

Regional Focus NZ

Connecting the Regions to the World



WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF
THE 'REGIONAL FOCUS NZ' JOURNAL

NORTH CANTERBURY FOCUS

A Strategic Location, Skilled Workforce and Supportive Community - MILES DALTON, Business Support Manager

HE AHI ECO-BUSINESS PARK

Taupō's New Home For Sustainable Industry BY BRYN INGHAM, Head of Industry Growth and Insights

FUTURE PROOFING LAND

A landmark initiative for the Manawatū region and rural New Zealand - BY JERRY SHEARMAN, CE of Central Economic Development Agency

FEATURE - REGION SOUTHLAND BEYOND 2025

Setting the scene for investment
By Chami Abeysinghe, CE of Great South

NORTHLAND PROPOSES AMBITIOUS REGIONAL DEAL

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A CONCIERGE SERVICE FOR MIGRANT INVESTORS - THE FUTURE OF INVESTMENT -

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FAST TRACKING INVESTMENT IN NZ

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TRANSFORMING ECONOMIES THROUGH CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT -

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DRIVING INFORMED INVESTMENTS: HOW REGIONAL DASHBOARDS CAN POWER GROWTH IN NEW ZEALAND -

By Mubashir Mukhtar, CE of Data n Dashboards

www.regionalfocusnz.com

WELCOME TO REGIONAL FOCUS NZ

FIRST EDITION

EDITOR'S WELCOME



**DR DAVID WILSON,
CEO AND FOUNDER OF
CITIES AND REGIONS
NZ**

A warm welcome to the “Regional Focus NZ Journal”. A long held ambition by the Cities and Regions NZ team. The team has created the Journal, along with a companion website, www.regionalfocusnz.com, to assist in forging a stronger connection between the regions of Aotearoa New Zealand and investors.

The Journal, podcasts and companion website positions our regions as willing collaborators with the newly formed “Invest New Zealand” and related government entities. Our regions are investment ready. We will showcase them.

Cities and Regions NZ is pleased that the Journal and website have received overwhelming support from Economic Development Agencies throughout New Zealand and looks forward to many years of collaboration and investment success.

The Journal will be promoted to potential international and domestic investors, industry, Ministers, central and local government. Please feel free to share the Journal with your contacts. We value your feedback at susan@regionalfocusnz.com. We encourage those of you with a great investment related story to share it in the next edition of Regional Focus NZ.

David Wilson

Dr David Wilson

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Regional Focus NZ is designed and
curated by Susan Houston



**NORTH CANTERBURY, A STRATEGIC LOCATION,
SKILLED WORKFORCE AND SUPPORTIVE
COMMUNITY**

M I L E S D A L T O N

**BUSINESS SUPPORT
MANAGER, ENTERPRISE
NORTH CANTERBURY**



WHY NORTH CANTERBURY?

North Canterbury is quickly becoming one of New Zealand's most attractive destinations for businesses seeking growth, sustainability, and a supportive community. For established manufacturing businesses like Sutton Tools and Misco Joinery, the region offers a unique blend of benefits that make it an ideal place to set up shop.

One of the primary reasons businesses like Sutton Tools and Misco Joinery have chosen North Canterbury is its strategic location. Nestled just outside Christchurch, North Canterbury is an easily accessible hub, providing businesses with proximity to both a skilled workforce and key transport infrastructure. The Christchurch International Airport and major highways ensure smooth logistics, while the region's affordable land offers ample space for industrial operations.

Sutton Tools, a drill-bit manufacturer with a rich history dating back to 1917, moved to Rangiora after a devastating fire destroyed their Kaiapoi factory.

Glenn Morgan, Operations Manager at Sutton Tools, explains. The skilled workforce, proximity to infrastructure like the international airport, and support from the Waimakariri District Council were major deciding factors.”





A Supportive Community

MAKING IT EASY

Similarly, Misco Joinery saw North Canterbury as the ideal location for expansion. “The land was affordable and it was close to our homes”, Michael Chernishoff, Director at Misco, explains, “We purchased the land because we wanted to expand.”

What makes North Canterbury truly stand out is the sense of community that runs through the region. Both Sutton Tools and Misco Joinery have enjoyed immense support from the local community, businesses, and council. For Misco, who opened a purpose-built factory in 2017, the region has been instrumental in their success.

“

“The community has been so accepting of Misco Joinery, and we’ve been able to get involved in local projects, events, and sports teams,” says Glenn Colenso, Director at Misco Joinery.

”

Misco Joinery credits their success in North Canterbury to their partnership with [Enterprise North Canterbury](#), the [Waimakariri District Council](#), and local politicians. This support has allowed the company to grow from a Christchurch-based business to a significant player in the South Island, offering bespoke joinery services across the country.

North Canterbury is also a hub for businesses committed to sustainability. Sutton Tools' new Rangiora facility, set to open in 2025, is a prime example.

INNOVATIVE

The Rangiora facility will feature solar panels, EV charging stations, and advanced HVAC systems to reduce the company's carbon footprint. From spending \$70,000 per year on diesel, the company will now be returning energy to the grid.

Misco Joinery has also invested heavily in sustainable technology, with the largest solar energy panel system in Canterbury installed on their factory roof. This system will provide up to 60% of the company's energy requirements and, eventually, help support local community projects and charities. "The plan is to support a community-based project or charity," says Director Glenn Colenso, adding that the local community has been a significant part of their move to North Canterbury.

