

# What makes for success in regeneration initiatives for thriving regions?

Final working paper, BBHTC Thriving Regions, Waitaki and Ōamaru case study



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National  
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# 1 Introduction

Writing about her family's experiences living in rural communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, Chessie Henry (2018, page 199), reflects on the observations of her rural GP father:

*“He explains to me how the health of a community is tied up with the rural economy. If you have a vibrant town, with good employment, medical facilities, schools, community spaces, internet and a thriving shopping centre, then everyone does better. People are attracted to live and work there, and that then attracts a better range of services. But if you have a town that's economically struggling – the meat works have closed, there's high levels of unemployment and alcohol and drug abuse – then all the services basically stop coming. The schools suffer, people don't want to live there, and it's even more difficult to recruit to that area. So, it becomes impossible to separate the health of a community from the economic wellness of that community”.*

When communities in rural regions struggle to achieve an adequate level of wellbeing for their residents and communities, they often embark on regeneration initiatives. These initiatives require communities to draw on and extend their capacity beyond that of local and central government. They do so through collaboration that utilises shared resources and provides localised, sustainable, community-based developments (Stocker and Pollard, 1994). However, as Powe et al. (2015) explain, regeneration is a complex, multi-dimensional process that evolves over time. We need to understand better the challenges faced by the practices of regeneration at the community level.

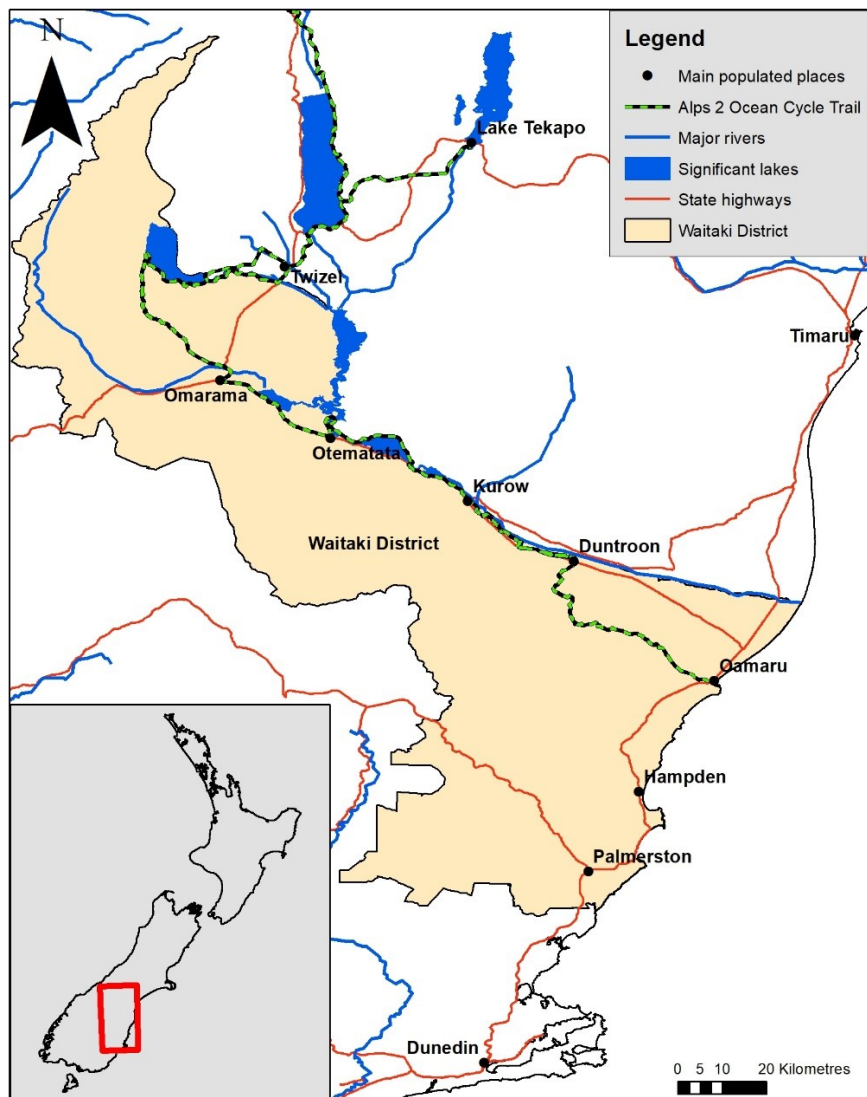
This research working paper summarises findings from research in a region of Aotearoa New Zealand. We found that regions in this country commonly adopt community-based approaches to solve their problems of development through local initiatives. Using a local lens and participatory methods we found community organisations often struggle in assessing the problems they face, and then in developing appropriate strategies and responses. Most importantly, they need to know what leads to successful regeneration, through knowing what works well and why. This working paper considers these issues for the practice of regeneration by focusing on our research findings from the Waitaki District in the South Island (see map below).

## 1.1 Background and purpose of this paper

The working paper is an output of the Thriving Regions (South Island) research theme of the Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities National Science Challenge (BBHTC) and provides the basis for subsequent papers and publications. The “Thriving Regions” theme of BBHTC comprises an integrated set of cases studies from across the South Island, focused on North Otago, Timaru and Ashburton. The research has considered regions, settlements and communities that are attempting to create positive futures for themselves (Perkins et al., 2019).

The research reported in this working paper is focused geographically on the Waitaki District, the Waitaki Valley that borders the north of the District, and the main town of Ōamaru that services the District and Valley (*the Waitaki*). The District lies in the North Otago sub region of Otago and the rohe of Te Rūnanga o Moeraki. By focusing on a valley, part of one of the largest catchments in the country, we gained insights to transformational

changes in natural resource use that directly affect the built environment and social wellbeing of regional towns (in this case Ōamaru), smaller settlements (see map) and their communities.



*Alps to Ocean trail map sourced from Google Maps. Coastline, populated places, State highways, major rivers and lakes sourced from Land Information NZ and licensed for use under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license. Waitaki District boundaries sourced from Statistics NZ.*

Numerous factors can transform a region's towns and communities. They include new technologies and communications systems, tourism development, amenity migration (people moving in for the available lifestyle and entrepreneurial opportunities), migration for work (including from overseas), new government policies, regulations, and the investment available for local government and local initiatives. Along with local councils, communities look to respond to these changes and enhance their wellbeing through regeneration practices and community-based initiatives.

The research has investigated and evaluated the effectiveness of community-based and collaborative approaches to regional regeneration, finding sustainable, local solutions to challenges for maintaining or enhancing community wellbeing. We describe two phases of research that both followed the ethos of co-production of knowledge (Taylor et al., 2021).

The research activities have involved participatory and action-research methods and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders including local and central government agencies, entrepreneurs, businesses, and community groups. Challenges examined have included, for example, adequate and affordable housing, sustainable tourism, heritage restoration, intensification of land uses, and the positive integration of migrant workers and other newcomers.

This working paper reports on the second phase of our research in the Waitaki, while drawing lessons for success in regional regeneration across the whole of the research programme. The research seeks to enhance regional regeneration practices through the development of practical tools for planning and implementing community-based change and testing their application, such as social impact assessment (SIA). A key output from the recent work programme in the Waitaki therefore is the recent publication of *Guidelines on Social Impact Assessment for Thriving Regions and Communities* (Taylor and Mackay, 2023). The guidelines support communities with a practical approach to assessing and communicating about social impacts of regeneration initiatives with affected people and communities (see Annex 1). The current phase of research has investigated and tested several other tools that support community-based initiatives, as reported in this working paper, with more detail in the Annexes.

## **1.2 What is community based regeneration?**

Community-based approaches to sustainable development initiatives are well established amongst regeneration practitioners (Stocker and Pollard, 1994). There is much potential for those leading changes at the community level to encompass strong participation and action elements to achieve sustainable outcomes. Community-based planning requires all stakeholders, including communities and local councils, to utilise frameworks for sustainability and community wellbeing at the strategic level (policy and planning) as well as for specific projects. Regeneration problems such as housing and social support for new settlers and migrant workers, for example, require stakeholders to work together with specific communities to enhance outcomes for social wellbeing, while sharing resources, building capacity, and then implementing change (Mackay and Taylor, 2024).

A community-based approach requires identification of a common and agreed set of community values and goals for change to achieve desired outcomes (Stocker and Pollard, 1994). It also requires the adoption of shared responsibilities and the joint application of available resources. Often the approach entails a place-based orientation to change as local geographies define the locus of change and the participants in regeneration (Fitzgerald, 1999). By implication, local governments are key players in community-based change. While central government agencies and stakeholder groups also play an important part, they, necessarily, must consider shifting their support towards a bottom-up approach to local initiatives and their leadership. The role of external agencies therefore becomes facilitative and focuses on being flexible and effective in delivering local services (Powe, et al., 2015).

## **1.3 Content of this working paper**

The content of this paper next considers the methodological issues for applied methods in regeneration research, emphasising the importance of comparative and longitudinal

research as well as action research and the co-production of knowledge. We outline the two phases of research and the spatial framework used (Section 2).

Based on the findings from these methods, the paper then draws lessons and success factors for regeneration practice from the two phases of research, summarising the first phase and detailing the results of the second phase. Of particular interest as practice exemplars are the leadership and role of Stronger Waitaki and the approach taken to develop the Waitaki District housing strategy: *Healthy Homes for all: A Community Housing Strategy* (Section 3).

The working paper concludes with discussion and reflection on how applied community research and community-based assessments can contribute to regeneration practices and the management of social change (Section 4).

