



# Connecting Canterbury: Strengthening Infrastructure for Growth White Paper

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## Connecting Canterbury: A Call to Act on the Infrastructure that Holds the Region Together

Canterbury is one of New Zealand's economic engines and the gateway to the South Island. Its transport, and digital networks do far more than move people and freight - they connect communities, enable exports, protect the environment, and underpin national resilience. After more than a decade of post-earthquake rebuilding, Canterbury has entered a new growth phase. Population is rising, exports are expanding, and investment confidence is strong. But this momentum is now at risk. Aging infrastructure, climate exposure, fragile transport links, and funding constraints threaten Canterbury's productivity, liveability and resilience. Incremental fixes will not be enough.

This White Paper sets out a clear message: Canterbury must move from project-by-project decisions to a coordinated, long-term infrastructure programme developed in partnership with central and local government, iwi and the private sector. That programme should deliver directly on the vision and planning the region is developing through Business Canterbury's private sector-led ambition which spans infrastructure, regulation and housing, a regional a spatial plan and a prioritised regional deal with central government.

## A 30-Year Vision: Canterbury as the South Island's Gateway and Growth Engine

By 2056, Canterbury should be a region:

- where people can live, work and age well, with real housing and transport choice;
- where people, freight and exports move reliably through a resilient web of road, rail, port and airport connections - seen as one integrated network and invested in as such;
- where major critical infrastructure can withstand earthquakes, floods and climate shocks and seek to recover in days, not months;
- where long-life assets are planned, funded and maintained beyond political cycles.
- where tourism, agritech, aerospace, manufacturing, engineering and service exports are supported on the world stage.

This paper summarises the key findings of pan-industry engagement from private sector, public sector and iwi in Canterbury. It has been prepared as input to current wider regional processes, including the development of a mandatory regional spatial plan, the negotiation of a potential "regional deal", and other collaborative forums.



## Immediate Actions

*Delivering this vision requires decisive action now*

### **Commit to Future-Focused Transport Connectivity**

Canterbury needs coordinated planning across road, rail, port and airport networks, backed by new capital investment, not just maintenance. This includes upgrading bridges, improving freight corridors, and expanding public transport options as growth accelerates.

### **Make Resilience and Climate Readiness a Priority**

Every major infrastructure decision must assume more flooding, more extreme weather, and greater disruption. Redundancy is not a luxury, it is essential. No major river crossing should be a single point of failure.

### **Use Smarter Funding and Delivery Models**

Traditional funding alone will not close the gap. Canterbury should bundle bridge and culvert renewals for a PPP or programme-based delivery, pursue asset recycling where appropriate (with proceeds locked into infrastructure), use targeted value capture and other user-pays tools where there are clear benefits of doing so.

### **Lead the Nation in Asset Management**

Canterbury proved, post-earthquake, that collaboration works. That approach should now be embedded permanently to create a national benchmark for whole-of-life asset management, transparency and performance.

## The Bottom Line

Canterbury's infrastructure is not just a regional issue; it is nationally significant. If Canterbury's connections fail, New Zealand's supply chains, exports, tourism and resilience fail with them.

The case for action is clear. The opportunity is immediate.

A bold, coordinated programme - starting with bridges and culverts - can secure Canterbury's future and set a new standard for infrastructure delivery in Aotearoa.

The choice now is simple: plan and invest with intent or pay far more later for failure.

## Message from the Minister

Hon James Meager, Minister for the South Island: "The South Island can only maintain its growth and productivity advantage by people working together and putting forward a plan.

This paper reflects strong ideas and forward-thinking of infrastructure industry leaders in Canterbury. It shows the value of industry stepping up, not simply to advocate for projects, but to outline better ways of working together over the long-term.

I strongly support the kind of partnership-led approach advocated for here, where central and local government, iwi and the private sector come together around shared priorities, long-term planning, and more coordinated delivery. If we are serious about lifting productivity, resilience and value for money in the South Island, this is exactly the kind of constructive, solutions-focused leadership we need."



**Hon James Meager**  
*Minister for the South Island, Minister for Hunting and Fishing, Minister for Youth, and Associate Minister of Transport*

## Action Plan Implementation

Canterbury's connecting infrastructure improvements require immediate action. This calls for public and private sector market participants and iwi to work together on the key priorities. The below actions should be developed to align with other collaborative forums, including, the development of a mandatory regional spatial plan and the negotiation of a potential "regional deal". It should also be part of the continuing development of the National Infrastructure Plan and central government initiatives regarding asset management.

