

# Case of Hino County: partnership to solve regional challenges

**Tottori Prefecture Hino County  
Partnership Conference  
(Nichinan Town, Hino Town,  
Kofu Town and Tottori  
Prefecture)**



## Background

Hino County is situated in a mountainous area far from the prefectural government office in Tottori City, where various issues in the lives of residents and public administration have surfaced through the acceleration of population decline and aging society. In the early 2000s, when the so-called “Heisei Municipal Mergers” took place, the current three towns in Hino County (Nichinan Town, Hino Town and Kofu Town) all decided to continue to carry on independently. While the local government finances have become more limited and the needs for the public administration have become diversified, in order to deal with broad-based regional challenges including the removal of snow and harmful birds and wild life that individual towns have difficulty handling, and to run an efficient administration, the three towns in Hino County and Tottori Prefecture established the Tottori Prefecture and Hino County Partnership and Collaboration Conference (See Note 1) in July 2010, where the member bodies cooperate to deal with administrative challenges by taking advantage of their scale. Moreover, in July 2015, by utilising the Partnership Agreement (See Note 2) that has been newly established under the Local Autonomy Act, the organisation became the current Tottori Prefecture and Hino County Partnership Conference (See Note 3), which enables swifter and more flexible resolution of issues.

## Project Aims

To maintain and improve administrative services and to facilitate efficient administrative management in Hino County, as well as solve various issues common to the area to contribute to sustainable development.

## Project Outline

The member bodies implement policy collaboratively in three areas, and they have divided roles mutually for respective specific approaches.

[Areas partnership]

- (1) Ensuring a safe and secure living environment
- (2) Job creation, industrial development, and tourism policy
- (3) Regional revitalisation, and improvement of administrative functions and resident services

[Major approaches]

<Case example1> Establishment of Development of Resilient Hino County Mutual Support Agreement:

In order to ensure the safety and security of residents in the event of a disaster in Hino County, a mutual support agreement was concluded in December 2017 focusing on six areas (evacuation of residents, medical and emergency systems, safety of housing and facilities, waste disposal; snow damage; and efforts to ensure students in compulsory education have a comfortable school life even in times of disaster),

where the three towns in Hino County and the prefectural government work together to make ongoing preparations even in the absence of a disaster.

<Case example2> Damage control against harmful birds and wildlife:

The Council for Damage Control Against Harmful Birds and Wildlife was established in December 2013 in order to prevent the damage of farm products caused by birds and wildlife, and a task force was formed by the people responsible for operations in April 2014. The task force educates and provides guidance for local residents mainly with respect to intrusion prevention in order to stop damage by birds and wildlife. As soon as they are notified of any damage, they go to the site in order to identify the offending animal and their intrusion route, propose measures to prevent damage, and make a plan together with the residents which aims to establish measures against birds and wildlife in unison with the residents in the region as part of their activities.

<Case example3>

Snow removal and maintenance of roads:

As partial responsibility for services concerning snow removal and maintenance of roads controlled by the prefectural government is entrusted to the towns, the towns implement the services in coordination with repairs, weeding, and snow removal for the roads they control. Further, in order to secure the number and ability of drivers of snow removal machines in the future, the prefectural government and the three towns in Hino County considered a system in which young people can easily acquire a license for snow removal machines, and they prepared a budget to establish a subsidy programme.



Removing snow

## Strengths and Innovations

Since Tottori is relatively small in size and has the lowest population of any prefecture in Japan, and the prefectural government and municipalities have traditionally aimed to work on projects in close collaboration, they were able to make a smooth transition to the new framework.

As of July 2015, the Partnership Agreement between the prefectural government and municipalities was the first of its kind in Japan. It features a flexible and timely response to challenges common to the regions.

## Results of the Project

The existing Tottori Prefecture and Hino County Partnership and Collaboration Conference required consultations with the leadership body of the organisation when discussing a new agenda, which took as long as six months, causing a lack of organisational mobility. In May 2014, however, the Local Autonomy Act was revised, and the partner agreement system was put in place to enable timely and flexible approaches to be taken. This has led to the improvement of resident services, and has enabled the maintenance of efficient administrative management and services. The following are the achievements in each case.

<Case example 1> Conclusion of Development of Resilient Hino County Mutual Support Agreement:  
A system for considering various challenges during

normal times has been established in order to enable efficient mutual support in the event of a disaster.

<Case example 2> Damage control against harmful birds and wildlife:

The Task Force contributes to the regional revitalisation through its prompt on-site response and region-wide comprehensive guidance on intrusion prevention.

<Case example 3> Snow removal and maintenance of roads:

The municipal governments' proximity to residents allows for prompt response in the form of snow removal and maintenance even on prefectural roads. For the three years from FY2015 to FY2017, 41 people acquired driving licenses for snow removal machines.

## **Problems and Responses**

Challenges to be handled varied by municipality, and identifying challenges that required cooperation was difficult at times. Currently, identifying common challenges and discussions on necessary measures have been carried out more smoothly through dialogue.

## **Future Developments**

The major initiative for the future is to enhance cooperation in preparing for disasters on the basis of the agreement concluded in December 2017.

Further, against a backdrop of serious population decline in the region, labour shortages occur in all areas. As it is difficult to secure human resources especially in the fields of healthcare and nursing care, considering solutions within such framework is imperative.

**Reference URL\_**

<https://www.pref.tottori.lg.jp/renkeikyoyaku/>

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**Definitions of Technical Terms etc.**

(Note 1) “Tottori Prefecture and Hino County Partnership and Collaboration Conference”

A conference under Article 252-2-2 of the Local Autonomy Act. It can be established to streamline administrative execution by handling official work collectively in a comprehensive and planned manner in cases where a larger living area is divided among multiple local governments and in other situations.

(Note 2) “Partnership Agreement”

Prescribes basic policies and division of roles when one local government handles official work in collaboration with another under Article 252-2 of the Local Autonomy Act. Often agreed between municipalities in disadvantaged areas and prefectural governments, where it is expected to be utilised appropriate to the situation in the region.

(Note 3) “Tottori Prefecture and Hino County Partnership Conference”

The name of the conference for consideration and discussion entered into by Tottori Prefecture and three towns in Hino County based on the Partnership Agreement (See Note 2) under the Local Autonomy Act.