

Statement of Proposal

Local Alcohol Policy

7 October 2026

1 Context and Situation

Under the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 (the Act), Far North District Council may make a Local Alcohol Policy (LAP) for the district, or parts of the district, stating Council's policy positions regarding licensing the responsible sale and supply of alcohol while minimising alcohol-related harm.

A LAP provides guidance to the District Licensing Committee (DLC) and the Alcohol Regulatory and Licensing Authority (ARLA) for their alcohol licence application decisions.

Under section 77(1) of the Act, a LAP may only address the following licensing matters:

- Location of licensed premises by reference to broad areas
- Location of licensed premises by reference to proximity to *premises* of a particular kind(s) (e.g. existing off-licences)
- Location of licensed premises by reference to proximity to *facilities* of a particular kind(s) (e.g. sensitive facilities such as places catering for children)
- Whether further licenses should be issued for premises in the district or any stated part of the district
- Maximum trading hours
- Issuing licenses subject to discretionary conditions
- One-way door restrictions.

The Council is not permitted to cover matters in a LAP that do not relate to alcohol licensing.

The Act requires the Council to have regard to the nature and severity of alcohol-related problems in the district when designing the LAP.

In 2024 the Council conducted research into the benefits of alcohol and the problems associated with the inappropriate and excessive consumption of alcohol. Key findings of the research were as follows (data has been updated to provide the latest possible information):

Benefits of alcohol

On the one hand, the alcohol industry provides a range of positive social and economic benefits to the district including:

- support for the local economy through revenue generated by alcohol sales
- direct and indirect employment
- support for the hospitality and tourism sectors
- licensed clubs and on-licence premises (such as bars, taverns, restaurants and nightclubs) serve as social hubs where people gather to socialise, network, and celebrate special occasions
- licensed restaurants and cafés offer patrons the opportunity to enjoy alcohol with food
- off-licences such as supermarkets, groceries, and liquor stores are convenient places to purchase alcohol
- sponsorship and funding of community groups and events.

Problems and harms

On the other hand, there are serious problems and harms associated with the sale and consumption of alcohol in the Far North, including:

- from the Ministry of Health's New Zealand Health Survey 2022 to 2025:
 - 20% of Northland residents aged 15 or more were classified as hazardous drinkers

- 17% of residents were frequent binge drinkers i.e. consuming at least six standard drinks per occasion at least monthly (the Ministry believes this is likely to be under-reported)
- physical health problems – alcohol consumption is associated with over 200 health conditions. The rate of hospital admissions solely attributable to alcohol in the Far North from 2016 to 2018 placed the district in 6th worst place out of all territorial authorities. Also, the Far North had a mortality rate wholly attributable to alcohol that was roughly double the national average. From 2020 to 2024 an average of 430 alcohol-related visits per year to emergency departments of hospitals were made by Far North residents
- excessive alcohol consumption is associated with mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorders, psychosis, and suicidal thoughts and behaviours
- unsafe alcohol use can trigger social problems such as family/whanau dysfunction and domestic violence – in the Te Hiku area Whiria Te Muka reported 338 instances of family/whānau violence involving 111 calls to the Police in 2025 that were triggered by alcohol. These incidents affected 748 people, including 150 children under the age of 17
- drinking to excess can lead to abusive behaviour, violence, and public disorder - in 2025, the Police attended 981 incidents in public spaces in the Far North where alcohol was a contributing factor
- driving under the influence is more common in the Far North than nationally, with the rate of alcohol and drug-related crashes causing death or injuries being 76% higher in the Far North in 2018-2021 than in New Zealand overall
- in 2019/20, 12% of drinkers in Northland reported feeling worried or stressed about money because of their drinking
- excessive and inappropriate alcohol use has major economic impacts, including costs related to healthcare, accident compensation, and law enforcement.

On 12 December 2024, in response to the research findings, the Council decided to develop a LAP for the District.