Tools we have used and tested for assessment, monitoring and evaluation of regeneration initiatives are summarised in the annexes with links provided to additional resources.

## **2 Research methods for investigating regeneration practices**

### **2.1 Case-study research using mixed methods**

In this section we describe the research methods used and explain why they are most appropriate for understanding regeneration practices and the factors that lead to success in a thriving region.

Case studies are a well-established research method for investigating community-based change. Stocker and Pollard (1994), for example, used a case-study methodology to investigate community-based approaches to sustainable development where communities took the responsibility to lead a development initiative themselves. These initiatives were examples of sustainable development in Western Australia, where communities faced a range of social, cultural, ecological and economic challenges similar to those found in rural Aotearoa New Zealand.

A strength of case study research is the ability to use mixed research methods to understand the complex interactions often found in regeneration processes. This strength is enhanced further through the co-production approach, where action research gains from diverse information sources and actors during a process of change. The Waitaki cases discussed in this paper utilised this ethos of co-production (Djenontin and Meadow, 2018; Perkins, et al., 2019; Taylor, et al., 2021).

Comparative cases are important because they add strength to the conclusions drawn inductively from a single case. For the “Thriving Regions” (South Island) research programme there were three case study areas, investigated by different research teams covering the towns of Ōamaru, Timaru and Ashburton and their surrounding smaller settlements and rural areas (Perkins, et al., 2019). The Thriving Regions research team members in the South Island met frequently over several years of research to draw conclusions and induce theoretical contributions. They also met several times with members of the North Island team, culminating in a two-day wananga in Hamilton in March 2023.

A mixed methods approach typically incorporates quantitative and qualitative data as well as primary and secondary data to understand both the process of change and the outcomes of that change. The Waitaki case studies therefore include first-hand, local experiences of what works and what doesn't, drawing from semi structured interviews, participant observation and casual conversations. Data were recorded digitally, along with detailed note taking and photography as part of the "discovery" of social settings and the exploration of casual relationships and outcomes (Baines, et al. 2003; Mackay et al. 2018). For the case studies described below there was an extended period of deep analysis (over several years) where the team engaged with affected people and communities (Taylor, et al., 2021).

Another potential benefit of a case-study approach is it allows researchers to explore success factors and social outcomes from regeneration over an extended period verses a single snapshot. A longitudinal perspective allows the researchers to explore the complex sets of interrelationships that are recognised to lie behind social impacts of change initiatives (Taylor et al. 2008), including the interactions between the natural and physical worlds and the social environment (Slootweg, et al. 2001) and changes over spatial scales (Taylor et al., 2021).



The Waitaki Valley is recognised in the research design as a site for these complex, multi-scaler and longer-term changes, where it is possible to consider impacts and outcomes for social wellbeing for a range of community sizes and types of natural resource uses such as hydro-electricity developments (pictured), dry-land pastoral farming and irrigated agriculture (Taylor, et al., 2008).

Another benefit of a case-study approach is the contribution it makes to social-impact assessment research (**SIA research**) as distinct from project SIAs. SIA research (Sairinen et al., 2021; Mackay et al., 2023) frames the research process to identify key impacts over time, showing, for example, how uses of natural resources can boost communities in the short term, as from construction of hydro-electricity generation regeneration. In the longer term, when communities such as Ōmārama, Otematata and Kurow have experienced a boost from project construction they find they then need initiatives that assist them through extended periods of downturn. These communities have seen a range of initiatives aiming to diversify and revitalise the economy and communities of the Waitaki Valley and Ōamaru. The case-study approach therefore helps to build on theories of rural and regional social change in this natural resource based, multi-functional countryside (Taylor, et al., 2021) and to re-locate the planning and management of regeneration initiatives to a stronger focus on sustainable community outcomes.

In addition, the approach and methods of SIA help to anticipate the agents of change and their effects on people and communities. Of specific interests are the impacts of land-uses, work, housing needs and supplies, social services and community capital (Taylor and Mackay, 2022). These changes are overlaid by complex, dynamic national, regional, and local settings of policy, regulation and periodic investment and dis-investment. Methods of SIA research helped us to understand the capacity of the community to lead and adapt to



these future challenges though innovative leadership and local collaborative initiatives (Mackay and Taylor, 2024).

## **2.2 Action research and the co-production of knowledge**

Action research has a strong focus on the complex ecological, social and economic demands of sustainability. To achieve transformations in these complex settings, the research inquiry is combined with community leadership and stakeholders to inform and transform their thinking about a problem, with a focus on actionable knowledge (Bradbury, H. 2023). Action-researchers therefore are active participants in a process of change (Fitzgerald, 1999). An action-research approach was a strong feature of the work with Stronger Waitaki and the Waitaki housing strategy example described below (sections 3.5 and 3.6). The action research featured the co-production of knowledge (Djenontin and Meadow 2018), where knowledge is generated collaboratively by the researchers and research participants focusing on transformational change, while empowering all participants and their contributions of local knowledge into a change process (Taylor, et al., 2021).

The research focus on housing reflects that housing is commonly regarded as a key social issue and a determinate of health and social wellbeing (Rolfe et al. 2020) and this is no less the case in regional towns and districts such as the Waitaki, whereas much housing research is located in large urban centres. The problems with housing in regional settings include quality and liveability as well as affordability, with housing being a central component in the cost of living. There are important causal links between housing and employment and the economy, especially the nature and location of employment, the ability to house workers, and the ability to pay for housing costs. The provision of housing for very transient workers such as seasonal workers, or short-term construction workers, is a particular issue in many places (Wilson, et al., 2020).

There are direct links between housing and social infrastructure including health services, education (schools and industry training), and council services. Some regional services and business struggle to employ people they need unless suitable housing can be arranged. Demographics add to the picture including length and security of residence (especially for migrant workers) and age, where youth are entering employment and the housing market, and elderly residents are looking to downsize. There are also strong links between housing and the environment, including topography and climate, especially in a district such as the Waitaki where many home occupants report their homes are cold and occupants are suffering from damp conditions and high energy costs (Leon de la Barra, 2020a).

When considering a regeneration strategy, there is a potential conceptual trap from oversimplifying causal pathways when investigating a problem such as housing needs. For example, access to housing might simply be defined as a problem of household income, when it is also important to recognise the influence of discrimination in the housing market based on ethnicity or other social characteristics such as youth or family size. In multifunctional places, landscapes or geographic areas, such as the Waitaki, an integrated approach is needed to solve local problems, paying particular attention to local community and indigenous knowledge and multiple stakeholders as part of the action-research.

It is also important to consider the planning and implementation phases of a regeneration initiative. Implementation requires collecting information after preparing a local regeneration

initiative, with the activities of monitoring and evaluation when implementing it (see also section 4 below). Further information on this distinction is available in the SIA Guidelines (Taylor and Mackay, 2023; Mackay and Taylor, 2024; and in the annexes).

### **2.3 Two phases of research on regeneration in Ōamaru and the Waitaki District**

Analysis of the regeneration initiatives was divided into two phases of research and each phase involved examples of regeneration practice. The first phase focused on the diverse regeneration activity of heritage and ecological restoration efforts and associated hospitality and tourism developments in the Ōamaru waterfront area, the neighbouring Ōamaru Heritage area, the Alps to Ocean (A2O) cycle trail initiative and the Waitaki Aspiring Geopark (Mackay et al., 2018; Mackay et al., 2019; Mackay et al., 2023). The second phase focused on the wellbeing of migrant groups and development of the district housing strategy. In this second phase the research team also updated progress in the harbour and heritage areas, and for main-street features such as the Ōamaru Opera House (sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4).

### **2.4 The spatial framework**

The locations of communities and places for the research (see map above) were considered in a spatial framework for GIS mapping and statistical analysis. The Waitaki District, Waitaki Valley and main town of Ōamaru were the primary focus. The whole of the Waitaki Valley was also a focus as it is the geographical area for the A2O cycle trail. Communities in the district along the trail include Ōmārama, Otematata, Kurow (Te Kohurau) and Duntroon. Other towns and villages outside the Waitaki Valley and Ōamaru, such as Hampden, Moeraki and Palmerston were not a specific focus of the research but were part of initiatives we examined such as the Geopark proposal and the housing strategy.

The rohe of Te Rūnanga o Moeraki covers the research area and beyond and is one of the Papatipu Rūnaka of Ngāi Tahu working to maintain the mana of Kāi Tahu whānui in their takiwā.<sup>1</sup> Whenever practical, the research team worked with Te Rūnanga, especially through our relationship with Stronger Waitaki, as for the housing strategy discussed below.

This diversity of geographical focus was important for the research and the mixed methods approach we adopted. It required attention is paid to the multifunctional nature of the area with a variety of resources and resource cycles driving social and economic transitions. This means there is a mix of regeneration activities at different stages in their life cycle. Some are being planned, others built, others are operational or under periodic maintenance or renewal. Still others are restructuring or closing for a variety of reasons. The result is a mosaic of economic and employment activity affecting community outcomes that the research can focus on (Mackay and Taylor, 2024).

