



Ministry for the  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mo Te Taiao*

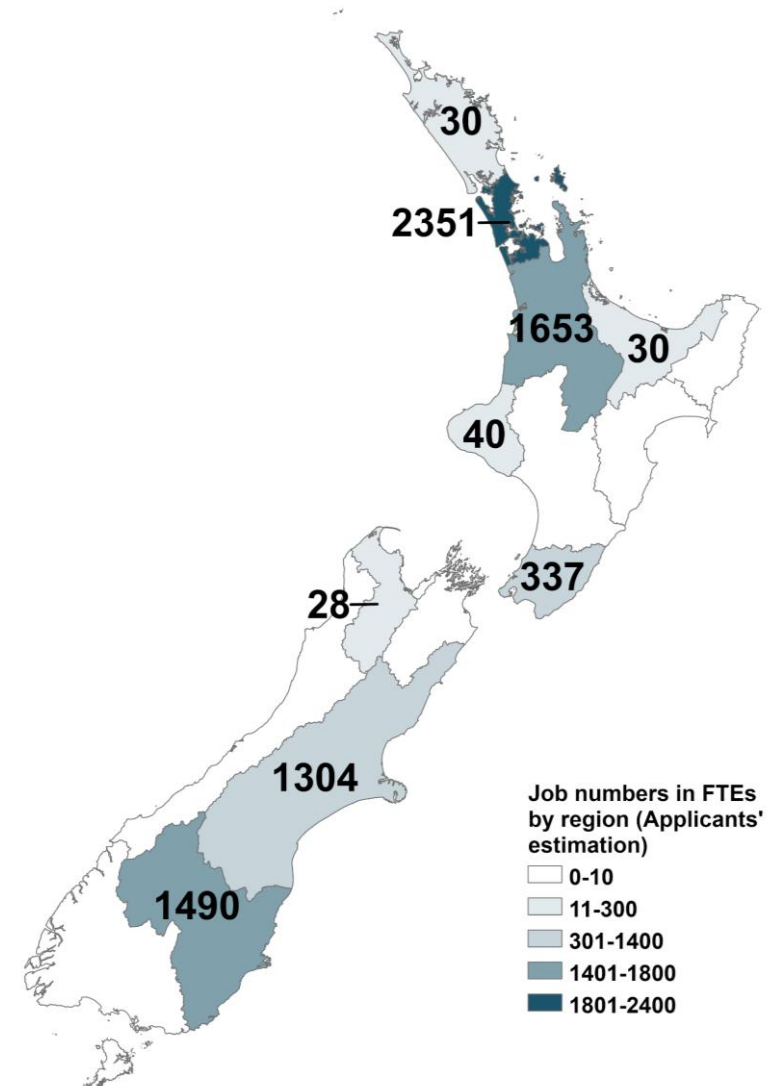
# Fast-track consenting: Annual Report 2020/2021

under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020

# Purpose: to promote employment

Part of the purpose of the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 (Act) is to urgently **promote employment** to support New Zealand's recovery from the economic and social impacts of COVID-19.

Within the first year, projects eligible to proceed under the fast-track process have the potential to create approximately 3,507 direct full-time equivalent jobs (FTE)



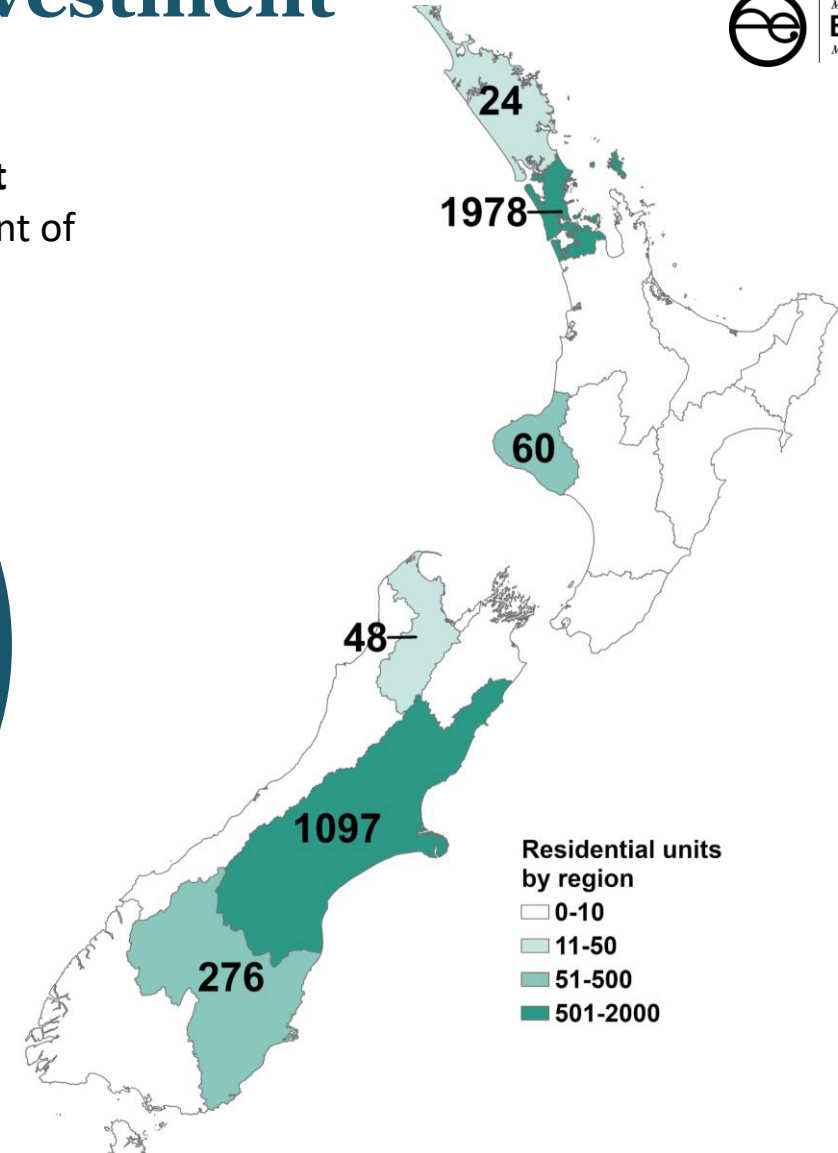
Full-time equivalent jobs distribution by New Zealand region