### Action Plan Timeframes

#### Quick Wins (0-12 months)

Action
Establish the Canterbury Infrastructure Coordination Group
Establish a group of owners, operators and asset managers of infrastructure to initiate development of asset management standards framework and standardised climate risk strategies
Development of business case for bundled bridges procurement

#### Medium-Term Strategy (12 months - 36 months)

Action
Implement a coordinated asset recycling programme
Implement the procurement for multiple bridge renewals bundled
Develop asset management standards framework and standardised climate risk strategies
Develop and secure a regional deal

#### Long Term Vision (3 - 10 years)

Action
Implement standardised asset management practices and climate risk assessments for all major infrastructure projects

## Vision for Canterbury to 2056

Canterbury stands at a pivotal moment in its infrastructure development. The first step in this journey is agreement on a shared vision for Canterbury's future.

Central to the 30-year vision is Canterbury as the South Island's gateway and growth engine. A region:

- where people can choose how and where they live, learn, work, and age, with affordable housing and with choice of travel modes without long commutes;
- where people, freight and exports flow reliably through a resilient web of port–airport–rail–road links and connect seamlessly to local and global networks;
- where international and domestic visitors can experience all the region has to offer and, as the gateway to the South Island, move efficiently to support premium tourism experiences across the region and beyond;
- where digital infrastructure seamlessly connects to and optimise Canterbury's core infrastructure as technologies evolve;
- where major critical infrastructure can withstand earthquakes, floods and climate shocks, and seek to recover in days, not months;
- where our unique regional exports, such as advanced agri-tech, aerospace-tech, manufacturing, engineering and services are supported on the world stage; and
- where infrastructure long-life assets are planned, funded, managed and maintained beyond political cycles.

### Unique Regional Strengths

- Strategic transport and freight infrastructure supporting Canterbury as the gateway to and from the South Island. Lyttelton Port, Christchurch Airport, the inland multimodal ports, the north–south and east–west corridors with both rail and road connections are all critical to that. Christchurch Airport also plays a dual role as also the primary visitor gateway to the South Island, shaping first impressions and enabling seamless access to world-class experiences.
- A deep export base of agriculture, engineering/manufacturing, food processing; growing tech and aerospace sectors; and tourism that support Canterbury's national and international trade.
- Available natural resources such as land, sun, water, and wind supporting future renewable energy generation and water offtake.
- Strong local council governance footprint with existing regional coordination and capacity for enhanced future coordination.
- Liveability attracting regional population growth given the space for housing growth, more affordable housing prices than many other parts of the country, shorter commute times, good schools, an abundance of parks and other green spaces, a revived post-earthquake city centre, and a growing economy.

In achieving this vision, we will:

- plan for a sustainable population growth that also preserve the regions liveability and lifestyle choices (urban, suburban, rural);
- preserve connection resilience to, from and across Canterbury, considering the natural landscape (such as the braided rivers and alpine corridors) so that natural hazards disrupt days, not months;
- unlock and enhance local investment to benefit the region's people and economy; and
- co-ordinate whole-of-life asset planning, funding, management and maintenance of infrastructure assets across the region.

## Priority Areas

The paper proposes a coordinated approach to Canterbury's infrastructure development across five key areas:

### 1. Replacing and Future-Proofing Bridges and Culverts

Through a Regional Deal or other form of procurement, partner with the private sector to establish and fund a region-wide, centrally supported programme to replace and upgrade bridges and culverts at scale. This would eliminate single points of failure across major rivers and corridors, lift safety, freight efficiency and emissions performance and design infrastructure to cope with future climate conditions.

### 2. Improve Transport Connectivity

Enhance integration and coordination across road, rail, air, and coastal shipping and improve critical bridge infrastructure and transport mode options to ensure reliable connectivity for the movement of people and goods. Focus on intra-regional linkages to support regional connections and enhance the region's connection into global networks.

### 3. Strengthen Infrastructure Lifeline Resilience and Climate Readiness (freight and communities)

Integrate climate resilience into all connecting infrastructure investments to ensure long-term sustainability.

### 4. Implement Alternative Funding and Delivery Models

Establish a long-term regional infrastructure vision that transcends political cycles and provides certainty for investment decisions. Expand the use of value capture, user-pays mechanisms, and asset recycling to diversify funding sources.

### 5. Collaborate on Whole of Life Asset Management Delivery Mechanisms

Set the national benchmark on asset management. Replicate successful post-earthquake collaboration models across infrastructure owners, operators and managers to improve asset management.



