

# West Coast Local Government Reform

## Councillor update on process and community discussions

As at 24 June 2026

**Purpose: update elected members on what Government has directed, where the West Coast process is up to, and what we are hearing from the first phase of community feedback.**

No final model has been agreed

Community discussions are a starting point



# Where we are now

All four councils have resolved to participate and work collaboratively

## 4 June milestone

All four West Coast councils have formally resolved to participate in Head Start and work collaboratively toward an outline proposal.

## Project governance

The project is reporting through MCIF, with support from the MCIF Leadership Group, CEs, a Working Group and the Project Lead.

## August deadline

The Government's deadline for outline proposals is 9 August 2026. This is a high-level proposal, not a final reorganisation decision.

## Independence

Media releases and public messaging are led by the Project Lead as spokesperson, supported by council comms leads for approvals.

*Key message: this is a controlled regional process with formal council decision points before any outline proposal is submitted.*

# Government direction and what Head Start means

A locally shaped response, within Government parameters

1

## Head Start is

A pathway to put forward a credible West Coast outline proposal for detailed design.

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## Government direction

Fewer, larger unitary-style arrangements that bring district and regional functions together in some form.

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## Proposal due

9 August 2026. The proposal needs to show a credible reform pathway and where further work is required.

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## Head Start is not

A blank page, a final model, or formal consultation on a preferred option.

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## Backstop risk

Without an accepted outline proposal, future arrangements may be considered through a central Government-led pathway.

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## Council role

Council tables remain decision-makers on whether a proposal is submitted.

**Councillors should expect the August proposal to signpost information gaps, risks and required detailed design — not settle rating, representation, staffing or service delivery impacts.**

# West Coast project process

Governance rhythm and decision points through to 9 August

## Ongoing governance, coordination and communications

- ✓ **MCIF Leadership Group**  
Fortnightly meetings, including Deputy Mayors.
- ✓ **Project Lead / CEs**  
Weekly meetings with CEs of all four councils.
- ✓ **Working Group**  
Cross-council support for engagement, evidence, options and drafting.
- ✓ **Media updates**  
Proactive releases as required, led by Project Lead as spokesperson and supported by council comms leads for approvals.



*The next formal decision point is July / early August when each council considers whether to approve submission of the outline proposal.*

# Community discussions: what they are for

A temperature check to shape the August outline proposal

## Community discussions are...

- A temperature check and starting point for engagement.
- An opportunity to understand what communities want from reform.
- A way to test scenarios and gather feedback on what might work in a West Coast context.
- A chance to identify alternatives, local voice options and issues needing further work.

## Community discussions are not...

- Formal consultation on a preferred final model.
- Evidence that final decisions have been made.
- A complete financial, rating or representation analysis.
- The end of the conversation if the proposal is accepted by Government.

*The scenarios are discussion tools — they are designed to give communities something practical to react to.*

# Feedback snapshot

As at 24 June 2026

# 69

respondents captured in the early survey feedback summary

Early feedback only — not final findings



**Note: district/region counts are treated as feedback tags or references, not a statistically representative sample. Themes will continue to be tested through drop-ins and online feedback.**

# What we are hearing so far

## Five early cross-Coast themes

### Amalgamation has early support

Most respondents favour combining councils to reduce duplication, lower costs and create a unified regional voice.

### Rates affordability is central

Respondents are concerned about multiple rates, small rating bases and the long-term cost of local government.

### Local representation must be protected

People want wards, community boards, local boards or service centres so smaller communities retain a voice.

### Infrastructure and resilience matter

Flooding, road maintenance, climate adaptation and service reliability are recurring concerns.

### Scenario A is most popular so far

A single West Coast unitary authority is receiving the strongest early support, but often paired with local boards with real influence.

**These are early themes. The project team will continue testing them across Buller, Grey and Westland sessions before shaping the August proposal.**

# District feedback themes

Early comments by district, as at 22 June

## Buller District — 17 respondents

Support for amalgamation to reduce costs. Key concerns include Westport flooding, whether other areas would fund Buller remediation, rates affordability and consenting red tape. Some raised possible Nelson/Tasman alignment.

## Grey District — 14 respondents

Generally supportive of amalgamation. Concerns include staff psychosocial impacts during reform, duplication between regional and district councils, retention of local knowledge, local service centres and community identity.

## Westland District — 14 respondents

Frustration with council inefficiencies including consents and facilities. Support for reducing management overhead. Concern that southern Westland may have stronger ties south. Desire for community boards with influence over local spending.

*District themes should be treated as early directional feedback, not a definitive mandate.*

# What this means for the August proposal

A credible outline proposal, with gaps clearly signposted

## Likely core direction for the outline proposal

- Use the Government criteria as the organising structure.
- Present Scenario A as the most clearly aligned scenario to test further, not a final decision.
- Retain space for alternatives and design features raised by communities.
- Be clear that local voice, affordability and service access are key design requirements.

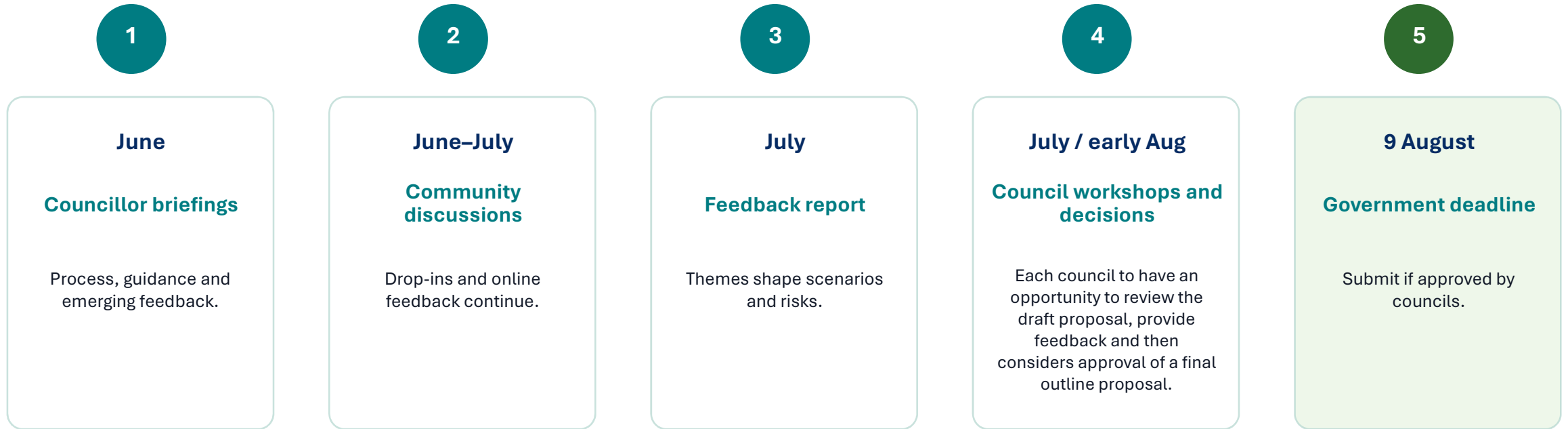
## Further work required beyond August

- Detailed financial and rating impacts
- Assets, debt, reserves and local schemes
- Representation, wards, local boards and service centres
- Poutini Ngāi Tahu partnership
- Staff, systems, transition costs and implementation support

**Councillor assurance: no final model is being confirmed in August. The outline proposal is a gateway into more detailed design if Government accepts it.**

# What councillors can expect next

Clear reporting, further analysis and formal council decisions



**The Project Lead remains available to answer questions from elected members on process, engagement, Government guidance or proposal development.**