



# BEYOND 2025

## SOUTHLAND

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12 Month Year in Review | 2023 - 2024





# Executive Summary

**The Beyond 2025 Southland Long-Term Plan, recognised nationally for excellence and awarded Best Practice for Integrated Strategy at the Economic Development NZ awards in October 2023, is a testament to Murihiku Southland's forward-thinking and cohesive approach to growth.**

As we reflect on the achievements of the past 12 months, we see significant strides in establishing a resilient, sustainable future for our region. Beyond 2025 has laid a robust foundation, addressing evolving regional needs, unlocking economic opportunities, safeguarding the environment, and promoting community wellbeing. However, the journey ahead demands continued collaboration and investment to achieve long-term success.

Murihiku Southland has been punching above its weight economically, with 12% of New Zealand's pastoral exports originating from the region and GDP per capita reaching \$80,148—the third highest in the country. This exceptional performance reflects the region's ability to compete on the national stage, but the ongoing growth will depend on the right support. While the plan offers a pathway to double exports and foster diversification, it must be backed by complementary investment from the government. Regulation and policy changes threaten to undermine these efforts, highlighting the need for stronger alignment between regional priorities and national strategies.

Key achievements over the past year include the launch of the Data Insights Southland Hub (DISH), which is providing critical data to support decision-making in housing, tourism, and environmental management. New frameworks and housing initiatives have been implemented to tackle affordability and availability challenges. Workforce development programmes—such as Southland Youth Futures, Mayors Task Force for Jobs and E tū's Job Match platform—have enhanced talent retention, connected job seekers with employers, and empowered young people.

The future of Southland remains focused on maximising our unique advantages, from our climate and strategic location to our potential in sectors like data centres, space operations, aquaculture, and agriculture diversification. Beyond 2025's strategy aligns with these strengths, reinforcing a future of growth in sectors where Southland's natural advantages drive success. What some may have viewed as regional limitations—such as our climate—are now key assets that enable us to create new opportunities.

Investments in infrastructure—like the Invercargill Airport expansion, South Port upgrades, and the Southland Engineering & Manufacturing Cluster—have bolstered the region's capacity for sustainable growth. Environmentally, decarbonisation workshops and partnerships have advanced emissions reductions, while the Southland Water and Land Plan is setting the stage for improved resource management.

The plan's collaborative nature has been critical to these successes, with councils, iwi, businesses, and community organisations working in unison to align efforts.

Looking ahead, the plan will continue driving progress through coordinated action, regular reviews, and community engagement. However, achieving its full potential requires sustained commitment—not only from local stakeholders but also from the government. With the right support, Murihiku Southland will build on its achievements, ensuring it remains a thriving place to live, work, and invest for generations to come.

A sincere thank you goes to all organisations, stakeholders, and community members who have contributed to the plan's success so far. Your dedication has been essential in driving progress, and your ongoing efforts will ensure that the vision for a bright and sustainable future for Murihiku Southland becomes a reality.



# Murihiku Southland

## A Region of Opportunity

Murihiku Southland is a region defined by its natural beauty, vibrant economy, and strong sense of community. It spans 12% of Aotearoa New Zealand's land area, with over half (58%) designated as public conservation land, showcasing a commitment to preserving its stunning landscapes.

The region boasts 3,612 kilometres of coastline, rich biodiversity, and the southernmost Dark Sky reserve, making it a prime destination for stargazing and ecotourism. Home to five of New Zealand's 11 Great Walks, it attracts adventurers and nature enthusiasts from around the globe.

With 100,143 residents, the region combines rural charm with economic strength. Its economy contributed \$8.27 billion last year, with a per capita GDP of \$80,148—third highest in the country, after Wellington and Auckland. This reflects a focus on agriculture, tourism, and emerging sectors such as renewable energy and aquaculture. Murihiku Southland is a powerhouse of primary production, responsible for 12% of Aotearoa's pastoral exports and is home to 3,400 farms.

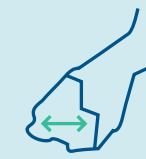
Murihiku Southland is a place where economic strength, environmental stewardship and quality of life come together building a vibrant future for the region and its people

Housing makes up 2.3% of New Zealand's total stock, reflecting both the region's size and population growth.

These indicators highlight Murihiku Southland as a place where economic strength, environmental stewardship, and quality of life come together, building a vibrant future for the region and its people.

- INVERCARGILL CITY
- SOUTHLAND DISTRICT
- GORE DISTRICT

# Murihiku Southland Regional Indicators



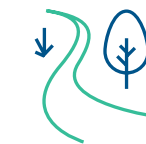
12% of Aotearoa New Zealand land mass (2<sup>nd</sup> largest region in Aotearoa New Zealand)



3,612 kilometres of coastline with 11 marine reserves and 2 marine sanctuaries



58% of land is public conservation estate most of which is in two national parks; Fiordland National Park and Rakiura National Park.



5 of the 11 Great Walks (Kepler Track, Milford Track, Rakiura Track, Routeburn Track, and Hump Ridge Track)



The southernmost International Dark Sky Sanctuary in the world (Rakiura Stewart Island)



Regional emissions are 6,753,059 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (9.5% of Aotearoa New Zealand net emissions)



Population of 100,143 people (2% of Aotearoa New Zealand)



\$8.27 billion GDP (2.1% of Aotearoa New Zealand)



\$80,148 GDP per person (3<sup>rd</sup> highest region in Aotearoa New Zealand)



14,622 registered businesses (2.3% of Aotearoa New Zealand)

### Top 5 Murihiku Southland industries by Employees are:



AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & FISHING  
7,700 employees  
14.8% of economy



MANUFACTURING  
8,300 employees  
16.0% of economy



HEALTH CARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE  
5,800 employees  
11.2% of economy



RETAIL  
5,000 employees  
9.6% of economy



CONSTRUCTION  
3,650 employees  
7.0% of economy





# A Quick Recap

**The Beyond 2025 Southland Plan was developed as a long-term framework to guide the region's growth and sustainability.**

It replaced the Southland Regional Development Strategy (SoRDS), offering a future-focused vision to address challenges and unlock new opportunities. Built on extensive community engagement and collaboration with councils, iwi, businesses, and government agencies, the plan aimed to align people, economy, and environment to ensure Southland remained vibrant and resilient in a changing world.

## Regional Coordination and Leadership

Strong regional coordination and leadership were essential to the success of Beyond 2025. Collaboration across stakeholders—councils, iwi, businesses, and government—ensured that efforts were aligned, creating a cohesive strategy to address shared challenges and opportunities.

## People and Communities

The plan prioritised thriving communities by responding to changing demographics and supporting over 2,300 community groups vital to the region's way of life. It aimed to ensure access to services, infrastructure, and opportunities that fostered community spirit and encouraged engagement.

## Equity and Wellbeing

Recognising disparities in access to healthcare, education, and services due to the region's size and population spread, Beyond 2025 focused on advocacy and innovative solutions to promote equity. It sought to ensure all Southlanders had equal opportunities to achieve a high quality of life.

## Economy, Environment and Climate Change

Murihiku Southland's economy, powered by 14,622 businesses and a strong rural sector, was positioned to diversify into new industries such as tourism, aquaculture, and technology. The plan also emphasised achieving net zero emissions by 2050, balancing economic growth and environmental sustainability through targeted action and partnerships.

