
BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose of Report

This report intends to aid the decision making of Councillors in approving the final Biodiversity Action Plan. The report summarises the submissions received on the draft Biodiversity Action Plan (see *Appendix 1*), highlights key considerations falling out from these submissions (see *Appendix 2*) and the subsequent amendments to the draft plan (see *Appendix 3*).

2. Executive Summary

The Draft Biodiversity Action Plan was approved by the Strategy and Policy Committee on 14 June 2007. Following this a month long consultation period was held with the wider community. Key stakeholders had been involved in the consultation process throughout the development of the draft plan. 39 written submissions were received and 8 oral submissions were heard by the Strategy and Policy Committee on 6 September 2007. There was a high level of support for the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan (97% support for the general direction of the plan and 89% support for the objectives and actions). The interest in the Biodiversity Action Plan was diverse.

This report outlines the main issues which were raised by submitters, namely:

- The place and value of introduced biodiversity, including native weeds
- The need for measurable targets and outcomes
- Ensuring sufficient resources to implement the plan
- Concern around the term 'high biodiversity value' implying that only high biodiversity areas would be protected
- Lack of substance on coastal areas
- Importance of pest control
- Importance of protection of biodiversity on private land
- Plan needs to be part of regulatory framework

As a result of the discussion within this report and the amendments within the Biodiversity Action Plan it is recommended that the Committee adopt the Plan.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Agree to the amendments of the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan, giving full consideration to submissions.*
- 3. Agree to approve the final Biodiversity Action Plan with any minor editorial amendments to be signed off by the Environment Portfolio leader.*
- 4. Approve the five year implementation plan.*
- 5. Approve the preparation of an adjustment to the Open Spaces Asset Management Plan based on implementation of Action 2.1.3 (Control Pest Plants and Animals to acceptable levels at High Value Biodiversity Sites) for consideration during the 2008/2009 Annual Plan round.*
- 6. Note that a separate funding bid for the implementation of Protection of Biodiversity on Private Land (2.1.6, 2.4.1, 3.2.2), Restoring sites of High Biodiversity value and important Linkages (3.1.1, 3.1.3), and Community Engagement (all action points under objective 2.5) will need to be considered for the 2009/2010 to 2012 financial years.*

4. Background

On 14th June 2007 the Strategy and Policy Committee approved the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan for public comment.

Key stakeholders had been involved in the formation of this plan as part of an interagency steering group and workshop sessions. Public submissions were invited from 13 July 2007 to 10 August 2007. 39 submissions were received and eight presented their submissions in person to the Strategy and Policy Committee on 8 February 2006. Submissions strongly supported the vision, objectives and actions of the Plan. Submissions and responses to submissions are provided in *Appendices 1 and 2* respectively.

5. Discussion

5.1 Summary of submissions

Of the 39 submissions received, 38 clearly stated their support for the general direction of the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan. 18 made detailed suggestions regarding specialist areas. Following is a summary of the feedback received. For

full submissions and responses to the submissions, please refer to *Appendices 1 and 2* respectively.

5.1.1 General Direction

One submission suggested a change to the general direction of the plan, including more information on introduced biodiversity. The environmental and cultural value of introduced biodiversity was also mentioned by two other submitters.

5.1.2 Objectives and actions

Key concerns are:

- Not a suitable balance of land and water based actions.
- Not enough focus on coastal areas.
- Little mention of the threat posed by native weeds.
- Not enough mention of community group involvement in research.

A number of organisations requested that they be included in a variety of different actions, such as data sharing networks.

5.1.3 Priorities

The top priorities mentioned by submitters were:

- Protection of biodiversity on private land, particularly from the fragmentation effects of land development/subdivision
- Addressing lack of information
- Stream protection (including clear waterways, riparian planting, restoration of fish passage, pollution)
- Community based initiatives/community involvement
- Pest management, particularly weeds
- Biodiversity to be considered by all areas of Council including land management and infrastructure.

Other priorities mentioned were: the impact of climate change; creation of viable corridors; protection of the South Coast; building capacity; research; recognising and providing for biodiversity in reserve management plans.

5.1.4 Additional requirements

Several submitters expressed concern that only areas with high biodiversity values would be protected, and that the plan overlooked other sites worthy of protection such as small ecological niches, areas contributing to overall ecosystem function, and areas with the potential to be enhanced.

One submitter also recommended that there be more recognition of the harbour and coastal waters as activities that happen within Wellington City have a large impact on the biodiversity of these areas.

5.1.5 Timeframes and funding

A number of the submitters thought there was a lack of measurable targets and outcomes. There were also concerns about the need to ensure the plan had sufficient resources to be implemented.

5.2 Feedback from Key Stakeholders

Greater Wellington Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Ministry for the Environment, Ngati Toa, Tenth Trust, Forest & Bird, Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, QEII National Trust, New Zealand Institute of Landscape architects plus local community groups and internal Council staff have all been involved in the formation of the final plan and have expressed their verbal or written support for the plan and its intention.