Both Sutton Tools and Misco Joinery are examples of how North Canterbury is attracting businesses with the promise of future growth. Sutton Tools expects to employ up to 100 people as their new facility ramps up, while Misco Joinery already employs 48 staff and continues to expand into new sectors, including commercial production.



North Canterbury's unique combination of strategic location, community support, and affordable opportunities makes it an attractive destination for businesses looking to grow. Companies like Sutton Tools and Misco Joinery are thriving in this dynamic environment, taking advantage of the region's infrastructure, talented workforce, and collaborative spirit. Whether you are an established company or a startup, North Canterbury offers everything you need to thrive.

As Glenn Morgan from Sutton Tools notes, "There's a real sense of community here and the pool of talent is great," says Glenn. "For us, being here is a no-brainer. We don't think it'll take long for others to see this either."

To discuss your ambitions for your business, contact Miles Dalton at Enterprise North Canterbury: miles@enterprisenc.co.nz



FEATURE ARTICLE

BEYOND 2025: PLANNING FOR INVESTMENT

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF 'GREAT SOUTH', CHAMI ABEYSINGHE



NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Murihiku Southland is on a journey of transformation through the 'Beyond 2025 Southland Long-Term Plan' – an ambitious strategy designed to future-proof the region's economic, environmental, and social wellbeing. Recognised nationally for excellence and awarded Best Practice for Integrated Strategy at the Economic Development NZ Awards, the plan sets a clear pathway to unlock opportunities, address challenges, and position Southland for long-term success.

Led and driven by Great South, the plan reflects a unified regional effort to leverage Southland's strengths and tackle pressing issues head-on. As the organisation spearheading economic development across the region, Great South has embraced its leadership role in implementing the plan's diverse programmes of work and ensuring that progress remains focused, collaborative, and impactful.

Situated at the southernmost point of New Zealand's South Island, Murihiku Southland is known for its natural beauty, rich agricultural heritage, and close-knit communities. However, like many regions with economies anchored in traditional sectors, Southland has faced challenges in diversifying its economic base, retaining talent, and ensuring resilience against global shifts.

The Beyond 2025 Southland Long-Term Plan was initiated to address these challenges with a proactive approach that balances growth, sustainability, and community wellbeing. Designed with a vision for the future, the plan aims to foster a thriving region where people want to live, work, and invest.

WHAT IS BEYOND SOUTHLAND 2025?

Developed through extensive collaboration between councils, iwi, businesses, community organisations, and residents, it provides a roadmap to balance economic opportunity with environmental protection and social equity.

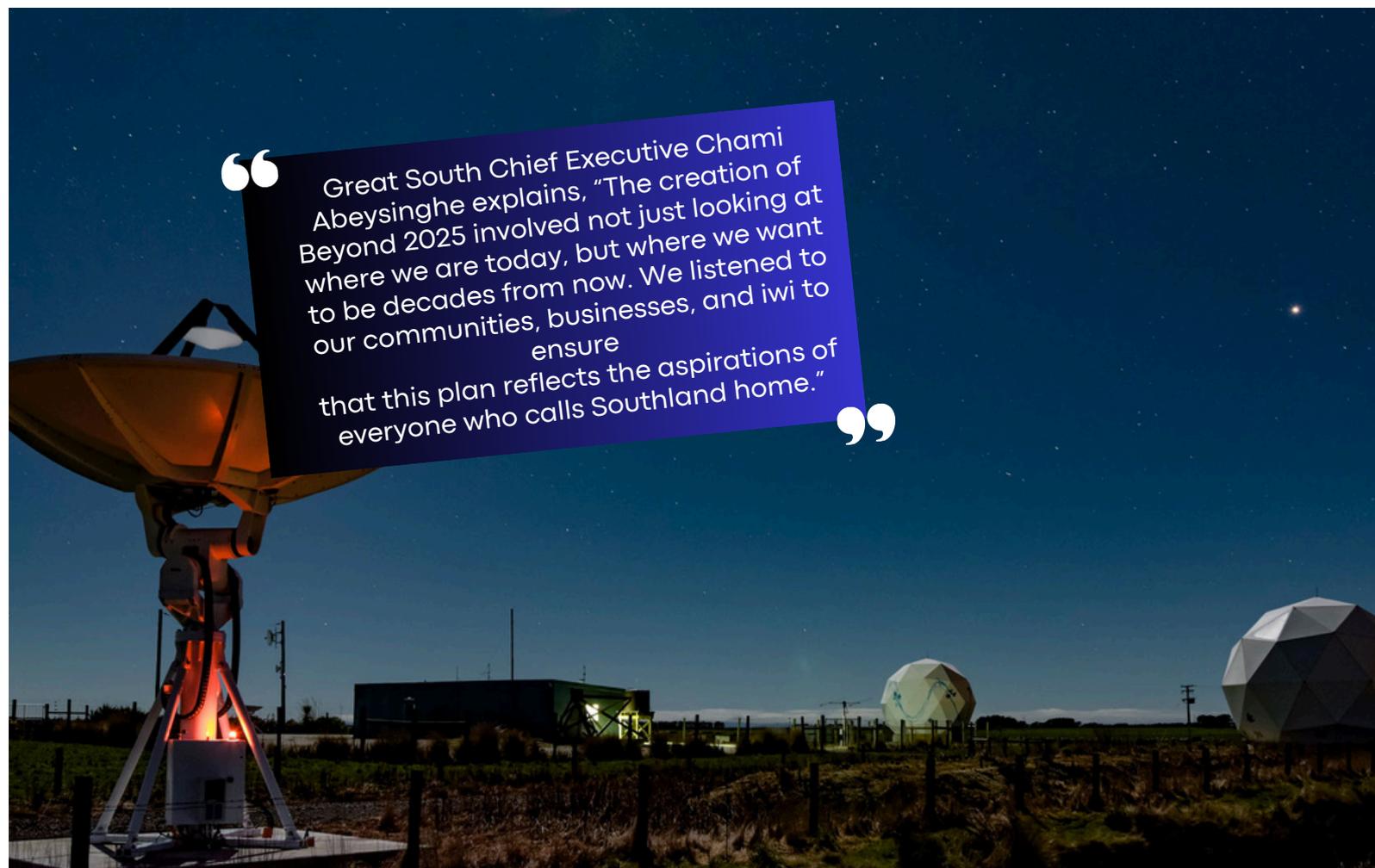
Recognising that successful regional development requires input from all corners of the community, Great South actively sought feedback and built the plan around both historical insights and forward-thinking objectives.

