement with individuals, whānau, and hapū to gain insight into how Māori use and interact with infrastructure, ensuring planning and delivery reflect lived experiences.
- **Investigate funding and investment opportunities:** Conduct research into funding and financing mechanisms to support iwi and Māori participation as full investment partners in infrastructure projects.
- **Support infrastructure readiness and transparency:** Mapping iwi and hapū readiness for infrastructure participation, recognising that communities are at different stages of financial and organisational preparedness. Provide guidance and transparent processes to ensure iwi have the information and tools needed to grow their participation in infrastructure planning, investment, and delivery.

Engagement findings confirmed that iwi and Māori rōpū are motivated, capable, and eager to play a central role in infrastructure development. The government has an opportunity to build stronger, more sustainable, and culturally responsive infrastructure by embedding these insights into planning, investment, and partnership models. This will not only improve outcomes for Māori communities but will also enhance resilience, equity, and sustainability across Aotearoa's infrastructure.



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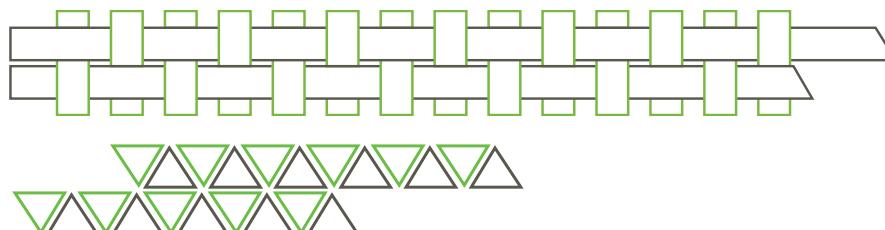
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