
PEST MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. Purpose of Report

To present the Pest Management Implementation Plan to the Committee.

2. Executive Summary

The Pest Management Plan was approved by the Built and Natural Environment Committee at its meeting of 25 May 2004, following public submissions, and subsequently adopted by Council at its meeting of 16 June 2004. The Pest Management Plan is a management document that will inform and support the Environment Strategy, one of the Council's six core strategies.

An integral part of the Pest Management Plan was the preparation of an Implementation Plan to determine operational programmes and identify resource requirements and service level options that would link to the Parks and Gardens Open Space Asset Management Plan.

The Implementation Plan sets out a 10 year operational programme to meet the objectives in the Pest Management Plan. Included is the identification and ranking of priority sites (Key Native Ecosystems) for integrated pest control, specific programmes for significant pest species, and community awareness and education programmes. The Implementation Plan includes provision for the control of amenity weeds.

The Implementation Plan (Appendix 1) sets out in detail how the Pest Management Plan policies will be implemented over the next 10 years, whilst the budget has been included in the Parks and Open Spaces Asset Management Plan for the next two years as part of the 2005/06 Draft Annual Plan out for public submission.

The Strategy and Policy Committee, in its meeting of 5 May 2005, approved a project brief for the development of an Environmental Strategy. Decisions on funding for the Pest Management Implementation Plan will be more appropriate after adoption of an Environmental Strategy later this year, so that Council can consider pest management within the context of its agreed priorities for total environmental expenditure

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*

2. *Note that the increased funding for 2005/06 and 2006/07 is included in this year's Draft Annual Plan and will be considered as part of the Annual Plan deliberations process.*
3. *Agree that any future increased levels of service after 2007/08 will be considered in the context of agreed priorities that result from the adoption of an Environmental Strategy.*
4. *Agree that the process for considering any future service level changes relating to the implementation of the Pest Management Plan would be inclusion in the Parks and Open Space Asset Management Plan and approval of funding through the LTCCP.*

4. Background

4.1 Pest Management Plan

In June 2004, the Council adopted the Pest Management Plan, following its approval by the Built and Natural Environment Committee. A period of public consultation including the hearing of submissions by the Committee was part of the approval process. The need for the Implementation Plan was highlighted in public submissions, as well as the Pest Management Plan itself.

The Pest Management Plan provides a blueprint for the city to control weeds and pest animals and a framework from which a detailed implementation plan can be prepared.

The Pest Management Plan's Vision states:

“The city is free from the adverse impacts of weeds and pest animals, allowing the maintenance, protection and restoration of a full range of the natural ecosystems that support our indigenous biodiversity.

- The ecosystems that are most ecologically valuable, and contain the greatest indigenous biodiversity, are identified and given priority in the management and control of weeds and pest animals
- All weeds and pest animals that have significant adverse effects are controlled, starting with those that have the greatest potential to cause damage
- The role of iwi as kaitiaki, or guardians, of indigenous biodiversity is recognised and valued, and local iwi are an integral part of programmes to control and manage weeds and pest animals.
- The community appreciates our indigenous biodiversity, and works in partnership with the Council to control and manage weeds and pest animals, and restore the City's natural biodiversity.”

The Pest Management Plan's rationale starts from the premise that prevention is better than cure. In the event that pests cannot be prevented, then eradicating them while they are in small numbers is the next best option. If total eradication is not possible, then eradication in specific areas and containment from further spread is the next best option. Finally, where pests are wide spread, eradicating and containing or restricting them to minimise adverse impacts is the focus.

The Council is responsible for pest control over 3,300ha of Open Space and 1200km of legal road throughout the city. Primary focus in recent years has been limited to the control of suppression pests identified in the Regional Pest Management Strategy and possum control in partnership with Greater Wellington.

The Pest Management Plan is the first comprehensive city-wide plan to address the control of the full range of weeds and pest animals in the city.

The need to control weeds and pest animals in order to protect and enhance the city's natural environment is recognised consistently throughout the Council's strategic and planning documents:

- Strategic Directions 2001
- Capital Spaces
- Wellington Wet and Wild: Bush and Streams Restoration Plan
- Sustainable Development framework,
- Annual Plan.

The Creative Wellington – Innovation Capital vision is underpinned by concepts of Sense of Place and Sustainable Growth, both of which are enhanced by a weed and pest animal free City.

In the wider context, the Pest Management Plan complements the work of the Regional Council, DOC and other agencies with land care responsibilities, as well as helping the Council to meet its responsibilities under the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy.

The Implementation Plan is included in the Parks and Gardens Asset Management Plan and provides a platform for long term operational work programmes, with further service level increases required from 2007/08 onwards.

4.2 Environmental Strategy

Council lacks an Environmental Strategy and a Biodiversity Plan, both of which will put the Pest Management Plan within a wider context of Council's activities in relation to the natural environment. Council's Strategy and Policy Committee approved in its meeting of 5 May 2005 a project brief for the development of an Environmental Strategy that will prioritise and orientate Council's current and proposed activities in relation to the natural environment, resources and waste.

Since Council earlier agreed to increased levels of funding and service for pest management in the 2005/06 and 2006/07,

2005/06 (C509 Pest Plants: +\$271,020, C510 Pest Animals: -\$8,119)
2006/07 (C509 Pest Plants: +\$358,528, C510 Pest Animals: +\$22,425)

there is no urgency in approving spending for 2007/08 onwards at this time. The draft Environmental Strategy is expected to be approved by Council in October 2005 and a final version approved as part of the 2006/07 LTCCP in the first half of 2006. While the attached Pest Management Implementation Plan could be an appropriate use of the funding, Council's decision will be better informed within the context of an approved Environmental Strategy. It may be that within the next six months Council approves a

draft Environmental Strategy that suggests pest management warrants less (or more) funding in relation to Council's other environmental activities.