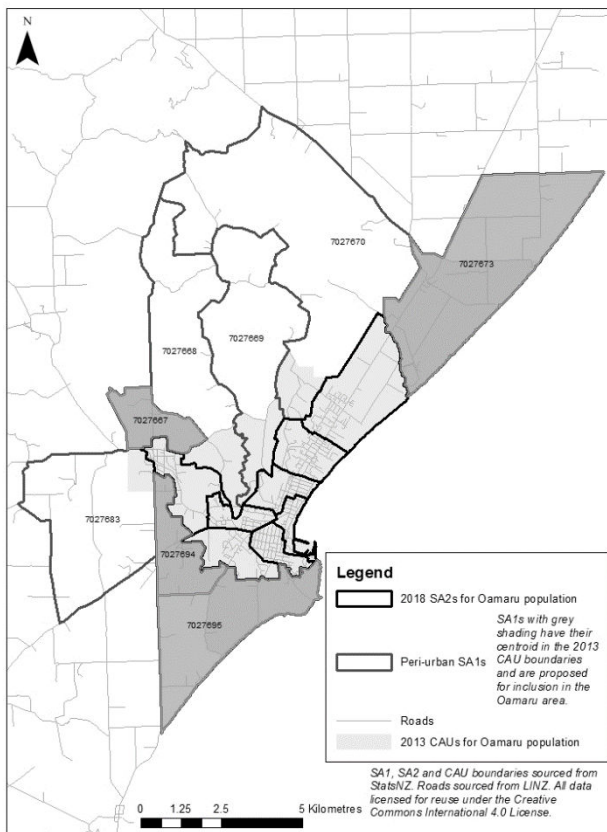
Analysis of the subject communities included analysis of social economic trends and specific issues (demographics, ethnicity, employment, housing) using data from Statistics NZ, mostly census data. There were time series and spatial issues with the census data because in 2017 Statistics NZ released a new Statistical Standard for Geographic Areas for the 2018 census. From the 2018 census, the new geographical boundaries are statistical areas 1 (SA1) and 2 (SA2), with SA2s being the larger geographical size. The old meshblock and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.terunangaomoeraki.org/about#OurValues>

census area unit boundaries are no longer employed, although mostly there is high consistency with the old geographical boundaries.

Census 2018 data was released for SA1 and SA2 boundaries – with some gaps and data quality issues. There is a meshblock dataset (the smallest spatial unit of the preceding censuses) that sits below the SA1 geographies, but 2018 data was not available at this level. Comparisons showed that in the Waitaki the new SA1 and SA2 boundaries are larger than the old meshblock and CAU boundaries although we found the population effect for the small towns was small for 2018 data when comparing the two boundary approaches. For population trends, the 2006 and 2013 census datasets have been recalculated to the new boundaries, but older census years (e.g., 2001) require a special request.



The greatest difficulty posed by the boundary changes was for the urban periphery areas of Ōamaru (pictured), where it is necessary to understand peri-urban populations and the potential areas for urban growth. The map shows that the new SA1 boundaries (heavy lines) cover a much larger area, incorporating areas that are farmed, versus the old CAU boundary area (light-grey shading). Although there are some resulting inaccuracies, we chose to use the new peri-urban boundaries as they are most relevant to future analysis of urban growth. We also included the dark- shaded areas in urban Ōamaru as these are current locations for growth to the north, south and west of the town.

### 3 Lessons and success factors in community-led regeneration

#### 3.1 Summary of success factors

In this section we explore some of the lessons and success factors in regional regeneration, drawing on the initiatives we examined in the Waitaki during phases one and two of the research. Phase one research (updated through phase 2) considered the waterfront and heritage areas (Mackay et al., 2018), the A2O (Mackay et al., 2023) and the Waitaki Geopark as summarised here. Phase two focuses on Stronger Waitaki and the housing strategy. Each example concludes with a summary of the success factors identified by the research.

The success factors are consolidated in the Table below based on the cases and the wider literature. These generic criteria for successful practice of community-based regeneration could be used in planning a regeneration initiative, by knowing what factors drive success. They could also be used for project evaluation as a basis for questions about what has worked well and why.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
Sufficient time	Time allowed to build capacity, develop relationships, prepare strategies, plan and implement change
Tiriti based approach	A Tiriti-based approach with the time, resources, and space to develop relationships with Treaty partners
Clear governance	Governance established early in a change process with well-defined leadership and roles with sufficient independence from funders and agencies
Social capital	Opportunities taken to draw on and support social capital through locality-based relationships and diverse opportunities for leadership and volunteering
Strategic	Shared understanding of a problem to drive practical solutions through planning and collaboration using a strategic framework
Local benefit	An emphasis on regeneration that provides discernible benefits to locally agreed community outcomes and social wellbeing
Facilitative	Government agencies support regeneration with funding and expertise, so their approach is more facilitative than directive
Incremental change	A series of small steps utilise diverse financial resources, and available social entrepreneurialism and voluntary activity
Able to scale up	Regeneration initiatives are scaled up and integrated from several smaller developments
Flexible	Responses to complex, multidimensional problems of regeneration are flexible and evolve over time
Information led	Regeneration initiatives are based on sound data about issues, community needs and wellbeing outcomes
Commitment	Community leaders, organisations and groups commit initiatives and share their knowledge, expertise, and leadership skills
Inclusive	A broad range of stakeholders and community members, including vulnerable groups, participate throughout
Monitoring and evaluation	Implementation of an initiative is supported by active monitoring and evaluation with key indicators of success

### 3.2 The waterfront, heritage precinct and Ōamaru Opera House

The Ōamaru waterfront and heritage area encompasses the Ōamaru harbour and wharves, an adjoining precinct of Victorian era heritage buildings restored around Harbour and Tyne Streets, and several outstanding, restored heritage buildings along Thames St (the main street), including the Ōamaru Opera House, a heritage-listed building that is a strong presence in the main street leading into the Victorian precinct and waterfront areas. Other major restored buildings on this street include the Forrester Gallery, the Council building and the ANZ building; all have received major investment and redevelopment or repurposing. These areas and buildings have been the focus for local initiatives to diversify and increase the local economy, protect heritage, hold events, encourage the arts, enhance amenity values and outdoor recreation, and develop Ōamaru as a destination for domestic and international visitors.

This set of regeneration initiatives dates back to 1987 and a feasibility study into the redevelopment of Ōamaru's Harbour and Tyne Streets, now known as Ōamaru's Victorian Precinct. Interest in reviving and protecting the heritage area coincided with the need to find strategies for economic development in the face of successive droughts, losses of farm subsidies and reduced government services in the late 1980s (Warren and Taylor, 2001). The area was the original commercial and business district of Ōamaru and served as the base for trade through the port of Ōamaru (Mackay et al., 2018). The Ōamaru Whitestone Civic Trust has protected and redeveloped at least 16 buildings in the precinct that are now used for a range of commercial activities, hospitality, and events.<sup>2</sup>



Waterfront developments add to the surrounding area, such as the redevelopment of Holmes Wharf (used by a small commercial fishing fleet, charter boats and recreational boats), the Ōamaru Blue Penguin Colony facility and a waterfront restaurant. Other enterprises have located in or adjacent to the precinct, using upgraded or new buildings including a commercial gym, a café, and a brewery. In addition, the waterfront now forms the finishing point (pictured) for the Alps to Ocean cycle trail (see further discussion in

section 3.3).

An example of one major heritage building is the Opera House, which retains many original features with a major restoration and renovation project from 2009. The project is ongoing, most recently with restoration of the large interior dome. The restoration work has attracted several funding sources over time including a Lotteries Grant, District Council funding and significant local fundraising.

The Opera House has provided a social and cultural hub for Ōamaru for over a century. Today the building retains this social-cultural focus providing a physical centre for the

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.victorianoamaru.co.nz/> (31-7-23).

performing arts, meetings and conferences and a range of community events. Management of the facility includes the District events organisation, ensuring the building has a district-wide function in the social-cultural space consistent with the roles of event management and support for cultural activities.

An interesting longer-term outcome of regeneration initiatives around the harbour and heritage precinct is that public perception of the area and its assets has changed from buildings as “derelict” eyesores to a central and proven site for regeneration activity in the Waitaki.

In summary, the success factors evident across this set of regeneration activities in the waterfront, historical precinct areas and main street are:

- Incremental change – this regeneration activity represents a series of small steps that drew on financial resources such as Council and heritage funding, local entrepreneurialism, commercial and individual benefactors, and considerable voluntary activity
- A community driven approach – there was diverse leadership and extensive voluntary inputs across multiple initiatives and opportunities
- An extended and open time span – regeneration projects over an extended time span
- Local benefit - an emphasis on creating facilities and amenities that attract and serve locals as well as visitors
- Core strategic planning and investment by the local Council – including numerous studies and reports, some drawing on external expertise, cognisant of limited, locally-derived funding for heritage and any new infrastructure
- A development strategy that is both flexible and staged – providing a framework for public, private and community investments and actions.

### **3.3 The Alps to Ocean cycle trail**

The A2O is a 300km, cycle trail that descends from the base of Aoraki Mt Cook through the Waitaki Valley, before reaching Ōamaru on the coast. The trail passes through and along mountain landscapes, alpine lakes, hydro-electricity canals, a large braided-river system, and some outstanding geological features, as well as small communities (see Map below). The A2O is part of the government backed Nga Haerenga/New Zealand Cycle Trail - (<https://www.nzcycletrail.com/>). As with other trails nationally, the A2O originated in the efforts of an enthusiastic local group looking to develop a project with positive impacts on small towns along the trail, and the larger town of Ōamaru (Mackay et al., 2023).



Map source: <https://www.alps2ocean.com/>

While this was a local initiative, it importantly received funding from the National Cycle Trail Project (Bell, 2018; Wilson, 2016). Additional strength came from direct involvement of the Waitaki District Council in project management and dealing with issues such as property access over private farm land.<sup>3</sup>

The key participants expected positive outcomes for local business and employment, along with an enhanced recreational environment and heritage protection. Our research found that the A2O is indeed helping to diversify and revitalise the local economy and small towns along the way.



