

Changes to National Direction

Central government | December 2025

What are the changes to national direction?

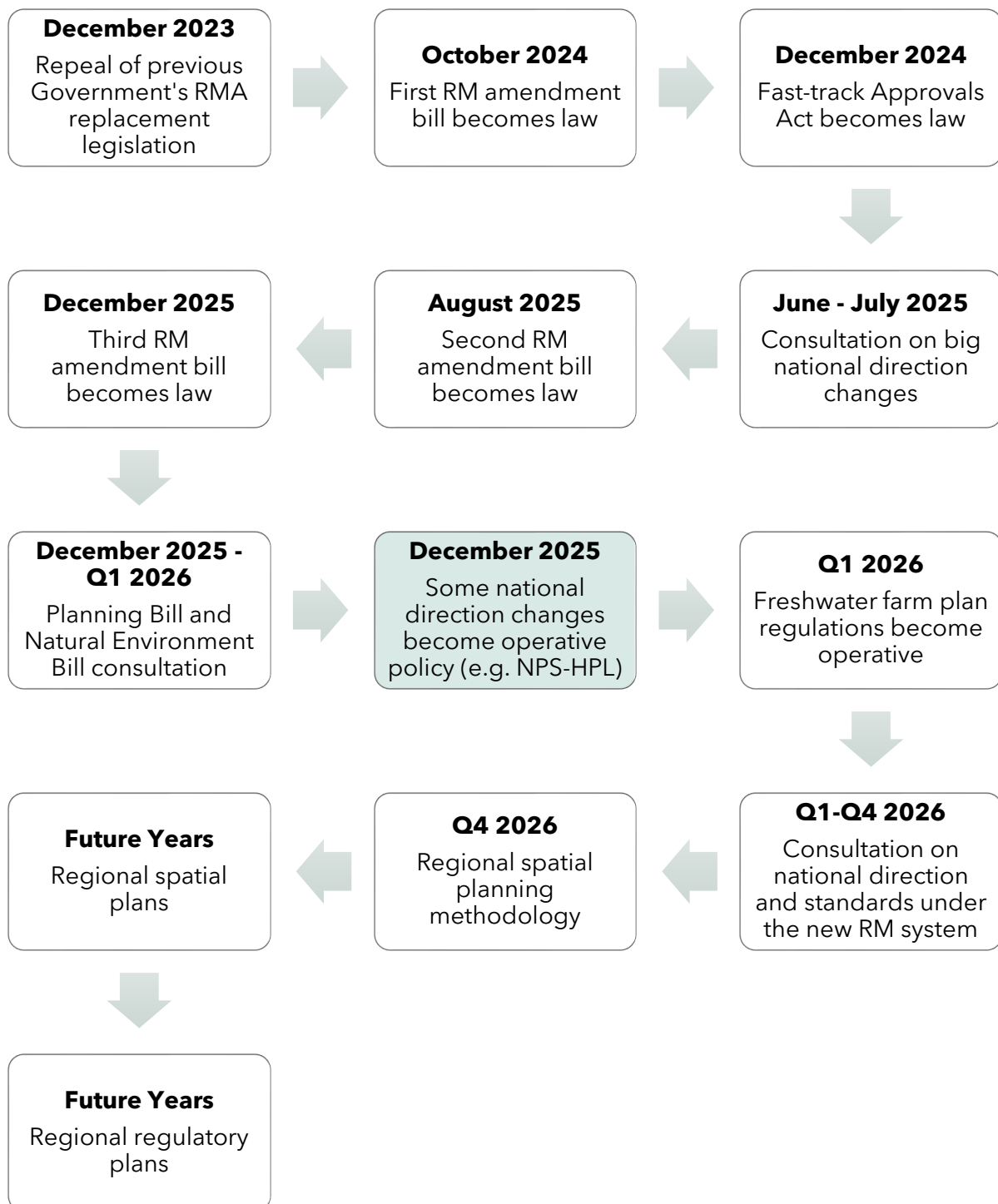
At the end of July 2025, public consultation closed on a number of changes to national direction ranging from freshwater to highly productive land to electricity transmission. These proposals are part of a sweeping overhaul of how planning works in New Zealand. In December 2025, the Government announced changes to this national direction as a response to this consultation. The decisions will become operative in January 2026. However, it is important to note that a 'Plan Stop' is still in effect, meaning that councils cannot make new plan changes to give effect to these new policies, except when related to natural hazards or when the Minister approves a council application for an exemption.

This process will, in time, include fully replacing the Resource Management Act (the RMA), the law which determines how all planning and resource management in New Zealand works. As a part of this process, further national direction and national standards will be released. The diagram on the next page shows where this consultation fits (in blue) within the longer timeline of resource management changes.

As HortNZ analyses these changes, more information will continue to be shared via the HortNZ website and newsletter.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

- [Ministry for the Environment website](#)
- HortNZ contact: Emily Levenson, emily.levenson@hortnz.co.nz or 027 305 4423



What decisions have been made after this consultation?