By drawing on previous regional strategies and building upon their successes, Beyond 2025 provides a robust framework for long-term growth.

The plan is centred around four key pillars: Economic Diversification, Sustainability, Workforce Development, and Infrastructure Enhancement. Each pillar addresses a different but interconnected aspect of Southland's future.

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS AND ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Southland's economic prosperity has long been anchored by its agricultural sector, with 12% of New Zealand's pastoral exports originating from the region. While this remains a cornerstone of the local economy, Beyond 2025 recognises the need to build resilience by expanding into new industries.



“ Great South Chief Executive Chami Abeyasinghe explains, “The creation of Beyond 2025 involved not just looking at where we are today, but where we want to be decades from now. We listened to our communities, businesses, and iwi to ensure that this plan reflects the aspirations of everyone who calls Southland home.” ”



The strategy promotes growth across several emerging sectors:

- Aquaculture: Utilising Southland’s pristine coastal resources to develop sustainable aquaculture operations, such as salmon and shellfish farming.
- Renewable Energy: Harnessing natural assets to establish a strong renewable energy sector, including wind, solar, and hydroelectric projects.
- Data Centres: Leveraging Southland’s cool climate and stable geological conditions to attract investment in large-scale data centres.
- Space Operations: Capitalising on the region’s flat lands, excellent horizon sightlines and low radio interference for satellite tracking and data processing.
- Tourism Diversification: Leveraging the Murihiku Southland Destination Strategy to develop unique experiences to share the regions distinctive story and heritage.
- Agriculture Diversification: Using science, technology, and innovation to aid the journey to zero carbon emissions, thereby building a strong provenance story for higher value goods.

“

“Economic diversification is critical to ensuring Southland remains a strong and resilient region. We’re taking steps to foster growth across a wide range of industries that complement our traditional strengths,” says Chami Abeysinghe.

”

SUCCESS STORY

One success story is the development of the Southland Murihiku Regional Energy Strategy 2022 – 2050 that has articulated the current and likely future energy demands for the region, focusing on energy security, energy equity and environmental sustainability. Southland is the first region in New Zealand to have developed an energy strategy that supports government initiatives to transition to a low emissions economy supporting our goal to become net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

SUSTAINABILITY

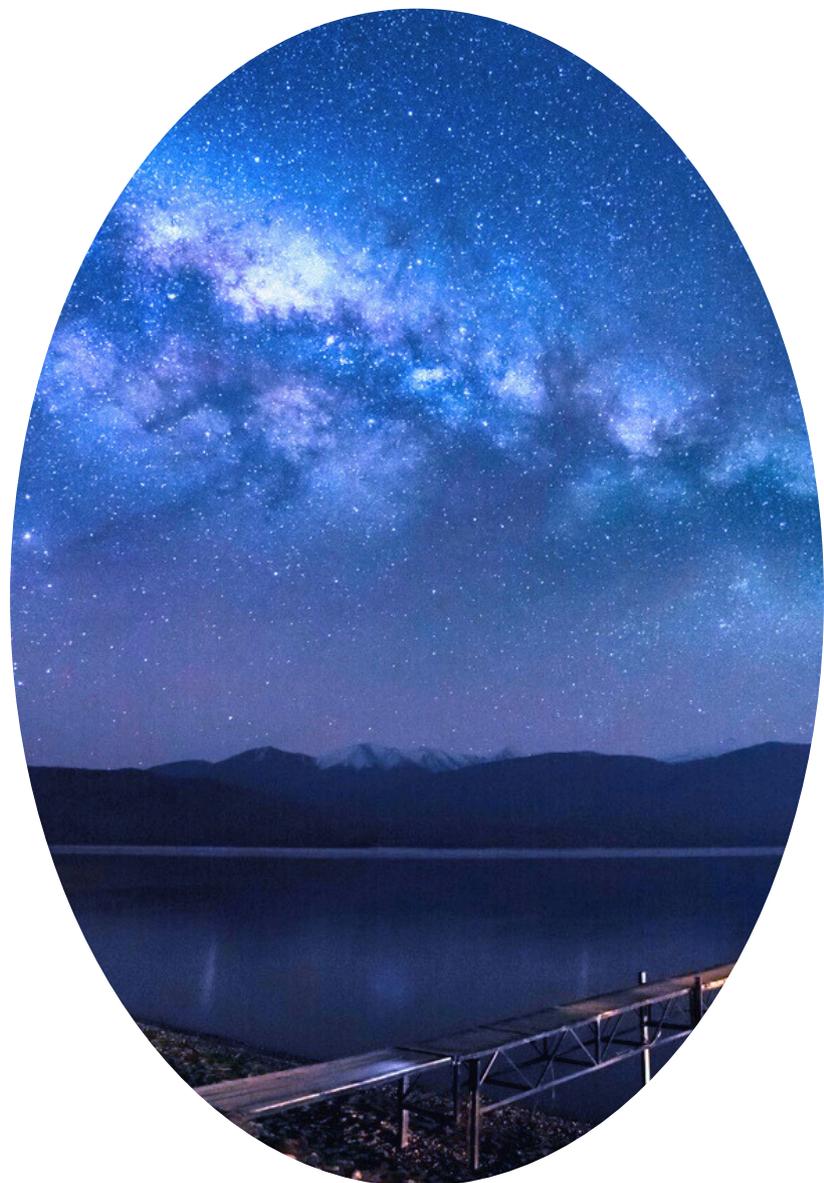
Environmental sustainability is a cornerstone of Beyond 2025. The plan acknowledges the importance of balancing economic growth with the need to protect Southland’s natural environment. Initiatives aim to minimise environmental impacts, enhance resource management, and build resilience to climate change.

