

Waikato Affordable Energy Webinar Series

June-November 2026



**Wellbeing
Waikato**
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.
Knowledge.
Storytelling.

To View This Webinar On Line, Click on the Image Below



Wellbeing Waikato



**Wellbeing
Waikato**
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.
Knowledge.
Storytelling.

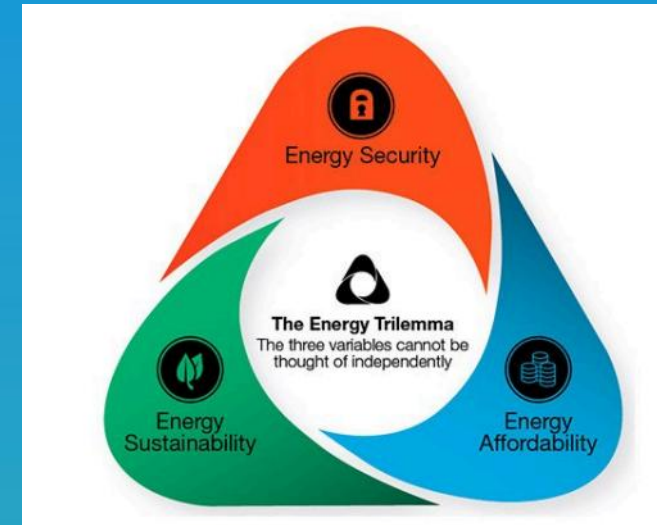
Independent Charitable Trust focused on:

- Regional intelligence about what's most important to households and whanau
- Identifying emerging opportunities and risks early
- Surfacing underlying drivers, not just symptoms
- Convening government, iwi, councils, community organisations and the private sector around decision-useful insights.



Energy systems need to be:

- Affordable
- Reliable
- Sustainable



**Wellbeing
Waikato**
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.
Knowledge.
Storytelling.

4 Big Questions

1. How does the electricity system actually work—and why is it designed this way?
2. What drives power prices, and how could they be made more affordable?
3. How does energy affordability affect household and community wellbeing?
4. What would a better system look like—and how do we get there?