Hospitality and associated retail activity, such as cycle hire and cafes (pictured), provide an important element of economic diversification leveraging off the additional visitors, and are also attracting amenity migrants. Complementary recent developments include conservation projects such as the Duntroon wetlands, and viticulture in the Waitaki Valley with several wineries and visitor facilities.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.alps2ocean.com/about/alps-2-ocean-cycle-trail-history>

Ōamaru town is well-known for its main street and picturesque harbourside precinct with neoclassical buildings built using locally quarried stone as discussed above. These town areas attract businesses such as transport operators, cafes and accommodation providers serving international and domestic visitors including the trail riders. These include riders using Ōamaru as a hub for day trips on parts of the trail.

An interesting feature of the cycle trail is the integration it fosters between regeneration activities that include local conservation and heritage projects. Development of the waterfront area, for example, sees new buildings and businesses such as a café and brewery (pictured). Stakeholders in the trail recognise the need to integrate multiple tourist initiatives and opportunities across the district using the trail as a focal point for regeneration actions. They also recognise that burgeoning national visitor numbers combined with rapid growth in bikers on the trail have implications for the capacity of local infrastructure, the natural environment and heritage resources that will require additional investment and management (Mackay, et al., 2019).



Of note is the ongoing role of the local council and other community leaders in achieving this integration through their planning and economic development officers, an economic development strategy co-designed with Te Rūnanga o Moeraki, event management, a biodiversity fund and heritage protection, and the resources allocated to support these activities.<sup>4</sup> Our research confirmed that regeneration has to focus on efforts by the community to lead and adapt to future challenges through innovative leadership and local collaborative initiatives within these strategic frameworks.

There is wide concern in the visitor sector about sustainable tourism development, suggesting that monitoring of a range of impacts (social, ecological, economics) needs to “move up a gear” (Mackay, et al., 2019). Rapid changes in sectors such as tourism can happen well outside the control of local areas, as found with Covid 19 and the sudden shift in emphasis from international to domestic visitors in promotional activities. These sorts of changes test the adaptive capacity of local communities and raise the likelihood of host resistance to further tourism developments if outcomes appear undesirable, such as overuse of a particular attraction or site. A sustainable planning framework should ensure that monitoring and assessment are integrated into future strategic and natural resource plans and infrastructure investment. Burgeoning national visitor numbers post Covid 19 are likely to boost the increasing popularity of the A2O and test the capacity of local infrastructure and the environment, heritage resources, and housing (Campbell et al., 2020). Information gaps include levels of visitor satisfaction, the social carrying capacity of specific sites, the types of employment generated by the sector, skill requirements, the distribution of positive and negative outcomes across the district, and effects on community cohesion.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.waitaki.govt.nz/About-Waitaki/Securing-our-future/Uplifting-Waitaki/Waitaki-Economic-Development-Strategy>



Overall, we confirmed cycle trails are an important part of recent regeneration practice in many regions of Aotearoa New Zealand, including the Waitaki and adjoining areas. While sustainable tourism development is usually a principal objective of cycle trails, the A2O creates broad opportunities for regeneration based on hospitality and transport sectors. There are also additional outdoor-recreation opportunities for residents; opportunities for utilitarian cycling (an alternative mode of transport for getting to work, accessing local services, or maintaining social relationships); and a focal point for enhancing amenity values around conservation actions and heritage re-developments (Mackay et al., 2023).

In summary, the success factors evident across the A2O example are:

- Funding sources - Investments and resources from multiple sources including Nga Haerenga/New Zealand Cycle Trail, district councils and the Department of Conservation were vital to achieve planning, and construction of the physical infrastructure of the trail
- Social capital - Development of the trail, and activities along the trail, shows that locality-based relationships and social capital underlie community-led initiatives
- Capacity building - Investments by central and local government in local capacity and skills (additional to trail construction) can assist communities to achieve the outcomes they seek to achieve (e.g., new economic activity and jobs, health, heritage reinstatement or conservation enhancement/restoration) from new recreation and tourism infrastructure
- Regeneration leverage - The trail provides an important leverage for heritage preservation and re-purposing, ecological restoration, and landscape protection. The trail acted as a focus for regeneration activity along its length in small communities and by entrepreneurial individuals and families, who see opportunities the trail riders bring for local economies and community resilience.

### 3.4 The Waitaki UNESCO (Global) Geopark

The Waitaki Whitestone Global Geopark developed over the time of the research from a promotional platform to a geopark with UNESCO designation. It is a “unifying platform showcasing Waitaki’s cultural and geological diversity, enabling people, communities and businesses to actively participate at all levels.”<sup>5</sup> Sites with geological interest are found in the Waitaki Valley and throughout the district with the A2O cycle trail traversing the Valley



and linking key geological features and interest points such as Māori rock art and the Elephant Rocks (pictured).<sup>6</sup> The Waitaki UNESCO Geopark was officially designated (May 2023) as Australasia’s only UNESCO Global Geopark, one of 48 such designations globally and there was a ceremony in Ōamaru to mark the milestone.<sup>7</sup> A Geopark festival was held in October 2023 for the community to celebrate.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.whitestonegeopark.nz/about-our-geopark>

<sup>6</sup> Waitaki District Council free image gallery

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.whitestonegeopark.nz/>

Our research over the last five years considered the GeoPark development and the application for UNESCO certification as an initiative where the research team was able to observe and participate in discussions and contribute background research (Mackay, et al., 2018). This included a post-doctoral research project that considered geo-gastronomy initiatives in the Geopark area (Fitt, 2020).

The geopark concept came from several community initiatives that together provided momentum for the UNESCO designation initiative, first towards promoting the area as the Waitaki Whitestone Geopark, and subsequently towards the UNESCO application and designation. The application was driven by the Council leadership and staff, who took on the vital role of carrying out and consolidating the necessary research, preparing the extensive documentation required for the UNESCO application and supporting formation of a governing body, The Waitaki Whitestone Geopark Trust. Council leadership acknowledged that the Geopark would bring benefits across the District.



Central to the original Geopark proposal was the innovation and leadership of a group of volunteers and landowners associated with the Vanished World Fossil Centre (pictured) in the small community of Duntroon. The Centre gained important technical assistance and display material from the Department of Geology at the University of Otago,<sup>8</sup> and it now provides an interactive fossil

display gallery and geology education centre (Mackay et al., 2018). The Centre also developed the 'Vanished World' visitor trail to showcase local attractions such as the Elephant Rocks, Māori rock drawings and the Centre itself. At the same time the whitestone heritage buildings in Ōamaru were gaining strength as a visitor attraction, as discussed in Section 3.1 above, and the iconography for Ōamaru increasingly reflected the whitestone theme. Parallel initiatives included development of the Moeraki Boulders,<sup>9</sup> Māori rock art<sup>10</sup> and a viticulture area near Kurow as visitor attractions. Fitt (2020) examined the potential for associated geopark trails including a geo-gastronomy trail to highlight local terroir, as found in existing labels and artisan products such as wines and Whitestone Cheese.<sup>11</sup>

Initial feedback from UNESCO came via a public meeting in 2019 with a subsequent internal review. These reviews, the report by Fitt (2020) and our own observations and interviews all highlighted the need for more engagement with key stakeholders and the wider community to fully develop the geopark concept. The review process also identified that mana whenua should become co-designers of the geopark, which subsequently included their cultural advice and the inclusion of te ao Māori principles.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Led by the late Professor Ewan Fordyce, a pioneer in the field of paleontology

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.whitestonegeopark.nz/moeraki-boulders>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.whitestonegeopark.nz/takiroa>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.whitestonecheese.com>

<sup>12</sup> See the Strategic Plan

In summary, the success factors evident across the set of regeneration activities found around the Geopark concept and the Aspiring Geopark UNECSO application are:

- Scaling up over time - The Geopark UNESCO designation initiative provides an example of linking and scaling up regeneration initiatives from several smaller developments to a district-wide strategy.
- A flexible framework - The process of developing a geopark concept for visitor promotion and then certification provided community groups and individual businesses with a framework whereby they can add visitor attractions, trails and hospitality services over time and as their capacity (assets and available labour) allows.
- Council resources - The Council provided necessary resources and an official base for development of the geopark concept and its promotional uses, with the UNESCO application work a collaboration between numerous organisations and individuals.
- Leadership - Waitaki District Council leadership was essential to the UNESCO application building on the efforts of Vanished World, the Waitaki District promotions group, Tourism Waitaki, the Council staff and University of Otago to develop the concept of the whitestone geopark and pursue the UNESO geopark designation.
- A Treaty-based partnership – partnership with mana whenua (Te Rūnanga o Moeraki) is a feature of the geopark governance that emerged over time.

### 3.5 Stronger Waitaki

Stronger (formerly Safer) Waitaki is a District wide project with a focus on community building, including safety, community health, well-being and development. Stronger Waitaki was initiated in March 2013 as Safer Waitaki,<sup>13</sup> an accredited member of the International Safer Communities Network.<sup>14</sup> The organisation is committed to being an inclusive voice for the community, working to identify and respond to community priorities for the Waitaki District. The organisation has developed a set of Strategic Outcomes<sup>15</sup> that are based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals framework (see also wellbeing-framework tools in Annex 4) and the four wellbeings. Key outcome areas include relationship building, reduction in harm, increased social connection, resilience and safety.