Key initiatives include:

- Decarbonisation Workshops:
Facilitated by Great South, these workshops help businesses and organisations reduce their carbon footprints through practical solutions.
- Emissions Reduction Projects:
Partnering with industries to transition to cleaner energy sources, improve efficiency, and adopt innovative technologies.
- Climate Resilience Planning:
Developing strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change on agriculture, tourism, and infrastructure.

Chami Abeysinghe goes on to explain, “Environmental stewardship is at the heart of what we do. Southland’s natural environment is one of our greatest assets, and protecting it is essential to our long-term success.”

The Southland Water and Land Plan has already made significant strides in improving resource management. By providing clear guidelines and encouraging responsible practices, the initiative is safeguarding Southland’s natural assets for future generations.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Creating a skilled, adaptable workforce is essential to Southland's growth and resilience. As the regional economy diversifies, ensuring people have the skills needed to thrive is a top priority.

Key initiatives include:

- Southland Youth Futures: Providing pathways for young people to explore local career opportunities through mentorship, training, and connections with employers.
- E tū's Job Match Platform: Helping job seekers find employment and supporting businesses to access the talent they need.
- Collaborations with Education Providers: Working with schools, tertiary institutions, and training organisations to align educational outcomes with industry needs.
- Upskilling and Retraining Opportunities: Ensuring workers have the skills to succeed in emerging sectors through targeted training programmes.

The Southland Youth Futures programme has proven particularly successful, with nearly 15,000 youth across the region having been engaged with the programme. By establishing clear career pathways, Great South is helping retain talent that might otherwise leave the area.

“Having a skilled and capable workforce is fundamental to our success. We are committed to providing opportunities for people to thrive in Southland and contribute to the region's growth,” says Chami Abeysinghe.



You can learn more about Beyond 2025 and Great South through an in-depth interview with Chami below.



Alternatively you can contact Chami by email: chami@greatsouth.nz



DRIVING INFORMED INVESTMENTS: HOW REGIONAL DASHBOARDS CAN POWER GROWTH IN NEW ZEALAND

MUBASHIR MUKHTAR
FOUNDER AND CEO, DATA N DASHBOARDS



In today's rapidly changing economic climate, data is the lifeblood of robust investment strategies. Gone are the days when investors relied solely on gut instinct or simple financial statements. Increasingly, stakeholders demand a clearer view of regional performance, encompassing everything from economic output and demographic change to environmental sustainability and overall wellbeing. In Aotearoa New Zealand, regional dashboards have emerged as critical tools in meeting this demand. These platforms collect and visualize a wealth of information—such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on regional level, employment statistics, and land-use data—and make it accessible for everyone, from start-up founders to government officials. Moreover, data is typically available at the regional, territorial authority (city and district), and statistical area 2 levels, where possible, allowing investors to refine their strategies with pinpoint accuracy.

At the heart of these dashboards is the goal of driving informed investments. By presenting complex data in easy-to-interpret charts, tables, and interactive maps, they enable users to zoom in on local or sector-specific indicators and identify regions with high growth potential. For instance, comparing labour force participation rates or business formation figures across different areas helps investors spot entrepreneurial hotbeds. Meanwhile, metrics like population growth, median household income, and net migration reveal where consumer demand may soon outstrip current services or infrastructure.



Moreover, environmental and social indicators are playing a larger role in capital allocation decisions. For climate-conscious businesses or those with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) mandates, dashboards can reveal critical factors such as water quality, air emissions, biodiversity trends, and other metrics relevant to sustainable operations.

Simultaneously, examining education levels, healthcare availability, and social support systems offers insights into the strength and stability of a community—pivotal considerations for companies seeking a reliable talent pipeline or aiming to foster positive stakeholder relationships.

THE WAIKATO DATA HUB: A CASE STUDY

While New Zealand boasts a growing number of regional dashboards, the [Waikato Data Hub](#) exemplifies how these tools can be both comprehensive and user-friendly. It is developed by Data n Dashboards Limited as a project with Waikato Regional Council. Its platform is split into two main sections:

1. Comparative Socio-Economic Profile: Waikato Region

- o Encompassing more than 230 dashboards and organized into 10 themes, this section breaks down the Waikato region's performance over time and in relation to other parts of the country. Coverage extends from the year 2000 onward, featuring updated metrics on population, land use, labour force, Māori economy, macroeconomic trends, productivity, and more. The data was last refreshed on March 1, 2025, with a scheduled update in next couple of months to reflect final Census results with as many cross-tabs as possible.

