

**Environmental Reference Group Meeting
13 August 2007
Committee Room One, Wellington City Council
Minutes**

Present:

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

Apologies:

Tushara Kodikara
Stephen Sargent
Kirsten Forsyth (GWRC)
Wendy Walker (WCC
Treaty Relations)

WCC Officers:

Jim Ebenhoh (Strategy)

Other Guests:

Councillor Gill

Information-Sharing and Announcements

Members shared information on upcoming events, including:

- Meetings of Project Kaiwharawhara, Friends of Wellington Town Belt, Wellington Botanical Society, and New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.
- NZ Coastal Policy Statement is under review.
- Waste Minimisation Bill is being drafted by Ministry for the Environment.
- Building Code review's submission period closes 28 September.
- E-Waste Day at Westpac Stadium is 29 September.
- Dave Kettell has had follow-on discussions with WCC officers on water conservation.
- Marine Bio-Blitz at the South Coast Marine Reserve is occurring in October.
- Various conferences and forums on climate change and sustainability (August – November).
- Local body elections are held 13 October.

Debbie Firestone was congratulated for receiving the Roding Innovation Award for her work at the Ministry of Transport on identifying sensitive receiving environments at risk from state highway runoff.

How inorganic waste collection days can be made more efficient was suggested as a topic for a future meeting.

Selecting Resource Consent Commissioners

Councillor Gill, Chair of the Regulatory Processes Committee, summarised the procedure and principles behind the selection of hearings commissioners. Her points included:

- The Mayor and Councillors have no say on whether a consent application is notified or non-notified; this is an officer decision.
- If an application is notified, it will be heard by a hearing committee, made up of Councillors or independent commissioners.
- Officers recommend a list of possible independent commissioners to the Chief Executive, then the Chief Executive recommends a list to the Mayor and Councillor Gill.
- Anyone can put their name forward for consideration as an independent commissioner, but they have to pay their own way through the required training.
- Councillors are not on hearing committees for applications in their ward.
- No conflict of interest is allowed (e.g. being a friend of submitters or applicants).
- All commissioners have to go through Resource Management Act accreditation approved by the Ministry for the Environment.
- There are now always an uneven number of commissioners due to the impasse with the initial Marine Education Centre decision.

Chris Horne expressed concern that, in the West Wind hearings, two of the hearings commissioners were, in his opinion, biased and not sufficiently experienced with the Resource Management Act. He also expressed concern that the AdShel (bus shelter) hearings committee included an ex-Councillor.

The link to subscribe for Web Alerts (including for resource consents) is:
<http://www.wellington.govt.nz/services/webalerts/subscribe.php>

Climate Change Update

Councillor Wade-Brown updated the group on the Councillor climate change working party, and its work on drafting a climate change action plan. Linkages to the Wellington Regional Strategy and the Regional Land Transport Strategy were discussed. Debbie Firestone asked how the Council's Sustainable Building Guidelines will be integrated with the climate change work programme, and Jim replied that the Guidelines are part of the climate change response. Dave Kettell asked how much of the Council's energy use is in buildings, and the reply was that roughly half is for buildings (including pools), with the rest being the vehicle fleet, streetlighting, and other infrastructure.

Councillor Wade-Brown asked for feedback on how engagement with the community on climate change targets and actions can occur. Suggestions included:

- Build on existing discussions such as the Sustainability Trust's pilot study on energy savings in Titahi Bay (and have the Trust speak to the Councillor climate change working party, on engagement strategies).

- Have ERG members bring in people from their existing networks.
- Use model of East Harbour CRAG (Carbon Reduction Action Group) – get them to come to the Councillor climate change working party.
- Roll out the CRAG and/or Sustainability Trust model for community action elsewhere in the community.
- Tie into Sustainable Households community-based education programme (Rhys Taylor).
- Develop a community climate action webpage.
- Use ICLEI's 9-minute DVD.
- Get Council's City Communities people involved.
- Empower local groups rather than imposing citywide formality.

Environmental Reference Group: Past and Future

The group discussed its thoughts on the way the ERG has been functioning during the past year, and how it could be improved in the future.

Members observed that the communication has been a little bit 'one-way' this past year, from officers to ERG, without as much opportunity for ERG to 'get its hands dirty' as it had with the development of the Environmental Strategy.

It was asked what Council as a whole gets from the ERG – including whether the ERG is balanced enough to be of use to the Council. Councillor Wade-Brown replied that her understanding of the value of ERG is:

- (1) To get feedback early on, to stop the Council from 'putting its foot in it'.
- (2) To get information out to the community via the ERG members' networks.

The idea of briefing the full Council on the ERG's role and recent activities, as done in May 2006, was discussed:

- Ian Hunter suggested that having an ERG member along to the briefing would be helpful.
- Ian Shearer suggested that the briefing session should occur after the elections, so new Councillors are up-to-speed with the ERG, and that this session could include all reference groups (such as the Disability Reference Group and Pacific Advisory group).
- Debbie Firestone suggested that Council's senior managers could also be briefed on the role and actions of the ERG.

Jim agreed to draft the report-back and send it to ERG members for comment, once a date for a briefing to Councillors is set after the elections.

Next Meeting

The group agreed to meet again once local body elections have occurred, possibly in December.