It is a Council-led coalition that builds on the resources and expertise of the community to consider and meet their needs across several strategic objectives.<sup>16</sup> Stronger Waitaki today is comprised of over 160 groups and organisations representing Government Departments, Local Government, NGOs, Emergency Services, Cultural Groups, Health and Wellbeing, Mental Health and Addictions, Education, and Workplaces. Hunt (2023) refers to this as a *wheke* structure. The organisation is guided by an inter-sectorial stewardship group and all

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<sup>13</sup> In this Working Paper we have used Stronger Waitaki throughout as the name of the organisation, including through its early development.

<sup>14</sup> Safe Communities is an NGO promoting “the values and philosophies of whanaungatanga (relationships), manaakitanga (respect, care and support), and tino rangatiratanga (self-determination and autonomy).” Safe Communities state “All human beings have an equal right to health and safety”.

<https://www.safecommunities.org.nz/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.saferwaitaki.co.nz/strategic-outcomes/strategic-outcomes>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.saferwaitaki.co.nz/>

social sectors are invited by Stronger Waitaki “to be active partners in making Waitaki the best place to be.”<sup>17</sup>

To meet their multiple and intersecting objectives, Stronger Waitaki has developed a strong sense of the changing communities of the Waitaki and the main town of Ōamaru, utilising available information to understand their changing needs. They see these needs panning across all community groups including newcomers. They have, for instance, a strong interest in the needs of youth, beneficiaries and low-income groups, the elderly, new settlers and migrant populations such as Pacific Peoples and Filipinos. There is an understanding that the Waitaki has changed considerably over recent years from a series of small populations and communities with strong density of acquaintanceship and mutual support networks. There is an increase in the number and diversity of the population and of vulnerable groups within it. So Stronger Waitaki plays an important part supporting funding proposals by partner organisations, ensuring they are well founded in fact.

Relationships (whanaungatanga) are essential to the success of Stronger Waitaki. The leaders and staff are prepared to devote time and energy to the tasks of relationship building. The time and care taken to develop relationships with Te Rūnanga o Moeraki, one of the 18 Papatipu Rūnaka of Ngāi Tahu, is a good example. This was a matter of building trust as well as personal relationships. As this is a very small Rūnanga with a large rohe, Stronger Waitaki recognised that it was important not to place unreasonable demands on members to attend meetings, and are flexible in finding ways to communicate. In time, the Rūnanga has built up staff and capacity, allowing them to make staff available to play an active part in Stronger Waitaki’s work such as the housing strategy (below).

The work of Stronger Waitaki to support the emergence of a strong Pacific Peoples network and support group is another example of their approach. This group was established in 1987 as the “Ōamaru Pacific Island Cultural Group,” now the Ōamaru Pacific Island Community Group Inc (OPICG).<sup>18</sup> The group aims to support resilient Pacific Peoples communities based around the different island populations in Ōamaru, which include Tongan, Fijian, Tuvaluan and Samoan people. They work with these cultural groups to promote Pacific values and “ways of doing things” including leadership, cultural activities and languages. Stronger Waitaki works in support of this group and its mission by supporting their committee, leadership and Community Connectors through their activities such as budgeting workshops and health programmes including their comprehensive Covid 19 response work. A feature of the OPICG approach is their active use of data about the needs of their people. For example, they undertook a comprehensive, household survey about household needs during Covid 19, using face-to face interviews by OPICG staff.

The horizontal, community development approach of Stronger Waitaki therefore extends organisational capacity across multiple groups and sectors, including mentoring and capability building backed up by information sharing. While the emphasis is on local capacity and answers there is also a strong commitment to advocacy by identifying key individuals and sources of support from regional NGOs and social services organisations, as well as from national agencies, several of which have bases in Ōamaru or in nearby centres at Dunedin and Timaru. The housing strategy discussed below (section 3.6) is a detailed

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<sup>17</sup> The review of Stronger Waitaki by Hunt (2023) provides further background and details.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.oamarupacific.nz/about-opicg/>

example of this approach. The approach also means stepping back to allow initiatives to grow organically as capacity allows. At times this approach can appear messy as a clear picture of needs, and responses with sufficient community support, can take a frustrating amount of time to emerge!

Looking ahead, Hunt (2023) points out that with a small staff and a few key individuals involved, Stronger Waitaki should undertake succession planning. This issue is faced by many community-based organisations and NGOs, however, with a strong ethos of community development and well-established methods, Stronger Waitaki is very well positioned to lead future community development in the district.

In summary, the success factors evident identified from Stronger Waitaki are:

- Supported governance - administration of Stronger Waitaki lies with the Waitaki District Council with oversight by a multi-sectoral Governance Group with an independent chair.
- Council buy-in - The Council funds key staff and acts as employer for all the staff. These staff have played an essential part in developing the ethos and methods of Stronger Waitaki, recognising the need to draw widely on skills and resources to achieve stated outcomes.
- Commitment - Busy people are committed to the process of community development through Stronger Waitaki, by committing time to initiatives and being prepared to share knowledge, expertise, and leadership skills.
- Open mindedness - Members and staff are open to the knowledge and expertise of others to develop a big picture and thorough understanding of any issue. The organisation understands that regeneration initiatives require support from sound data about community needs.
- Information based - There is a well-grounded understanding of the changing social character of the district and recognition of the strength gained from an increasing diversity of the population, and from its many cultural groups and interests.
- Strategic - They promote the idea that a shared understanding of a problem is necessary to drive practical solutions through planning and collaboration.

### **3.6 The Waitaki District Housing Strategy**

The Waitaki District housing strategy known as “Healthy Homes for all: A Community Housing Strategy” was developed by a Housing Taskforce convened and supported by Stronger Waitaki.<sup>19</sup> The strategy development was a central focus of our action research in Waitaki District and Ōamaru in the second phase of the research.

As the Just Transitions Aotearoa Group (2023) point out, a strategy “*formalises the shared vision, goals and overall approach for the process, as well as measures of success. It should help you to identify and manage risks, uncertainties and barriers to progress. A strategy gives you the overarching framework for action.*”

The Housing Taskforce is a collaborative, community-based group convened by Stronger Waitaki to address housing issues in the district. The Taskforce brings together organisations to identify and address housing issues and needs in the main town of Ōamaru,

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.waitaki.govt.nz/Council/Council-Documents/Plans-Reports-and-Strategies/Our-strategies>

smaller towns and rural areas, through development and implementation of the housing strategy.

Those present at the initial Housing Taskforce meetings convened by Stronger Waitaki in 2019 included Stronger Waitaki staff, the Waitaki District Council, MSD, Kainga Ora, Corrections, Methodist Mission, Presbyterian Support, and local real estate agents. The research team were invited to join the Taskforce and have attended meetings since then in person and by Zoom (the use of video meetings was initiated in 2020 to continue the work under the Covid 19 restrictions).

The approach of the research team was in the mode of action research and co-production of knowledge alongside the Taskforce. The research interest in housing for successful regeneration of towns and communities of the Waitaki is consistent with the issues addressed in the BBHTC Thriving Regions workstream whereby, *“Guided by the principles of mātauranga, the Challenge seeks innovative, affordable, and flexible solutions for our homes, towns and cities. This will enable ... residential environments that suit the needs of our multi-cultural society. Included among these are effects of accelerating climate change and dynamic population shifts.”*

The research team identified housing as fundamental to development issues such as the establishment of new businesses, attracting and retaining sufficient skilled workers to government, new economic activities and businesses, welcoming newcomers and integrating them into their new community, staffing of health and social services, and therefore a wide range of wellbeing outcomes. The increasing use of family homes for visitor accommodation is another factor identified by the research team in relation to the penetration and concentration of Airbnb within the district (Campbell, et al. 2020).

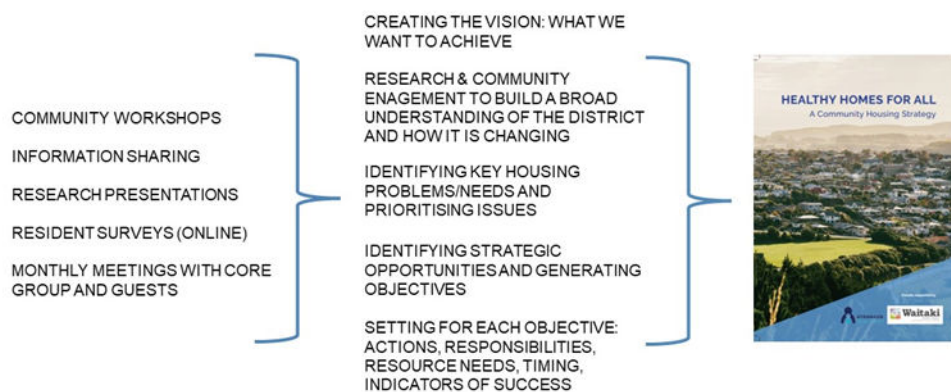
The provision of housing for local and incoming workers includes transient (seasonal) workforces with specific issues around settling migrant workers and newcomers into communities. The vulnerability of migrant families is increased by overcrowded, or otherwise substandard housing and a lack of knowledge of legislated rights and available support services. We found that housing support for migrant populations should be community driven and broad based – involving a range of stakeholders. Action plans can include support for groups of migrants and will often include support for their employment issues, such as visas and employment conditions, as well as for housing, health, and adequate social services.