Ultimately, the goal of Beyond 2025 is to position Murihiku Southland to seize new opportunities and make the most of its strengths—supporting its people, strengthening the economy, and securing a sustainable, prosperous future for generations to come.



# Implementation Approach

## Āhuatanga Mātāmua Key Enablers

The successful implementation of the Beyond 2025 Southland Long-Term Plan was driven by five Key Enablers: Data, Housing, Energy, Workforce, and Regulatory and Planning.

These enablers formed the foundation for many of the plan's initiatives, supporting other projects and aspirations across the region. Each enabler was prioritised for early implementation, ensuring momentum was built from the outset.

Great South took the lead on Data and Housing,

developing regional data systems and driving housing solutions to meet community needs. Energy required a collaborative approach involving Great South, Murihiku Regeneration, and other key stakeholders to align efforts toward decarbonisation and renewable energy initiatives. Workforce development involved partnerships across multiple agencies, ensuring the region had the skills and talent to meet future demands. Meanwhile, Regulatory and Planning efforts were closely aligned with local and central government, ensuring policies and frameworks supported Southland's growth and sustainability goals.

These Key Enablers were essential to unlocking progress across all areas of the Beyond 2025 plan. Each enabler connected closely with specific initiatives in the People, Economy, and Environment focus areas, creating an integrated approach to regional development. The collaborative execution of these enablers ensured that Southland was well-positioned to meet emerging challenges and realise the long-term vision outlined in the Beyond 2025 plan.

### Turning it into reality

The implementation of the Beyond 2025 Southland Long-Term Plan relied on a collaborative approach, ensuring alignment across stakeholders, including Great South, local councils, iwi, central government, and other regional organisations. The plan addressed interconnected projects with short, medium, and long-term priorities, allowing flexibility to respond to emerging scenarios and challenges.

### Collaboration and Leadership

Great South played a pivotal role in facilitating, coordinating, and monitoring progress, working closely with the Mayoral Forum, the Great South Joint Shareholders Group, Iwi, and Just Transition workstreams. This partnership-based approach ensured efforts were aligned across sectors and the region.

### Project Prioritisation and Flexibility

The plan's 124 projects and recommendations were divided into 42 advocacy-based initiatives and 82 practical projects across four focus areas: Enablers, People, Economy, and Environment. The ability to adjust priorities based on evolving developments—such as decisions around Tiwai Point and changing government policies—ensured the plan remained responsive and relevant to Southland's needs.

### Monitoring, Reporting, and Adaptation

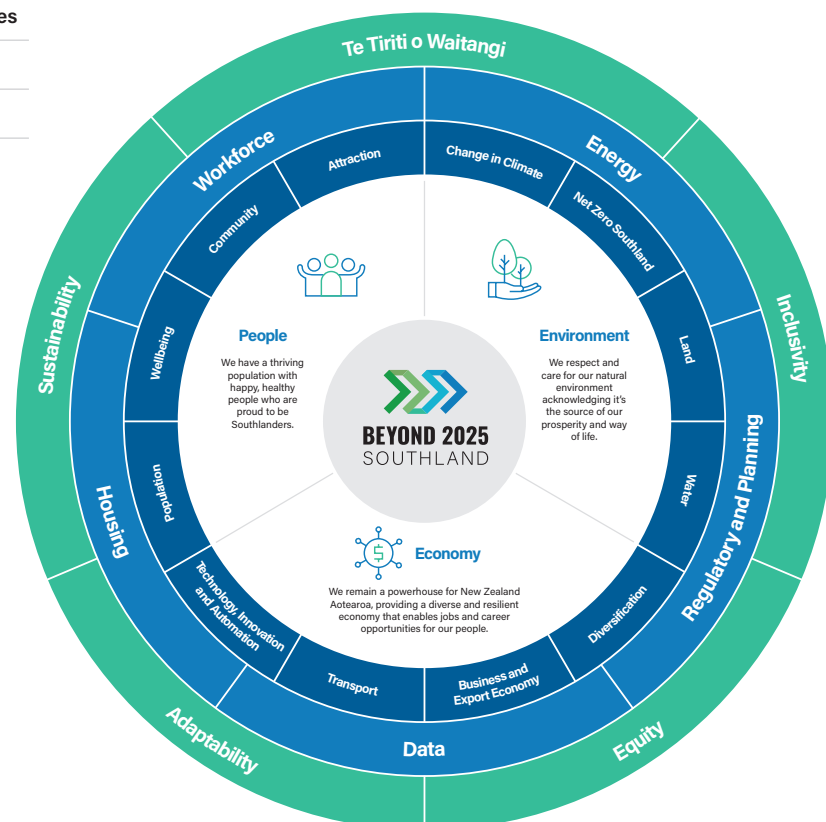
A master reporting template was established to track progress, enabling regular monitoring and assessments. This ensured accountability and allowed adjustments to strategies as circumstances evolved, ensuring the plan stayed on course toward achieving its long-term goals.

### Integrated Regional Development

The plan recognised that successful regional development required an integrated approach, with projects in housing, energy, infrastructure, data, and workforce closely aligned to support both economic growth and community well-being. Great South's Statement of Intent reflected the Beyond 2025 priorities, ensuring that efforts remained consistent over the following years.

Through collaboration, adaptability, and alignment across various projects and organisations, the implementation of the Beyond 2025 Southland Long-Term Plan laid a solid foundation for sustainable growth and regional resilience.

- Guiding principles
- Key enablers
- Sections





# Raraunga Data

**Data that provides insights about the region's people, economy and environment is required to support decision makers and policy makers.**

Data has been central to the Beyond 2025 project as it provides a foundation for informed decision-making across Murihiku Southland. By investing in comprehensive data collection and analysis, the region is supported to navigate economic, social, and environmental challenges. Accurate, accessible data enables regional leaders to monitor progress, allocate resources effectively, and respond proactively to emerging issues. This data-driven approach is critical given recent reliance on outdated census data, underscoring the need for timely insights to guide policy and community planning.

**The importance of data lies in its ability to highlight regional needs and inform strategies that align with Murihiku Southland's growth aspirations.**

By identifying trends, opportunities, and gaps, data plays a pivotal role in the region's planning, ensuring decisions are grounded in current, relevant information. Beyond 2025's focus on data reflects a commitment to a resilient future, supporting initiatives that are responsive to Murihiku Southland's unique challenges and strengths.

## Beyond 2025 Recommendation:



### Recommend

- That a Regional Data Strategy and Regional Data Repository are investigated and developed with this to be driven by a Working Group.

## Achievements



### ✓ DISH

Centralised data access for smarter regional decision-making.

Launched in November 2024, DISH (Data and Insights Southland Hub) [www.southlanddata.nz](http://www.southlanddata.nz) is a centralised platform created to collect, process, and present data relevant to the Murihiku Southland region. It serves as a trusted, single source of truth, connecting users to key datasets and offering a comprehensive view of the region's economy, environment, and other vital components.

The benefits of DISH are far-reaching. By streamlining data into one accessible hub, DISH empowers

local councils, businesses, command individuals to make informed decisions that support long-term sustainability and growth. It also enhances transparency and consistency in data use, ensuring that the information is accurate, up-to-date, and relevant. Whether for policy development, funding allocation, or strategic planning, DISH offers the insights needed to shape a stronger future for Murihiku Southland.

