



Climate Change Response Amendment Bill

Climate Change Adaptation Planning

The Government is introducing a bill to amend Aotearoa New Zealand's key climate change law, the Climate Change Response Act 2002 (CCRA).

The Climate Change Response Amendment Bill (the Bill) introduces a new requirement for territorial authorities (TAs) to undertake adaptation planning. TAs are city or district councils. The Bill requires TAs to make climate change adaptation plans for priority areas that are vulnerable to climate risks.

Find more information on the full list of changes in the Bill on the [Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport's \(MCERT\) website](#).

At a glance: The Climate Change Response Amendment Bill

This Bill amends the CCRA. The CCRA is the legislation that sets out a range of legal requirements to help New Zealand transition to a low-emissions economy and prepare for the impacts of climate change. The Government announced the changes to the CCRA covered by this Bill in 2025.

The Bill makes changes to several different aspects of the CCRA. This includes:

- introducing a **new requirement for local councils to undertake adaptation planning**
- **amending complex or duplicative requirements in the CCRA**
- supporting the **effective functioning of the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS)**, including **making changes needed to enable the introduction of new eligible activities** and **strengthening secondary market governance**

The Government is not changing the fundamental mechanisms of the CCRA. The core elements of the Zero Carbon Framework established under the CCRA remain in place. The Government is still required to meet New Zealand's 2050 target, with appropriate checks and balances for climate policy including the independent advice of He Pou a Rangi Climate Change Commission (the Commission).

This publication is one of a series of factsheets on the Bill. For more information, please see our other factsheets on:

- [Information for New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme Compliance and Market Participants](#)
- [Supporting the Efficiency of Aotearoa New Zealand's Climate Change Law](#).

Context for local adaptation planning

The National Adaptation Framework

Local adaptation planning is one of the actions under the [National Adaptation Framework](#), which is the Government's long-term, strategic approach to help New Zealand prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate change.

What does the Bill change?

Territorial authorities will be required to prepare adaptation plans

Climate-driven natural hazard risks in New Zealand are increasing in scale and severity. Many communities are already being affected by natural hazards such as flooding, coastal inundation, erosion, slips and severe weather events.

The Bill will ensure TAs (city and district councils) plan for and communicate how growing climate-driven natural hazard risks will be managed by introducing a new requirement for adaptation plans. Specifically:

- councils will be required to plan their responses to climate-related natural hazards in the highest-priority areas
- adaptation plans will lay out actions to implement the plan including how different actions are expected to be funded, so communities can be well prepared.

Adaptation planning will be undertaken by territorial authorities, however they will be encouraged to work together with regional councils and adjoining TAs where it makes sense to do so.¹

Adaptation plans will work with the new planning system, subject to the Planning Act being passed. If you live in an area identified as a priority location for climate change adaptation planning, the council will be required to work with your community to generate an adaptation plan to respond to the risks.

The new planning system

The new planning system is replacing the Resource Management Act 1991. Two new bills are being introduced in its place: the Planning Bill and the Natural Environment Bill.

Under these bills, all councils in a region will jointly prepare a **regional spatial plan**. Councils will establish a spatial plan committee to prepare the draft plan, and the Minister responsible for the Planning Act may appoint a member to the committee. The regional spatial plan must identify priority locations for which councils are required to develop and adopt adaptation plans and will also:

- set the strategic direction for growth and change in a region for the next 30-plus years
- support growth, while taking things like natural hazards and other constraints into account.

More information about the new planning system can be found on the [MCERT website](#).

¹ Some TAs may become unitary councils through the Simplifying Local Government process, in which case the responsibilities for adaptation plans would transfer to the new council.

What adaptation plans will do

An adaptation plan will:

- **cover at least 30 years**, considering existing and potential future impacts of climate-related natural hazards
- **outline objectives and intentions for managing climate-driven natural hazard risks**
- **outline a programme of work to respond to climate-related natural hazard risks**, including any triggers or thresholds for actions to be taken, including responses following a natural hazard event
- **provide high-level cost estimates** and an implementation plan (how and when these actions will be taken, and how they will be funded and financed over time)
- **specify how the plan will be monitored, reviewed and reported on.**

Within 12 months of the Bill passing, regulations to guide adaptation planning will be put in place. These may include requirements for preparing, communicating or adopting adaptation plans and additional content requirements.