**Wellbeing
Waikato**
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.
Knowledge.
Storytelling.

Energy Communities: Building Core Infrastructure for our Energy Wellbeing



Gareth Cartwright
Community Energy Network



**Wellbeing
Waikato**
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.
Knowledge.
Storytelling.



Waikato Wellbeing – Energy Communities

Building Core Infrastructure for our Energy Wellbeing

Gareth Cartwright | Community Energy Network | October 2026

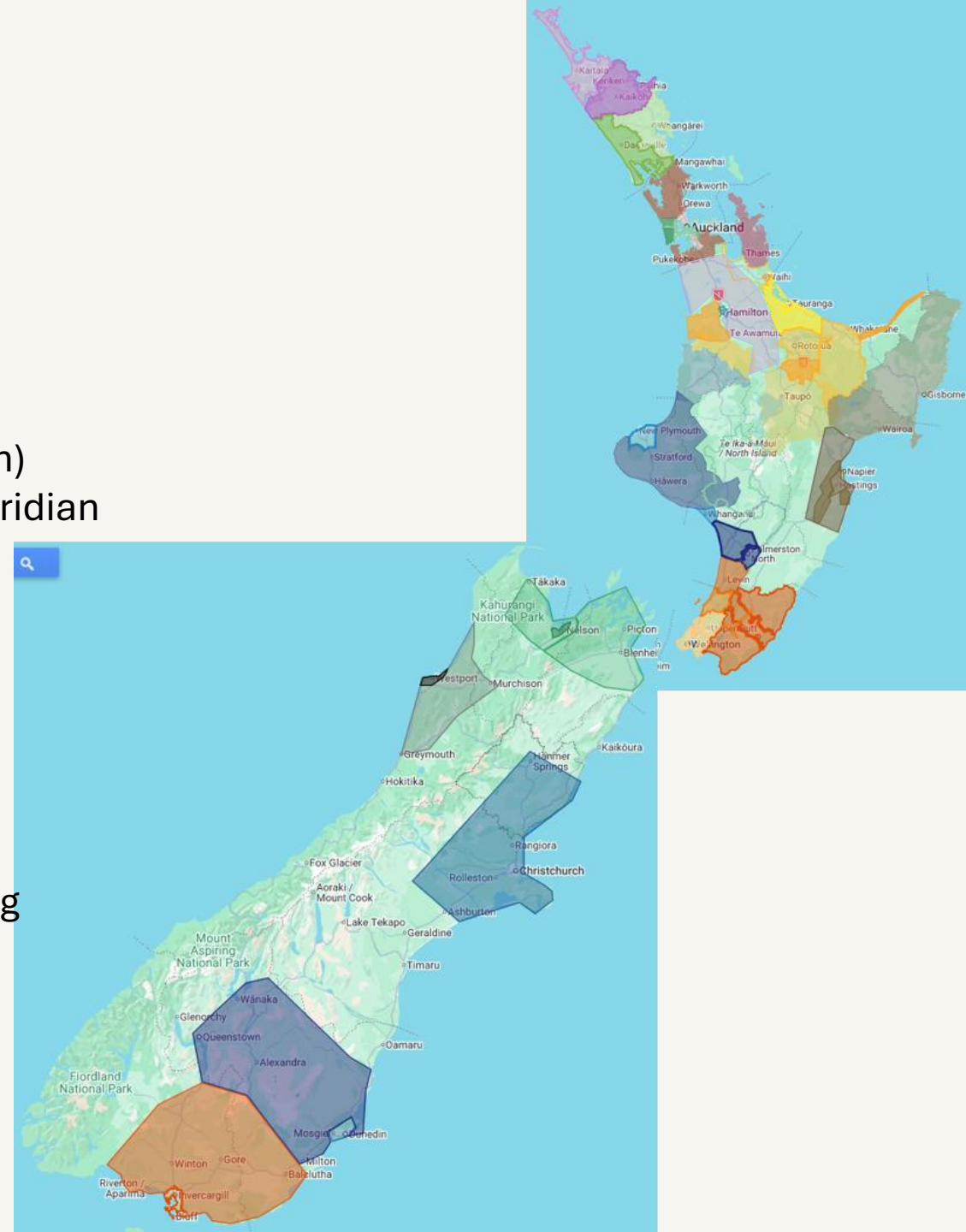
Community Energy Network

33 Members,

- 8 kaupapa Māori. 1 Pasifika (in 3 regions)
- 3 national bodies – EHA, ZWA and Rewiring Aotearoa
- 1 lines company (Orion), 1 philanthropic trust (Trust Horizon)
- 5 working in WKH, 12 in HHI, 10 with SEEC and 20 in the Meridian Energy Wellbeing Programme

Over the last 22 years:

- 300,000+ healthy home assessed
- 175,000+ home retrofits (\$3.5-4B in ROI)
- Partners on the [Home Performance Advisor Training](#)
- Energy Wellbeing programme with Meridian
- Collaboration to grow a Community Energy Sector, including two CE Activators and Navigator training workshops



Main messages

1. Parts of our energy (and therefore social/economic) system are going through massive change
2. Current/proposed policy and funding settings will not give us an equitable transition – not even close
3. We need to develop a much more robust way of negotiating the new ways of living. This is best done at the community level.