As DISH continues to evolve, three main areas will be prioritised:

### 1 | Data Governance

- Collaborate with stakeholders to establish and share rules, processes, and systems that ensure data integrity within DISH.
- Explore partnerships for shared services and consider developing a Regional Data Strategy to enhance alignment and efficiency across stakeholders.

### 2 | Enhancement

- Expand DISH to include new dashboards, such as Population, Net Zero, and Wellbeing, while adding new datasets and analysis to current areas of focus.
- Develop partnerships with councils to incorporate geospatial data, supporting spatial planning in areas like housing and aquaculture.

### 3 | Analytics

- Further explore DISH's processing capabilities for data analysis and reporting.
- Identify regional plans, policies, and legislation that DISH data can support, ensuring data-driven insights are utilised for strategic decisions.

This progression will allow DISH to continually deliver value, adapting to meet the data needs of Murihiku Southland and fostering data-driven decision-making for the future.

### Conclusion

Data is critical to Beyond 2025, and the launch of DISH is a significant step forward, offering a centralised hub for accurate, accessible information to support sustainable growth and community planning.

With a focus on governance, enhancement, and analytic, DISH will continue to evolve, ensuring data-driven decisions remain at the centre of the region's progress. By embracing this approach, Murihiku Southland is well-positioned to navigate challenges and seize future opportunities.





# Wharenoho Ahupori Housing

**Providing quality homes that meet the evolving needs of Southlanders is essential for fostering community well-being and driving sustainable economic growth, with a focus on both upgrading existing homes and developing new ones.**

The Beyond 2025 Southland Plan identified housing as essential to supporting the region's growth and well-being. It stressed the importance of delivering quality homes—both retrofitted and newly built—to meet the needs of Southlanders and sustain the local economy.

**Southland's housing stock, accounting for 2.3% of New Zealand's homes, was noted for its affordability, with house prices about half the national average and rents a third cheaper.**

However, rising property prices and rents have outpaced income growth, making housing less accessible for many.

A stock take of the region's 46,761 homes revealed two main challenges: an aging housing stock and a mismatch between available housing types and the needs of residents. The Plan highlighted the need for smaller, warmer homes and increased retrofitting to improve existing housing.

All councils recognised the vital role they play in addressing these housing challenges, acknowledging the need for better coordination, improved housing quality, and support to increase supply. Housing was framed as a strategic priority, integral to the region's long-term sustainability and well-being.

## Beyond 2025 Recommendation:



### Recommend

- Establishment of a Regional Housing Forum.
- Development of a Regional Digital Housing Portal.
- A focus on housing innovation (kitset, tiny homes, employer built, mobile housing for construction projects/seasonal workers).
- That there is a review of existing housing stock with a focus on incentivising brownfields development and supporting Southland homeowners (initiatives to modernise).
- Development of new social, community and papakāinga housing with a particular focus on housing for our ageing population.

## Achievements

- ☑ Southland District Council has completed a Housing Action Plan designed to streamline internal processes and enhance its ability to support housing development across the region.
- ☑ Kāinga Ora has increased its housing stock to a total of 458, directly increasing the supply of quality housing in Southland. These homes provide much-needed accommodation options, contributing to community well-being and ensuring more families have access to safe and stable living environments.
- ☑ The Warm Homes Trust has helped retrofit 871 homes in the past 12 months to June, enhancing energy efficiency and improving indoor living conditions. These upgrades reduce energy costs for households, improve health outcomes by providing warmer, drier homes, and contribute to environmental sustainability by lowering carbon emissions.
- ☑ Invercargill City Council has replaced the original windows with double-glazed ones in 194 of its council-owned flats across Invercargill and Bluff. The Council has also built four new energy-efficient housing units, offering modern, sustainable living options that promote environmental responsibility and long-term affordability for residents.
- ☑ Great South has developed an advocacy document to address the region's housing challenges and drive meaningful change.

## Key Housing Projects

### Murihiku Southland Housing Action Plan

The Murihiku Southland Housing Action Plan, led by Great South, now has key actions underway. This comprehensive plan identifies 13 projects across three focus areas:

- Setting Ourselves up for Success
- Addressing Gaps in Knowledge and Understanding
- Achieving Housing Aspirations through Key Enablers and Projects.

It seeks to empower the community and private sector to deliver both retrofitted and newly built homes that meet the evolving needs of Southlanders while supporting sustainable economic growth.

As part of the implementation, Great South is focused on delivering four key projects by July 2025:

- Housing Data Dashboard
- Regional Framework and Approach
- Regional Digital Housing Portal
- Housing Development-Ready Regulatory Planning Review

Additional initiatives, including an Annual Housing Situation Report, expanded social and elderly housing, and long-term rental solutions, will progress based on available resources and stakeholder involvement. These efforts will ensure Southland's housing strategy remains informed and aligned with long-term regional priorities.

### Regional Housing Data Dashboard

The Housing Data Dashboard, now live within the Data and Insights Southland Hub (DISH), provides essential data on housing affordability, supply, and social housing. This project, identified in the Housing Action Plan, plays a key role in supporting decision-making and tracking the region's progress toward solving housing challenges.

The dashboard will continue to grow with new datasets and deeper insights, ensuring it remains a valuable resource for stakeholders addressing Southland's housing needs.

## Regional Framework and Approach

A collaborative Regional Framework and Approach has been developed under the guidance of the Mayoral Forum and the Great South Joint Shareholders Committee, with the initial stages confirmed and implementation underway. This initiative unites councils, iwi, and central government to streamline efforts, ensuring coordinated housing solutions that meet the region's diverse needs.

A key milestone of this framework is the signing of a Charter, which formalises the commitment of regional leaders to tackle housing challenges together. A Housing Group is now being established to facilitate collaboration, led by Great South, ensuring housing solutions are delivered effectively across Murihiku Southland.

## Conclusion

Access to quality housing is essential to the well-being of Southlanders and the region's long-term prosperity. The projects and actions developed through the Beyond 2025 Plan, such as the Housing Data Dashboard, the Regional Framework and Approach, and a focus on retrofits and new builds, are key to meeting evolving needs. These initiatives provide stability for families, attract talent, support businesses, and foster connected communities. By delivering on these priorities, Murihiku Southland is building a future where everyone has a place to call home and the region can thrive.





Waeture me te Whakakaupapa

# Regulatory & Planning

**It is essential that there is alignment between the region's aspirations with the rules that will enable them to happen and that these rules enable a prosperous and sustainable future.**

The Beyond 2025 Southland Plan stressed that effective regulatory and planning frameworks are essential for turning regional aspirations into reality. It highlighted the need to balance environmental protection with the flexibility required for sustainable development, ensuring both people and place are supported while enabling progress.

With many policies under review, the Plan saw a key opportunity to collaborate and influence future regulations. It noted concerns from businesses and residents about the complexity of current rules and the uncertainty caused by overlapping policy changes, urging action to prevent these barriers from hindering growth.

The Plan recommended prioritising critical areas such as carbon forestry, housing, transport, energy, climate change, and water management. It called for data-driven policy changes and advocated for regional variation over a 'one size fits all' approach. Additionally, it urged the development of a regional

data repository, better data sharing, and stronger alignment between national strategies and regional goals to drive sustainable growth.

