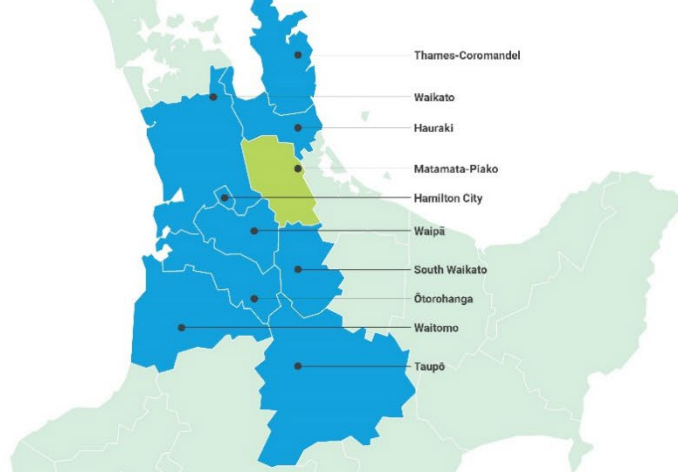
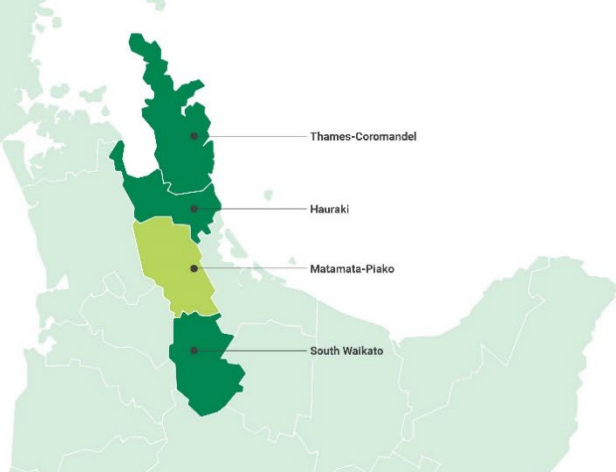
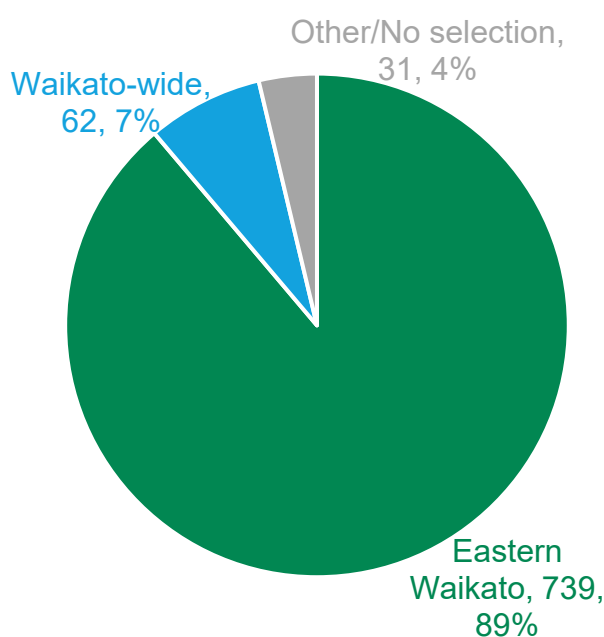




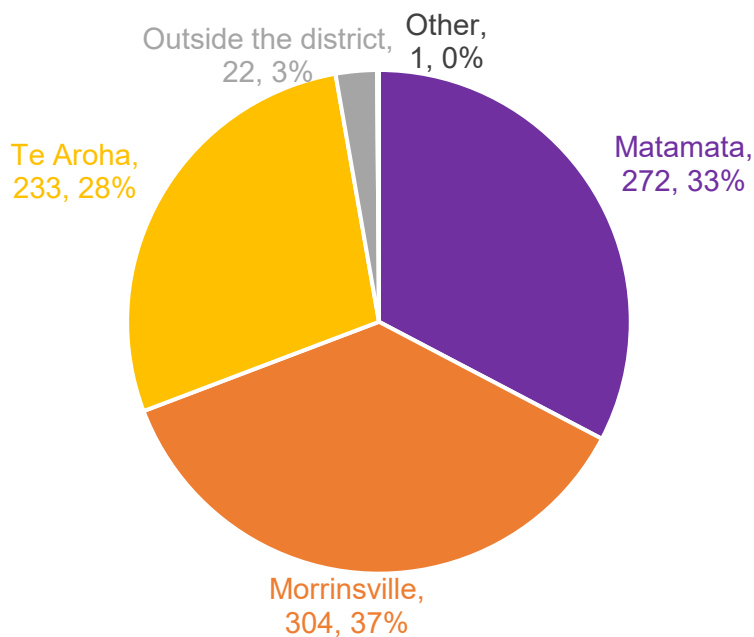
Local Government Change is Coming – Consultation summary

Community consultation was open from 15 to 30 June. 832 submissions were received. These have been summarised below. Full submissions are available [here](#).