Language reflects intent

Affordability

Resilience

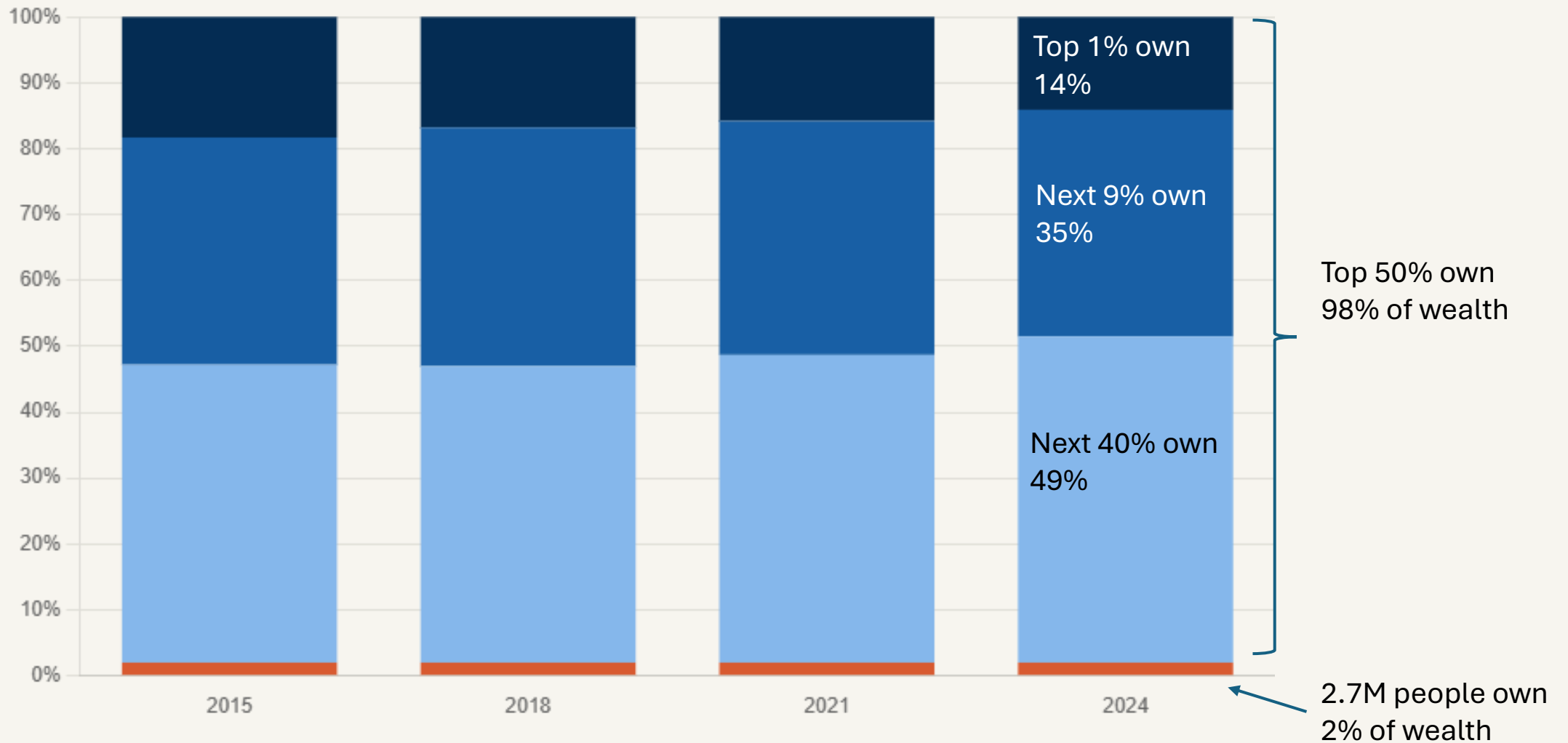
Growth

Energy Hardship/Wellbeing

Equitable transition

“Energy affordability means a household can pay for **necessary energy services** within normal spending patterns **without sacrificing basic needs, health, or safety.**” [OECD](#)

“A just, equitable and inclusive energy transition is not only a moral imperative; it **is a social, economic, environmental and geopolitical necessity. Neglecting to place people at the core** of this accelerated and scaled-up effort risks eroding the trust necessary for a stable and secure future and **jeopardizes the entire energy transition.**” [World Economic Forum](#)



Source: Stats NZ Household Net Worth Statistics (Household Economic Survey), years ended June 2015, 2018, 2021 and 2024.

“Boots Theory” = “Home and Energy Theory”

“The reason that the rich were so rich, Vimes reasoned, was because they managed to spend less money.

Take boots, for example. He earned thirty-eight dollars a month plus allowances. A really good pair of leather boots cost fifty dollars. But an affordable pair of boots, which were sort of OK for a season or two and then leaked like hell when the cardboard gave out, cost about ten dollars. Those were the kind of boots Vimes always bought, and wore until the soles were so thin that he could tell where he was in Ankh-Morpork on a foggy night by the feel of the cobbles.