To develop an initial picture of housing in Waitaki District for the Taskforce, Sophia Leon de la Barra (2020b) prepared a summary of secondary data relating to the population and housing. The BBHTC research team subsequently built on and supplemented this available secondary data (Taylor et al. 2020) and presented additional information to a Taskforce meeting in February 2020. The research team also contributed to the design of an internet survey of the housing needs of district residents by the Taskforce (Leon de la Barra, 2020a). With 559 self-selected respondents, of whom 73% were female, the survey provided a detailed picture of housing issues for district households. In addition, Taskforce members brought data and anecdotes to Taskforce meetings, from formal information about the waiting list for social housing to stories of discrimination in the housing market. This co-production, with a range of knowledge types provided, a strong basis for informed discussions of housing needs and the workshops later convened by the Taskforce.

The Taskforce members identified several issues: the suitability (the size of houses and number of bedrooms) and affordability of housing for groups such as migrant workers, elderly residents, those on low incomes, and youth entering the housing market; the provision of social housing (short and longer-term rentals); the warmth of housing given cold winters; and discrimination in the housing market due to factors such as ethnicity, gender and age. Land-use planning problems also were noted, including the availability of suitable land, including greenfield sites and the subdivision and intensification of urban land, with new central government policies driving housing intensification and protection of productive soils to the fore. The Taskforce acknowledged, throughout, that responses to these issues must be broad based and community driven, engaging a range of stakeholders. It was also clear that action plans for tackling housing issues must look beyond housing to the broader provision of social services and drivers of social wellbeing.

The Taskforce developed their understanding of the needs and issues for housing over several meetings from late 2019 and presented these to a Council workshop (staff and councillors) in September 2020. This iterative process led to an understanding of key issues that was taken into a workshop phase with two workshops convened: i) The first workshop included Taskforce members, councillors, and other key stakeholders on 22 February 2021. This workshop focused on defining and prioritising housing issues; ii) The second workshop focused on identifying feasible changes, setting out the strategy goal, objectives and outcomes for each component of the strategy, the actions required, and tentative timing and responsibilities. The research team helped to analyse the workshop outputs and write the draft strategy, which Stronger Waitaki circulated for review and editing by the Taskforce and then by the Council, who formally adopted the strategy as “Healthy Homes for all: A community housing strategy” and made the strategy document available online.

## CO-PRODUCING THE HOUSING STRATEGY – AN ITERATIVE COMMUNITY PROCESS (2019-2022)



This approach to developing the strategy drew on two interrelated methods: i) soft systems analysis combined with SIA - an approach designed for finding ways to address complex problems while identifying feasible change (Taylor, et al., 2004), and ii) a Logical Framework approach (Logframe), which is designed to apply a logical series of steps to move through in strategic and project planning. Both approaches emphasise the need to build a “rich picture” of the context of a strategy or plan before embarking on strategy design. Both approaches

also look to ensure that the ideas for the content of the strategy are developed alongside, and tested for feasibility, with stakeholders and affected people throughout the process. (Further details of this combined approach are provided in Annex 2).

An important aspect of the strategy approach to a complex social issue, such as housing, is that the strategy has to be flexible and evolving. In the Waitaki example, the Housing Taskforce brought new information to the table as the strategy was developed, implemented and adapted. The ability to clarify and adapt the objectives and actions of the strategy over time is fundamental to success and necessitates ongoing co-production of knowledge. For example, at a Zoom meeting during the pandemic, the Taskforce discussed Covid 19 and impacts of the resulting 'shutdown' on the local economy, work, welfare and housing. Later the Ōamaru Pacific Island Community Group reported on their community outreach (including visits to most Pacific Peoples households), their support for vaccination clinics, and their overall Covid-19 welfare response<sup>20</sup> utilising funding from the national Covid 19 response funds. Housing issues for migrant groups remained at the forefront of the Taskforce discussions, with housing recognised as an essential part of the successful integration of new settlers. The research team provided the Taskforce with a summary of their literature review on this topic (Wilson et al., 2020). In addition to flexibility to adopt new information the process had to adapt to unexpected contextual issues, which included the Council staff and other stakeholders having to support recovery efforts after the loss of 53 homes in a wildfire at Lake Ōhau and delays due to Covid 19 restrictions.

Monitoring and evaluation are fundamental to an adaptive process for implementing the strategy, an integral part of the process of designing and implementing a change process, whether it be a project, strategy, policy or plan (Taylor and Mackay, 2023). The research team developed a monitoring and evaluation framework (spreadsheet) for the housing strategy in collaboration with Stronger Waitaki and the Taskforce. This framework was then used to help guide participants in preparing for their regular meeting and discussions about progress (see Annex 3). This framework is also important in providing consistency when new people join the Taskforce or agency personnel change.

In summary, the success factors evident from Waitaki District housing strategy are:

- The strategy process was supported by the District Council throughout
- There was high-value leadership from Stronger Waitaki, Mayor and councillors, who actively included key stakeholders and researchers, including the BBHTC team, in the strategy process
- The strategy utilised a logical approach to developing the strategy, and on through to implementation, using a monitoring and evaluation framework
- A broad range of stakeholders participated through the meetings and strategy process of the Housing Taskforce
- The strategy drew directly on co-produced knowledge from stakeholders, the Council and researchers.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.oamarupacific.nz/about-opicg/#history>



## **4 Applied social research and community-based assessments**

In this concluding section we discuss the role of applied social research in regeneration practice, drawing on the lessons from co-production of knowledge in the above examples. We first consider the use of a community-based approach to SIA. We also consider the role of monitoring and evaluation when implementing a regeneration initiative, and the importance of building local capacity in support of community-based change.

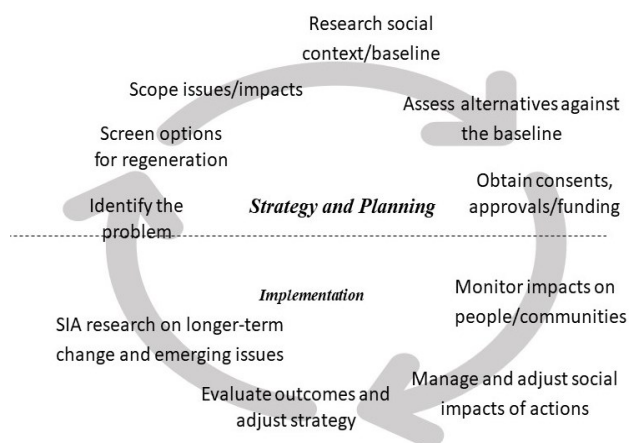
### **4.1 Social assessment for regeneration practice**

Social impact assessment (SIA) provides information to decision makers, affected people and communities planning for and implementing regeneration initiatives. We found a common problem in rural areas and small towns is that decisions are made about the investment of effort and funds into initiatives and programmes without sufficient evidence about success factors, or about the short and longer-term impacts of resulting outcomes for people and communities.

During our research community leaders identified the need for guidelines that provide a practical approach to SIA, written for a wide audience with little or no prior experience of doing it. We took up the challenge of compiling a set of practical guidelines useful for proponents of change as well as affected people and communities (Taylor and Mackay, 2023). The guidelines cover basic steps in doing an SIA and provide examples of how SIA is applied (see Annex 1 for further detail).

A key consideration in writing the guidelines was consistency in terminology with international guidelines, including the IAIA guidelines published in 2015 and the New South Wales Government in 2021, when describing the components of an SIA. A key point of difference in our guidelines is the emphasis we place on approaches that empower community-based assessments when developing a regeneration initiative. A community-based approach to SIA produces knowledge about impacts in a collaborative and strategic way - the co-production of knowledge (Taylor, et al. 2021).

The guidelines explain how SIA is carried out in a cycle of planning and implementation for a regeneration initiative (Taylor and Mackay, 2023). The figure below has SIA components in this cycle as a series of steps that build through the strategising and planning of a proposal, to implementing it. While some activities necessarily precede others, it is best to think about the steps in a continuous cycle focused on identifying and managing social change. This means the SIA builds information over time for the best community outcomes.



We found SIA is often focused on project design and consents in the first half of the project cycle (Taylor and Mackay, 2024). These early stages of project planning utilise SIA in the development of a regeneration initiative from concept through to formal approvals (pictured). In this paper we also place an emphasis on the implementation phases of the SIA cycle, as typically there is inadequate attention paid to this phase.

A typical regeneration initiative starts with strategising, planning and design as with the housing strategy as in section 3.6. A proposal will often start with a local council or community organisation identifying a regeneration problem and then developing options for how they might tackle it. At this point they can usefully screen the possible options for their likely impacts and outcomes. As they explore the underlying issues and start considering their impacts some options are usefully discarded. Next it is important to develop a comprehensive picture of the social context (social baseline) and the regeneration problems being addressed.

Next the alternative components of a regeneration strategy or proposal are explored. This is the most practical time to consider and select the alternatives for actions that get the best results. The guidelines explain how it is most effective to ensure that people and communities affected by a proposal are fully included throughout these early steps. This process also requires working out the best ways to avoid or manage negative impacts and to enhance the positive ones when changes start (i.e., during implementation). Finally, planning, consent and funding approvals are sought with impact assessment information available as part of those decision processes.

Once implementation starts it is important to monitor and evaluate the actions taken. Monitoring and evaluation are crucial to an adaptive approach to regeneration, especially given our finding that initiatives typically evolve over a period of several years. Usually, impact management actions lie primarily with the regeneration project proponent and subsequent operator, and we have identified the need for community leaders to be involved from early stages of planning. Additionally, funders of regeneration activities increasingly require information about the environmental and social impacts of their funding, the benefits for affected people and actual value of funding a proposal to communities (sometimes referred to as social value). This approach to social value builds on institutional momentum from European funders in recent years (Colantonio, et al., 2009) and there are good resources now available to assist.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.centreforsocialimpact.org.nz/>

The Waitaki experience also shows that in the operational stages of a regeneration initiative it is important to consider the longer-term outcomes for community wellbeing. A broad understanding of community outcomes draws on monitoring and evaluation as part of SIA research (Mackay and Taylor, 2024). These outcomes typically are complex and interrelated and there are numerous ways used to assess them as discussed in Smyth and Vanclay (2017) and summarised for Aotearoa New Zealand in Annex 4 with links to useful resources.