## Beyond 2025 Recommendation:



### Recommend

- That there is a prioritised focus on policy and legislation changes regarding key areas such as carbon forestry, housing, transport, energy, climate change, emissions reduction, immigration, water and land.
- That policy makers prioritise how regulatory change is communicated including the possible development of centralised information repositories.
- That Murihiku Southland councils and Te Ao Marama Inc continue to work together to develop regional spatial planning.

## Achievements

### Government Policy and Legislation Monitor

The Government Policy and Legislation Monitor, led by Environment Southland, is updated and shared monthly. This initiative ensures that Murihiku Southland's voice is represented in shaping national policy by tracking significant legislative changes. The report provides timely updates on key developments driven by the coalition government, helping stakeholders across the region stay informed and aligned with evolving regulations.

The Monitor covers six critical areas:

- Resource Management
- Climate Change
- Te Tiriti / Te Ao Māori
- Transport and Infrastructure
- Mining
- Other Topics

Information is gathered through public sources and formal communications from ministries and regional bodies, including LGNZ, Taituarā, and Te Uru Kahika. It is distributed across councils, Great South, elected representatives, and staff, ensuring decision-makers have access to essential regulatory insights.

This initiative has strengthened collaboration among regional councils and agencies, facilitating better alignment with policy changes and enabling Murihiku Southland to respond proactively to national decisions. It has also improved access to critical information for local decision-makers, fostering more informed and strategic planning.

Next steps include exploring improved ways of

sharing the Monitor and investigating opportunities for greater alignment between national and regional strategies, ensuring policies effectively support Murihiku Southland's development goals.

## Conclusion

The next phase of this key enabler will focus on reviewing the region's Coastal Plan, which includes aquaculture and advancing spatial planning to address housing needs, ensuring alignment between regulations and sustainable growth.

A priority is improving communication around regulatory changes. Simplifying processes and creating a centralised regional information repository will foster better engagement between policymakers and the public.

Recognising regional variations in national policies is also essential. Tailored approaches, supported by advocacy and collaboration with councils, will ensure policies meet local needs.

Data-driven policy development will play a key role. A regional data repository will provide accurate, accessible information to inform decisions and improve transparency across stakeholders.

Finally, aligning national and regional strategies, planning, and policies is critical to avoid confusion and ensure coherent development. This includes key areas such as the repeal of the Resource Management Act, the Southland Water and Land Plan, climate change, carbon forestry, housing, and transport. Regular updates through Council Long-Term Plans, along with community consultation, will ensure alignment with well-being goals and prepare the region for future reforms.





# Pūngao Energy

**The Beyond 2025 Southland Plan identified clean, resilient, and affordable energy as essential to meeting the region's future needs, ensuring accessibility for communities and globally competitive energy pricing for exporters and new industries. Aotearoa New Zealand's competitive advantage has historically relied on affordable, reliable energy, and maintaining this edge was seen as crucial for the region's transition to renewable energy.**

Murihiku Southland's abundant renewable resources—such as wind, solar, and nearby run-of-river hydro—were highlighted as key to supporting this transition. The Murihiku Southland Regional Energy Strategy 2022-2050 projected that demand for renewable energy would more than double within seven years, driven by the need to decarbonise, the shift to electricity based transport, and new industry investments, including Green Hydrogen.

The Plan identified the need for 1200MW of new electricity generation and an increase of 340,000 tonnes of woody biomass to decarbonise large boilers over the following six years. With the future of the New Zealand Aluminium Smelter (NZAS) at Tiwai Point now clear for the next 20 years, the region gained confidence in its ability to fully realise its renewable energy potential.

The energy strategy focused on three key enablers: Energy Efficiency, Energy Security, Energy Balance, Equity, and Environmental Sustainability. Through these efforts, Murihiku Southland aimed to position itself as the renewable energy hub for the South Island, fostering sustainable growth and long-term prosperity.

## Beyond 2025 Recommendations:



### Recommend

Establishment of a regional coordinated Energy Steering Group with a focus to

- Implement the Murihiku Southland Energy Strategy 2022 – 2050
- Provide technical and consent expertise to local authorities
- Ensure planning frameworks and spatial plans incorporate new energy investment, considering geographic location and resilience of networks
- Create a community-wide engagement awareness and education programme.

## Achievements

### Decarbonisation in Murihiku Southland

Murihiku Southland has made significant progress toward decarbonisation, with 127 of the region's 186 fossil fuel boilers converted to renewable energy by the end of 2024. Another 30 boilers are scheduled for conversion by 2026, demonstrating strong regional and business commitment to reducing emissions. Since adopting the Net Zero 2050 target in 2018, Southland's emissions have already decreased by 9.7%.

Great South has played a key role by managing the conversion of 11 boilers in Invercargill and Bluff and increasing biomass wood fuel availability from 20,000 tonnes in 2018 to 215,000 tonnes in 2024, with a goal of 555,000 tonnes by 2028. This growing fuel supply is critical for decarbonising large

industrial boilers across the region.

One major success has been at Mataura Valley Milk, where a high-pressure electrode boiler was installed, replacing coal-fired heat systems and making the site 100% powered by renewable electricity. This project, supported by \$5 million from the Government Investment in Decarbonising Industry (GIDI) Fund, eliminates 22,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually, setting a new standard as New Zealand's first fully electrified dairy factory. Mataura Valley has also repurposed its coal fired boiler to run on wood chip which produces resilience and redundancy & potential for cost saving during electricity price spikes.

The State Sector Decarbonisation Fund, launched by EECA, has also supported various Southland institutions—including schools, hospitals, and the prison—in switching to low-emission heating systems. Meanwhile, the Invercargill Decarbonisation Contestable Fund, managed by Great South in partnership with EECA, allocated \$2 million to nine local businesses, helping them transition from fossil fuel heating to renewable alternatives. All of these boiler and heat conversions are now completed at total cost of \$3.9 million. These conversions are expected to save 2,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually and significantly improving Invercargill's air quality.

Through initiatives like these, Murihiku Southland is making measurable progress towards its decarbonisation goals, reinforcing its commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 and becoming a leader in sustainable energy practices.

### Energy Planning in Murihiku Southland

Murihiku Southland's energy planning is guided by the Murihiku Southland Regional Energy Strategy 2022-2050, led by Great South. The strategy focuses on meeting growing energy demands with renewable sources, targeting 1200MW of new electricity generation and increasing woody biomass supply by 360,000 tonnes annually over the next six years. With clarity on the future of the New Zealand Aluminium Smelter (NZAS) at Tiwai Point, the region is well-positioned to unlock its full renewable energy potential.

The Murihiku Southland Electrification Development

Plan, developed by Transpower and PowerNet, outlines the infrastructure needed to support renewable generation and increased electricity demand. Short-term projects include a protection scheme on Transpower's 110kV lines and thermal upgrades to the Invercargill–North Makarewa circuit. PowerNet is also expanding its 66kV network in Awarua and boosting load transfer between Invercargill and North Makarewa.

Long-term projects under review include duplexing the North Makarewa to Three Mile Hill line and upgrading grid exit points like Edendale. These developments will ensure the grid can meet future demand, supporting both decarbonisation and economic growth.