But the thing was that **good boots lasted for years and years**. A man who could afford fifty dollars had a pair of boots that'd still be keeping his feet dry in ten years' time, while the poor man who could only afford cheap boots would have spent a hundred dollars on boots in the same time and **would still have wet feet.**”

1993 *Discworld* novel, *Men at Arms*, Terry Pratchett

Energy Wellbeing/Hardship

1. We tend to focus on the bottom of the cliff
2. We need to
 - Fix the homes so they are more efficient and make sure people understand how to use their home effectively.
 - Create an environment where communities can engage easily in their energy future without needing to become experts.

How we talk about the energy sector

Since 1990s energy is a 'commodity'

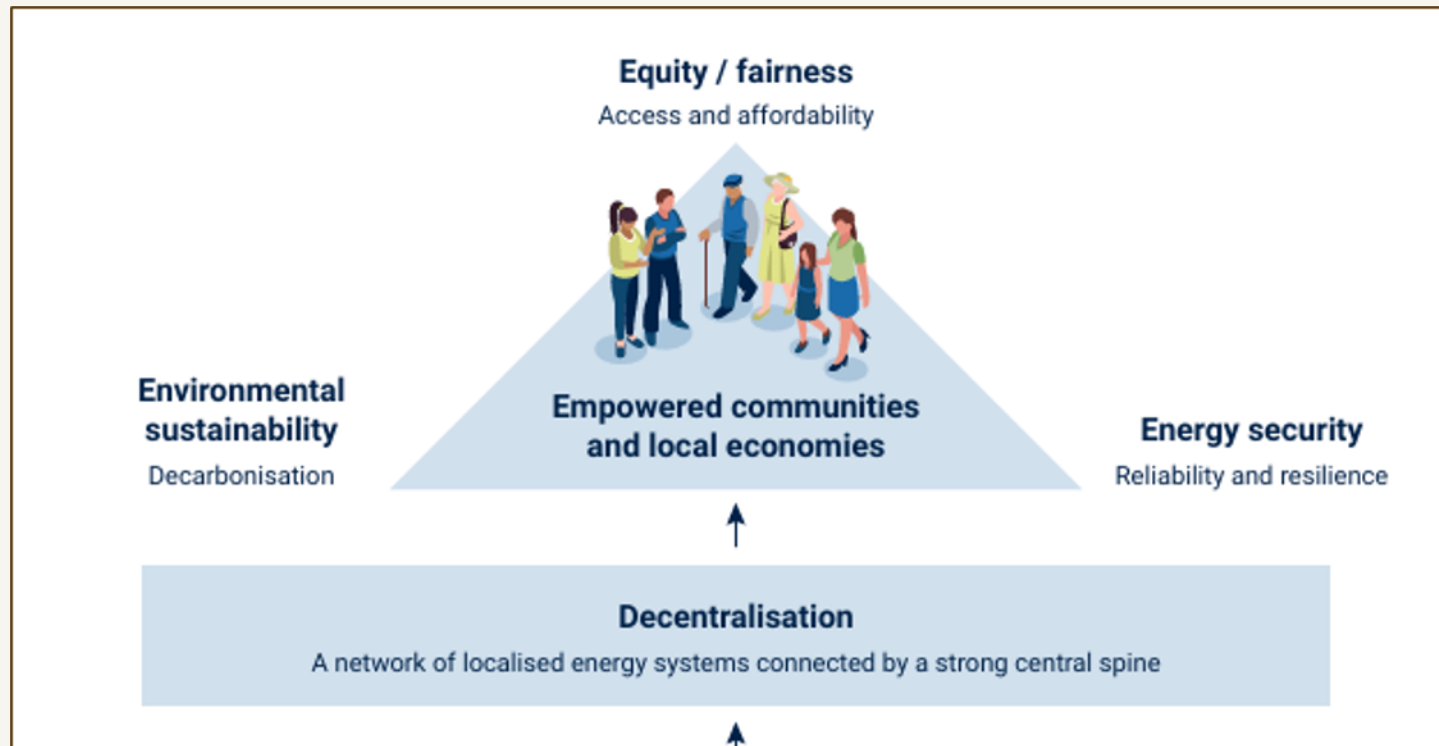
Technologically, financially and legislatively complex

We have been very poor at presenting this complexity to people

Using an equity lens, we should design the delivery of a 'basic human right' differently