# How to Get There

## 1 The Critical Priority: Replacing and Future-Proofing Bridges and Culverts

***This is the White Paper's central call. Many hundreds of bridges and culverts are Canterbury's most under-recognised lifeline assets.***

Many of the bridges are single-lane bottlenecks that slow freight, emergency response and daily travel. They are vulnerable to flooding, erosion and seismic damage. Many are reaching the end of their design life, with a growing renewal backlog.

These structures are not just transport assets. They are social connectors for rural communities, economic enablers for agriculture and exports, and environmental protectors that manage water flow across braided rivers and floodplains.

### Recommendations

Through a Regional Deal or other form of procurement, Canterbury should partner with the private sector to establish and fund a region-wide, centrally supported programme to replace and upgrade bridges and culverts at scale. Those would have the explicit goals of:

- eliminating single points of failure across major rivers and corridors;
- replacing single-lane bridges with resilient two-lane structures;
- lifting safety, freight efficiency and emissions performance; and
- designing infrastructure to cope with future climate conditions, not historic averages.

Bundling bridge and culvert renewals into a single, long-term programme would reduce costs through standardised, modular designs and accelerate delivery by avoiding piecemeal procurement. Private capital to help fund a large-scale programme could be unlocked via PPPs or other partnership models. This would ensure Canterbury pushed ahead of its renewal backlog, rather than constantly reacting to failures.

This is one of the clearest opportunities in New Zealand today to combine resilience, productivity and value for money.



# 2

## Improvements to Transport Connectivity

*To enhance integration across road, rail, air, and coastal shipping and improve critical bridge infrastructure to ensure reliable connectivity for the movement of people and goods.*

*To focus on intra-regional linkages to support regional connections and enhance the region's connection into global networks.*

There is a great opportunity to support Canterbury's recent boom. Transport connectivity is integral to Canterbury's continued population growth and economic growth. It's about linking the rural with the urban, the suburban with the urban. Transport reliability is also a defining part of the visitor experience. Delays, congestion, and network fragility can affect perceptions of Canterbury and the South Island as a premium destination.

### **Examples:**



### **Complimentary Transport Modes**

Complimentary transport modes are crucial for connectivity and development. In Europe, for example, there are significant motorways running alongside high capacity/highspeed rail, plus freight connectivity to ports and airports. The airports are serviced by road and inter regional rail. The main transport nodes are also serviced by high quality, frequent suburban transport systems enabling seamless transitions.

If a similar model was applied to the Canterbury region, Christchurch Airport and Lyttelton Port could become more accessible to regional Canterbury (Kaiapoi, Rangiora, Prebbleton, Rolleston etc.). If the vision was widened further, it could mean commuter services availability from places such as Greymouth or Blenheim.



### **Cherries**

Each year, thousands of tonnes of ripened cherries, predominantly grown in Central Otago, make the journey via temperature-controlled trucks to Christchurch Airport to be exported to Asian markets. The journey time is integral in this process given fruit are high-value but also ultra-perishable and rely on a tight cold chain from orchard to consumer. Longer transit times can increase handling points and the risk of temperature breaks.

Transport efficiencies could greatly reduce the risk and improve economic outcomes for all involved along the chain to market. For example, ensuring bridges throughout the region are double-lane to reduce the overall transport time (a significant number remain single-lanes) and increasing the number of double-lane transport corridors within the routes.



## Waimakariri

The Waimakariri District Council estimates Waimakariri's population rising to around 83,500 by 2033, with ongoing household growth. This will result in increased traffic volumes which can in turn result in increased vehicle emissions, unreliable travel times, increase road faults and decrease road safety. The Council's Long Term plan projects a lack of travel mode choices can result in social disconnect and lack of opportunity for safe and healthy activity. This could in turn increase vulnerability in an aging population.

Transport efficiencies and more varied travel mode choices could reduce risk of the above and support the growth in the regions to better support Canterbury's liveability and economic growth. For example, SH1 Belfast to Pegasus Motorway and Woodend Bypass are expected to deliver an increase of 1.4% of transport services in the South Island and create over 1000 additional jobs post-completion.

More generally it is expected to reduce congestion levels, improve safety, travel times, reliability and resilience of the corridor. In addition, it is expected there will be greater engine efficiency and emission reductions (given the lower gradients are lower based on current design standards).



