The Northland story

‘looking in, looking out’:

a call for action

Northland Planners Forum

October 2007
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Introduction

The aim of The Northland Story is to paint a picture of Northland that all the major public sector agencies in the region can subscribe to and own – one that transcends the perspectives of individual organisations.

It seeks to provide a link between the four wellbeings - social – environmental – economic – cultural- that drive the work of local government and the themes that drive other public sector agencies.

A concern for the overall wellbeing of the community of Northland connects these different players in this region.

The relationship between the Crown and tangata whenua continues to be a dynamic one within Northland; with Maori continuing to experience disproportionately high levels of disparity. Partnership process and treaty relationships vary considerable across the public sector and achieve variable results for tangata whenua. The importance of Maori involvement in planning, service development, implementation and evaluation is embedded across the public sector. As the Treaty settlement process unrolls with its subsequent shifts in the economic and political powerbase of Te Tai Tokerau various agencies/ departments within the public sector will need to review its relationship with hapu and iwi.

The Northland Story is designed to provide a shared understanding of Northland, from which the NIF can shape the direction of its progress over the next year. It is an attempt to take the information available and translate it into knowledge that can be then used to develop action.

The Northland Story has distilled the main features of Northland as the region is currently, and recommended some priorities for the immediate future.

The Story has been developed through a process that involved planners from the key public sector agencies in the region. It utilised a set of organisational briefs, supported by hard data, observation and critical group enquiry.
Process

Firstly, the Planners group looked inwards, at their individual organisations - and then outwards, at Northland as a whole, in order to answer three main questions from the perspective of their own organizations:

- what are the key opportunities and threats for Northland?
- what are the main challenges for Northland?
- what are 2-3 key indicators that reflect these observations of Northland?

The organisations were clustered into a number of aligned groupings: economic, local government, education, health, housing and social1.

The individual organisations’ presentations were subject to group discussion and query, followed by an opportunity for further discussion of each grouping’s contribution at the end of each session.

Secondly, the information from across the agencies’ presentations was collated and grouped into key ‘feature themes’. Following confirmation by the participants, these were then workshopped to develop

- contextual statements for each key feature theme
- the specific issues within each of these
- calls for action / priorities within each theme
- measurements/indicators of progress

As well, a number of initial statements were agreed that comprise a snapshot of the current situation for the region. A future ‘to watch’ list of emerging themes was also developed and agreed by the full group.

Thus the information contained in The Northland Story was first described through the prisms of the individual agencies’ perspectives, then captured through a single lens group process, and finally explored through a joint focus on its different aspects.

This cumulative process has formed the basis of this draft report. ‘The Northland Story: looking in, looking out – a call for action’ is an agreed representative viewpoint of the Northland Planners Forum.

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1 Economic: TPK, EN, DoL; Local Govt: WDC, FNDC; Education: TEC, Career Services; Health: DHB, KCI, MAPO, ACC, Sport Nthld; Housing: Hsg, Police, DoC; MSD: FACS, CYF, W&I

In absence: NRC, KDC, MOE, DIA
The Planners Forum is aware that progress is already underway on a number of the issues commented on in this document by members of NIF. Their mention serves to emphasise their importance from the planners’ viewpoints.

Finally, the Planners Forum is aware that The Northland Story is to inform and advise the NIF. It is up to the NIF to determine what, if any, action/s to take on the issues raised.
Background: the current situation

The Planners group felt that the Northland story needed to be contextualised through a number of agreed overview / background statements. These statements are condensed in the following ‘summarised messages’:

1. The region has come a long way…

There is a sense that Northland has made significant progress. There are a number of positive developments and many indicators are starting to shape up well. Examples include an increase in the level of educational qualifications of secondary school students; the largest growth in SMEs in New Zealand. The region is seen as having ‘inherent potential’.

2. …but there is a long way to go still.

However Northland’s progress – both on a regional and district level – is coming off and growing from a very low base. There remain a number of substantive issues that will require significant effort to address. The positive indicators also have a downside –for example - educational qualification still lag behind almost every other region in the country - SMEs are still characterised by being lifestyle businesses, with low turnover and a general lack of interest in growth beyond being owner-operated.

3. The issues are not fundamentally different from last year’s.

There has been little change over the last year in terms of major issues. However there has been a move from simply describing the issues, to clarity through discussion and practice about the elements that make up the issues, and some ways for them to be addressed by the region.