With collaborative planning and strategic investments, Murihiku Southland aims to position itself as a leader in renewable energy, fostering sustainable growth while meeting its decarbonisation targets.

### New Renewable Energy Opportunities in Murihiku Southland

Murihiku Southland is advancing renewable energy projects as part of Aotearoa New Zealand's transition to clean, resilient energy. The Murihiku Southland Regional Energy Strategy 2022–2050 prioritises regional advocacy, investments in wind, solar, and biomass, and government support for decarbonisation.

## Conclusion

Murihiku Southland's comprehensive approach to energy, built on the foundations of the Beyond 2025 Southland Plan, ensures the region is prepared to transition to a renewable future. The projects and strategies outlined, from expanding renewable capacity to strengthening infrastructure and accelerating decarbonisation, reflect the collaborative efforts driven by this plan. Together, these initiatives will not only meet future energy demands but also create new economic opportunities, positioning Murihiku Southland as a leader in sustainable energy and securing long-term prosperity for the region.





# Ranga Kaimahi Workforce

**In order for Murihiku Southland to remain an economic powerhouse for Aotearoa New Zealand, it needs to ensure it has the skills, flexibility and resilience to meet current and future labour market demands.**

The Beyond 2025 Southland Plan identified a skilled and resilient workforce as essential to the region's economic success and future growth. Ensuring the labour market was aligned with current and future needs required a coordinated, collaborative approach. The plan emphasised the importance of understanding workforce shortages and working together to address them, involving businesses, education providers, and immigration systems.

A major challenge for the region is balancing the need for skilled workers with the global workforce constraints driven by an ageing population and declining birth rates. These demographic trends, compounded by the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted the urgency of preparing for a smaller, more highly skilled workforce. Technology and automation were expected to drive efficiency, but the region needed people trained to develop, implement, and manage these innovations.

The plan also acknowledged the critical need to attract and retain talent. With record low unemployment and industries struggling to find staff, the strategy focused on promoting Murihiku Southland's lifestyle and opportunities to recruit workers and encourage them to settle in the region. Retention efforts included better supporting newcomers and building pride among residents to foster regional ambassadors.

Murihiku Southland's workforce strategy aligned education, workforce development, and immigration settings to meet both present and future labour demands. By strengthening these connections, the region positioned itself to maintain its role as an economic powerhouse and ensure sustainable

growth. The coordinated efforts outlined in the plan aimed to address skill gaps, attract talent, and develop a future-ready workforce to meet the evolving needs of businesses and industries.

## Beyond 2025 Recommendations:



### Recommend

- Coordinated support within the region for organisations and businesses to understand Immigration New Zealand's regulations on employing migrant workers.
- Explore capability building opportunities for upskilling people (particularly older people) with regard to digital technologies.
- Continue to support the regional strategic approach to labour force planning including the implementation of the Southland Murihiku Regional Workforce Plan.
- Showcase businesses with excellent employment practices to other businesses, especially in the sectors with greatest labour market needs, such as engineers, agriculture, technology and manufacturing, healthcare and hospitality.

## Achievements

Several key initiatives have been implemented to strengthen work readiness, promote employment, and connect job seekers with quality opportunities.

### E tū Job Match Platform

E tū, New Zealand's largest private sector union, launched the Job Match platform to connect job seekers with employment opportunities across the region and beyond. Accessible through a dedicated

website, the platform offers job search services alongside CV and interview preparation support. This initiative contributes to short- and long-term employment goals by promoting Decent Work and helping workers secure stable jobs.

### Decent Work Survey

E tū also conducted a comprehensive Decent Work Survey to understand the experiences and concerns of workers in Murihiku Southland. The survey, which received input from various industries, highlighted key workforce issues such as pay, job security, and workplace safety. Based on the findings, E tū published a public report advocating for improved working conditions and emphasising the importance of balancing employer and worker perspectives.

### Southland Youth Futures (SYF)

Great South expanded the Southland Youth Futures (SYF) programme to address skills shortages by connecting education providers, employers, and government agencies.

Since its inception, SYF has engaged with:



Over **11,000** students



Over **140** employers

Key SYF initiatives include:

- **Work Ready Passport (WRP):** Over 1,400 students have completed this programme, which equips young people with the skills, attitudes, and behaviours sought by employers through engaging, curriculum-linked lessons.
- **Career Days:** Popular events, like "Girls in Trades," provide students with insights into various career paths, helping them develop self-belief and positive attitudes toward employment.

- **Mayors Taskforce for Jobs:** Aimed at young people ages to 16 to 24 within the Southland District area it offers support, at no cost, for those not already in fulltime employment.
- **Workplace Tours:** These tours offer students hands-on exposure to industries and job roles, allowing them to explore potential career opportunities directly with employers.
- **Employment Events:** The Southland Jobs Expo, CareerFest Southland and the Southland Summer of Work initiative have connected job seekers with seasonal employment, while employer workshops offer strategies for retaining Gen Z talent.

SYF's initiatives have enhanced collaboration between schools and businesses, helping young people access meaningful employment opportunities and supporting employers in finding skilled workers. As the programme evolves, it will continue to expand its reach through innovative events and virtual components, with a focus on strengthening partnerships with employers across more industries.

## Conclusion

These achievements reflect the priorities outlined in the Beyond 2025 Southland Plan, which emphasised the importance of building a skilled, adaptable workforce to meet current and future labour market demands. The collaborative efforts of initiatives like E tū's Job Match and Decent Work Survey, alongside Southland Youth Futures and Mayors Task Force for Jobs, align with the plan's focus on improving work readiness, fostering meaningful employment, and ensuring the region remains competitive.

Through these efforts, Murihiku Southland is addressing workforce challenges head-on, creating opportunities for growth, and laying the foundation for a thriving, resilient economy.





## Kāhui Tangata

# People

**The Beyond 2025 Southland Plan recognised population, wellbeing, community, and attraction as essential to Murihiku Southland's sustainable future.**

With population growth lagging behind the national average and a rising proportion of elderly residents, the plan highlighted the need to attract new people while ensuring all Southlanders have access to essential services and opportunities.

Wellbeing was identified as critical, emphasising the importance of equitable healthcare, education, and services across urban and rural areas to support quality of life.

The region's community networks, powered by over 2,300 groups, are key to social cohesion, though volunteer recruitment remains a challenge. Strengthening these connections and fostering community pride are essential for maintaining the Southland spirit.

Finally, attracting and retaining talent was prioritised, building on earlier efforts to grow the population. The plan called for better support for newcomers, streamlined settlement processes, and empowering residents as ambassadors to promote the region's lifestyle and opportunities. These efforts aim to secure a thriving, connected, and resilient future for Murihiku Southland.

## Achievements

### Population

Southland's aging population, driven by longer life expectancies and declining birth rates, has prompted strategic efforts to promote healthy aging and community engagement. The Ready for Living Programme in Gore District offers free parking and swimming for residents aged 80+ and resources like the "Living Well in Later Years" booklet to connect older adults with services and volunteer opportunities. Building on this, the 2023 Ready for Living Age-Friendly Strategy identified key areas—such as housing, employment, and health—to ensure the region remains inclusive and supportive for all ages.