#### 4.2 SIA and the co-production of knowledge

The co-production of knowledge is fundamental to the way we applied action research and SIA methods in the Waitaki. We found that a community-led approach to SIA is important for regeneration initiatives. In this approach, as portrayed in the diagram below, the steps for an SIA are aligned with typical community processes of planning and strategy design, engagement, and analysis. This consolidated community-based approach assists with the identification of community needs, and the development of regeneration initiatives.

*SIA and community processes in the co-production of knowledge*

SIA process	Community process		Engagement and analysis
<b>Scoping</b>	Community group formed to lead a community initiative or strategy	<b>CO-PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE</b>	Engage with key stakeholders; initial community meetings
<b>Social baseline</b>	Understand the existing position, social needs and main trends		Assess and discuss issues and options; community workshops
<b>Assess alternatives</b>	Consider issues and potential strategies		Surveys and data gathering by local groups, agencies, affected people; collate local knowledge and expertise
<b>Assess proposed action/s</b>	Strategic plan of action sets out objectives, tasks timing and resources		Workshops and meetings including with and without scenarios and impact predictions
<b>DECISION</b>			
<b>Monitor and evaluate</b>	Monitor, mitigate and manage impacts Evaluate outcomes		

As described throughout this working paper, the community-led approach to regeneration practice co-produces knowledge in a collaborative and strategic way. The example of the Waitaki housing strategy shows how knowledge was generated by the researchers and taskforce participants together identifying needs and working out new ways to meet them. We have also noted how this approach helps to empower all participants and their contributions of local knowledge into the regeneration process.

#### 4.3 Monitoring and evaluation for greater success in regeneration practice

Monitoring and evaluation are required in regeneration practice to enhance positive outcomes and to reduce or manage any negative ones. Social monitoring is required once a regeneration initiative is underway, so the management of social change is assisted by information on what is happening on the ground. Evaluation, on the other hand,

systematically, and critically examines an initiative against the expected outcomes for communities and social wellbeing. Evaluation therefore often draws on monitoring data. It asks what makes a regeneration initiative successful or not (Taylor et al., 2019).

Both monitoring and evaluation are important to establish organisational accountability or social value in regeneration practice, so they are part of regular reporting on an initiative as well as efforts to look back on what was achieved, how, for who, at what costs and with what impacts. They therefore become part of the information gathered to justify extended or new funding arrangements. In addition, territorial governments have legislative obligations to monitor outcomes related to the environment and social wellbeing.

Data about what has happened with initiatives in particular localities therefore provide an indirect benefit to future planning. Finding out what has taken place in regeneration activities and their levels of success, applied to the planning and design of new policy and programmes, is known both as formative assessment (Taylor, et al., 2019). Where this reflective practice involves systematic and longitudinal research then it is usefully viewed as SIA research (Mackay et al., 2021; Mackay and Taylor, 2024).

Participatory approaches are proven to enhance monitoring and evaluation and should be employed in the implementation phase of regeneration actions as well as in their planning and design. It is well proven that inadequate engagement with affected people in the monitoring and management of social impacts can build a legacy of distrust in communities affected by a project (Mackay and Taylor, 2024). To support a higher-trust model of monitoring and evaluation, the co-production of knowledge can continue as participating organisations track activities and outcomes. In the housing strategy example, important information is coming from organisations such as the Ministry of Social Development regular data gathering on social housing needs, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development quarterly reports, and the Waitaki District Council planning and consenting team.

The practical examples in this paper raise useful issues to consider in obtaining data for monitoring and evaluation practice:

- A mix of quantitative and qualitative data is appropriate – listening to accounts of local experiences and descriptions from personnel dealing with issues on the ground alongside numeric data sets provides a basis for checking the veracity of an emerging conclusion
- Monitoring and evaluation practice is strongest when multiple measures or indicators of change or success are employed. Some effects such as discrimination in the housing market will have little or no official data therefore descriptive measures are necessary
- Mixed methods and multiple sources of data mean a mixture of internal data sources and local knowledge are combined with external sources such as those proved by central government agencies and official statistics.

We found that a monitoring framework is a useful tool that assists with linking the logical framework approach used in developing a regeneration strategy to the work involved in implementing the strategy. An example is provided in Annex 3, drawing from the housing strategy.

Evaluation of longer-term outcomes for community wellbeing can take place during workshops and meetings, including public dialogue. Some methods of community participation allow for numeric ranking of progress against outcomes using simple progress scales, so there is a sound basis for recording progress over time.

#### **4.4 Conclusions: enhancing capacity for community-based strategies**

Community-based approaches to regeneration practice demonstrate the principles of collective action and the empowerment of community governance, leadership, organisations and individuals. Typically, community groups and local organisations identify the need for an intervention or set of interventions that enhance community wellbeing and then set out to share responsibilities for a strategy or plan and to undertake the necessary actions (Stocker and Pollard, 1994; Fitzgerald, 1999). To adopt this approach, community groups need the necessary skills, information and financial resources, broadly defined here as community capacity.

In this sense community development becomes an essential part of regeneration practice as it entails processes for community action such as building relationships, leadership, and sharing of information and resources (Caswell, 2001). We add here that the co-production of knowledge is a feature of this effort to build local capacity, especially in the areas of data collection and analysis. Most importantly, we agree with Powe et. al (2015), who highlighted that in order to develop and implement a local strategy there must be a spirit of collaboration from the start.

The antithesis to this approach is for local government and local agencies to rely on external sources of research, data and consultancies rather than build an internal ability to be part of a co-production approach. This building of local capacity in social analysis with iwi, the community and key stakeholders is key to co-production of knowledge at a local level. A useful task for Local Government NZ and one carried out by several NGOs in this country.<sup>22</sup> Universities and science organisations can play an important part by adopting co-production ideas versus research on or for communities and councils. Building skills in applied research amongst the research community, with critical reflection on the results, is necessary for strengthening the theory and praxis of knowledge co-production. Co-production requires jointly developing frameworks for assessment and evaluation and theories of regional change that challenge current thinking. Here, while emphasising the importance of community-based SIA, we also acknowledge the importance of SIA Research (Mackay and Taylor, 2024) as reflected in this working paper.

From our research we have concluded that SIA should support opportunities for community organisations to have a leadership role throughout the project cycle, using co-production of knowledge about social impacts in the short and longer term. We argue for renewed attention to the importance of local knowledge in social impact assessment alongside secondary data, through an iterative mixed method approach (Taylor, et al., 2019). Commonly there will be a mix of operators, sector organisations, agencies of local, regional, iwi and central governments and community groups involved in this work to co-produce knowledge, designing and leading the actions around new opportunities for regeneration and social development. The approach will ideally include a feedback loop to complete the

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<sup>22</sup> <https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/>

project cycle through SIA research on longer-term changes and emerging issues, with better-informed policy, regulation and plan making as a result.

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## Annexes – tools to enhance regeneration practice

### Annex 1 Social impact assessment guidelines

A key output from the recent work programme in the Waitaki is the publication of *Guidelines on Social Impact Assessment for Thriving Regions and Communities* (Taylor and Mackay, 2023) in an accessible format free online and in print. The guidelines were designed as a tool to support community leaders with a practical approach to assessing and communicating about social impacts with affected people and communities. We found that community leaders and built environment stakeholders need guidelines for a practical approach to SIA, freely available to them, written to support communities they are working with to improve outcomes for social wellbeing.

The guidelines take readers through what an SIA does, with examples of how it is applied, while assuming the audience has little or no prior experience with SIA but other practical knowledge and experiences to apply, including in land-use planning, project management, data collection and research, community development or the provision of social services.



The guidelines are for those who want to understand more about how to:

- conduct an SIA
- contribute to an SIA
- use the results of an SIA
- judge if an SIA is fit for purpose.

In summary, SIA provides information to decision makers and affected people when planning for change. SIA helps to balance economic, social and environmental needs, and promote equitable and sustainable development, by helping to:

- Identify social impacts well in advance of a decision being made.
- Design plans, projects and strategies that enhance positive community outcomes.
- Design mitigations that will reduce any negative social impacts, or unforeseen impact.
- Monitor and manage social impacts once a change is underway.
- Monitor and evaluate longer term community outcomes, and respond where needed to enhance living standards, social equity, sustainability and social-cultural wellbeing.

The SIA guidelines outline the basic steps of an SIA. These will usually involve:

- Screen the SIA, usually as part of feasibility analysis, and establish the requirements and terms of reference for the SIA.
- Scope the SIA so it is focused on the likely impacts and main issues of concern to people and communities.
- Gather information about the social baseline – the starting point for understanding social impacts, what is changing and how social outcomes are affected.
- Assess alternatives/options for planned actions.
- Monitor, mitigate and manage impacts for optimum social outcomes.
- Evaluate and audit the outcomes.

The guidelines promote a community-based approach to SIA with co-production of the necessary information to assess impacts and make decisions. They emphasise the use of social data from multiple sources, including descriptive information and numbers. All these sources are brought together to provide findings about impacts and outcomes. Participation of affected people interested groups and communities is included throughout.

The guidelines point out that social change is often complex and will include positive and negative impacts, which are often distributed unevenly. So, the process of doing an SIA must include thinking about the best ways to manage social change so that the most sustainable, positive outcomes are achieved for people and communities.

