

Environmental Reference Group Meeting
11 June 2007
Committee Room One, Wellington City Council
Minutes

Present:

Councillor Celia Wade-Brown (Chair)
Ralph Chapman
Mike Ennis
Liz Hibbs
Chris Horne
Ian Hunter
Dave Kettell
Tushara Kodikara
Ruth Paul
Ian Shearer

Apologies:

Debbie Firestone
Jennie Francke
Stephen Sargent
Murray McLea (GWRC)
Wendy Walker (WCC
Treaty Relations)

WCC Officers:

Maria Archer (Infrastructure)
Jonathan Anderson (Planning Policy)
Paul Kos (Strategy)
Kevin Reardon (Parks and Gardens)
Jim Ebenhoh (Strategy)

Other Guests:

Amanda Cox (GWRC)

Information-Sharing and Announcements

Members shared the following information:

- ECO (Environmental and Conservation Organisations of Aotearoa / New Zealand) is having a conference 30 June – 2 July at Riverside near Motueka; see www.eco.org.nz for more information.
- Mike Ennis is helping to organise an e-waste day for 29 September.
- The Botanical Society's evening meeting on 18 June at 7:30 features Dr Ian Atkinson discussing revegetation vs. restoration. The meeting is held at Victoria University's Kelburn campus, in Lecture Theatre 101 on the ground floor of the Murphy Building, which can be accessed on the west side of Kelburn Parade about 20 m down from the pedestrian overbridge.
- On 27 June at 7:30, Dr Bill Lee from Landcare Research will be giving the Cockayne Lecture on "Birds in Paradise – the role of birds in shaping NZ's terrestrial biodiversity." This will be held at Science House on Turnbull Street in Thorndon.
- Conservation Week will be 6 – 12 August.
- Otari-Wilton's Bush is having its next Open Day on Saturday, 11 August.
- Tushara Kodikara is helping to organise a Climate Day of Action for 8 December; contact him if you want more information or can help.

Water Conservation

Amanda Cox from Greater Wellington Regional Council gave a presentation on water conservation. She said that GWRC wants to target the 40% of people who are 'self-aware wasters' and that the focus is on reducing peak use in the summer months. She says that the annual trend in water use for the region has been upward due to population growth, while per capita use has been declining. Amanda said GWRC is working with four cities in the region (Hutt, Upper Hutt, Porirua and Wellington) on a Wellington Water Management Plan that is considering water demand management. It will be out for consultation and decision making in 2008.

Maria Archer from Wellington City Council's Infrastructure team said that cost-benefit analysis of potential measures will need to be done. She pointed out that 20% of the water that WCC buys from GWRC is lost in WCC pipes before reaching its ultimate destination, so WCC is working to reduce that. She also highlighted that WCC's Parks and Gardens team is working to use water more efficiently, to send a good message to the community.

Q&A and comments from the group followed. Some of the comments included:

- Advertising may not be as effective as real-time meters.
- Social implications of metering include the fact that more expensive houses pay more in rates so could save more by metering than lower-value homes.
- The Building Code review should consider requiring rainwater tanks and banning private pools, as well as requiring low-flow showerheads and dual-flush toilets.
- Subdivision in Kapiti Coast needs to be curtailed.
- No dam should be built in Skull Gully, but instead weirs could be used in the Hutt River tributaries.
- Fisher and Paykel should be encouraged to make a front-loading washing machine.
- Better information is needed on the proportion of households who have low-flow shower heads and other water-saving devices.

Further comments on this issue can be sent to maria.archer@wcc.govt.nz. The draft Wellington Water Management Plan will eventually come before the Environmental Reference Group for comments.

Earthworks rules

Jonathan Anderson from the Council's Planning Policy team described work that is being done to review the Council's rules for earthworks. Consents are required through the District Plan and the Building Act. The existing bylaw is being revoked. A proposed District Plan Change will go to the Council's Strategy and Policy Committee in September. Unlike some other proposed Plan Changes, the new earthworks provisions won't apply until the Plan Change is actually approved.

Jonathan explained that goals are stability and safety, and that issues include the following:

- Flooding and vegetation protection.
- Dust and sediment.

- Maori archaeology.
- Transport of earth.
- Visual (including Visual-Coastal).

Q&A and comments followed, which included:

- Most earthworks consents are classified as “non-notified”.
- Design guides can be useful in encouraging better earthworks.
- The moving of cleanfill to and through the rural area is an issue in Makara/Ohariu Valley. Jonathan says this could be looked at in the context of the cleanfill rule and the Rural Area rules in the District Plan.

Targeting and Improving Residential Infill

Paul Kos, from the Council’s Urban Development team, described the Council’s proposed Plan Change to improve the quality of residential infill, and outlined the proposed approach to targeting infill and intensification. He explained that the proposal for targeting is to have areas of stability, areas of limited infill, and areas of change – based on the ability of various parts of the city to cope with growth. He handed out a brochure and said that a full discussion document can be found at www.wellington.govt.nz or by calling 499 4444. Comments can be sent to infill@wcc.govt.nz and are due 2 July.

Chris Horne asked whether permeable surfaces can be required for infill development. Paul responded that the open space requirements of the proposed District Plan change may result in less paved areas, and Jim said that proposed changes to the Council’s Code of Practice for Land Development also make greater allowance for the use of permeable surfaces.

Hazardous Tree Removal and Revegetation

Kevin Reardon, the Council’s Urban Forestry Manager, gave a presentation summarising the programme of removing hazardous exotic trees (including pine, macrocarpa and eucalyptus) on Council-owned land like the Town Belt, and replacing this with native replanting. He said this is a phased approach over many years and is spread throughout the city so that the visual impacts won’t be concentrated in any particular part of town. The removal of pines on the southern end of Tinakori Hill and to the west of the Berhampore Golf Course are some of the larger areas that will be cleared at any one time.

Chris Horne expressed his support for this programme.

Kevin was asked whether the Council is considering doing revegetation to qualify for the Government’s proposed Permanent Forest Sink Initiative (to absorb greenhouse gas emissions), and he replied that he is analysing the potential for Council to qualify through the regeneration of bush and scrub on former pasture in the Council-owned Outer Green Belt.

Other Issues: Biodiversity Action Plan and Climate Change

Councillor Wade-Brown said the draft Biodiversity Action Plan will be presented to the Strategy and Policy Committee at its 14 June meeting, and it can be viewed at the

Council website (www.wellington.govt.nz) under the “Have Your Say / Meetings / Strategy and Policy / 14 June” headings.

Councillor Wade-Brown and Jim also informed the group that the Strategy and Policy Committee agreed last week to a long-term aspirational vision of carbon neutrality for the Council and the community. They thanked members of the group for their earlier advice on this issue.

Report-Back to Council

Jim mentioned that the group is due to report back to the Council (probably in September) on its activities over the past year. He agreed to send around a list of headings or questions for members to respond to, to assist in this report-back. Volunteers to speak to the Council meeting and help answer questions are encouraged to let Jim know of their interest.

Next Meeting

The next meeting date was not set but will probably be in late July or early August. Councillor Gill is being approached to see if she is available to discuss the issue of how resource consent commissioners are chosen, as per an earlier request by some members.