Good News for Business with the Western Bay of Plenty Regional Deal

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The Regional Deal and the bigger picture
The 2026 Western Bay of Plenty Regional Deal (Regional Deal) is more than an infrastructure announcement. It is a clear statement that the region is being repositioned for a new phase of growth. For businesses, landowners, investors and iwi, the message is simple: the direction of travel is being set now.

The question is no longer whether the Bay of Plenty will grow. It is who will have the land, capital, contracts, partnerships and governance in place to move decisively, and who will be left reacting once the key decisions have already been made.

What is the Regional Deal?
We discussed regional deals in our article last July. In short, they are intended to move growth planning beyond aspiration and into delivery, through long term partnerships between central and local government focused on economic growth, housing delivery and connected, resilient infrastructure. The long term commitment also reduces the risk that priorities shift each time there is a change in Government.

The Regional Deal applies that model to one of New Zealand's fastest growing regions.

Essentially, it establishes a partnership between central government, Tauranga City Council, Western Bay of Plenty District Council and Bay of Plenty Regional Council. It is built around a 30-year vision for the Western Bay of Plenty subregion as New Zealand's Global Trade Gateway, with a 10-year implementation framework. This will influence where public investment is prioritised, where private capital is likely to follow, and where future legal and commercial pressure points will emerge.

Confidence drives investment
The strongest theme underpinning the Regional Deal is confidence.

Certainty around infrastructure and development does not just make planning easier, it changes investment behaviour. It can unlock land, bring forward projects, improve productivity and give businesses the confidence to commit before every answer is known.

For businesses, that matters now. The Regional Deal may affect whether to buy land, expand premises, invest in plant and equipment, enter long term supply arrangements, restructure ownership, bring in new capital or commit to a new project.

Export growth starts well before the Port
The Port of Tauranga now handles approximately 33% of all New Zealand cargo by volume and 48% of the country's containerised exports. Around it sits a network of logistics, warehousing, transport, distribution, manufacturing and export focused

businesses that support regional and national economic activity.

Export growth does not begin at the wharf. By then, most of the important decisions have already been made.

It starts with productive land, industrial and commercial zoning, workforce availability, housing, roading corridors, freight connections, storage and distribution facilities, digital connectivity, and efficient access to domestic and export markets.

The Regional Deal recognises that these pieces are connected. For clients across sectors, that creates opportunity, but it also creates risk. A strong commercial idea can still fail if road access, workforce accommodation, zoning, funding, consents, customer demand or long term contracts do not line up.

What businesses should be doing now

The Regional Deal is designed to support GDP growth, unlock capacity for land development, enable housing growth, create jobs and provide additional industrial land. These are not abstract policy goals. They are commercial signals.

For businesses, projects and landowners, readiness is a competitive advantage. That may mean reviewing governance, succession planning, commercial structures, funding pathways, infrastructure arrangements, contracting strategy, landowner agreements and engagement with project partners.

Regional Spatial Planning (part of the Government’s resource management reform) will provide strategic direction to manage the planning changes required over a 30 year horizon.

A broader and more inclusive growth story

The Regional Deal also recognises that growth must be broader than roads, buildings and balance sheets.

It includes commitments around economic diversification and unlocking opportunities within the Māori economy, including social procurement, papakāinga housing, land leasing and public infrastructure opportunities.

Those commitments recognise the important role tāngata whenua and Māori enterprises already play in the Bay of Plenty economy. They also point to a practical reality: meaningful outcomes will require partnership, commercial discipline and structures that allow opportunities to be delivered, not just discussed.

Looking ahead

The Regional Deal should be viewed in context with the sectors already shaping the Bay of Plenty's growth story. Horticulture is one example. In our recent article on proposed plant variety rights reforms, we discussed how the sector shows innovation, commercialisation and export ambition can position the region on a world stage.

The Regional Deal starts the plan for ensuring that the infrastructure, investment settings and legal foundations are in place to support that ambition at scale.

Businesses should not wait until projects are shovel ready before testing whether their ownership structures, funding arrangements, land use plans, contracts and governance settings are fit for what comes next.

The Bay of Plenty's next chapter is already being written. Those who understand where growth will be directed and put the right legal and commercial foundations in place will be best placed to help shape it, rather than simply respond to it.

CLM has worked alongside Bay of Plenty businesses for generations. If you are considering how the Regional Deal may affect your land, business, investment plans or growth opportunities, we'd be happy to talk with you.