Energy/Energised Communities

- Engaged – they have learnt what the opportunities could be
- Activated – they know what to do to achieve those opportunities

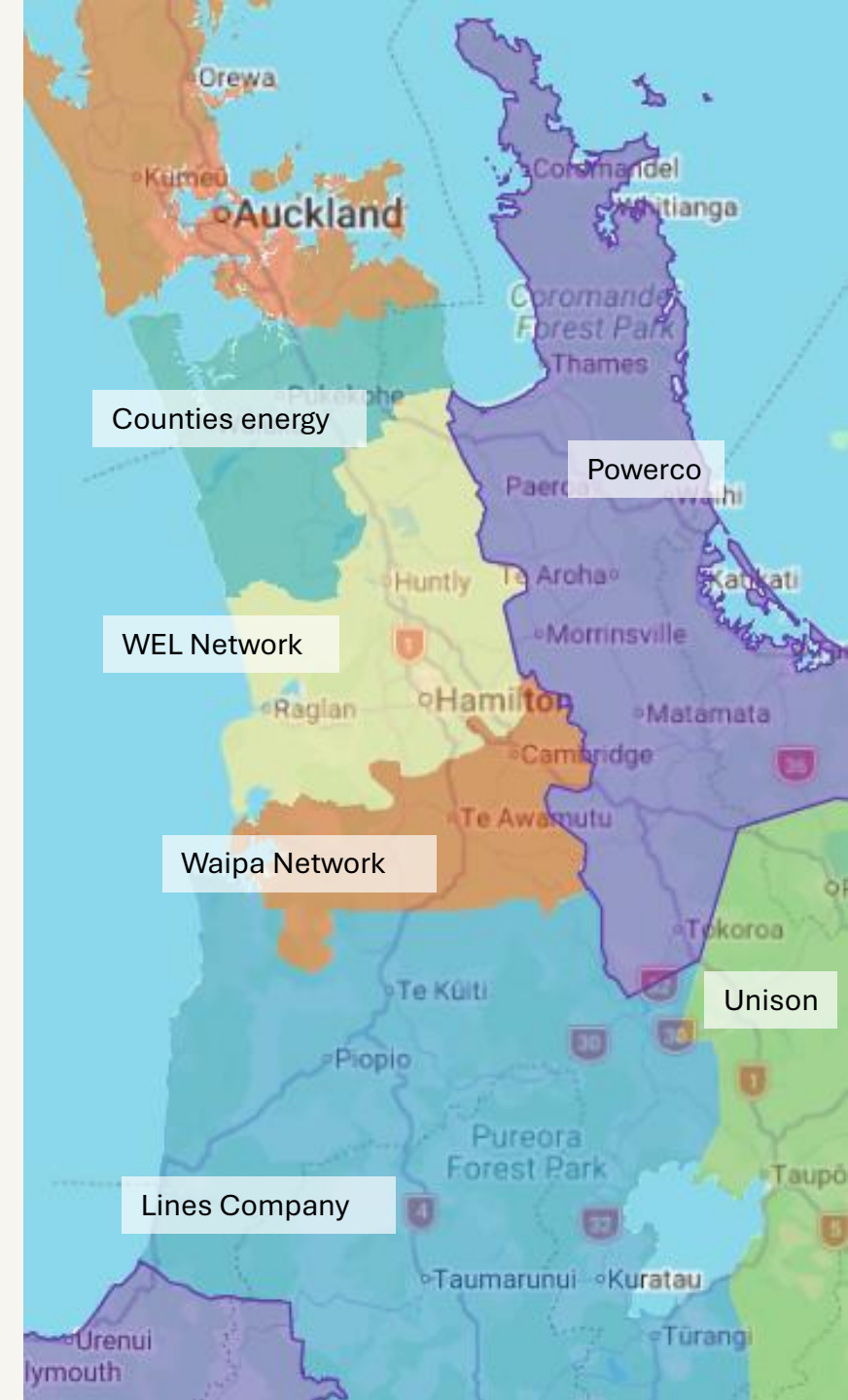


Community Energy

- EDBs, retailers and policy want to talk about the technology
- More than 'just' solar and batteries - warm healthy homes, local food, resilient transport, local economic development, Te Tiriti commitments...
- Increased social complexity means increased energy demand – with a new definition of growth it might be ok to use less energy?
- Communities need high trust partnerships not top down directives or handouts
- Introduces significant range of uncertainties

