

## National planning standards factsheets

# Information for elected representatives

This factsheet sets out key information on the planning standards and the impact they will have on your council plan-making activities.

## What are they?

The national planning standards (planning standards) are a new form of national direction introduced through the 2017 amendments to the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). They aim to make RMA plans (eg, policy statements, regional plans, district plans) more consistent with each other, easier to use and faster to make.

Over the past two years, the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) and the Department of Conservation (DOC) have worked collaboratively with councils, iwi and sector groups to develop the first set of 17 planning standards. The planning standards address the structure and form of plans, set some national definitions and require plans to be accessible through an online interactive plan (ePlan).

The Ministers for the Environment and Conservation released these planning standards on 5 April 2019.

The national planning standards are as follows:

1. Foundation Standard
2. Regional Policy Statement Structure Standard
3. Regional Plan Standard
4. District Plan Standard
5. Combined Plan Standard
6. Introduction and General Provisions Standard
7. District-wide Matters Standard
8. Zone Framework Standard
9. Designations Standard
10. Format Standard
11. Regional Spatial Layers Standard
12. District Spatial Layers Standard
13. Mapping Standard
14. Definitions Standard
15. Noise and Vibration Metrics
16. Electronic Accessibility and Functionally Standard
17. Implementation Standard.

## What do they mean for my council?

Even with the planning standards in place, your council will still need to develop the majority of its content with your community. Your plan can still reflect other local planning documents, such as strategic plans, spatial plans, transport plans and long-term plans, at the district and regional scale.

Your council will need to decide whether to update your current plan to reflect the planning standards or implement them as part of your next plan review process. The implementation timeframes set out below will guide this decision. We expect many councils will choose to implement the standards as part of their next plan review process.

You can implement the majority of the planning standards without going through a normal RMA plan change process (eg, notification, submissions and hearings). The exception to this is when councils implement the Zone Framework Standard, which offers a choice of zones to pick and choose from so these may need a plan change process. For some councils that have zones which are already very consistent with the Zone Framework Standard, it might be possible to simply change the name of the zones.

If you implement the standards as part of a broader plan review process, plan submitters will need to understand that any aspect of the plan that comes from the planning standards cannot be changed through the submissions process – such as some definitions, the range and names of chapters, sections, where provisions are located and how they are displayed. It is inevitable however, that you may still receive submissions on matters that cannot be changed. Councils will need to address these submissions in their reports and may also need to address these at hearings.

The planning standards also introduce a requirement for plans to be accessible through an ePlan. There are costs associated with creating an ePlan, but in many cases, these costs will be more manageable when timed with the plan review process. To recognise the impact of these costs for smaller councils, the standards have a longer implementation timeframe for councils with a ratepayer base of less than 15,000 people (list 3).

## What are the timeframes for implementing the planning standards?

Timeframes for implementing the planning standards vary for different councils, planning documents and standards:

- all councils must meet basic electronic accessibility and functionality requirements within one year from when the planning standards come into effect
- regional councils have three years to adopt the standards for their regional policy statements, and ten years for their regional plans
- unitary councils have 10 years to adopt the planning standards
- city/district councils generally have five years to adopt the planning standards, with seven years for the definitions standard. A smaller group of councils (list 1) who have recently completed a plan review have seven years, and nine years for definitions.

If your council undertakes a full plan review within these timeframes the new plan must meet the planning standards when it is notified for submissions.

There are also different timeframes for online interactive plans:

- local authorities generally have five years, though some have seven years (list 2)
- all regional councils and unitary councils, and city/district councils with under 15,000 ratepayers (list 3) have 10 years to comply with the requirements.

### **List 1: Councils who have seven and nine years to adopt the planning standards**

- Christchurch City Council
- Dunedin City Council
- Hurunui District Council
- Invercargill City Council
- Kāpiti Coast District Council
- Opotiki District Council
- Queenstown-Lakes District Council
- South Taranaki District Council
- Thames-Coromandel District Council
- Any territorial authorities committed to a combined district plan (through a council resolution, MOU or similar statutory obligation) under section 80 (3) of the RMA.

### **List 2: Councils who have seven years to obtain an online interactive plan (ePlan)**

- Christchurch City Council
- Dunedin City Council
- Invercargill City Council
- Kāpiti Coast District Council
- Queenstown-Lakes District Council
- Thames-Coromandel District Council
- Any territorial authorities committed to a combined district plan (through a council resolution, MOU or similar statutory obligation) under section 80 (3) of the RMA.

### **List 3: Councils who have 10 years to obtain an online interactive plan (ePlan)**

- Central Hawke's Bay District Council
- Central Otago District Council
- Clutha District Council
- Gore District Council
- Hauraki District Council
- Hurunui District Council
- Kaikoura District Council
- Kawerau District Council
- Mackenzie District Council
- Manawatu District Council
- Matamata-Piako District Council
- Opotiki District Council
- Otorohanga District Council
- Rangitikei District Council
- Ruapehu District Council
- South Taranaki District Council
- South Waikato District Council
- Stratford District Council
- Tararua District Council
- Waimate District Council

- Wairoa District Council
- Waitomo District Council.
- Waitaki District Council

## Disclaimer

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