Northland is a region of contrasts and consequently there is much debate and difference of views as to what the priorities are, and also how to tackle them.

What is seen as a draw-card from one perspective may be perceived as a draw-back from another. The Northland lifestyle, for example, is seen by some as an attractant and by others as a hindrance to business growth. Young people leaving the region to develop their skills may be seen as a positive aspirational step (‘let them fly’), or as an exodus that attenuates the region’s human resource deficit (‘keep ‘em here’).

There are a variety of ‘world’ views because individual organisations look at things from their own different and particular perspectives.
5. While there may be common or similar themes across the region, local districts’ analysis and response to them may be quite different.

As well as different organisational perspectives, different parts of the region may hold different views on how best to approach issues. The response to an issue may be quite different at a local level because of the diversity of need across the region.

For example, while there may be regional agreement that skills development is an issue, in one part of the region the response may be to attract skilled immigrants, in another to encourage people on benefits to undertake training, in another, to focus on promoting apprenticeships to school leavers to enter apprenticeships, in another, to ensure that literacy and numeracy training is available to existing employees, or front line management training to supervisors.

Thus, there may need to be a smorgasbord of options required to deal with the way different needs are exhibited throughout the region.

6. Northland is rich in ‘natural’ resources, but poor in adding value.

Northland has a huge amount of raw material. This includes both the physical and human resources. Most of these have had little value added to them thus far. Industry areas such as mining, forestry, farming – even tourism – continue to be constrained by the region’s limited ability – capability – to extract maximum value from the raw resource. Infrastructural issues of many types impede the region’s development and overall wealth creation.

7. A culture of collectivism is important because regional resources are limited (e.g. infrastructure).

The infrastructural issues, combined with lack of scale and exacerbated by a low and limited funding base, mean that the region has to ‘pull together’ to look at how to get the ‘best bang for the buck’. This can mean being very focused and selective about priorities so as to get some operational ‘runs on the board’ while at the same time continuing to chip away at bigger issues.

For example, focusing on getting a mobile one-stop-shop of government services throughout a district may be a better use of resources and a higher priority than (say) working to get a one-stop-shop into a particular suburb.

8. The more we work together, the better work we do, and the higher the expectations are of us – by others and ourselves.

Many agencies are working more closely together than they were in the past. Collaboration continues to grow. Often these operational partnerships are happening because of connections made through NIF, even though the partnerships and initiatives themselves may not be designated as NIF projects.
Success breeds success, and the cycle of despair is turning into a virtuous cycle. We need to keep striving to go forward, and be mindful of growing a ‘culture of success’ within the region.

9. **Linking NIF’s work with community outcomes would ensure greater alignment of resources.**

We are now at a stage where our effectiveness would be enhanced by developing stronger connections between the NIF’s priorities and Councils’ community outcomes. For example, the NIF setting priorities that link to the four well-beings is a way of forming a bridge between the two.

This could also provide a way to include other players that could lead to practical service delivery on the priorities, regardless of whether organizations are formally participants in the NIF.

10. **Thinking globally – acting – and delivering – locally.**

The last year has shafted home the effects of global issues on local areas. Environmental factors, international labour issues, the world market/economy and the use and allocation of resources all impact on Northland and its communities. It is critical to be both aware of these ‘big issues’ – and ready and able to respond swiftly and nimbly by maximising the opportunities they present, rather than reacting to them as threats.

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2 Rather than the local newspaper headlines being about Northland schools losing $800, 000 of government funding, we want to see them trumpeting Northland schools lifting out of their low decile rankings.
Current feature themes

1. Infrastructure

Definition and context

Northland’s infrastructural weaknesses continue to impede the region. These are based around transportation (roading, rail, air), energy (power) and tele/communications (including broadband).

But they extend to other related areas. ‘Roading’ conceals issues such as public transport, footpaths, street lighting and road safety.

Telecommunication limitations affect cellphone coverage and the potential for people to access e-learning and to develop flexible working conditions. Working from home or establishing (or using) online-based business – including, for example, accommodation bookings – is difficult or impossible for parts of the region.

There are also many water related issues, including sewage, waste water and storm water dispersal.