2. Comparative Socio-Economic Profile: NZ Economy

- o Going a step further, this section includes more than 345 dashboards spanning 11 themes, providing global context by comparing New Zealand's performance against other small, advanced economies. Whether examining productivity levels or sector-specific contributions, these dashboards help investors see how New Zealand as a whole stacks up on the international stage.

With these metrics both local operators and global firms can identify specific pockets of opportunity or risk.



A TOOL FOR EVERYONE

One of the major advantages of platforms like Community Pulse from [Data n Dashboards Limited](#) and the [Waikato Data Hub](#) is their broad accessibility. Traditionally, in-depth economic or demographic research required specialized knowledge or expensive analysis tools. Now, these dashboards lower that barrier, offering user-friendly interfaces and customizable filters. Small businesses can pinpoint underserved markets, while larger corporations can evaluate the feasibility of scaling operations in a new district. Even community groups benefit, leveraging insights to advocate for policies or resources that support local development.

In addition, frequent updates ensure that decisions are based on the most current information available. Since economic conditions, migration patterns, and resource constraints can shift rapidly, dashboards that integrate recent data—from local councils, census figures, or international comparisons—empower organizations to adapt in near real time. The ability to view both historical and up-to-date metrics side by side also reveals whether shifts are part of a longer-term trend or a temporary fluctuation.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

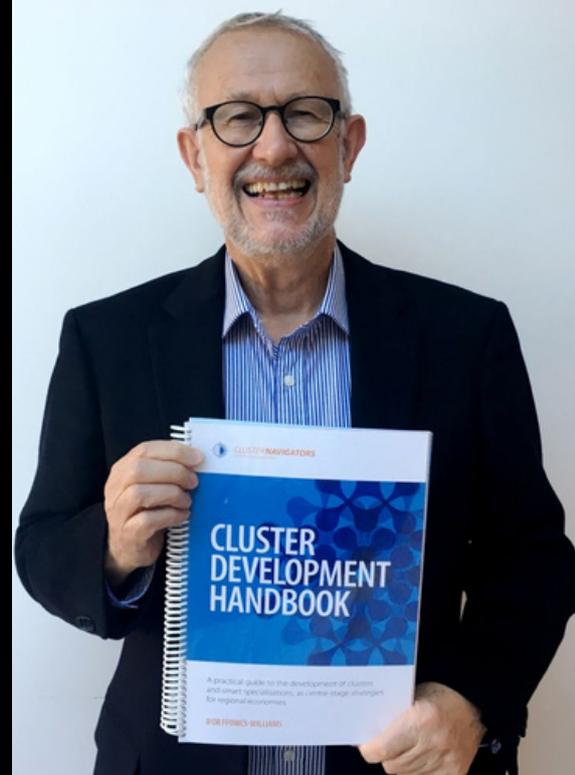
Ultimately, regional dashboards serve as a powerful catalyst for sustainable, data-driven investment. By combining economic, demographic, environmental, and social indicators under one digital roof, they illuminate both opportunities and potential pitfalls. For instance, an area with strong population growth but

limited infrastructure might represent a market poised for expansion—yet also demand long-term planning in roads, schools, and hospitals.

In a globally interconnected era, it's no longer enough to rely on narrow or outdated datasets when planning new ventures or evaluating economic health. Investors need a panoramic view that captures the interplay of workforce trends, local demand, resource availability, and community wellbeing.

In New Zealand, platforms like Community Pulse and the Waikato Data Hub rise to this challenge, offering a blueprint for how technology, thoughtful design, and robust data can converge to guide better investments. For anyone seeking a more strategic approach—whether to launch a new product, diversify a portfolio, or strengthen regional policies—these dashboards provide essential clarity. By turning information into actionable insights, they not only enhance the potential for profit but also pave the way for responsible and forward-thinking decisions, benefiting both businesses and the communities they serve.

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ADVERTORIAL - TRANSFORMING ECONOMIES THROUGH CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT

Cluster development is now a mainstream approach for regional economic development globally.

This Cluster Development Handbook reference guide is based on two decades of hands on cluster development experience, covering six continents and exposure to over a thousand clusters.

The 240 page handbook is available as a pdf. and in hard copy. For this 2nd edition, the handbook has been comprehensively revised, updated and extended. Sixty-four cluster experts, from twenty-eight countries, have contributed Invited Forewords to specific chapters. Most are The Competitiveness Institute (TCI) Network members.

Over 300 quotations are used, identifying further information sources. The book was initially launched at TCI's 2016 Annual Global Conference in Eindhoven, Netherlands.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

If you are aiming to grow investment in a specialisation in your region this handbook will become your go to knowledge base.

Ifor Ffowcs-Williams is the CEO, Cluster Navigators Limited. Since establishing Cluster Navigators in 1997, Ifor's focus has been on the practicalities of cluster development. He has led strategy workshops around the world with economic development agencies, cluster groups and support organisations. Ifor has been a frequent speaker on competitiveness, clusters and innovation. Ifor has led training workshops on the Twelve Step cluster development process in over fifty countries.

He has been described as 'one of the most influential cluster practitioners in the world'. Clients have included The World Bank, UNDP, international aid agencies and national & regional economic development agencies on six continents. Ifor is a Founder and Past President of TCI Network, the leading global network for practitioners, policy makers and business leaders addressing regional competitiveness.