Do you have a preferred option?



Where do you live?



Those that selected **Eastern Waikato** - Summary of comments (739 comments, 89%)

Overview

Feedback received from those that selected Eastern Waikato was overwhelmingly supportive of a smaller, rural-focused unitary authority comprising Matamata-Piako and neighbouring eastern districts. The dominant view was that this option provides the best opportunity to meet the Government's reform objectives while preserving strong local representation, local decision-making, community identity and avoiding domination by larger urban centres.

Protecting Local Voice and Representation

The most frequently raised theme was the importance of retaining a strong local voice. Respondents expressed concern that a larger Waikato-wide authority would dilute representation for rural communities and result in smaller towns being overshadowed by larger urban centres. Many considered the Eastern Waikato option more likely to maintain local accountability and decision-making closer to the communities affected.

Rural and Provincial Communities of Interest

Many submitters considered Matamata-Piako, Hauraki, South Waikato and, to a lesser extent, Thames-Coromandel, to share common characteristics and challenges. Respondents referred to shared rural economies, similar demographics, primary industry interests, community values, and common environmental and catchment issues as reasons for supporting an Eastern Waikato grouping.

Concerns About a Waikato-Wide Authority

A significant proportion of respondents opposed a Waikato-wide model, particularly one including Hamilton City. Common concerns included:

- Rural communities being outvoted by urban populations.
- Funding and resources being directed towards city priorities.
- Increased bureaucracy and reduced responsiveness.
- Potential loss of local identity and community focus.

Financial Prudence and Debt Concerns

Many submitters expressed concern about potentially inheriting debt or financial liabilities from larger councils. There was strong support for protecting locally funded assets and ensuring ratepayer funds continue to benefit local communities. Respondents frequently questioned whether a larger authority would deliver genuine savings or improved outcomes for rural ratepayers.

Building on Existing Partnerships

Submitters commonly noted that councils within the proposed Eastern Waikato area already collaborate successfully in areas such as emergency management, waste services, environmental management, and catchment-related activities. Many viewed the proposal as a natural extension of these existing relationships.

Process and Governance Expectations

While supporting Option 1, many respondents sought assurances around future governance arrangements, including maintaining strong local representation, protecting local assets, ensuring transparent financial arrangements, and providing ongoing opportunities for community input. There was also criticism of the perceived pace of the reform process and calls for continued community engagement.

Those that selected [Waikato-wide](#) - Summary of comments (62 comments, 7%)

Overview

Those who favoured a Waikato-wide model generally did so because they believed a larger authority would be better positioned to deliver long-term efficiencies, stronger strategic planning, improved coordination of regional infrastructure, transport, environmental management, and economic development across the wider Waikato region. However, even among supporters there was recognition that safeguards would be required to ensure local communities continue to have an effective voice and that rural interests are not diminished within a larger governance structure.

Key Themes

Supporters considered a larger authority could provide greater organisational capability, economies of scale, and a stronger collective voice when engaging with central government. Several respondents noted that growth, transport, housing, infrastructure and environmental issues increasingly cross current council boundaries and may be more effectively managed at a regional level.

Some submitters questioned whether a smaller Eastern Waikato authority would have sufficient scale to meet the Government's long-term reform objectives and suggested that a larger model may ultimately be more sustainable. Others believed potential concerns around rural representation could be addressed through well-designed governance arrangements, local boards, and ward-based representation.

While supportive of a larger authority, respondents generally emphasised the importance of retaining meaningful local representation, transparent governance structures, protection of local interests, and strong community input into decision-making.

Those that selected [Other/No selection](#) - Summary of comments (31 comments, 4%)

Overview

A smaller group of respondents either selected "Other" or did not clearly express support for either proposed option. Feedback from this group was generally characterised by concerns about the reform process itself, requests for additional information, stronger community engagement, greater transparency around costs and benefits, and careful consideration of alternative structures that would preserve local representation and community identity.

Key Themes

Many respondents expressed a preference for retaining the current local government structure and questioned the need for reform. Common concerns included the perceived lack of public consultation, the short timeframe for decision-making, and uncertainty around the costs, benefits, and long-term implications of amalgamation. Several submitters described the process as rushed and sought more detailed analysis before any decisions were made.

A number of respondents proposed modifications to the options presented, including alternative council groupings, excluding Thames-Coromandel from an Eastern Waikato arrangement, or adopting boundaries based on shared river catchments, communities of interest, or existing service arrangements.

Governance and representation remained important considerations. Respondents sought clarity on future governance structures, the role of mayors and elected members, protection of local assets, treatment of debt, and mechanisms to ensure local communities continue to have meaningful influence over decision-making.