Determining a priority location

Priority locations will be identified by spatial plan committees and councils as part of the process of creating regional spatial plans under the Planning Act, once it is in force. How priority locations are determined may be set out in a national standard or regulations under the Planning Act. The expectation is that regional spatial plans will identify the priority locations at a broad level, with any site-specific boundaries to be determined through the adaptation plan process. Councils will be expected to focus first on the places where people live – this means residential areas and their supporting services. They'll start by looking at places facing risks from flood and coastal hazards.

In selecting locations for adaptation plans, decision-makers will need to consider the needs of rural, urban and Māori communities and, at their discretion, may consider a wider range of hazards, land-use activities or other land. Councils may also choose to develop adaptation plans for other areas that are not identified as priority locations.

Existing adaptation plans

Some councils have already created, or are in the process of, creating plans to adapt to the impacts of climate change within their territories. Existing adaptation plans that have been completed before the Bill becomes law may be considered as an adaptation plan under the CCRA if they fulfil certain criteria. This includes those that set out responses to flooding or coastal hazards, and that were approved by the TA before the commencement of the adaptation planning regulations.

Substantially completed plans can also be deemed to be completed plans adopted under the CCRA.

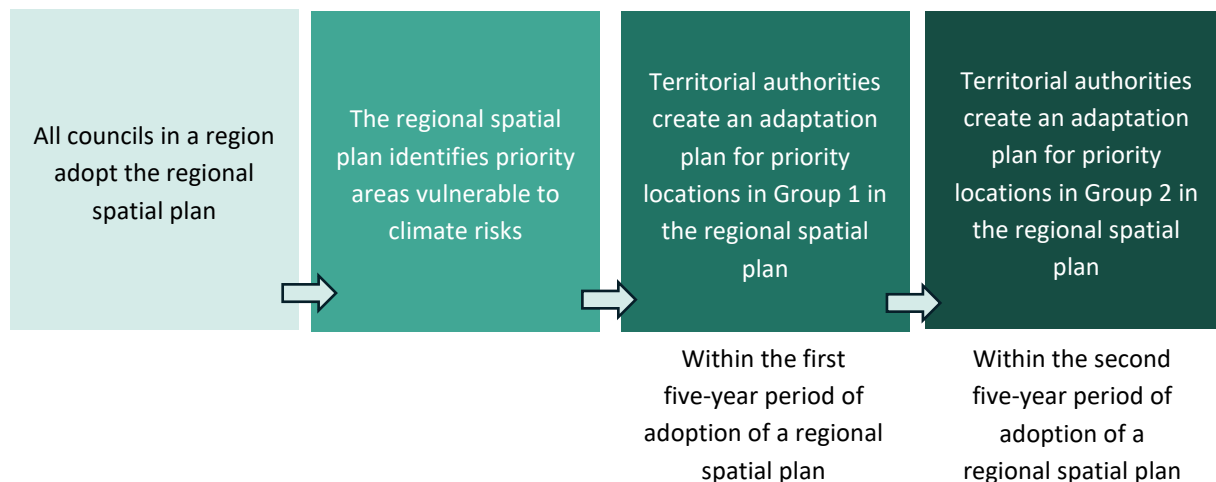
Timeline for adaptation planning

The process to identify priority locations is expected to happen as part of the regional spatial planning process under the Planning Act, once this Act is in force. Territorial authorities will have five years to prepare an adaptation plan. Regional spatial plans cover a period of 30-plus years.

The intention is that a national standard or regulation will require priority locations to be either in Group 1 or 2 in the regional spatial plan: Group 1 must prepare plans within the first five years of adoption of the first regional spatial plan for the region, and Group 2 within in the second five-year

window. The intention is that the spatial plan committee and councils will determine which locations are within each group in a region.

Figure 1: Timeline for adaptation planning



Implementation

Councils are expected to implement adaptation plans through their existing tools and processes, including:

- long-term plans including associated infrastructure strategies (Local Government Act 2002)
- combined spatial, land use and natural environment plans (Natural Environment and Planning Bills 2025)
- emergency management group plans and recovery plans (Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002)
- land information memoranda (Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987)
- regional land transport plans (Land Transport Management Act 2003)
- catchment management activities including flood risk management (Soil Conservation and River Control Act 1941)
- water service strategies (Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025).

Adaptation plans do not contain rules. Instead they coordinate risk management responses, with the main legal effect being that decision-makers under other statutory regimes must have regard to these plans, and the relaxation of certain requirements that apply to local government under the Local Government Act 2002 where specific events or trigger points identified in a plan occur.