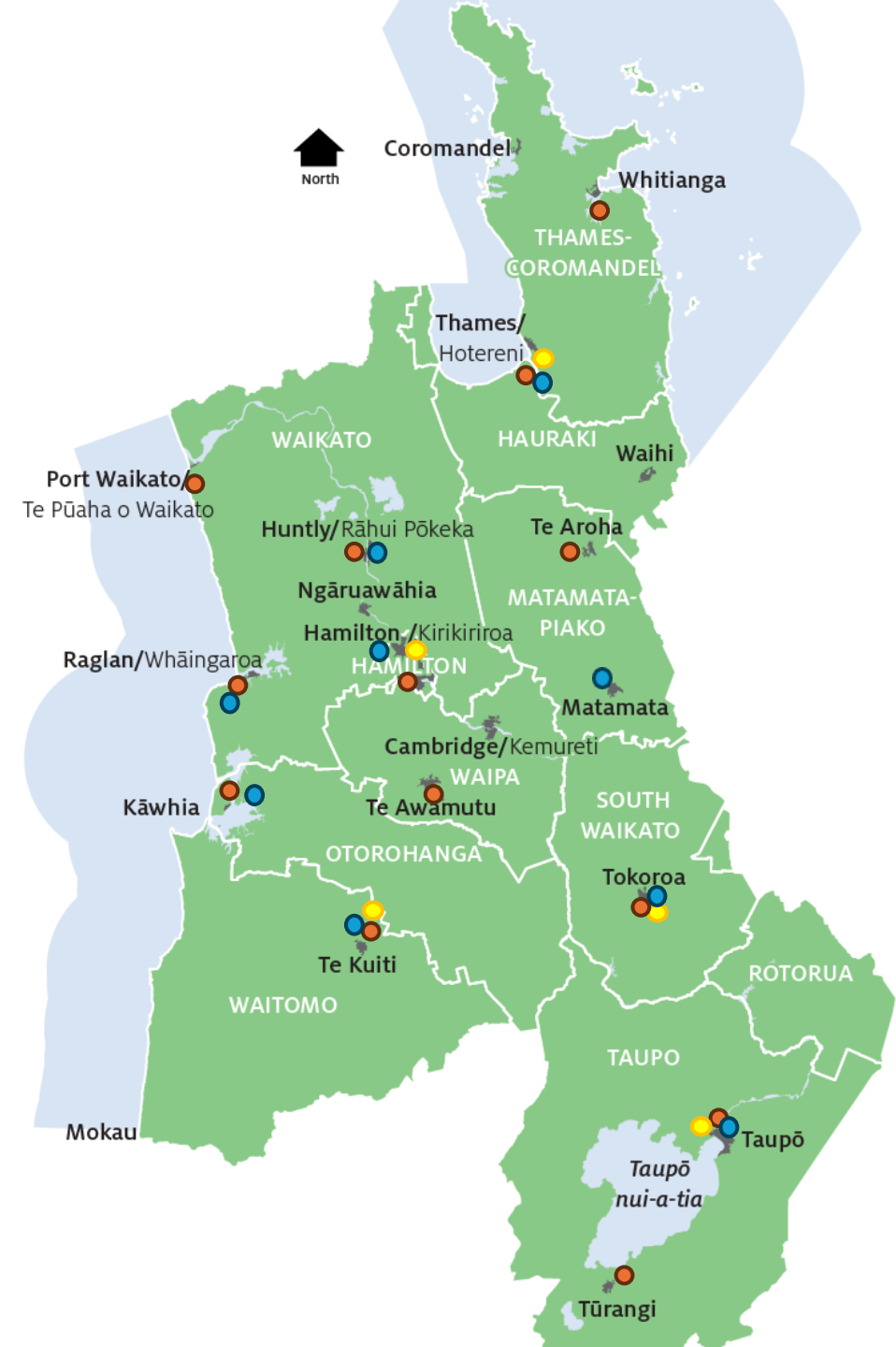
Challenges to the sector

1. We are in the transition now but haven't started the negotiations properly
2. If we ignore this issue, the transition will get increasingly messy as people get left behind or hit with large 'legacy' costs with no or little corresponding benefit