To learn more [follow this link](#)



FUTURE PROOFING LAND

New Land Diversification Tools to Unlock Potential for Manawatū Farmers and Landowners.

J E R R Y S H E A R M A N
CEO, CENTRAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



In a landmark initiative for the Manawatū region and rural New Zealand, the Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA), with digital support from the Manawatū District Council, has developed two strategic tools designed to support local farmers and landowners in adapting to the evolving agricultural landscape.

These tools include a comprehensive report on alternative crops, and an interactive Crop Suitability Map, which utilises GIS (geographic information system) technology to provide valuable insights for more informed decision-making.

These tools are designed to help farmers and landowners across the region to unlock new opportunities and maximise the potential of their land.

WHAT ARE THE TOOLS?

The Land Diversification report examines market conditions for high-value crops and offers financial insights into diversifying farming systems. By focusing on a small set of crops, it gives a clear starting point for

farmers and landowners considering diversification without overhauling their current operations.

The Crop Suitability Map provides detailed information on soil and climate conditions in the Manawatū region, allowing farmers and landowners to explore their land's potential for alternative uses.





Local farmers already see benefits

BENEFITS

Local farmers like Gemma McDougall from [Ataahua Blooms](#) have already seen the benefits of diversifying.

As Gemma says, “Diversifying our land has opened up new income streams and job opportunities, proving that it’s a financially smart move. Manawatū’s stunning soils and climate make it an ideal location for land diversification.”

As the impacts of climate change and severe weather events across the country increase, coupled with the

volatility of the financial returns in the primary sector, this initiative is aimed at supporting landowners, farmers and investors with more tools to help inform decision making and reduce risk.

With the added benefit of one of New Zealand’s largest and most connected distribution hubs – Te Utanganui – this Land Diversification initiative leverages off the strategic advantages of Manawatū while directly supporting our farmers and growers – both existing, and potential.

Other local initiatives include a macadamia farm in Kiwitea, and a new blueberry farm and olive grove in Colyton. With Manawatū’s unique class one and two soils, the decision to diversify and future proof is an easy one for many local landowners and farmers.

We’d be more than happy to connect you to some of these landowners if you are interested in finding out more about the Manawatū’s move to land diversification. contact ashley.oneil@ceda.nz for more information.



ADVERTORIAL

THE FUTURE OF INVESTMENT IN NEW ZEALAND - A CONCIERGE APPROACH

BY JOSEPH STUART
SENIOR ASSOCIATE
CITIES AND REGIONS NZ

A CONCIERGE SERVICE

In today's rapidly evolving global economy, New Zealand stands at the forefront of innovation and opportunity. The introduction of personalised concierge services for investors marks a significant milestone in enhancing the overall investment experience in our beautiful country. This initiative is not just about facilitating transactions; its about creating a holistic environment where investors feel supported, informed, and connected.

One of the key components of this service is the Network Introduction and Navigation Service. (NINS). This service is designed to facilitate connections and navigate the New Zealand investment landscape, encompassing both the public and private sectors.

“

A wrap around service for investors where they feel supported, informed and connected.

”





CHANGE IS AFOOT

By providing a structured pathway for investors, NINS ensures that they can seamlessly integrate into the local market, fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness.

The focus on economic development is a testament to New Zealand's commitment to sustainable growth. By identifying and promoting investment opportunities that contribute to local growth, we are not only supporting local businesses but also creating jobs and fostering innovation.

This approach ensures that the benefits of foreign direct investment (FDI) are felt across the entire community, leading to a more prosperous economy and society.

The facilitation of FDI is another crucial aspect of this concierge service. By providing comprehensive information on investment incentives and assisting with the establishment of foreign businesses, we are making New Zealand an attractive destination for global investors. The networking opportunities simplify the process, ensuring that investors can focus on what truly matters – contributing to our economy and growing their businesses.

These services are underpinned by detailed market research and analysis.

Investors can make informed decisions based on current trends, ensuring that their investments are strategically aligned with the market dynamics. This level of insight is crucial in today's competitive landscape, where timely and accurate information can make all the difference.

Networking opportunities are also a cornerstone of this service. By facilitating connections with other investors, industry experts, and potential business partners through exclusive events and webinars, we are creating a vibrant ecosystem where ideas can flourish and collaborations can thrive. This network is not just a support system; it's a catalyst for innovation and growth.

PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Ensuring the highest level of privacy and security for all client information and transactions is paramount. This commitment builds trust and confidence.

A personalised concierge service prioritizes the needs of investors while fostering economic growth and innovation in New Zealand.

Contact: susan@regionalfocusnz.com



HE AHI ECO-BUSINESS PARK: TAUPŌ'S NEW HOME FOR SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY

BY BRYN INGHAM
HEAD OF INDUSTRY, GROWTH AND
INSIGHTS, AMPLIFY
bryn@taupo.biz



HE AHI ECO-BUSINESS PARK

Taupō's journey towards a more sustainable, low-carbon future took a significant step forward recently with a karakia that marks the start of earthworks at the new He Ahi Eco-Business Park. This milestone paves the way for a world-class development that will position Taupō as a leader in renewable energy and circular economy initiatives.

He Ahi Eco-Business Park is an innovative development that brings together Māori values, renewable energy, and forward-thinking infrastructure to create a unique industrial environment.