Isolation already has a big impact on Northland, as does poverty, and these two access-related issues are exacerbated by the limitations of the region’s weak infrastructure.
Infrastructure is the basic building block of hauora - health and healthy communities. It provides for peoples’ essential needs. Investment in developing infrastructure will give people opportunities and ultimately reduce the region’s negative statistics in areas such as embedded unemployment, crime and perceptions of safety and the cycle of intergenerational poverty in isolated communities.

Infrastructural issues impact at three levels:

• individuals: access to health, education and employment opportunities)
• communities: wellbeing, resources, independence)
• industries / businesses: lack of opportunity to overcome disadvantage of geographic isolation, transport issues, difficulties with export of produce, unattractiveness of region to new industry

Infrastructure is a critical precondition to improving the region’s productivity in all senses.

Issues

• Issues related to infrastructure are wide-ranging, and relate to the potential impact of climate change on the region. The natural events of the past year, primarily caused by floods, have shown the vulnerability – and importance – of Northland’s infrastructure on the region’s economy. The cost of recovery and infrastructure repairs needs to also include the social costs on communities. The region needs to prepare for the likelihood of further similar events, and to prepare for the possible impacts of weather and climate change – drought, tsunami, further flooding, and even the remote possibility of volcanic eruption.

• The effect that these could have on emerging industries such as aquaculture – and the effect that some other emerging industries such as mining could have on core infrastructure - need to be considered.

• The region also needs to have on its agenda the infrastructural effects of other possible disasters such as pandemics, particularly because of the impact of Auckland’s growth.

• Flood prevention, looking at alternative sources of power, and options to our current fuel (taking into account peak oil issues – scarcity and cost) are all on the agenda. Working with isolated communities to develop sustainable and locally owned alternatives to current power supply is an economically effective priority.

• Weak infrastructure limits the region’s core services, its capacity for development and economic growth, and its ‘connectedness’ and interconnectedness. Telecommunications – and particularly regional broadband coverage - is another priority that requires the collective weight of NIF for progress. Further, there needs to be work done on how broadband services can be delivered so everyone has access to it – that is, dealing with take-up issues such as the cost of the service. Currently 27% of Northland households are unable to access broadband because of the price, thus compounding isolation and inequality of economic opportunity.

Call for Action / priorities
All Northland people are entitled to have the necessities of life – as individual citizens, communities, and peoples. These essentials include clean water, removal of waste, supply of power, and healthy shelter. Adequate infrastructure is a prerequisite to these being universally available throughout the region.

At the moment infrastructural issues are a major impediment to access: access to services that enhance resilience, quality of life and a sense of belonging; access to knowledge on which skills are built; access to jobs.

There needs to be some innovative thought given to building a collective response that will lessen the impact of infrastructural weaknesses on people, property and industry / private sector development, and that will protect against adverse effects.

This may be developing multiple pathways for communities – for example, looking at a range of options for power supply to isolated communities, or considering whole-of-community approaches to the broadband/access issue. It will include closer working relations between public sector agencies and the private sector.

In essence, a practically focused, coordinated approach to developing infrastructure in Northland is an urgent priority and is a bottom line condition to further social and economic development in the region.

**Indicators / Measures**

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2. Climate change, the environment and sustainable development

Definition and context

Developing projections about future climate changes is subject to significant uncertainty. However it is clear that sustainable development – development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs – involves considering the impact of climate change and how to most effectively manage for it.

Northland is already susceptible to weather events that can cause natural disaster/s such as flooding and thus washouts and major erosion. The strong links between environmental change, Northland’s infrastructure and the region’s economic development means that sustainability is an important theme in future planning.

This will require more collaboration and engagement between NIF and the private business sector around the Northland Sustainability agenda that links to the regions social, cultural, economic and environmental community outcomes.

Environmental sustainability and related issues impact on:

- individuals: e.g. housing, health
- communities: e.g. water quality
- industries / businesses: e.g. tourism, aquaculture

Issues
• The potential markets around aquaculture and mining, and growth in the dairying and tourism industries need to be sustainably managed.

• Northland needs to deliver on its ‘Naturally Northland’ strap-line, and our clean green promotion. This image will not be sustainable unless some significant and genuine practical steps are taken.

• The NIF needs to respond to the risks and opportunities associated with climate change. And with regard to the challenge of developing a sustainable Northland, the NIF needs to lead a process that integrates social, culture, environmental and economic factors or considerations into any decision making process. It is important to ensure that the region has a robust monitoring or performance indicators programme that protects these wellbeings and the values they represent from development that risks being unsustainable in the future.