In short, pest management is an important activity for Council to be involved in, but decisions on funding for 2007/08 onwards as part of future Parks & Open Space Asset Management Plans will best be made within the context of the upcoming Environmental Strategy, so that Council can make the best use of its environmental spending.

5. Discussion

5.1 Why Have an Implementation Plan

An Implementation Plan will ensure that the vision set out in the Pest Management plan becomes a reality by setting out an operational programme that can be followed by Parks and Gardens staff. It will provide guidance on priorities and key issues, creating a framework for long term management and planning.

The ten year time frame of the attached Implementation Plan allows for a balance of pest eradication and control which flows through to the Parks and Gardens' Asset Management Plan's long term planning. It also provides a clear linkage between policy and action.

Whilst Open Space is a city asset just as other infrastructure is, it has some critical differences. Open Space is made up of living systems, which are continuously changing influenced by a range of external factors. A concentrated pest control operation must be supported by ongoing control to prevent re-infestation, unlike a fixed asset which can be replaced and not require additional attention for a lengthy period.

To implement the policies in the Pest Management Plan, changes in service levels and funding will be required after 2007/08. The details of these changes are included in Appendix 2.

The **Key Native Ecosystems** contain our best examples of remnant or regenerating bush, threatened species or communities. Other areas such as the Inner Town Belt and the Outer Green Belt have significant recreational, tourist and economic values which also need to be protected from the adverse impacts of pests.

Wellington has a unique set of factors which influence pest control:

- Lengthy boundaries between open space and urban / private land
- Steep topography
- Difficult access
- Number and size of threatened plant communities
- Rapid changes in land-use and vegetation cover
- High frequency of windy days affecting wind spread weed species

Complementing the Pest Management Plan's focus on Key Native Ecosystems and service level delivery are programmes to support **Community Education and Awareness** such as assisting community group plantings, and anti garden waste dumping programmes that now form part of the wider DOC "Weedbusters" initiative.

Monitoring is required to ensure that control operations are carried out effectively and efficiently, and on a wider scale, to measure the presence or absence of weeds and consequent improvements in the state of the environment.

5.2 Risks

Pests, both pest animals and weeds, are the biggest threat to what remains of the city's biodiversity (the diverse range of indigenous plants and animals and their special communities). Failure to protect the important open space areas of the city will allow threatened species and important communities to be further degraded, with a high probability that they will be degraded beyond recovery or lost entirely over the next 10 years.

With open space areas being used more frequently for extensive recreational activities such as mountain biking, mountain running and informal walking, as well as a heightened perception of the city through the Creative Wellington – Innovation Capital campaign, there is an increased demand for the control of amenity weeds across the city. Inattention to this aspect puts at risk the positive perceptions of the city that are being fostered.

Open space is an integral part of the city's make up and structure, contributing to the unique landscape that sets Wellington apart in the eyes of visitors and residents. The Wellington Town Belt and the Outer Green Belt are icons making important contributions to the City. Controlling weeds and pest animals is critical to maintaining the quality of the experience that these areas present, affecting tourism, recreation, marketing initiatives and the ability to attract major events.

6. Conclusion

Council adopted the Pest Management Plan in June 2004. The Implementation Plan details a 10 year programme that links the policies of the Pest Management Plan to the Parks and Gardens Asset Management Plan.

Approval of funding for the Pest Management Implementation Plan after 2007/08 will be considered in future Parks and Open Space Asset Management Plans subsequent to approval of an Environmental Strategy within the next year, as per the project brief approved by the Strategy and Policy Committee on 5 May 2005. An Environmental Strategy will put the Implementation Plan within the wider context of all of Council's activities in relation to the natural environment, resources and waste.

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Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

The Implementation Plan supports Council's Open Space Strategy articulated in Capital Spaces. The Implementation Plan supports Council activities in managing areas of high biodiversity value and open space to provide a quality experience free of weeds. The Implementation Plan will contribute to the meeting of outcomes to:

- host and protect a representative range of indigenous and non-indigenous plants and animals in their natural habitats and communities (Outcome 5.1 Biodiversity)*
- value and where appropriate protect and restore the city's varied marine and land-based ecosystems (Outcome 5.2 Ecosystems)*
- recognise and where appropriate protect the features of Wellington's landscape and natural environment (Outcome 5.4 Landscape and Natural Environment)*

The Implementation Plan does, however, lack the wider context of an approved Environmental Strategy.

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

Resourcing for the Implementation Plan is contained in Opex C509, C510. The changes indicated here have been approved for 2005/06 and 2006/07 and the plan if fully funded, will lead to changes in operating expenditure for the remaining 8 years of the plan.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

There are no Treaty of Waitangi considerations as input on the Pest Management Plan was sought earlier.

4) Decision-Making

This is not a significant decision

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

Consultation with other units of Council, Department of Conservation and Greater Wellington Regional Council has been undertaken in the preparation of the Implementation Plan. Community groups and submitters on the Pest Management Plan will be involved as appropriate, in the preparation of individual site plans.

b) Consultation with Maori

Mana whenua were consulted in the preparation of the Pest Management Plan.

6) Legal Implications

There are no legal implications

7) Consistency with existing policy

The Implementation Plan is consistent with Council policy.