## Wellbeing

The Beyond 2025 Plan prioritised wellbeing by focusing on equitable healthcare, food resilience, and sustainable transport. The Feeding Murihiku: Good Food Road Map, launched in 2024 by the Murihiku Kai Collective, identified challenges in accessing quality food and proposed strategies to support local producers and build a resilient food system.

Healthcare improvements shaped by Hokonui Locality Community-Led Health include the introduction of new clinical and non-clinical roles funded through the Comprehensive Primary Care Team (CPCT) initiative. These roles support whānau and the wider community on their health journey. A separate Kaiawhina role supports Māori needing help engaging with the health system. A new Hokonui Hauora fund supports community-led wellbeing initiatives. A new adult oral health programme helps those struggling to afford dental care. The Manaakitanga Customer Service Mastery Programme was created for front-facing staff in the health and wellbeing sector, to build excellence in customer service. The first cohort graduated in November. The Locality co-hosted the eMental Health International Collaborative (eMHIC) roundtable in May 2024, exploring digital mental health solutions.

The region looks forward to the opening of the Southland Charity Hospital in 2025 which will provide healthcare to those living in Southland who wouldn't be able to access treatment through the private or public sector.

## Community

The Strong Communities Murihiku Initiative has promoted connectedness through the Connected Murihiku platform, which provides tools and resources for community organisations. Efforts to attract and retain volunteers and support succession planning remain critical to maintaining community resilience.

The Murihiku Marae, reopened in June 2023 after a \$15 million redevelopment, serves as a modern, sustainable hub for education, community services, and civil defence. Its triple net-zero design reflects the region's commitment to environmental sustainability while enriching the social fabric.

The Murihiku Southland Spaces and Places Strategy continues to guide the development of sports facilities, ensuring access and affordability. Future projects will target areas like South Invercargill, addressing barriers to participation and expanding opportunities for recreation.

## Attraction, Talent Retention, and Vibrancy

Promoting Murihiku Southland as an attractive and vibrant place to live, work, study, and visit is a key priority under the Beyond 2025 Plan. Initiatives like the Zero Fees Scheme at the Southern Institute of Technology (SIT) have drawn both domestic and international students to the region, helping to build a skilled workforce and encouraging graduates to settle in Southland.

To foster pride and community spirit, Great South and the Invercargill City Council have revitalised the Invercargill city centre through events such as night food markets, New Year's Eve celebrations, and fan zones for major sporting events. These activities have transformed the city into a lively hub, enhancing its appeal to both residents and visitors.

The redevelopment of the Te Unua Museum of Southland is another key project contributing to the region's vibrancy. In 2022, the Council committed \$39.4 million to build a new 3,550m<sup>2</sup> museum at Queens Park. The museum will serve as both a cultural and educational landmark, enhancing Southland's appeal as a place to live and visit. The new tuatara enclosure, completed in 2024, is already enriching the visitor experience, and construction of the new museum is scheduled for completion by late 2026.

The development and launch of the "Get a Life" campaign was designed to attract top talent to Southland by showcasing the region as a place where they could truly "get a better life" - combining meaningful work with outdoor adventures, stunning landscapes, and a strong sense of community. To support this effort, the "Get a Life" toolbox was developed as a resource for companies to share the Murihiku Southland story with potential job seekers. The toolbox includes links, videos, and a one-stop shop for those looking to apply and relocate to Invercargill, helping businesses attract talent to the region.

## Conclusion

By creating vibrant public spaces, fostering cultural engagement, and expanding educational opportunities, the Beyond 2025 Plan positions Murihiku Southland as an attractive destination where people can thrive. These efforts complemented by initiatives like the "Get a Life" campaign, showcase Southland as a region where professionals can achieve both career success and exceptional lifestyle. Highlighting meaningful work opportunities, outdoor adventures, stunning landscapes, and a strong sense of community, the campaign exemplifies Southland's unique appeal.

Through these dynamic initiatives, Murihiku Southland is fostering a connected, vibrant, and resilient region, building on the foundational work laid out in the Beyond 2025 Plan.

From supporting healthy aging and strengthening community networks to improving wellbeing, expanding education, and revitalising public spaces, each project reflects a collective commitment to making Southland a place where people want to live, work, study, and visit.

With these efforts in motion, the region is well-positioned to attract new talent, retain its residents, and create opportunities for sustainable growth, ensuring a prosperous future for generations to come.





# Ōhanga Economy

The Beyond 2025 Southland Plan recognised that a diversified economy was essential for reducing reliance on traditional industries like agriculture and tourism. It encouraged the development of emerging sectors such as renewable energy, technology, and space operations to create new opportunities and build economic resilience.

Murihiku Southland's businesses contributed significantly to the national economy, generated \$8.27 billion last year with only 2% of New Zealand's population. The plan highlighted the need to support entrepreneurship, remove barriers to business growth, and expand into global markets to attract investment and ensure competitiveness.

Efficient transport and technology infrastructure were identified as critical to supporting economic growth and future needs. Integrated planning across road, rail, air, and sea, along with the adoption of new digital technologies, was prioritised to enhance connectivity, productivity, and opportunities for innovation.

The plan also emphasised the importance of innovation and automation in driving future growth. It called for investments in skills development, education, and research to support new technologies and prepare industries for future challenges.

By embedding these priorities into the Beyond 2025 Plan, Murihiku Southland laid the foundation for a robust, forward-looking economy. These efforts ensured the region's businesses were resilient, competitive, and well-positioned to embrace emerging opportunities, securing sustainable growth for the future.

## Achievements

### Diversification

Murihiku Southland's commitment to economic diversification focuses on expanding key sectors such as tourism and aquaculture.

Tourism continues to be a vital contributor to the regional economy, leveraging Southland's spectacular natural landscapes, including Piopiotahi





Milford Sound, and vibrant local events. The Murihiku Southland Destination Strategy (MSDS) supports sustainable tourism growth, aligning with community priorities for vibrancy and job creation. Key progress includes efforts to establish Fiordland National Park as a Dark Sky Sanctuary, promote food tourism through the Murihiku Eats guide and Taste Southland event series, and assess the region's potential as a cycling destination through the Murihiku Southland Cycle Tourism Opportunities Assessment. Storytelling projects with mana whenua further enhance the cultural identity of the region, contributing to the overall visitor experience. The newly developed concept for Motupohue Bluff Hill, Te Taurapa o Te Waka is a strong example of this and one which, once built, would become a national significant iconic site.

In aquaculture, Southland aims to grow into at least a \$1 billion industry by 2035, accounting for over one third of New Zealand's national aquaculture sales target. This will be achieved with both land based and ocean aquaculture opportunities and also builds on the region's proud 50 year industry foundation. In recent times, there have been achievements such as the Ocean Beach Aquaculture Hub of Excellence which has recently received a \$2.2 million loan from the Government's Regional Infrastructure Fund. This will support its \$6.3 million site expansion which is already being used to farm seaweed, pāua, and whitebait onshore. This project includes increasing its shared services for more businesses, expanding its farming pods, building training, research, worker accommodation, and tourism facilities.

Other key recommendations from Beyond 2025 include fostering investment, integrating sustainable practices, and developing essential infrastructure to support future growth. Research and development (R&D) investment and industry collaboration remain vital to ensuring long-term success.