Strategically located near the renowned Tauhara Geothermal Field, the park offers businesses of all sizes direct access to a low-carbon, renewable energy source - an ideal solution for manufacturing,



Te Pae o Waimihia, Trust Chairman, Ngahere Wall says 'The Park is an investment in our future and an investment in a future for our members and our generations to come.'



food processing, timber drying and other heat-intensive industries. The karakia was led by Te Pae o Waimihia, a Maori-owned Trust formed by a collective of six hapū from the Taupō District, who have invested in the development of He Ahi Eco-Business Park.



Artist's Impression

He Ahi has been designed with kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and sustainability as guiding principles, ensuring the environment is both protected and enhanced while supporting economic growth. By integrating cultural values into every aspect of the project, He Ahi demonstrates how enterprise and nature can flourish side by side.

INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGNED FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

A key part of the park's design is its partnership with [Contact Energy](#), whose expertise in geothermal energy provides tenants with access to a stable, cost-effective heat directly from the Tauhara Geothermal Field. For businesses that require consistent, high-grade heat, the shift towards clean energy can be challenging but He Ahi bridges that gap by providing:

- **Competitive Energy Pricing:** With direct geothermal energy supply, tenants can secure stable, long-term energy rates.
- **Reliable Energy Source:** Geothermal energy offers consistent baseload power, unmatched by other renewable energy sources prone to weather fluctuations.
- **Scalability:** The park can accommodate small to medium-scale heat demand, ideal for businesses of varying sizes.
- **Sustainability and Carbon Reduction:** By using geothermal heat instead of fossil fuels, companies significantly cut down on carbon emissions and meet growing consumer and regulatory demands for cleaner operations.

FLEXIBLE DESIGN AND BUILD PACKAGES

In addition to offering prime access to Taupō's geothermal resources, He Ahi Eco-Business Park provides tailored design and build packages that accommodate a variety of operational needs:

- **Customised Facilities:** From processing plants to warehouses, all builds can be designed to include advanced geothermal infrastructure and energy-efficient features. Each plan is shaped by the tenant's specific requirements, ensuring the space is fit for purpose and future-ready.
- **Sustainability at the Forefront:** Buildings are developed with eco-conscious materials, systems, and layouts to reduce environmental impact and align with He Ahi's kaitiakitanga values. Tenants gain the advantage of integrated process heat connections, further lowering their carbon footprint.
- **Collaborative Planning:** The He Ahi team works closely with each business to streamline design, consenting, and construction processes. This partnership approach helps fast-track development while maintaining high standards of quality and sustainability.



AMPLIFY'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT

As Taupō's Economic Development Agency, Amplify is actively supporting the He Ahi project, helping businesses understand the opportunities and benefits of operating within an eco-focused industrial environment. We're here to:

- **Facilitate Conversations:** Connect potential tenants with He Ahi development team, Contact Energy, and other project partners.
- **Connect Businesses:** Leverage our network of industry partners, iwi groups, and other stakeholders to foster strong, collaborative relationships.
- **Navigate Incentives & Regulations:** Offer guidance on local and national funding options, consent processes, and best practices for establishing in Taupō.
- **Promote Growth:** By showcasing the world-class opportunities at He Ahi, we aim to attract the best and brightest businesses to Taupō, boosting employment and prosperity for our community.

If your business relies on process heat and you're seeking a sustainable, cost-effective energy supply, consider becoming a tenant at He Ahi Eco-Business Park. Contact Amplify to discover how your organisation can take advantage of Taupō's geothermal advantage and join the innovative community at He Ahi. Together, we can power a cleaner, more resilient future - one business at a time. For more information contact bryn@taupo.biz



FAST TRACKING INVESTMENT IN REGIONAL NEW ZEALAND

S U S A N H O U S T O N

SENIOR ASSOCIATE, CITIES AND REGIONS NZ

INWARD INVESTMENT

Over the past few years total international investment has been wide ranging, from \$404b in 2017 to \$572b in 2024. The fluctuation reflects sensitivity to Covid 19, along with changes to New Zealand's policy and legislative settings.

The Prime Minister of New Zealand, Christopher Luxon had this to say on striking a new balance in our policy and legislative settings, "The Government is relentlessly focused on accelerating the growth New Zealand needs to lift our incomes, strengthen our businesses, and create opportunities for all Kiwis. That means we need to stop saying 'no' to growth opportunities like foreign investment and start saying 'yes'.

So, what steps has the current government taken to rebalance the policy and legislative framework to better support migrant investors?

The Government has initiated changes to the Active Investor Plus Visa and the Overseas Investment Act, effective 1 April, 2025. It has also established a new entity to drive investment, 'Invest New Zealand', and committed to a \$100 billion future fund that may, in part, provide tax cuts for foreign investors.

It continues to scrutinise and consider adjustments to other policy and legislative settings whilst initiating such projects as the Regional Infrastructure Fund to support economic development in the regions. Collectively the changes should see a significant increase in foreign investment for New Zealand.

Henley and Partners, a company specializing in foreign investor migration, estimates that this year, 128,000 high-net-worth individuals will be seeking investment opportunities. As many countries are becoming less accessible to migrant investors, New Zealand, with its proposed plans to attract investment, is poised to be a strong contender for international investment, especially from the United States of America, where the stable political environment on offer in New Zealand will be valued.



HON CHRIS BISHOP, MINISTER FOR REFORM OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT

“

Our Fast Track Approval process will make it easier and faster to build regionally and nationally significant projects as part of the Government's plan to rebuild the economy and get it working for all Kiwis. It is only through a strong economy that we can solve the cost of living crisis, lift incomes and afford the public services Kiwis deserve

”

FAST TRACKING APPROVALS

Legislation enabling fast-track approvals and the expedition of projects deemed important to the nation's recovery following Covid – 19 was introduced to Parliament under urgency in March 2024. By February 2025 the necessary legislation was in place and applications for the fast-track process encouraged. The process is designed to benefit investors by reducing bureaucratic delays and accelerating project timelines.

The Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 allows for the use of expert panels to assess projects and make recommendations, ensuring that approvals are based on technical expertise and not just bureaucratic processes. While expert panels provide recommendations, the final decision on whether to approve a project rests with the relevant Minister.

In April, 2024 an Advisory Group selected by the Government was tasked with identifying what sort of projects should be eligible for the fast track process. Below are examples of projects identified by the Advisory group:

- Residential projects
- Industrial projects
- Commercial projects
- Renewable energy projects
- Tourism and entertainment projects
- Infrastructure projects
- Development projects

The Fast-track process has now been launched and is dealing with over 150 applications.

Also cause for guarded optimism is the anticipated rebalance of the investment framework which should see an increase in migrant investors, leading to a more robust and expanding economy. As should the introduction of Fast-Track Approvals, the root and branch changes to the RMA and the introduction of the Regional Infrastructure Fund. In addition to the introduction of the Fast-Track Approvals Act the Government has signalled its intentions to make much needed changes to the Resource Management Act Reform (RMA), replacing it with two pieces of legislation; the Natural Environment Act and a Planning Act.

When introducing the changes, the Minister for RMA Reform, Hon Chris Bishop had this to say "The RMA is broken and everyone knows it. It makes it too hard to build the infrastructure and houses New Zealand desperately needs, too hard to use our abundant natural resources, and hasn't resulted in better management of our natural environment,"

It is anticipated that the new legislation will cut administrative and compliance costs by 45%. Again, this is good news for both international and domestic investors.



NORTHLAND PROPOSES AMBITIOUS REGIONAL DEAL TO UNLOCK ECONOMIC POTENTIAL



The proposed Regional Deal is projected to increase Northland's GDP by \$977 million, create over 6,000 new jobs, and boost exports by \$877 million. This will increase business and household income and reduce unemployment, ensuring a better quality of life for all Northlanders.

Enabling the drastic injection into the Northland economy requires enhanced educational and workplace development, housing availability, supporting infrastructure and healthcare services, outlined within the application.

“The development opportunities identified within the Northland Regional Deal proposal have the potential to double Northland's economic production, an ambitious aim. The proposal underscores a unified commitment from Northland's Councils to work collectively, building on established partnerships and governance structures to ensure we can meet long-term goals for the good of the region.”

The plan aims to harness Northland's unique strengths and drive sustainable economic growth, with four key sectors identified to drive future growth. These are:

“The plan is ambitious yet achievable says John Vujcich, Chair of the Joint Regional Economic Development Committee and Far North District Councillor.”

- **Future Energy:** Leveraging Northland's position as an energy hub to transition to renewable energy sources and enhance energy security.
- **Marine Manufacturing:** Supporting the Northport Vision for Growth, floating dry dock, and the development of a sustainable inshore fishing fleet.
- **Primary Industries:** Increasing returns across the primary sector through value-add, processing, product development targeted at high-value markets, innovation, training and education, enabled through supportive legislation. Development of new and fledgling opportunities such as in aquaculture and horticulture.



- **Visitor Economy:** Investing in quality visitor accommodation and cultural experiences to boost tourism.

Says Vujcich: “Smarter investment is crucial for Northland's growth, and collaboration with central government is essential to provide a healthy economic, social, and physical environment we can pass on to future generations. By aligning regional and national economic priorities, the Northland proposal can ensure long-term, sustainable growth for Northland, as well as New Zealand.”

Each sector is supported by critical infrastructure investments to facilitate growth. To fully realise Northland's potential, the proposal seeks:

- **Infrastructure Investment:** Prioritising upgrades to roads, rail, and ports to improve connectivity with Auckland and export markets.
- **Policy & Legislative Support:** Streamlining regulations to enable faster development and investment.

- **Co-Investment in Key Growth Projects:** Partnering with the private sector and local councils to accelerate initiatives that will drive job creation, GDP growth, and export expansion.

Paul Linton, Chief Executive of Northland Inc says: “Northland has a strong track record of collaboration with government, Māori, and industry, as demonstrated in previous successful regional initiatives. This proposal represents a regionally enabled, centrally supported partnership to create lasting economic transformation. The region is ready to act, with governance, projects, and private sector support already in place – we just need central government to capitalise on the opportunity that the Northland region presents to them.

Our regional deal offers solutions for both Auckland and New Zealand in many areas, but especially energy resilience, marine manufacturing, food security, and tourism”.

The Northland Light-Touch Regional Deal Proposal is available on the Northland Inc website [via this link](#).

For more information contact Paul Linton - paul.linton@northlandnz.com



WAYS YOU CAN ENGAGE WITH REGIONAL FOCUS NZ JOURNAL AND PORTAL

Cities and Regions NZ has to date absorbed all costs relating to the research, build and design of both [www.regionalfocusnz](http://www.regionalfocusnz.com) and the RFNZ Journal. If both platforms are to be sustainable we will need your support.

GET INVOLVED

Both the Quarterly Journal and the Portal offers the opportunity to build your profile. Albeit, you a consultancy, University, Real Estate Agent, Economic Development Agency, Private School, Relocation Company or investment company, there are a myriad of opportunities to get involved on either a one off or annual basis.

In anticipation of your consideration, thank you!

To learn more contact susan@regionalfocusnz.com