**Canterbury's economic strength has always depended on reliable, resilient infrastructure. Yet across the region, ageing bridges and culverts quietly carry the weight of our freight, farm production, tourism, and daily commuting. Many are reaching the end of their design life. Replacing them is not optional maintenance, it is strategic investment.**

**If Canterbury wants to retain its competitive edge, it must take charge of its infrastructure future. Every dollar spent proactively now avoids far greater economic, climate costs later. Strong infrastructure underpins productivity.**

**Nick Leggett**  
*Chief Executive*  
**Infrastructure New Zealand**

## Recommendations

### Future-focused Transport Planning

To improve Canterbury's transport planning to better enhance connectivity, the following actions are suggested:

- Canterbury's transport planning must look beyond immediate needs to ensure infrastructure investments provide long-term value and consider urban form, mobility and access. Better overall coordination of all transport modes is needed to be effective for both passenger and freight.
- Continued identification of agreed regional growth areas combined with clear transport links in advance of or alongside the growth to support the growth (e.g. Waimakariri and Selwyn areas).
- Development of transport plans with partnership buy-in at central and local government level, including with extended planning horizons that transcend political cycles.
- Continued identification of future transport corridors (air, land and sea) through planning mechanisms to prevent urban development from compromising future transport options.
- Incorporating emerging transport technologies into transport planning and infrastructure design to ensure Canterbury's transport system can adapt to technological change. For example, infrastructure to support electric or hydrogen powered vehicles.
- Identification of international competitors of our key export base to consider how they manage the transport issues affecting the relevant export products and make freight more efficient.
- Commitment from central government and the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) to ensure new capital investment in the region's road network (rather than only resilience-related investment), noting that only the SH1 Belfast to Pegasus Motorway will be delivered via the Roads of National Significance programme in the region in the next 10 years.

### Investment in Multiple Transport Options

To maximise efficiency and enhance multi-modal integration across the transport network, the following actions are suggested:

#### Freight

- More regular collaboration between the owners, asset managers and operators of Christchurch Airport, Lyttelton Port, the freight hubs, road and rail operators to improve freight outcomes.
- Establish more strategic freight hubs at key interchange points between road, rail, ports, and airports (for example, the South Island Freight Hub). These hubs could facilitate efficient freight transfers and reduce transport costs for regional businesses.
- Participate in the Government's National Freight Demand Study led by NZTA.
- Develop more bypasses to better link to key ports to reduce transport time. For example, a Pound Road bypass on the western side of Christchurch Airport.
- Increase capacity on strategic rail corridors to provide alternatives to road freight and reduce maintenance costs on the road network.
- Develop a South Island coastal shipping strategy to provide additional freight capacity and network resilience.

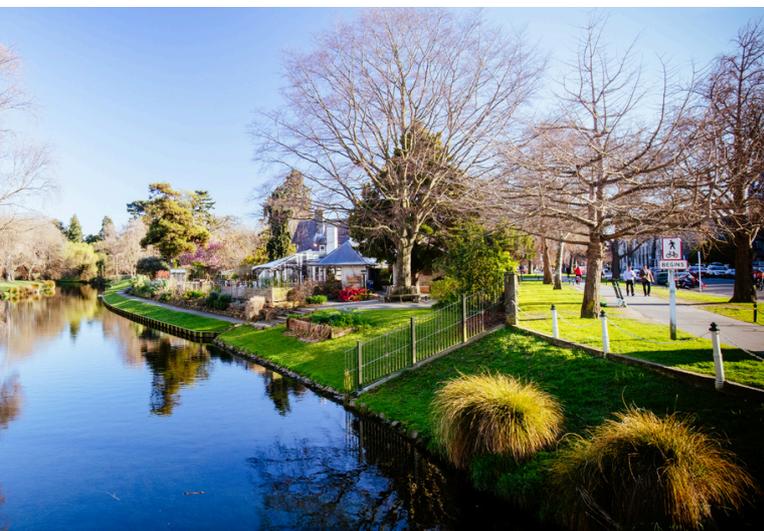
#### People

- Accelerate investment in public transport infrastructure in Greater Christchurch to provide travel choice and help reduce car dependency for residents. Consider Park and Ride in outer suburbs.
- Ensure all new retirement villages and large new greenfield developments are within 400m of public transport and support bus operations.

# 3 Strengthen Infrastructure Lifeline Resilience and Climate Readiness

***To build infrastructure resilience for lifeline connections and integrate climate resilience into all connecting infrastructure investments to ensure long-term sustainability for both movement of freight and people.***

New Zealand is facing increasing climate-related challenges year on year and a critical risk to New Zealand's infrastructure generally is its lack of resilience. While Canterbury is a sought-after location for liveability, it is also a region with a unique combination of natural hazards – earthquakes, braided rivers that could cut off communities in a flood, high fire risk in the hotter months, slips and more. Cantabrians know all too well from the lessons of the past how important lifeline connections are to the region when faced with a natural disaster and how imperative it is that owners, asset managers and operators of such infrastructure plan and coordinate together. Properly safe-guarding infrastructure is also a critical enabler of economic growth to ensure that the region can get back on its feet following an inevitable natural event. Resilience planning must prioritise not only freight lifelines but also visitor routes that underpin Canterbury's tourism economy and regional identity.