In May/June 2025, the Council surveyed the Far North public to understand community preferences regarding provisions that could be included in a LAP.

From mid-2025 to mid-2026, Council staff worked on the design of a draft LAP with the support of a Working Group including the Police, the Medical Officer of Health, and Alcohol Licensing Inspectorate.

On 9 September 2026, the Te Kūkupa Committee for Strategy, Policy and Regulation approved this Statement of Proposal for formal consultation with the community.

2 Proposal

The Council proposes to adopt a LAP for the Far North District. A link to the Draft LAP is included in section six of this document. In summary, the Draft LAP includes the following proposed provisions:

1) Maximum trading hours for licensed premises

Proposed maximum hours that licensed premises in the district can sell alcohol are as follows:

Type of Licensed Premises	Maximum Trading Hours
Off-licences e.g. bottle stores, groceries and supermarkets	7.00am to 9.00pm, on days permitted by the Act
On-licences e.g. bars, taverns, restaurants, and cafés, except those exempt under the Act	8.00am to 1.00am the following day, on days permitted by the Act
Licensed Clubs	
Licensed Clubs on ANZAC Day (except RSA NZ clubs that are legally allowed to sell alcohol from 4am on ANZAC Day)	5.00am start of trading
Special licences e.g. for events	On a case-by-case basis

These hours will apply from Monday to Sunday, district wide. Overall, these hours are the same as current maximum hours for licenced premises across the district. However, off-licences will be required to stop selling alcohol at 9pm, one hour earlier than the latest hour currently permitted. This change will help address the level of alcohol-related harm occurring in the late evening/early morning in the district such as road crashes/fatalities and admissions to emergency departments of hospitals. This will affect 23 off licences

currently permitted to stop selling alcohol after 9pm, however only 3 currently advertise they stay open after 9pm.

2) Restrictions on granting further Off-Licences (such as bottle stores, groceries and supermarkets) in the district

The Draft LAP includes a general rule that new off-licences will not be approved, unless an applicant can demonstrate good reasons why the application should be granted. This is proposed because off-licences account for most alcohol sold in New Zealand, alcohol bought from off-licences is consumed in unregulated settings, and off-licence density in the Far North is much higher than the national average. This approach also reflects community feedback, with less than 10% of survey respondents wanting more off-licence premises in the district – only 3% wanted more bottle stores, while only 4% wanted more grocery stores selling alcohol.

3) Discretionary conditions for Off-licences (that the DLC may apply on a case-by-case basis) include:

i) The option to not approve (or apply special conditions to) applications for new off-licence premises located within 100 metres of places catering for children, alcohol and drug addiction treatment centres, marae and places of worship.

This is proposed for two reasons:

1. to reduce exposure to alcohol for vulnerable groups, particularly young people, and to reduce temptation for people using alcohol or drug treatment services. Very strong support for this option was recorded in the public survey with 85% supporting protecting places catering for children and 83% supporting protecting alcohol and drug addiction treatment centres.
2. out of respect and to protect places of worship and marae. In the public survey 64% supported no new alcohol outlets near marae and 48% supported no new alcohol outlets near places of worship.

ii) Not allowing the sale of single-units of some types of alcoholic beverages that were packaged as multiple-unit packs

Single-unit sales can make alcohol cheaper and easier to buy for immediate consumption. For instance, bottle stores have been recorded breaking down multi-packs and selling beer bottles for as little as \$2 per bottle. Restrictions are proposed because these sales may encourage impulse purchases and excessive drinking, particularly by young people, heavy drinkers, and people dependent on alcohol.

iii) Prohibiting the purchase of alcohol using Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) contracts

This condition is proposed because Buy Now Pay Later arrangements can encourage impulse purchases, higher spending on alcohol, and escalating debt, particularly for vulnerable consumers. This condition received very strong support in the public survey with 84% of respondents in favour.

iv) Limiting alcohol advertising on the exterior of alcohol outlets

Applying limits to alcohol advertising e.g. on bottle stores is proposed because young people are susceptible to alcohol advertising and excessive alcohol advertising can affect the appearance and amenity of town centres and neighbourhoods. Around two-thirds (63%) of public survey respondents were in favour of this option.

v) Crime prevention/surveillance, and social responsibility requirements

These conditions are proposed to support safer premises. They may include measures such as CCTV, lighting, incident registers, and staff practices that help prevent intoxication, protect minors, and reduce alcohol-related disorder.