These efforts have positioned Southland as a leader in aquaculture, with significant opportunities for local job creation, environmental sustainability, and economic diversification. Future priorities include refreshing the Murihiku Southland Aquaculture Strategy alongside the review of the regional Coastal Plan to ensure there is a clear pathway forward to achieving aquaculture goals.

### ✔ Business and Export Economy

Murihiku Southland generated \$8.27 billion last year in GDP, driven by a diverse range of businesses, including agriculture, aquaculture, and manufacturing. With 14,622 registered businesses employing 51,900 people, the region plays a critical role in New Zealand's economy, contributing 11.7% of the country's pastoral exports.

The region is focused on expanding access to global markets and refining its Provenance Story to highlight Southland's unique products. Efforts to support export growth include trade event participation, regulatory streamlining, and promoting

sustainable practices. The Southland Engineering & Manufacturing Cluster, funded by MBIE, enhances local collaboration and supports workforce development through vocational training and Industry 4.0 technologies.

These initiatives position Southland as a hub for high-value manufacturing and business innovation, ensuring resilience and growth in an evolving economic landscape.

### ✔ Transport

Transport infrastructure remains a cornerstone of Southland's economic growth.

Invercargill Airport plays a key role in regional connectivity, having recently taken over management of the Milford Sound Aerodrome, a critical gateway for tourism. To meet future demand, the airport is planning terminal upgrades to enhance passenger services and ensure long-term regulatory compliance. These upgrades will support both regional tourism and economic development by maintaining the region's status as a key entry point for visitors.

Sustainable transport is also advancing through HW Richardson's hydrogen site in Clifton, which will produce 450kg of hydrogen daily, helping convert dual-fuel trucks to hydrogen power. This initiative positions Southland at the forefront of the transition to low-emission heavy transport fuel, supporting the region's 2050 net-zero targets. The under investment by NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, particularly in the regions bridges, has created weight restrictions and bridge closures which is increasing drive distances and emissions from road transport adding 3.5 million km to heavy transport drive distances and an additional cost of \$18.5 million to farmers, exporters and rural communities.

### ✔ Technology, Innovation, and Automation

Murihiku Southland's focus on technology and innovation is driving business capability and attracting investment. The Satellite Ground Station at Awarua will improve GPS accuracy to 10cm, generating \$864 million in economic benefits over 20 years. The project highlights Southland's potential as a hub for high-tech industries and innovation.

The COIN South Innovation Programme supports local businesses with workshops, innovation services, and ecosystem mapping. Collaborations with the Southland Engineering & Manufacturing Cluster have led to new product development, market expansion, and the adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies. Future efforts will continue building on this foundation by supporting startups, retaining local talent, and expanding business automation.

### ✔ Tiwai Aluminium Smelter and South Port

The Tiwai Aluminium Smelter is a cornerstone of Southland's economy, directly employing over 1,000 people and supporting thousands more through local businesses and supply chains. As a global producer of high-purity aluminium, the smelter drives significant export revenue for the region. New energy agreements through 2044 provide long-term stability, ensuring job security and supporting New Zealand's renewable energy goals through dry-year demand response. Tiwai's ongoing environmental remediation efforts further align with the region's sustainability objectives.

South Port, New Zealand's southernmost commercial port, plays a vital role in connecting Southland to global markets. It facilitates the export of key commodities, including aluminium, agricultural products, and timber. Despite recent challenges with cargo volumes and inflation, the port has expanded its cold storage facilities and increased efficiency through upgrades. Looking forward, South Port is preparing to support wind farm construction and hydrogen production, ensuring it remains a critical enabler of both traditional exports and emerging industries. Together, Tiwai and South Port provide essential infrastructure and stability, driving job creation, economic resilience, and future growth for the region.

### Conclusion

The Beyond 2025 Plan has laid the foundation for a resilient and future-focused economy in Murihiku Southland. Through initiatives in tourism, aquaculture, business development, transport, and technology, the region is driving sustainable growth, creating jobs, and opening new markets.

Key projects, such as the expansion of aquaculture, hydrogen transport development, and the Southland Engineering & Manufacturing Cluster, are fostering innovation and ensuring Southland remains competitive.

With the stability provided by the Tiwai Aluminium Smelter and South Port, alongside investments in infrastructure and digital technology, Murihiku Southland is well-positioned to thrive economically, building a vibrant and sustainable future for all.





## Taiao

# Environment

**The Beyond 2025 Long Term Plan prioritised environmental sustainability, recognising that Murihiku Southland's future prosperity depended on addressing the challenges of climate change, land use, emissions reduction, and water management.**

These areas were identified as essential to balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility.

The plan acknowledged that climate change posed risks through rising sea levels and extreme weather, but also presented opportunities in areas like renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. Building resilience and adaptability was seen as crucial to protecting communities and infrastructure.

Land use was also a key focus, with an emphasis on balancing development with conservation. Sustainable practices were promoted to safeguard biodiversity while supporting key industries, ensuring that economic progress would not come at the cost of the environment.

Achieving Net Zero Southland by 2050 was central to the region's vision, encouraging businesses, industries, and communities to adopt cleaner technologies and renewable energy sources. Collaborative efforts were essential to driving emissions reductions while creating new economic opportunities.

Water management was critical to both economic and environmental sustainability. The plan prioritised the protection of water quality and sustainable usage, recognising water as vital for agriculture, tourism, and community wellbeing. Effective strategies were developed to maintain the balance between the region's water needs and ecological health.

Together, these initiatives outlined in the Beyond 2025 Plan set Murihiku Southland on a path toward a sustainable future, ensuring that economic development and environmental stewardship could thrive side by side.





## Achievements

### ☑ Climate Change

Murihiku Southland took significant steps to address climate change through the development of a Regional Climate Change Strategy, led by Environment Southland, the region's councils, and Te Ao Mārama Inc. This strategy guided Long-term Plans, ensuring tailored climate responses and encouraging collaboration across sectors. It identified opportunities to engage communities and promoted sustainable practices throughout the region. Submissions on the proposed strategy were heard in May 2024, highlighting Southland's commitment to building climate resilience and supporting a sustainable future.

### ☑ Net Zero Southland

Great South has been at the forefront of efforts to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, supporting businesses through decarbonisation workshops and carbon certification programmes. The Decarbonisation Workshop Series provides businesses with tools to measure their emissions and develop actionable reduction plans. Through a partnership with Ekos, participating businesses can access discounted carbon certification, offering them a competitive edge as sustainability becomes increasingly important for customers and investors.

The 2023 Net Regional Emissions were 9.7% below the 2018 baseline emissions. This has changed from the 2022 figures because MfE has increased the amount of methane produced by cows.

Great South's sustainability leadership was

recognised with a Grand Business South Award in 2023, celebrating the organisation's efforts to guide regional emissions reductions.

Key industries are also contributing to these goals. Fonterra has transitioned many of its operations to renewable energy, improved energy efficiency by 20% since 2003, and is piloting New Zealand's first electric milk tanker, Milk-E. The need to address the mandatory climate related disclosures to meet the requirements of 80% of NZ's export markets is motivating all of Southland's exporters, particularly meat and dairy, to eliminate the use of coal, fossil fuels and adopt sustainability initiatives, including energy efficiency, external certification, waste reduction, and water conservation, ensuring the company remains aligned with regional decarbonisation efforts.