We need to start

- We need a vision and a well resourced set of actions
 - We need to be able to pivot quickly too
- Local Energy Hubs
 - Healthy homes advisors ●
 - Community energy navigators ●
 - Regional leads ●



Q&A



**Wellbeing
Waikato**
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.
Knowledge.
Storytelling.

The Affordable Energy Webinar Series

June-November 2026



Stew Hamilton
Chief Executive
Mercury Energy
21 October



**Wellbeing
Waikato**
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.
Knowledge.
Storytelling.

Upcoming Speakers:

David Wilson, Member of Parliament: New Zealand First

28 October

Blair Dickie, Principal Strategic Advisor: Waikato Regional Council

4 November

Martin Atkins, UoW Ahuora Centre for Smart Energy Systems

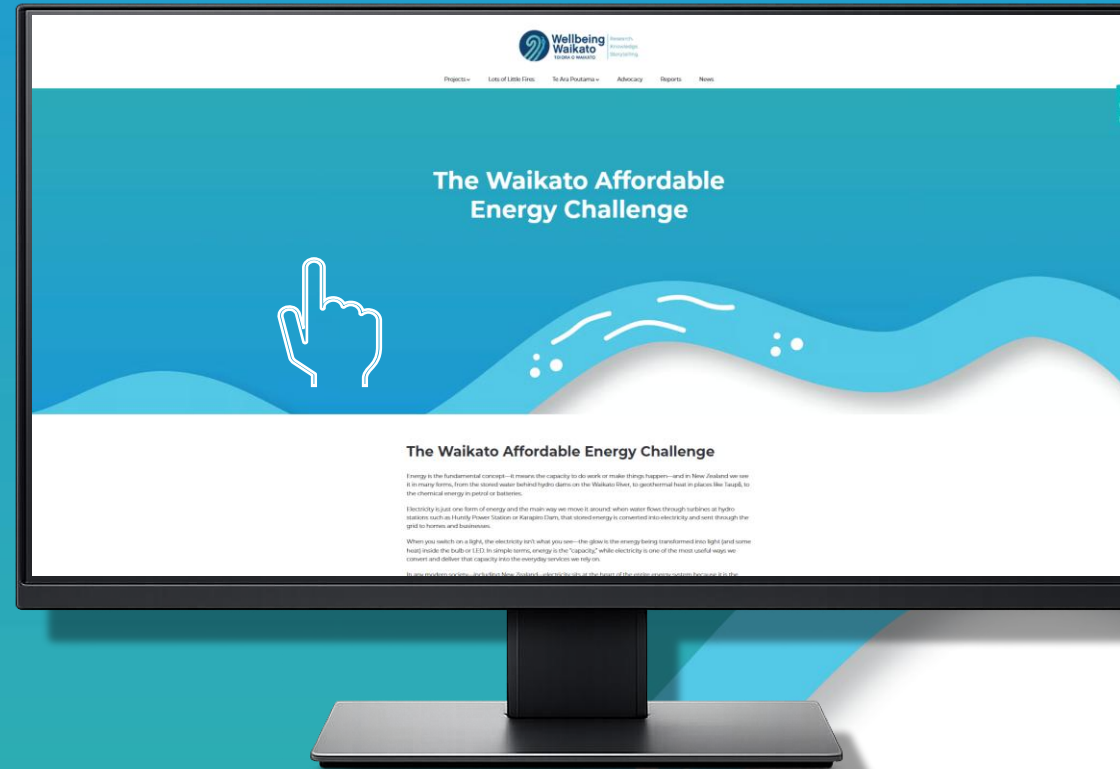
11 November



**Wellbeing
Waikato**
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.
Knowledge.
Storytelling.

Go to our Website to See all Presentations and Slides from the Series:



**Wellbeing
Waikato**
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.
Knowledge.
Storytelling.

Thank you!

www.wellbeingwaikato.org.nz

harvey@wellbeingwaikato.org.nz

021 913 418



**Wellbeing
Waikato**
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.
Knowledge.
Storytelling.