4) Discretionary conditions for On-Licences and Licensed Clubs include:

i) The option to decline applications for new taverns, pubs, nightclubs, and Class 1 restaurants located close to licensed premises of the same type e.g. a new tavern close to an existing tavern. This Option does not apply to Licensed Clubs.

This option is proposed to help manage the density of higher-risk on-licence premises in local areas. Research shows that having more on-licences close together is associated with higher levels of alcohol-related harm, including excessive drinking, crime, anti-social behaviour, traffic accidents, and reduced neighbourhood amenity.

ii) Supervised areas for minors

These conditions are proposed to reduce under-age drinking and limit young people's exposure to alcohol-related harm in licensed premises.

iii) The option to not approve (or apply special conditions to) applications for new taverns, pubs, nightclubs, and Class 1 restaurants located within 100 metres of places catering for children, alcohol and drug addiction treatment centres, marae and places of worship

Reasons for this option are similar to those applying for off-licences (described above).

iv) Setting maximum patron numbers

This helps manage crowding, reduce the risk of disorder, and support safer operation of premises.

v) Applying one-way door restrictions where alcohol-related disorder has been reported near a premises

One-way door restrictions are proposed as a targeted tool for managing late-night alcohol-related disorder in locations where this has been reported. These restrictions can help reduce movement between premises and patrons congregating in public places late at night. In the survey of the public 76% were in favour of this option.

vi) Noise control and management of outdoor areas

These conditions are proposed to reduce adverse effects on neighbours and nearby communities, especially where licensed premises operate late at night or use outdoor areas. Over three-quarters (77%) of public survey respondents approved these measures.

vii) Crime prevention/surveillance, and host responsibility practices.

These conditions are intended to support safer drinking environments and responsible service of alcohol. Licence conditions may relate to security, CCTV, incident registers, staff training, limits on high-risk drink service, food and low/non-alcohol options, and transport information.

5) Discretionary conditions for Special Licences

These conditions are proposed because special licences are required for temporary events that can vary significantly in size, location, duration, and risk. Case-by-case conditions allow the DLC to manage event-specific risks, including intoxication, under-age drinking, unruly crowd behaviour, drink-driving, and alcohol-related disorder.

3 Reasons for the proposal

The Council plans to adopt a LAP to encourage the responsible sale and supply of alcohol while minimising alcohol-related harm in the District. This proposal seeks views from the community on the draft LAP.

4 Analysis of reasonably practicable options

The Council considered two options:

1. to develop a LAP for the District
2. not to develop a LAP.

The advantages and disadvantages of these options are summarised in the following table:

Options	Advantages	Disadvantages
1) Develop a LAP for the district	Public health, wellbeing, and safety benefits Research findings indicate a reasonable likelihood that policies in a LAP will reduce alcohol-related harm in the district. Protection of vulnerable groups LAP provisions regarding licensed premises close to schools, playgrounds and medical facilities could help protect vulnerable groups from alcohol-related harm. Support from key stakeholders The Police, the Medical Officer of Health, the DLC, and the Alcohol Licensing Inspectorate support making a LAP. Clarity of policy direction A LAP will clearly express Council's stance on alcohol licensing. Community input A LAP will ensure alcohol licensing decisions reflect community preferences. Greater consistency in licensing decisions The DLC will have a point of reference for all licensing decisions which it must have regard to Potential cost savings Having a LAP may lead to a decrease in the number of objections made against individual licence applications meaning fewer costly hearings.	Some adverse impact on alcohol outlets Some licensed businesses may be adversely affected by possible LAP provisions such as reduced trading hours. Resource commitment Developing a LAP is resource intensive, with extensive engagement required with the community and significant staff time involved in drafting the LAP and analysing submissions. Reviewing a LAP at least every six years will involve one-off costs and require significant staff resource from Council teams.
2) Do not develop a LAP for the district	Licensed premises will not be adversely affected by LAP provisions For example, provisions in a LAP applying to trading hours would not apply. Further Council resources will not be required The resources required to continue developing the LAP and reviewing it at least every six years will not be required.	Failure to address public health, wellbeing, and safety issues in the community The opportunity will be lost to introduce policy guidelines to reduce the level of alcohol-related harm in the district. Community input The Council will not benefit from the community's feedback into addressing alcohol-related harm. Missed opportunity to protect vulnerable groups LAP provisions regarding the location of licensed premises in relation to sensitive facilities will not be in place. Lack of policy direction The DLC will not benefit from policy advice from the Council regarding its decisions. Potential inconsistency in licensing decisions The DLC will lack a key point of reference for its licensing decisions. Potential cost savings will not occur Cost savings through fewer licensing objections and hearings will not occur.

The Council resolved that Option One, developing a LAP, is the preferred Option, for the following main reasons:

- there are extensive problems and harms associated with the inappropriate consumption of alcohol in the district, and there is a reasonable likelihood that a LAP could address these issues
- developing a LAP will enable alcohol licensing decisions to reflect community preferences
- a LAP will lead to clarity of policy direction from the Council and greater consistency in licensing decisions by the DLC
- a LAP can potentially lead to cost savings through a decrease in the number of objections made against individual licence applications and fewer costly hearings.

5 How to give your views on the proposal

The Council encourages any person or organisation affected by, or having an interest in, the proposed Local Alcohol Policy to present their views to the Council by making a submission using any of the following methods:

- online at the Council's website www.fndc.govt.nz/have-your-say
- email your submission to submissions@fndc.govt.nz
- drop-off your submission at any Council service centre or library. Details of their locations and opening times are available at www.fndc.govt.nz/contact or by phoning the Council on 0800 920 029
- post your submission to: Policy and Bylaws Team, Far North District Council, Private Bag 752, Kaikohe 0440
- make an oral presentation to the Te Kūkupa Committee for Strategy, Policy and Regulation either in person or virtually.

Written submissions are open from 12 October to 15 November 2026, with oral submissions heard in early December.

You can download a hard copy of the submission form [here](#) or ask a Council Service Centre to print a copy for you.

Please include your full name and email address or postal address in your submission if you want:

- the Council to acknowledge receipt of your submission
- to make an oral presentation – you will be contacted about when and where this will take place.

Privacy statement

Please be aware that any submissions made on the proposed Policy become part of the public consultation process. As such, all submissions, any summaries of submissions, and any documents provided with your submission, will be copied and made available to the Council's governing body as well as the public. Any personal information included with your submission such as your name is treated as part of the submission and may also be released publicly. Your submission and any personal information that you supply such as your name will not be treated as confidential unless you specifically request this in your submission.

6 Draft Local Alcohol Policy

The draft Policy can be found [here](#).

7 Implementation and Review

The LAP will come into force when it is formally adopted by the Council (likely in early 2027) and will then be publicly notified.

The provisions of the LAP regarding maximum trading hours of licensed premises and one-way door restrictions will come into force three months after public notification. All other conditions will apply upon the grant, variation, or renewal of a licence.

The LAP will be monitored by the Council.

The LAP must be reviewed no later than 6 years after it is adopted. It may also be reviewed in response to issues that may arise, at the request of the Council, or in response to changes to legislative or statutory requirements.

Amending the LAP following a review will be subject to public consultation.