• Northland has the opportunity to take a lead in responding to climate change by acting on the emissions trading scheme (ETS). The forestry sector will be the first sector to be involved in the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). Forestry plays a critical role in managing New Zealand's carbon footprint and helping the country adapt to climate change by reducing erosion and flooding. Forestry is therefore a core component of the Government’s plans to ensure New Zealand's sustainable economic development and forestry emissions trading is scheduled to come into operation on 1 January 2008. With forestry being a key economic area in Northland, the NIF needs to take a leadership role on this issue in the region.

• Building up an adaptive capacity to respond to climate change is an important consideration in Northland's drive to sustainability and regional self-sufficiency.

Call for Action

Firstly, the NIF must become thoroughly familiar with the issues for Northland related to climate change. These include:

• the impact of Auckland’s growth on the region’s sustainable development in the region
• the effect of weather events on Northland due to the proportion of low-lying land that will be impacted by flooding (sewerage, water quality)
• the opportunities for the region with forestry (and agriculture) related to the ETS

The NIF needs to link with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and comment where possible on any public discussion documents produced, in the interests of Northland’s sustainable development. We need to use all that NIF members know of Northland to collectively make our case.

Ideally the NIF should establish a small working group and charge it with

• reviewing existing systems using genuine progress indicators (GPI)
• developing a Northland indicator programme for use in any decision-making related to sustainability.
• developing a response plan to climate change and a framework for action re the issues for use throughout Northland
This in turn will provide districts and communities with a guide from which to develop their own plans to minimize the effects of climate change on their areas.

Indicators / Measures

- the NIF receives regular briefings and updates on the IPCC’s progress and considers them in relation to Northland’s sustainable development
- a NIF working group is set up to progress work on ‘Sustainable Northland’
- a regional framework for action is developed through the NIF’s leadership
3. Skills, labour and employment

Definition and context

Skill-related issues continue to be a major factor in the region, although the needs are changing and it is appropriate for more detailed discussion to tease out the specifics of what the priorities are.

Terms such as ‘skills gap’ and ‘skills shortage’ are generic terms that need to be clarified. Consideration needs to be given to whether the emerging priorities are pointing towards labour market issues, such as labour shortages related to wages and conditions, rather than (or as much as) skill gaps.

As with other provincial regions, the hollowing of the demographics of Northland is now becoming more obvious – a high youth population that drops dramatically as school leavers exit the region – and a high older population as people move north for lifestyle reasons and to wind down, then retire.

There are sub-regional variations to this, mainly related to school leaver qualifications and access (including financial) to further tertiary study.

For example, in more isolated parts of the region, there remains a relatively high ‘after school’ youth population that is not engaged in either employment or further education. In these areas, unemployment remains stubbornly high due to the continued lack of accessible employment,
and poverty issues such as lack of transport. Maori youth still feature disproportionately in the negative indicators.

Labour market issues are related to the particular characteristics of the Northland economy – based around primary industry production (farming, forestry) and tourism, rather than processing or manufacturing. This tends to involve lower skills and (thus) lower pay and less attractive conditions (hours etc). It also introduces the seasonality factor and related factors.

The Northland economy is also characterized by being based on ‘small employers’ and a very high proportion of SMEs, with the concomitant issues of low wages, often poor conditions and limited career development options. This is especially evident in the HR area (recruitment, staff development, meaningful performance assessment) and also in organizational and business development (non existent or underdeveloped quality assurance systems and processes, lack of documentation re work flow, checks and balances).

As with other aspects of Northland, the skill base of the region is improving, but from a much lower base than the rest of the country. Similarly, un/employment has markedly improved, but the region suffers still from pockets of intransigent unemployment, a large proportion of the population being benefit dependent (including sickness, invalid and sole parent) and the limited labour supply having more complex needs.

Skills, labour and employment issues have an effect on:

• individuals: educational achievement, level of qualifications, quality and value of employment
• communities: capacity to survive, adapt, innovate and develop
• industries / businesses: mis/match between needs and skills, link with productivity and economic growth

Issues

Depending on which part of the region is focused on, the key responses to be considered include:

• encouraging school leavers, where appropriate, to stay in the region and upskill through further post-compulsory education

This may be while in employment (e.g. apprenticeships) or through participating in full time training within the region.