Throughout the guidelines there are practical examples of how SIA is applied.

The guidelines were produced as part of SIA research for the Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities National Science Challenge (“BBHTC”) Ko ngā wā kaingā hei whakamahorahora, including collaboration with Stronger Waitaki (Waitaki District Council) and the Waitaki Housing Task Force.

Download the SIA Guidelines at: <https://www.buildingbetter.nz/toolkit/social-impact-assessment-guidelines-for-thriving-regions-and-communities/>



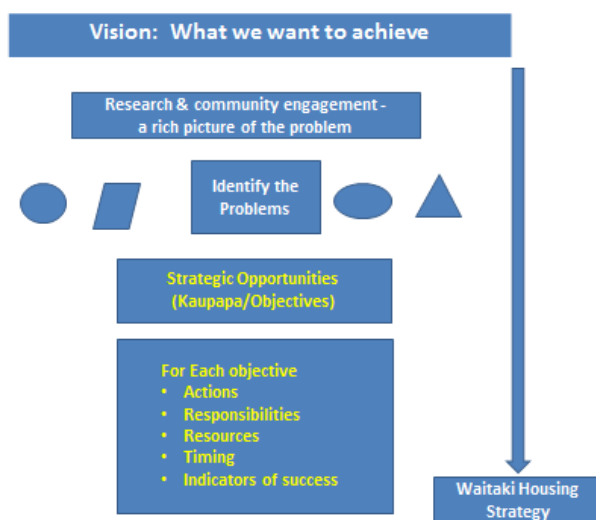
## Annex 2 A logical framework approach for community-based regeneration Initiatives

The logical framework approach to project development is a systematic framework for planning, monitoring and evaluating projects. The approach is sometimes criticised as simplistic (linear) and potentially unresponsive to a wide range of community needs and views. In practice it is easily adapted to fit the needs of a community-based approach, which can always benefit from a simple, logical structure to be successful. Some past criticism probably goes back to the origins and use of the model by international development agencies and organisations and wider concerns about the effects of their programmes.

A logical framework approach helps a regeneration group to set out what they plan to do in a systematic way by describing the:

- Goal – a high level description of what is intended.
- Objectives -
- Desired outcomes -
- Required actions and their timing -
- Responsibilities for carrying out the actions and the resources required -
- Risks and indicators of success.

The logical approach is backed up by the monitoring and evaluation frame (see Annex 3). The approach is flexible regarding the use of qualitative and quantitative data, consistent with the mixed methods used in SIA. It is also consistent with the idea of co-production of knowledge and with the ideas of soft systems theory, which also were designed to tackle complex problems in a more flexible way that involves affected people and communities from the start of planning.



The basic steps in the approach are:

- data gathering - a detailed (rich) description of the context in which a community issue, set of issues or concerns have arisen, such as the housing needs of a population.
- a description of key stakeholders
- problem analysis and definition
- strategy preparation and writing
- implementation with monitoring and evaluation.

This diagram from the Waitaki housing strategy illustrates how the process was adapted and used in that community-based strategy.

### Annex 3 Monitoring and evaluation framework

A monitoring and evaluation framework is an important part of implementing a community regeneration strategy or initiative. The framework should be started during planning of the initiative, as at that time it will be useful to clearly state the logical progression for each objective need to achieve a goal, with details of the expected actions and outcomes over time, as shown below.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions and outcomes</b>	<b>Responsibilities and Resources</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Indicators of success, with measures</b>	<b>Progress on actions to date</b>
Description of what this line of the strategy is expected to achieve	These are the specific actions needed with stated outcomes expected from them	Who is going to undertake each action or set of actions – can tie to a more detailed budget statement	When should this be achieved by, with intermediate steps as necessary	The information and specific indicators need to chart progress and success	For monitoring purposes, it is useful to chart progress, points of achievement or runs on the board

Outcomes, actions, timing and responsibilities can be updated, and details around measures and indicators of success added over time. This basic framework is easily adapted to different regeneration strategies, initiatives or projects but the basic logic should be retained. There are numerous on-line resources about the Logframe approach. Readers should be aware that while these resources are often for business strategic planning they are also adapted for planning sustainable development.

A good example and resource for monitoring and evaluation practice is provided online by the World Bank (2004) as *Monitoring and Evaluation: some tools, methods and approaches*.

For additional international resources see <https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources>

The Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association promotes quality evaluation practice and supports practice working with people, whānau, families and communities “as a critical way to inform and evaluate programmes, services, policy, strategies and other functions delivered or provided by public, private and non-government sectors.”

Their website and resources are found at <https://anzea.org.nz/>

## Annex 4 Wellbeing frameworks

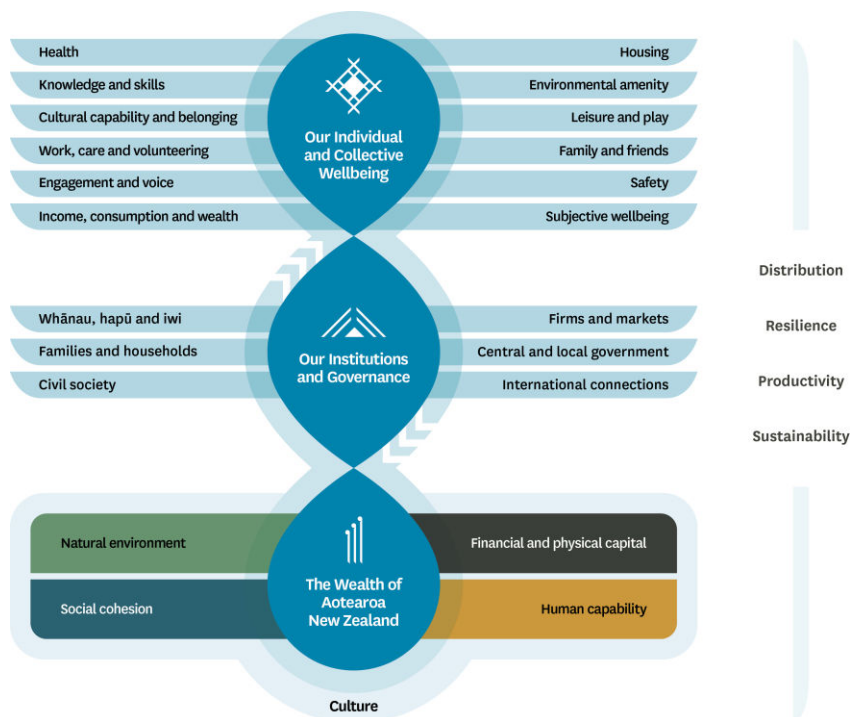
### The sustainable development goals (SDGs)



A key feature of the SIA process is the focus it places on improving the social wellbeing of affected people over the longer term. Usually, the outcomes for wellbeing will result from informed planning and decisions over time, emphasising a balance between the economic, social, cultural and environmental components of sustainable development. Addressing sustainability and social acceptability from the start of planning, with a focus on sustainable

outcomes, helps to integrate technical analysis and community engagement. Agreed targets and indicators help to navigate conflicting interests and ensure decision makers consider all interests.

### Living Standards Framework, NZ Treasury



The Living Standards Framework (pictured above) was developed by The NZ Treasury, based on four capitals to provide a national basis for considering wellbeing outcomes across policy making, regulation and investment decisions. They define 12 domains of wellbeing and in the updated 2021 LSF version add children's wellbeing and culture, te ao Māori and Pacific Peoples in more detail. They also include an initial frame of indicators to measure wellbeing. See <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/tp/living-standards-framework-2021#overview-of-the-2021-lsf>

### **Trust Tairāwhiti Regional Wellbeing framework**

A good example of a wellbeing framework developed at a regional level is provided by Trust Tairāwhiti. The framework aims to depict the wellbeing of people in the region along with wellbeing data and is available for public use. It reflects regional voices and interests and active public engagement. The framework guides investment decisions and operations of the Trust. Six muka represent aspirational wellbeing outcomes for Tairāwhiti. These muka are interdependent and complementary. When woven together, they capture a holistic and enduring vision for regional wellbeing. See <https://trusttairawhiti.nz/what-we-do/wellbeing-data/>

- Mātauranga - Diverse systems of knowledge, information and Mātauranga Māori are accessible, used and valued.
- Taiao - The quality of our land, water, air and atmosphere is pristine. Biodiversity is abundant. We practice kaitiakitanga.
- Hapori - Communities are happy, healthy and empowered. The voice of communities is integral to decisions that impact their lives.
- Ōhanga - The Tairāwhiti economy is diverse, innovative, resilient and regenerative and provides access to well-paid quality jobs. Our people have sustainable livelihoods from paid and unpaid work.
- Tu Tangata - Culture connects the people of Tairāwhiti. We express, celebrate and value our di Our people, whānau and communities in Tairāwhiti have respectful, connected and collaborative relationships.
- Tūhono - Our people, whānau and communities in Tairāwhiti have respectful, connected and collaborative relationships.

### **Smyth and Vanclay (2017) generalised wellbeing framework for SIA practice**



The SDGs provide a useful starting point for assessment practitioners working with communities (Smyth & Vanclay, 2017). These authors provide practitioners with a generalised framework (pictured) that can be used to develop an initial statement of desired outcomes and targets. The published paper provides a more detailed version. The outcomes defined by a community also provide a basis for evaluating and auditing what transpires in any regeneration setting. Used with target indicators these can provide a way to measure outcomes against expectations (see also Annex 3).