## **Examples:**



### **Interdependency of Connecting Infrastructure**

Critical transport infrastructure is interdependent and can be affected by the same natural hazards.

For example, the 2016 Kaikōura earthquake cut off both State Highway 1 (road) and the Main North Line (rail) between Picton and Christchurch, isolating communities and disrupting freight and passenger connections. The North Canterbury Transport Infrastructure Recovery alliance involving NZTA and KiwiRail was formed to restore both road and rail after major seismic damage. This involved coordinated planning and execution between the two modes.

In a similar vein, advance planning, coordination and investment between owners, asset managers and operators of key transport assets in the region (for example, Christchurch Airport, NZTA, Lyttelton Port, KiwiRail, Orion, Enable) is needed in the face of increasing climate related risks (extreme heat, fires, flooding, slips, sea-level rise and erosion) in order to support better outcomes. Enhancing climate resilience of critical infrastructure across the region in a coordinated manner will help support operability, ensure safety and protect economic activity.



## Digital Infrastructure

Digital infrastructure is critical to resilience.

- **Monitoring:** For example: ECan's sensor networks which track water levels.
- **Essential Services:** Canterbury's fibre and mobile networks support emergency coordination, enable faster responses and provide live monitoring during weather events. Fibre monitoring used in the electricity networks also allows for fault detection and power re-routing during weather events.
- **Long-term planning and adaptation:** digital spatial data, modelling and mapping helps to drive planning decisions long term (e.g. Christchurch's post-quake digital mapping).

Investment in Canterbury's digital infrastructure as it evolves is critical to ensuring resilience of the region.

## Recommendations

### Resilience Focused Investment

To develop a strategic approach to strengthening the resilience of critical transport infrastructure, the following actions are suggested:

- Identifying, protecting, and developing alternative routes for critical sections of the network, particularly where single points of failure currently exist due to vulnerable bridge connections over large, braided rivers and across the Southern Alps. Establish two resilient crossings over each major river so that there is no single point of failure.
  - Owners, asset managers and operators of key transport assets in the region to develop a coordinated program to assess, strengthen, and where necessary replace aging infrastructure along strategic routes to maintain network reliability, including ensuring there is an inland route alternative to SH1.
- Create network redundancy at identified critical vulnerability points to provide alternative pathways when primary routes are compromised.
  - Integrate climate-resilience into all infrastructure planning processes rather than it being treated as a separate consideration. For example, standardised climate risk assessments for all major infrastructure projects, ensuring that climate risks are identified and addressed at the design stage.
  - Consider a risk-based approach to guide investment in critical bridges. Resilience doesn't always mean longevity – easy to replace fit for purpose infrastructure may be acceptable.
  - Modular and standardised designs can deliver faster, more cost-effective solutions, with opportunities for private sector investment if projects are bundled.

### Infrastructure Design Standards

To design new transport infrastructure to function under projected climate conditions, ensuring resilience to changing environmental conditions, the following actions are suggested:

- Owners, asset managers and operators to develop a more standardised approach across infrastructure assets to implement climate-resilient infrastructure design standards that incorporate projected climate conditions rather than relying solely on historical data.
- These standards should account for extreme weather event scenarios, including compound events where multiple hazards occur simultaneously or in close succession.

# 4 Implement Alternative Funding and Delivery Models

***Establish a long-term regional infrastructure vision that transcends political cycles and provides certainty for investment decisions.***

***Expand the use of value capture, user-pays mechanisms, and asset recycling to diversify funding sources.***

Ongoing investment in Canterbury's infrastructure is critical. However, it is important that Canterbury's long-term regional infrastructure vision extends beyond political cycles to provide certainty for investment decisions. Other than following the earthquakes, some Cantabrians have historically felt that central government's attention has not always been as focussed on the region as it could have been. With the recent establishment of the Minister of the South Island, there is new opportunity for Canterbury's infrastructure players to be greater advocates for the region to central government when it comes to infrastructure investment decisions.

Canterbury presents several opportunities for alternative funding and delivery models for infrastructure assets across the region. This is important for the region's future given the current affordability crisis and in consideration of Canterbury's rates (especially in Christchurch) which are well above the nationwide average in nominal rates paid. Such opportunities will also allow private sector and iwi participation and investment in the region, particularly if done at scale. This has the potential to bring new innovation and asset operation/management experience to the region's infrastructure.