Provision of qualifications at Level 4 and above are particularly required. While the region lacks sufficient scale to attract a university, increased higher level tertiary education provision could be supplied by training providers (the ITP, universities and PTEs) working together to offer more advanced qualifications.

There is, in particular, a range of university programmes being offered in Northland that could benefit from investigation, with a view to extension. Linking with and improving connections with research in the region is another area requiring further exploration. Ensuring that all school leavers get the range of information they require to make quality choices continues to be an issue due to limited careers advice resourcing in secondary schools.
• ‘growing our own’ - upskilling the existing workforce and growing capability from within

Enhanced capability is required at a number of levels:
  • foundation level – reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, problem solving, numeracy skills and communication technology
  • supervisor / frontline management level - communication, teamwork, giving instructions, reporting to management
  • management level – organizing work (QA, QMS related), output and outcome measurement, human resource systems, project management and planning, leadership

Firms need to make a commitment to developing capability at the appropriate level – which may be all three. At the risk of using a truism, training has to be seen as an investment, not a cost. Just as firms unquestioningly invest in OSH training, so too must they commit to literacy, numeracy and other productivity levers.

Rather than focus on ‘what happens if I train my staff and they leave’, firms need to consider ‘what happens if I don’t train my staff and they stay?’

Employers need to recognize that providing upskilling opportunities also contributes to making their workplaces more attractive in what is becoming a more competitive labour market. With recruitment becoming tighter, retention and the development of existing staff is a priority. It is also part of creating an environment that facilitates business growth and productivity.

• ‘buying in’ - recruiting from without

We need to attract employees to Northland and then retain them in the region. There are a number of supply areas that are possibilities:
  • ‘bring them home’ - attracting local young people to return to the region after study.
  • making working in Northland attractive to other New Zealanders – including ex - Northland people well established in their careers and ready to ‘move home’ again
  • expatriate New Zealanders and immigrants from overseas – including again ex - Northland people, possibly looking at investment options

Supply of course needs to be predicated on the nature of the demand. The skill characteristics required by the region will determine the recruitment strategies required, depending on the type of people required. There are three key demand areas:
  • highly skilled trades-people – Northland is no different from other regions in having an ageing workforce, particularly with regard to trades skills
  • entrepreneurs - people with new and innovative ideas, technological skills, networks and capital
  • low skilled people - to do work that locals don’t want to do for reasons
including wages, conditions and seasonality

The region may need to decide where it is most effective to concentrate its efforts.

- **building the overall capability of small businesses**

Small businesses, as the major organizational type in the region, have the potential to be real ‘engines for growth’ in the local economy. However there is a growing recognition of the number of issues that have to be addressed if this is to occur.

Many small businesses are owner operated and are either lifestyle choices (for example, b and bs operating in the tourism/hospitality sector), or not interested in expansion (for example, sole trades-people). Many also lack the overall ‘basket of skills’ required to run – and grow a business. They require enhanced management capability, including human resource related information, business improvement systems, productivity measures etc.

The challenge is to grow micro businesses into SMES, and SMEs to MEs. For this to occur businesses need to understand that they need strategies to improve their productivity. Integral to this is small businesses themselves seeing the value of being part of clusters and the gains to be made by collaborating with other SMEs.

**Call for Action**

As Northlanders all, we need to make the most of our assets to create an environment to facilitate our region’s growth.

We have the most beautiful natural resources: our climate, our land and our sea. We need to investigate and support new opportunities to maximise these resources in a sustainable way e.g. mineral development, aquaculture, bioprospecting. We need to continue supporting tourism development with value added product.

We have talented, innovative people, but we lack skilled people. We need to continue and increase our efforts to grow skills - vocational, life and artistic - through formal education, in-work training. We need to find ways to overcome barriers to skill development, including barriers such as geography that limit access.

We have large numbers of micro and small businesses. We need to support these to grow, find ways to develop their flexibility and thus their ability to grab opportunities, consider ways to help them enhance their productivity. In some cases we need to change our attitude towards business. We as the public sector need to better understand the reality of businesses so that we can collaborate with them more effectively.

We have strong iwi, that are getting stronger. We need to continue building mutually valuable relationships with iwi so as to better understand their key driving influences and look at how we can constructively support them in their future plans.