# Purpose: to support certainty of investment

The purpose of the Act is also to support the **certainty of ongoing investment** across New Zealand, while continuing to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

Applicants advise that using the fast-track process saves an average of 14.7 months per project

The referred projects have the potential to increase the housing supply in high-growth areas across the country, with a range of densities and typologies



Residential units by New Zealand region

# Application numbers

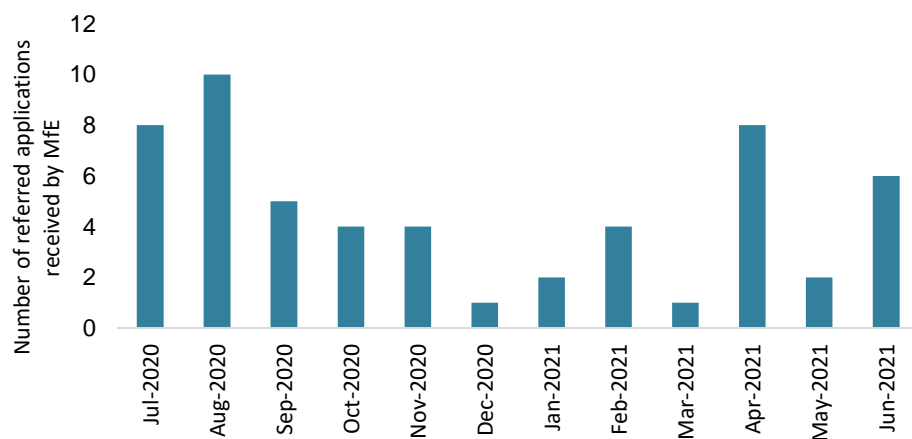
## Listed and referred application numbers

17 projects were listed in schedule 2 of the Act and could apply for their consents directly.

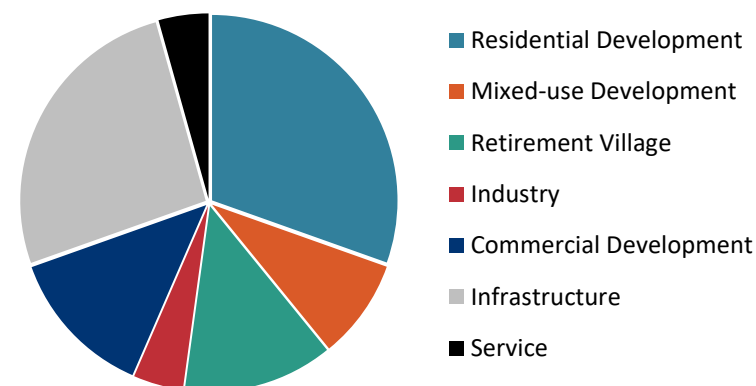
8 listed projects have used the fast-track process so far.

56 referred projects were lodged with MfE in the first year, 23 of which were referred by the Minister(s) for consideration by an expert consenting panel.