## **Examples:**



### **Value Capture in High Growth Areas**

Given the number of high-growth development areas in Canterbury (Waimakariri, Greater Christchurch), there is an opportunity to develop infrastructure in those areas with funding linked to land value capture created by the infrastructure. For example, tax increment financing (TIF), where a charge is assessed on a group of beneficiaries (eg ratepayers near a new train station) by reference to the increase in their property values that is created by the delivery of the new infrastructure.

Value capture mechanisms are most suitable for use in connection with projects that directly create value for an identifiable class of beneficiaries. They are less suitable for infrastructure projects where value uplift doesn't occur or is difficult to causally link (such as with wastewater and stormwater infrastructure), or where it is difficult to clearly identify beneficiaries.

Legislative changes would be needed in New Zealand to apply these models to the New Zealand market. For example, TIF could be applied through the existing targeted rates funding mechanism in the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002, but changes would be needed to allow a rate to be assessed by reference to a change in capital value over time, rather than total capital value.



## Public Private Partnerships as Alternative Delivery Models

Some of Canterbury's core infrastructure assets have been, or are currently being procured, using alternative delivery models.

- Several Christchurch schools, notably Shirley Boys' High School, Avonside Girls' High School, and Haeata Community Campus, were delivered as part of New Zealand's national PPP programme.
- Christchurch Men's Prison redevelopment is being procured by the Department of Corrections using the PPP model. It will be developed in several phases with phases 1 and 2 comprising an indicative capital investment of approximately \$800 million for each phase.

Further use of the PPP model (for example, to develop a bundled bridge and culvert renewal programme) could present further delivery opportunities and private sector involvement in the region.

## Recommendations

### Long Term Regional Infrastructure Vision

To develop the long term Vision, the following actions are suggested:

- Establish a dedicated Infrastructure Coordination Group with representation from central government departments and agencies, Canterbury's local authorities, Ngāi Tahu and relevant rūnanga, key industry stakeholders and infrastructure providers, community and environmental representatives to:
  - develop a long-term vision that supports the National Infrastructure Plan with a more enhanced regional focus for Canterbury;
  - meet periodically to discuss the assets they are in charge of to collaborate and coordinate across assets to improve regional infrastructure asset management and development; and
  - meet periodically with the Minister of the South Island to advocate for investment decisions for Canterbury's infrastructure.
- Establish a formal mandate from participating organisations to ensure the Infrastructure Coordination Group has authority to make decisions and commitments.
- Increase monitoring of progress on major infrastructure projects by the Infrastructure Coordination Group to ensure accountability and enable early intervention when projects face challenges. This could also lead to better liaison with central government on policy and regulatory matters, to ensure Canterbury's interests are represented in national decision-making.

## **Diversify Funding Sources**

To diversify funding sources for infrastructure delivery in the region, the following actions are suggested:

### **1. Implement a Coordinated Asset Recycling Programme**

- With assistance, support and funding from central government, Canterbury's local authorities to develop a systematic approach to identifying publicly owned assets in the region suitable for recycling, with proceeds dedicated to priority infrastructure investments.
- As part of the portfolio review, Canterbury's local authorities should identify assets that could be partially or fully divested, or leased back, or otherwise monetised without compromising key community outcomes. This should involve consideration of other successful examples such as the Napier Port IPO.
- Identify assets suitable for partial or full divestment in consideration of financial and strategic factors. Structured processes for recycling proceeds into new infrastructure should ensure that asset sales generate maximum benefit for regional infrastructure development. Any sale proceeds should be tied to new assets, no diversion to operating expenditure and include strong consumer protections.
- Local authorities will likely need support from central government regarding the messaging to Cantabrians of how any such recycling will safeguard investment in assets and key regional priorities.

### **2. Develop Direct User Pays or Other Value Capture Mechanism Opportunities**

- Consider possible examples in Canterbury of user pays or other value capture opportunities such as tolling, levies, targeted rates, or tourist levies. Identify infrastructure investment opportunities that could support these mechanisms. This could be considered as part of any regional deal application.
- This should include clear communication strategies about how the connection between payments and benefits would build public acceptance of user-pays mechanisms, to demonstrate user payments directly fund infrastructure improvements that benefit users, which will more likely increase support for these funding approaches.

### **3. Create a Multi-Project Partnership Program**

- To develop a programmatic approach to partnerships rather than project-by-project transactions.
- This could include multiple bridge replacements bundled for delivery efficiency, water and wastewater infrastructure across multiple councils coordinated for scale benefits, and renewable energy and resilience infrastructure bundled to attract specialised investors.
- To discuss and develop opportunities to unlock local investment by ring-fencing proceeds and revenues into a Regional Infrastructure Fund to build, not to spend. Develop this as a Canterbury Regional Infrastructure Fund (CRIF) with \$2–3b capital by 2030.