We have a great location - near Auckland, the country’s biggest market - and we need to investigate further how we can lever as much as possible from this opportunity.
We have strong links within the region, and collaboration has become a Northland hallmark. We need to continue to strengthen our relationships, and get them working for the betterment of our region.

Indicators / Measures

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(growth in) level of qualifications/ proportion of higher qualifications
(growth in) level of participation in labour force
(growth in) size of businesses (staff numbers)
(growth in) turnover per business / net profit per employee
4. Quality of life / ‘the Northland way’

Definition and Context

The main thing that people identify as different, distinctive and special about Northland is the lifestyle associated with the region. The way of life – in particular the opportunity to experience a quality of life not available in large urban areas – linked to our subtropical climate, our proximity to both the sea / beaches and forests, and our unique mix of Maori and non-Maori residents.

‘The Northland way’ has huge value in terms of the ability to experience work/life balance. It captures the Northland identity - resilience, tradition, endurance, obstinance against adversity, resourcefulness, adaptivity – the number 8 wire approach.

But on the other hand, there is a downside to ‘the Northland way’. Within Northland, this is characterized by low esteem, resignation, lack of desire to change, lack of self – belief. These are both individual and regional attitudes, and equally they affect individual and regional aspirations. They also affect the perception of others outside the region.

Turning these negative perceptions into positive ones continues to be the region’s challenge. It is the difference between a ‘slack’ and a ‘smart’ lifestyle, it is the difference between not caring and being laidback, it is the difference between striving for success and being resigned to failure.
The Northland way impacts on all aspects of community wellbeing: social, cultural, environmental and economic. It affects individuals, communities and industries/businesses:

- **individuals:** health (meningococcal, SIDS, alcohol and drugs), education (truancy, literacy, early school leaving, low qualifications), family relations (violence, sexual abuse),
- **communities:** housing, crime (graffiti etc)
- **industries / businesses:** attitude, recruitment, skill, productivity issues

### Issues

- There are particular sub-regional and localized contrasts, primarily between the north-west (where the population is predominantly Maori) and the south-east of the region (where the population is primarily nonMaori). These require quite different and specifically targeted approaches.

- Maori health in particular is approaching a state of emergency, according to local public health experts. Life expectancy remains significantly lower than nonMaori, due to a wide range of contributing factors. Whether it be tobacco use, alcohol abuse, inappropriate diet or mental health issues, statistics for Maori are the worst.

- Maori also predominate in key negative statistics such as intergenerational unemployment, substandard or inadequate housing, and low school leaver qualifications.

- As a whole, the region needs to focus on the development of strong resilient families. Families – of whatever description - are the backbone of our communities. Parenting skills need to be made a priority, and family violence outlawed in the region. In small communities, local schools provide a community collection – and connection – point, and can be a conduit to providing more integrated delivery of services and support to families.

- Building resilient families builds resilient communities. Resilient communities can access resources that then start building strong local economies, ideally based on local high growth companies with the ability to access capital and with global connections.

### Call for Action

We need to invest in interventions that enhance the contribution of those in our region who are currently ‘dependent’, so they can have choices. Choices means opportunities and opportunities opens up the possibility of moving from dependence to independence. This will facilitate a reduction in levels of inequality.

With this comes an improvement in community wellbeing – a sense of individual fulfillment and community achievement - quality of life - ‘the Northland way.’

### Indicators / Measures
• improved housing: greater house ownership, development of innovative affordable housing solutions, reasonable market rentals, reduction in overcrowding, reduction in transience, improved access to phone lines (broadband)

• improved health: decreases in adverse health statistics, decrease in hospital admissions for life-threatening / chronic illness, rise in Maori life expectancy

• improved family wellbeing: reduction in youth / offending, reduction in notifications to CYFS, reduction in family violence, increase in number of people doing teen parent skills

• improved income: increase median income to national average or above, decrease in deprivation index rating, reduction in demand for relevant services / improved access to services, decrease in UB/SB/IB/DPB numbers, reduced gap between rich and poor

• improved educational outcomes: increase in skill levels (measured by qualification achievement), increased participation in the labour market
Watchlist

Picking up from the above comments, there are three emerging issues on the ‘watch this space’ list.

1. **Northland as part of ‘the banana of growth’**

   This relates to the area from Northland to Tauranga (inclusive) which is driving the national economy. Northland is being impacted on by being part of ‘Greater Auckland’. The move north is becoming more accentuated, with people now moving from Mangawhai to ...Donnelly’s Crossing, and from Whangarei to Kaitaia to avoid urban pressure and to ‘get away from it all’.