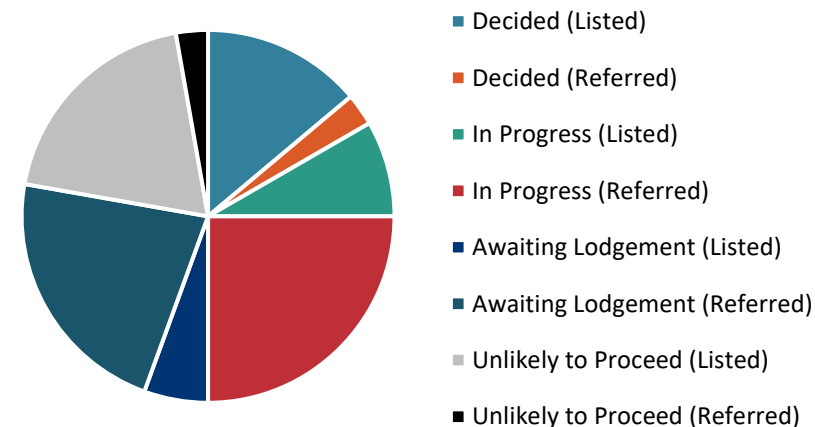
## Referred applications received by MfE each month



## Referred projects by sector



## Referred and listed project status



# Public benefits from projects

## Direct benefit to Māori

- enhanced/new purpose-built facilities
- increased construction and ongoing employment
- new infrastructure to facilitate new opportunities

## Delivering infrastructure:

- enabling urban development
- adding additional resilience to networks

## Protecting historical heritage:

- some projects retaining and enhancing heritage buildings and sites



## Increasing resilience to natural hazards through:

- smart project locations and design

## Improved environmental outcomes

- removing contamination
- enhancing water bodies and wetlands
- increasing biodiversity, enhancing air-quality, and minimising waste

## Well-functioning urban environments

- delivering high density housing near transport nodes
- social and community hubs
- open space networks

## Climate change mitigation and transition to a low-emissions economy

- public infrastructure projects
- increased urban density
- construction and development design

# Lessons learnt

## **Fast-track consenting increases the certainty of projects progressing, with:**

- targeted timeframes and information requirements
- consideration and determination by an expert consenting panel on measures to offset or compensate any actual and potential effects on the environment.

## **Projects are progressed faster than a standard RMA consenting process:**

- applicants have quantified the time period saved and acknowledge the significant advantage, and
- certainty of projects being delivered sooner as there is limited appeal process.

## **The process is iterative with:**

- reduced information requirements at the ‘front end’
- better targeting of additional information requests
- more appropriate scaling of information required to align with the scale of the proposed activity.

## **Restricted and targeted consultation:**

- those parties from whom it is appropriate to receive comments are preselected
- consideration of comments received for both referral and consents is thorough and informs considerations
- limiting wider consultation allows for more efficiency in the system.

## **Engagement with relevant partners and stakeholders:**

- as with all projects, the fast-track process has highlighted the need for applicants to engage with iwi, community, stakeholders and technical advisers
- early engagement with iwi is encouraged in the initial phases of design, well before the application is lodged for a project to be referred or a consent is applied for.





# Case study 1: a listed project

## Waitohi Picton ferry precinct redevelopment

This Project was listed in Schedule 2 of the Act, so could already lodge a consent application with the EPA. The redevelopment of the Picton Ferry Precinct included applications from three applicants.

The proposed development includes work within sensitive environments such as Picton Harbour, Waitohi Awa and the adjacent Coastal Marine Area (CMA), which is home to a number of at-risk/declining indigenous species.

Several information requests were issued from the expert consenting Panel to the applicants and local authority, relating to dredging activities, storage of dredged materials, and effects on indigenous avifauna. Works within the CMA triggered the “*avoid*” policies under the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS).

The Panel had limited discretion to decline the application, with the applications’ consistency with the NZCPS being a major factor. The Panel granted the consents with conditions on 6 May 2021, apart from the ability to store dredging spoil on two sites. The Panel concluded resource consent had not been sought for the use of these two sites.

Despite their limited discretion to decline, the Panel assessed the Project’s effects and evaluated them against the relevant planning framework including the purpose of the Act, in the same manner as it would under the RMA.

The applicant has stated that granting the application has the potential to deliver at least 200 FTE direct and at least 100 FTE indirect jobs.



# Case study 2: a referred project

## Ryman Healthcare, Kohimarama Retirement Village, Auckland

The Kohimarama Retirement Village aims to build 123 independent apartments and 173 care beds including hospital care and specialist dementia care. The applicant has stated that granting the application has the potential to deliver at least 300 FTE direct jobs in the construction period and at least 150 full and part-time operational jobs in the post-construction period.

The applicant estimates that following the Fast-track consenting process will enable them to start 12-18 months ahead of an equivalent RMA process. The proposed development infringed building height in relation to boundary standards. An application to Auckland Council was previously notified.

The Minister for the Environment (Minister) approved the application based on the potential job and housing supply opportunities but allowed all previously notified parties to continue to participate in the process.

An expert consenting Panel considered the application and issued its decision in May 2021. The Panel granted consent to the development with conditions, including reducing the height of two of the buildings to satisfactorily mitigate height and shading effects on neighbouring properties. Although the Minister had referred the application, the Panel was also required to carry out its own assessment against the purpose of the Act.

The Panel assessed the Project's effects in the same way as it would under the RMA and evaluated those effects against the relevant planning framework, noting that it had a wide discretion to decline the application. The Panel concluded that reducing the height of the two most visually dominant buildings resulted in a consentable proposal that was consistent with Part 2 of the RMA.







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New Zealand Government