# 5 Collaborate on Whole of Life Asset Management Delivery Mechanisms

## ***Replicate successful post-earthquake collaboration models across infrastructure owners, operators and managers to improve asset management.***

The New Zealand Infrastructure Commission, Te Waihangā, has identified:

- There is little transparency of infrastructure and asset management performance and planning. This includes a lack of user-friendly access to information on how infrastructure is performing and what future funding intentions are.
- Capability and capacity are the biggest constraints in improving infrastructure asset management maturity in NZ.

Canterbury is already a gold standard in post-earthquake collaboration in respect of infrastructure asset management and rebuild coordination. The partnerships included local agencies, central government agencies, infrastructure owners and operators, private-sector developers and contractors, iwi, and researchers who together worked to restore, redesign and improve the region's infrastructure after the 2010–11 earthquakes and related events. There is great opportunity to replicate these models in application to whole of life asset management of infrastructure across the region, including to potentially create a national benchmark to improving transparency in asset management practices and build asset management capacity and capability.

The benefits of implementing standardised asset management frameworks across Canterbury's owners, operators and asset managers include:

- improving consistency in asset condition assessment and renewal planning, enabling better comparison of investment priorities across the region;
- facilitation of shared procurement and delivery arrangements, reducing costs through economies of scale;
- more effective coordination with central government and the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission regarding infrastructure planning would ensure alignment between local and national infrastructure priorities; and
- enhancing reporting and accountability for infrastructure investment decisions to improve public confidence in infrastructure management.



**Examples:**



**Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team**

The Government - through the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority and NZTA - and Christchurch City Council established an alliance in September 2011, called the Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team (SCIRT). The SCIRT alliance secured the services of five major civil contractors to manage and carry out the repair and rebuild programme of work.

The scale and complexity of the repair and rebuild required for earthquake-damaged horizontal infrastructure (water, wastewater, stormwater, roading, and associated assets) would have been challenging for traditional project procurement processes. Instead, the alliance model brought shared risk, joint decision-making, and integrated planning to asset rebuild and prioritisation. SCIRT delivered hundreds of projects (over 720) worth equating to approximately NZD 1.9 billion through the alliance model, speeding up delivery and improving outcomes.



**Canterbury has a chance to set the national standard in asset management and climate resilience through a coordinated approach between the owners, operators, managers, developers and financiers of the region's infrastructure. By imploring the coordination models of the past, we can work together to strengthen our region for future growth.**

**Catherine Shipton**  
*Partner*  
**Simpson Grierson**



## Recommendations

To collaborate on asset management, with a view to developing a national benchmark.

### **Develop and Implement Standardised Asset Management Framework Across Asset Classes**

- Refine understanding of post-earthquake learnings with a view to future asset management application, including in-depth analysis of effective collaboration between central government, local authorities, and the private sector to determine how it's worked in the past and how it could work in the future
- Owners, operators and managers of Canterbury's infrastructure to meet regularly to develop common standards framework and practices specifically for Canterbury conditions, recognising the region's unique geographic and climatic challenges. This should include developing:
  - common asset condition assessment methodologies to enable consistent evaluation of infrastructure condition across the region;
  - shared renewal and replacement planning approaches to facilitate coordination of infrastructure investments; and
  - consistent performance monitoring and reporting systems to enable benchmarking and continuous improvement.
- Consider proven technologies (such as extending the Wellington City Council Underground Asset Register) to assist in implementation of asset management practices and development of asset registers for data-based decision-making.
- Focus on developing shared services and capability to make more efficient use of scarce technical resources.
- Facilitate knowledge sharing networks between asset management experts to facilitate continuous learning and improvement.
- Provide and implement training and development opportunities to build local capability and ensure effective implementation of standardised approaches.

- Coordinate regularly with central government and the Infrastructure Commission on infrastructure planning to ensure alignment between local and national infrastructure priorities.
- Develop better procurement strategies that consider operating expenditure impact and lifecycle costs (not just immediate capital expenditure).

### **Supporting Local Authority Capacity Building Strategies**

- Consider asset management benefits that result from co-ownership with private sector owners.
- Facilitate access to specialist expertise in infrastructure financing and commercial arrangements to potentially enable local authorities to implement innovative funding mechanisms effectively.
- Consider opportunities for shared technical support services for complex project management and delivery.
- Develop secondment and exchange opportunities to build internal capability while providing immediate access to required skills.
- Consider resource sharing arrangements to develop shared services for functions where scale economies are available.