   Factors that will need to be considered include:
   - increased visitor / tourism traffic
   - Northland as a labour pool for Greater Auckland industry
   - improved access to markets; infrastructural issues - roading / traffic / transport / fuel (prices and availability); carbon footprint / emissions trading
   - effect on local communities – image (safety), increased ethnic and demographic diversity, commuting suburbs to a metropolis
   - keeping identity while becoming part of a ‘mega-city’; weaker community networks and connections, lessened access to core services that anchor people

2. **Role of the Private Sector**

   The need for a stronger relationship between the public and private sectors in Northland is an emerging area of discussion that will require leadership from the NIF.

   As a generalisation, the public sector has limited real understanding and knowledge of the private sector. Currently there is huge private sector investment occurring in the region, with little knowledge of or input from the government sector. Equally, the private sector has little understanding of ways in which the public sector can assist business growth.

   The connection between agencies and businesses needs improving, so that each can influence the other. [Further collaboration on a Sustainable Northland theme that integrates and balances economic development with Northland's unique social, cultural and natural environment is an ideal focal point to improve the connection between the private and public sector.](https://www.nif.org.nz) We need to build strong companies in Northland and grow a vibrant, creative, private sector throughout the region so that Northlanders can have real jobs with real incomes, and Northland can become a high skill high wage economy

   Areas for discussion include:
   - public / private partnerships – Northland needs private sector catalysts and inwards investment if we are to see sustainable change in the region
   - how to assist business development and workplace productivity - growing microbusinesses to SMEs, and SMEs to MEs, facilitating clustering for scale and strength
   - how the public sector can assist the private sector to sustainably add value to natural resources e.g. aquaculture, mining (tourism)
• how the public sector can assist with non-technical skills now being required by employers (reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, problem solving, numeracy and measurement, communication technology)

3. Impact of Treaty settlements

There is likely to be a number of Treaty Settlements signed off in the near future for iwi in Northland. Already the impact of Te Uri o Hau’s settlement has been seen both in developments occurring in the Kaipara district and in their recent purchase of a Whangarei hotel. Through the settlement process, the Maori role in the regional economy will become an increasingly important factor – both in terms of the development of raw materials, and as a significant player with regard to investment.

4. Other issues

The following were other issues raised at the Planners Forum that participants felt required a ‘watching brief’.
• the impact of political change, either /both locally or nationally may mean a reprioritisation of issues and projects
• productivity – further discussion required on the elements that make up productivity so the right levers can be pulled
• impact on isolated communities of the review of section 62 of Electricity Act
• youth: continuing issues around early school leaving, limited career opportunities, disruptive activity
Summary

if we don’t like change, how are we going to handle irrelevance?

One of the underlying challenges for the NIF is to determine whether its role is primarily about talking or doing - engagement and influence or directly undertaking projects. Where does NIF sit on the advocacy to activity continuum?

Advocacy:

The NIF is a vehicle to advocate to central government re regional needs and the need to resource regional solutions related to the four strategic ‘feature themes’:

- Infrastructure
- Climate change, the environment and sustainable development
- Skills, labour and employment
- Quality of life issues in Northland

With this role, the NIF is primarily a vehicle for ideas collaboration.

Activity:

The NIF takes an active leadership role in the region to get things done. Members of the NIF work collaboratively on joint projects, carefully chosen to operationalise an aspect of the strategic themes. Projects are targeted, specific, practical and ‘easy’ (able to get traction quickly).
Work may occur on different ‘layers’ of projects according to sub-regional needs e.g. upskilling the existing workforce – Whg; West - East Coast public transport – Far North.

Alternatively, members may decide to focus on one discrete cross-regional project, but to action it differently in different parts of the region (e.g. one stop shop – Otangarei; mobile service centre – Far North communities).

Or the NIF may roll out one project across the region (e.g. house insulation – PHO).

The NIF should approach this as experiential learning – learning by doing. Part of the learning is about learning how to work collaboratively.

Regardless of the NIF’s location on the continuum, there will continue to be a need to access and share meaningful information, including robust data analysis to inform and measure /evaluate/review appropriate interventions. The Northland Story is a contribution to this collaborative process.

*we are only limited by ourselves – our fear of change, our resistance to new opportunities*