### ☑ Land Use and Rural Initiatives

The Southland Rural Support Trust received increased government funding to support farmers during challenging economic and environmental conditions, ensuring continuity in the agricultural sector. The Food and Fibre Investment Accelerator Project, led by Thriving Southland, identified key opportunities for diversification, including on-farm energy solutions and industrial hemp production. These initiatives aim to strengthen Southland's agricultural sector by fostering innovation, creating jobs, and promoting sustainable land use practices.

### ☑ Water Management

The Southland Water and Land Plan has been a cornerstone of the region's efforts to manage water resources and balance land use with environmental sustainability. Developed through extensive

collaboration between Environment Southland, Te Ao Mārama Inc., and various stakeholders, the plan provides a regional framework to improve water quality, manage discharges, and promote sustainable farming practices.

The plan underwent years of public engagement, with over 900 submissions and hearings shaping its development. By 2024, most of the plan had become operative, simplifying the regulatory landscape for land and water activities while promoting sustainable practices. The plan includes rules on intensive winter grazing, farm plans, and discharge consents, ensuring compliance with environmental standards.

Future amendments, known as Plan Change Tuatahi, will align the Southland Water and Land Plan with the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM). These updates will set freshwater objectives, limits, and targets to ensure sustainable water use. Public consultations in 2024 will shape policies that reflect local values, fostering hauora (healthy resilience) by balancing ecological health with agricultural and economic needs.

## Conclusion

These environmental initiatives align with the strategic framework outlined in the Beyond 2025 Long Term Plan, ensuring that Murihiku Southland remains resilient and sustainable in the face of future challenges. By integrating climate adaptation, emissions reduction, sustainable land use, and water management, the region is actively balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility.

Together, these efforts demonstrate Southland's commitment to building a greener, more sustainable future. Guided by the Beyond 2025 framework, the collaborative actions of councils, businesses, and communities will ensure the region thrives, delivering long-term benefits for both the environment and the people who call Southland home.





*Titiro Whakamua*

# Looking Forward

**As we enter the next phase of Beyond 2025, our region's accomplishments over the past year offer a strong foundation for what lies ahead.**

Guided by the strategic focus and collaborative drive that have defined Beyond 2025, we are positioned to continue making significant progress in achieving our shared aspirations.

Economic indicators demonstrate our strength, with Southland's GDP per capita at record highs and our growth outperforming national averages. This solid footing allows us to address challenges while seizing new opportunities across multiple sectors.

Our key focus areas and priorities for the year ahead, reinforce our commitment to a thriving, resilient, and sustainable Murihiku Southland.

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## Data

Data and insights are vital to informed decision-making, and Southland is committed to advancing a robust Regional Data Strategy.

This strategy will enhance the operations of DISH, focusing on areas such as housing, economy, and tourism, while expanding into key areas like wellbeing, net zero progress, and population trends.

In the coming year, a comprehensive suite of regularly updated reports will be developed, providing up-to-date insights that support policy and strategy across sectors.

Through partnerships with iwi, councils, and regional organisations, DISH will strengthen our region's approach to data governance and create a centralised resource for Southland's most critical information needs.

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## Housing

Addressing housing needs is essential for Southland's social and economic wellbeing.

Over the next year, we will complete the Housing Development-Ready Regulatory Planning Review to





ensure that new developments align with community needs and comply with potential government reforms.

Through DISH, we will implement regular housing reports to monitor demand and supply trends, providing valuable insights for decision-makers.

A Regional Housing Group will be established to coordinate spatial planning across councils, ensuring that housing developments occur in optimal locations and meet the diverse needs of Southlanders. A particular focus will be placed on providing warm, energy-efficient homes, including initiatives on Stewart Island and ongoing support for the Southland Warm Homes Trust.

## Regulatory & Planning

Achieving Southland's aspirations requires an enabling regulatory framework, and in the coming year, we will continue data-driven advocacy to ensure alignment between regional goals and national policies.

We will continue collaborating with councils, iwi, and Government agencies to shape policies that drive economic development and protect Southland's distinctive environment. This includes alignment with existing plans, frameworks, and new policies to support growth and sustainability, ensuring that the regulatory landscape enables Southland's success.

## Energy

Renewable energy development is at the heart of Southland's decarbonisation and economic diversification strategy.

Implementing the Murihiku Southland Regional Energy Strategy 2022-2050 will focus on scaling

renewable energy sources to meet the region's growing demands, targeting the generation of 1,200 MW of new electricity and an increase in wood biomass supply by 360,000 tonnes annually.

These efforts will reduce reliance on non-renewable energy and support sustainable economic growth.

Our ongoing partnerships with Government and industry will strengthen Southland's energy security and environmental responsibility, aligning with the region's long-term decarbonisation goals.

## Workforce

The future of Southland's workforce is key to the region's growth and success.

Mayors Taskforce for Jobs and Southland Youth Futures will continue to address skill shortages by connecting education providers, local employers, and Government agencies.

Our collaborative approach with local businesses will help attract new talent while retaining existing residents, building a skilled workforce capable of supporting emerging industries such as aquaculture, automation, and renewable energy.

By working closely with business and educational institutions, we will ensure that workforce development aligns with the region's economic diversification and meets the demands of evolving industries.

## People

Ensuring quality of life and equitable access to services remains a priority for Southland's communities.

The coming year will see continued advocacy

for healthcare, education, and essential services across urban and rural areas, supporting an ageing population and addressing local healthcare gaps.

With the opening of the Southland Charity Hospital, we celebrate a step forward for regional healthcare, while acknowledging the ongoing need for comprehensive health services for all residents.

Our investment in urban revitalisation will take further shape with the next stages of Invercargill's City Centre developments, including new attractions, businesses, and Te Unua Museum of Southland.

Additionally, initiatives to attract and retain talent will focus on creating meaningful employment opportunities and enhancing our region's appeal as a great place to live, work, and grow.

## Economy

Diversification remains central to Southland's economic resilience and future growth.

Our region will continue to focus on high-potential industries such as tourism, aquaculture, and digital infrastructure, including data centres.

These sectors offer pathways to increase export capacity and support national targets.

The development of the Murihiku Southland Aquaculture Strategy will provide a roadmap for scaling this industry responsibly, creating jobs, and contributing significantly to Aotearoa's export goals.

In tourism, we are looking forward to the outcomes of the Milford Opportunities Project and are

committed to promoting year-round, sustainable tourism across the region.

Investment in infrastructure, transport, and freight services will further support export growth, ensuring that Southland's high-value goods reach both domestic and international markets efficiently.

## Environment

Environmental stewardship remains a pillar of Beyond 2025, and in the coming year, we will advance our climate and sustainability initiatives with renewed focus.

A comprehensive review of the 2021 Net Zero Southland Report will ensure that our decarbonisation strategies are inclusive of all significant emissions sources, including updated data from New Zealand Aluminium Smelter (NZAS).

As part of the Regional Climate Change Strategy, we will develop a framework to facilitate effective implementation across local councils, iwi, businesses, and community organisations.

Spatial planning will play a critical role, with an emphasis on collecting and modelling key environmental data to guide informed decisions for land and coastal management.

Our collaborative efforts with industry will support businesses in their transition to low-emissions practices, strengthening their competitiveness in the global market and securing a sustainable future for the region.







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