## Conclusion

Canterbury stands as an example to the nation. Its resilience post-earthquake has led to it becoming an economic powerhouse and the most sought-after region for its liveability. However, it stands at a critical juncture in its infrastructure development. The region has substantial infrastructure needs arising from population growth, ageing assets, and climate change adaptation requirements and to support its continued economic growth. These needs coincide with significant opportunities arising from policy reforms, new funding mechanisms, and growing iwi and private sector interest in infrastructure investment. These all create great opportunity for the region.

Achieving this requires a bold Vision supported by all stakeholders. Central government departments and agencies, Canterbury's local authorities, Ngāi Tahu and relevant rūnanga, private sector industry stakeholders and infrastructure providers, community and environmental representatives need to work together to finesse this vision and to develop and implement regional infrastructure priorities to sustain and protect Canterbury's future both locally and as a vital gateway to the South Island.

The foundation has been laid through the post-earthquake recovery experience, policy reforms, and growing recognition of infrastructure's critical importance to regional and national prosperity. In achieving the vision, we will support sustainable population growth while protecting liveability and lifestyle choice; strengthen resilient regional connections that work with Canterbury's natural landscape; enable local investment to support people and the growing economy; and take a coordinated, whole-of-life approach to infrastructure planning, funding, and management across the region. In doing so, Canterbury will become leader in innovative, collaborative approaches to infrastructure development.

### Resources

1. Waimakariri District Council "Waimakariri Demographics" (June 2025) Enterprise North Canterbury [www.enterprisenorthcanterbury.co.nz/invest/waimakariri-demographics/](http://www.enterprisenorthcanterbury.co.nz/invest/waimakariri-demographics/).
2. Waimakariri District Council "Long Term Plan 2024-2034" (25 June 2024) Waimakariri District Council [www.waimakariri.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0031/164596/Final-LTP-2024-2034-Full-Documents-WEBSITE.pdf?v=0.11](http://www.waimakariri.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0031/164596/Final-LTP-2024-2034-Full-Documents-WEBSITE.pdf?v=0.11) at 46.
3. Simpson Grierson "Infrastructure Funding & Financing: a time for change" (27 March 2024) Simpson Grierson [www.simpsongrierson.com/insights-news/legal-updates/infrastructure-funding-financing-a-time-for-change](http://www.simpsongrierson.com/insights-news/legal-updates/infrastructure-funding-financing-a-time-for-change).
4. New Zealand Infrastructure Commission Te Waihanga "Taking care of tomorrow today: Asset management state of play" (November 2024) Te Waihanga [te.waihanga.govt.nz/our-work/research-insights/taking-care-of-tomorrow-today](http://te.waihanga.govt.nz/our-work/research-insights/taking-care-of-tomorrow-today).
5. The Treasury "Investing for New Zealand: Insights from 2015/16" (20 January 2017) The Treasury [www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2016-12/ipannualreport-15-16.pdf](http://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2016-12/ipannualreport-15-16.pdf) at 18.

## Authorship

This report has been prepared by Infrastructure New Zealand in partnership with Simpson Grierson. It has been prepared based on feedback from pan-industry engagement from private sector, public sector and iwi conducted by Infrastructure New Zealand and Simpson Grierson within Canterbury in 2025 and reports the key findings of that engagement.

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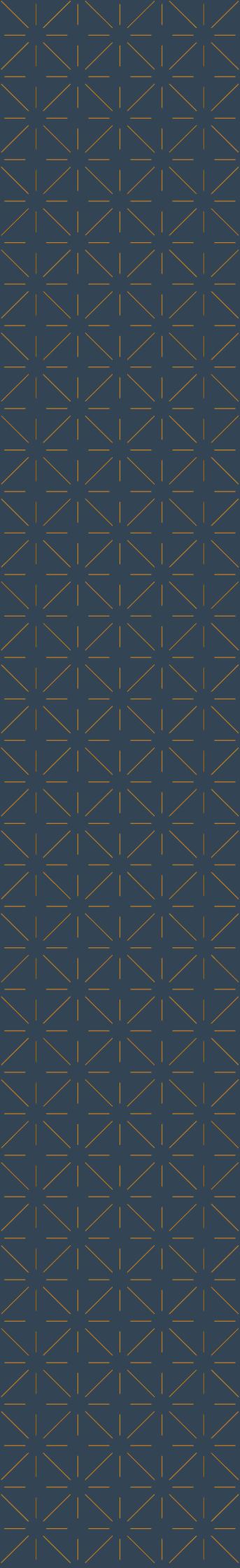
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