

SUBMISSION

**On the discussion document Sustainable Land
Management and Climate Change**

MARCH 2007

1. Introduction

Wellington City Council (the Council) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the discussion paper Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change: Options for a Plan of Action. It is also making a separate submission to the Ministry of Economic Development on the draft New Zealand Energy Strategy (NZES) and to the Ministry for the Environment on the draft New Zealand Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy (NZECS). Together, these documents are critical for the future economic, social, and environmental well-being of New Zealand.

2. Background

This suite of government documents on energy and climate change policy represents a long-awaited piece of central government policy direction, which provides a framework for local government action on the important issues of energy and climate change.

Within the existing central government policy framework, the Council has prioritised its own work on energy and climate issues. The highest three-year priority from the Council's Environmental Strategy is:

Increasing the Council's promotion of water and energy efficiency and conservation, energy security, and the use of renewable energy sources, and taking a more active leadership role in these areas.

The Environmental Strategy is one of seven strategies guiding the Council towards thirteen shared outcomes¹ as set out in the 2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP). This strategic framework supports the Council's long-term vision: to achieve global competitive advantage by positioning our city as *Creative Wellington – Innovation Capital*.

The Council is also a participant in ICLEI's Communities for Climate Protection – New Zealand (CCP-NZ) programme and has set its corporate targets as stabilising greenhouse gas emissions at 2003 levels by 2010 and reducing emissions 20% by 2020. It will be developing community emission reduction targets this year in consultation with the public.

3. Comments

3.1 General

Because of the role of local government and the impact of central government policy on local communities, the local government sector will need to be involved in discussions that lead to the required detail of policy design and implementation.

The Council supports the government's move to decrease the greenhouse gas emissions of the agriculture and forestry sectors. The Council also believes that urban development and transport networks are critical parts of sustainable land management that need to be

¹ Wellington City Council outcomes: More liveable, Stronger sense of place, More compact, More eventful, More inclusive, More actively engaged, Better connected, More sustainable, Safer, Healthier, More prosperous, More competitive, More entrepreneurial and innovative.
Wellington City Council strategies: Urban Development, Transport, Economic Development, Environmental, Cultural Well-being, Social and Recreation, Governance.

considered with respect to climate change, but the Council notes that this discussion document does not cover these topics. Central government needs to engage with local government to develop policy for urban form, structure and design that will promote a less carbon-intensive lifestyle. Regional co-operation can provide efficiencies in this regard.

3.2 Pillar 2: Reducing Emissions and Enhancing Sinks

Wellington has relatively little agricultural land use, but because of the potency of methane and nitrous oxide as greenhouse gases, the Council wishes to stay informed of any opportunities to minimise the city's contributions from this sector.

Wellington also has limited commercial forestry. The Council owns approximately 180 hectares of forest planted prior to 1990. This includes two commercial forests (Spicers Forest at 43 hectares and Clelland Forest at 23 hectares) and approximately 115 hectares of mixed exotic forest in reserve land and the Town Belt. The Council is considering options for the future use of its forest land, including recreational use. It is interested in the implications of a tradable permit system or a flat deforestation charge for this activity. Of particular relevance is the size threshold above which any such system would apply.

The Council is gradually replacing much of its exotic forest in the Town Belt with native vegetation. The Council supports the policy that any tradable permit system or deforestation charge will not apply where revegetation is the planned activity.

The Council supports the Pillar 2 options of afforestation grants or 'carbon sink credits' for new forests, as well as the Permanent Forest Sink Initiative (PFSI) that has already been proposed. Afforestation Option 2 is desirable because it would enable the Council either to apply for afforestation grants or to receive forest sink credits and associated liabilities. This would work in much the same way as the PFSI that the Council is also currently exploring for other suitable Council land areas. As a large landowner with an active revegetation programme, the Council would welcome these additional resources to contribute to the greening of Wellington.

3.3 Pillar 3: Capitalising on business opportunities

The Council supports the promotion of bioenergy from forestry crops, residues and wastes, as mentioned in Pillar 3.

4. Conclusion

Wellington City Council is generally supportive of the discussion paper *Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change: Options for a Plan of Action* and of the Government's proposed direction on energy and climate change. This direction is consistent with the Council's Environmental Strategy, which prioritises energy efficiency and conservation because of the economic benefits as well as environmental issues like climate change.

Notwithstanding this general support, there are many details yet to be resolved with respect to the further development and implementation of the proposals, and the local government sector needs to be actively involved in discussions on these details.

Option preferences have been identified and additional points specifically relevant to Wellington City Council have been raised.