HortNZ submitted on the following pieces of national direction in July 2025. This table compares the Government's original proposals to HortNZ's submissions and the Government's ultimate decisions.

Topic	Government's proposals	HortNZ's main submission points (July 2025)	Relevant Government Decisions (December 2025)
Water storage HortNZ submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Environmental Standard making off-stream water storage a permitted activity An objective in national direction for freshwater directing councils to consider water security for climate change resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water storage for the horticulture industry will need policy support community-scale collective schemes, including managed aquifer recharge. The objective should recognise other economic, social and environmental benefits of water storage in addition to climate change adaptation. 	<i>Not yet announced</i>
National direction for vegetables HortNZ submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National permitted activity for commercial vegetable production An objective in national direction for freshwater directing councils to enable commercial vegetable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We seek a National Environmental Standard making vegetable production a permitted activity with minimum standards and certified and audited farm plans. We provided lots of technical evidence to support a national permitted activity for vegetables. 	<i>Not yet announced</i>

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	production and crop rotation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crop rotation needs to be enabled at a sufficiently large scale. 	
Freshwater (general) HortNZ submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebalancing freshwater objectives to safeguard the environment, provide for human health and provide for a productive economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We support making sure objectives for the environment, human health and the economy are held in balance. We support the option retaining Te Mana o te Wai with more guidance about how to achieve that balance. Frameworks to improve the health of waterbodies should be achievable and take an action plan approach, looking at the best improvements over a whole catchment, not just property-scale. 	<i>Not yet announced</i>
Highly productive land HortNZ submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove LUC 3 from the definition of highly productive land Introduce Special Agricultural Areas in key horticultural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The definition of highly productive land should be based on all of the factors that make land productive – not just soil type and climate. We support the idea of Special Agricultural Areas and seek that 	Urban development on LUC 3 is exempted from NPS-HPL restrictions until the end of 2027 or until highly productive land is mapped by councils.

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	<p>where LUC 3 is still protected from housing development</p>	<p>they come with actual enabling of horticulture in those areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We seek an interim Special Agricultural Area on the Heretaunga Plains in Hawke's Bay • Regional and district councils should be directed to enable primary production on highly productive land. 	<p>Special Agricultural Areas were not introduced.</p> <p>The timeline for councils to map highly productive land was extended until 31 December 2027. However, the current 'Plan Stop' prevents councils from mapping HPL until this date anyways.</p> <p>Rural lifestyle development on LUC 3 is still constrained by the NPS-HPL.</p> <p>Read more on the MfE website: National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land</p>
<p>Natural hazards</p> <p>HortNZ submission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new risk accounting framework for natural hazards • The rules won't apply to primary production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We support the exclusion of primary production. • Workers' accommodation will still be subject to these rules, so the need for workers' accommodation to be on or near farms and orchards (even in hazard areas) should be 	<p>This policy statement still does not apply to primary production.</p> <p>Read more on the MfE website: National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards 2025</p>

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		considered, especially since they're often not allowed in other areas.	
Infrastructure HortNZ submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New national policy directing councils to prioritise and plan for infrastructure 'Social infrastructure' like hospitals and schools are included 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood protection and water storage should be included Some areas are more appropriate than others for schools and hospitals – for example, the working rural production zone is not an appropriate location for a new school. Policies are needed to manage the reverse sensitivity effects caused by these activities. 	Flood control and protection was added to the policy statement. Read more on the MfE website: National Policy Statement for Infrastructure 2025
Granny flats (minor residential units) HortNZ submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New national permitted activity for minor residential units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setbacks are needed to manage the reverse sensitivity effects caused by these activities in rural areas. 	The Government progressed with this standard, renaming it to remove the reference to "granny flats". Instead, the new title is clear it applies to Minor Residential Units. Read more on the MfE website: National Environmental

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			Standards for Detached Minor Residential Units 2025
<p>Electricity</p> <p>HortNZ submission on NES</p> <p>HortNZ submission on NPS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amendments to the NPS Electricity Networks and NES Electricity Network Activities to enable electricity infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electricity infrastructure should only be placed on highly productive land where there is a strong need to do so. Policy should consider the cumulative effects of electricity network infrastructure on primary production because it can affect how growers can use their land. National Grid Yard provisions that apply to transmission lines should not be extended to electricity distribution networks. Activities that can take place under these provisions are managed under national standards (NZECP 34:2001 – New Zealand Electrical Code of Practice for Electrical Safe Distances). 	<p>The Government progressed with these pieces of national direction, making amendments which they state will, “enable a significant increase in renewable electricity generation to improve security and resilience of electricity supply and to achieve emission reduction and energy targets.”</p> <p>Read more on the MfE website: National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation; National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks</p>