5.3 Significant amendments

- *Introduced biodiversity*: While the key focus of the plan remains indigenous biodiversity, a new section on introduced biodiversity has been included. This sits at the end of the profile on Wellington's biodiversity.
- *Focus limited by 'high biodiversity values'*: The intention of the plan was always to focus on a range of sites important for a variety of reasons, as expressed in Objective 2.2 "Actively protect sites that are collectively representative of the full range of Wellington's biodiversity". The term 'high biodiversity value' has been changed to better reflect the intention of the plan. We now refer to the '*ecological significance*' of an area. This is defined in the glossary as an area comprising any one or more of the following ecological features: representativeness of Wellington's indigenous biodiversity, high diversity of ecological and physical features, degree of natural character, relative size and shape, relative rarity and special features, buffering and connectivity, viability. These ecological features contribute to Wellington's indigenous biodiversity and include consideration of current and potential biodiversity values. Action 2.1.1 has also been reworded to reflect this.
- *Stream protection*: Included new action regarding streams and their protection/restoration.
- *Native weeds*: Actions 2.1.9 and 2.5.7 have been amended to include the threat posed by native weeds.
- *Harbour and coastal waters*: The section on harbour and coastal waters has been expanded using the format for the previous topics, with the inclusion of a case study on the Wellington Harbour sediment sampling project.
- *Coastal connections*: The 'green and blue network' has specified that it will include coastal connections.
- *Lack of targets*: The timeframe itself provides measurable targets and this has now been outlined in the plan. In addition, the following targets have been included:
 1. Pest management plans in place for 15 Key Native Ecosystem sites in year 1, with plans developed and implemented for 3 additional sites in each successive year.
 2. Protection mechanisms in place across a representative range of Wellington's biodiversity by year 5. Protection mechanisms may include legal protection, restoration planting, and pest control.

3. Protection mechanisms in place for all Wellington City Council owned sites of ecological significance by year 5.
 4. Protect all Wellington City Council owned areas with ecological significance as vested reserves by year 3.
 5. Create four ecological management plans per year for sites of biodiversity value.
 6. Increase the number of eco-sourced native plants supplied by Council to community groups by 1000 plants per year.
 7. Two programmes each year that aim to change human behaviours which have a negative impact on biodiversity.
 8. One training programme provided for across-Council biodiversity awareness per year.
- *Inclusion of other organisations:* A number of organisations such as QEII National Trust, Department of Conservation and Ministry for the Environment have now been listed under various actions in the Plan.
 - *Community involvement in research:* Action 4.1.5 amended to include community involvement in research as well as monitoring

5.4 Key implementation considerations

5.4.1 Existing resources

Each action has been allocated a funding source, sequenced into a timeframe and responsibilities identified for its implementation.

Many of the actions identified can be implemented using existing resource capacity. Actions will be included in business unit business plans and consequently staff performance plans. Key existing roles include Planner: Ecology & Biodiversity (Open Space & Recreation Planning), the District Planning team, and the Natural & Botanic Areas team (Parks & Gardens).

Where appropriate, actions will consider alternative funding sources through sponsorship, grants, trust funds and strategic partnerships. These opportunities have been identified in the Plan.

5.4.2 Additional resources: Pest Management

The most significant action requiring additional funding is the continuation of the Pest Management Implementation Plan. This is identified as Action 2.1.3 under Theme 2: Protect.

In June 2005, the Strategy and Policy Committee (SPC) approved the first two years of the Pest Implementation Plan budget but agreed that any future increase in service levels after 2007/08 will be considered in the context of the agreed priorities that resulted from the adoption of the Environment Strategy. The adoption of the Environment Strategy led to the development of the Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Biodiversity Action Plan recognises effective pest management as a critical factor and a high priority in the ongoing protection and restoration of Wellington's indigenous biodiversity. The Plan highlights pest management is an important activity for Council and one that warrants continued investment. It recommends that pest management is implemented through the Pest Management Implementation Plan (adopted in 2005). Accordingly, the proposed pest implementation plan budget is identified in *Table 1* below.

Table 1: Pest Management Implementation Plan Budget

Proposed Pest Implementation Plan Costs Versus Current LTCCP Funding								
Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Totals
June 2005 Total Proposed Pest Implementation Plan Costs	725,889	783,726	830,461	854,096	898,627	894,144	907,888	5,894,831
Existing LTCCP Funding	653,119	653,999	655,091	648,002	649,905	649,764	648,577	4,558,457
Variance of Proposed Costs to LTCCP Funding	(72,770)	(129,727)	(175,370)	(206,094)	(248,722)	(244,380)	(259,311)	(1,336,374)
Proposed additional Increase in Funding	72,770	129,727	175,370	206,094	248,722	244,380	259,311	1,336,374

Service level changes relating to the implementation of the Pest Management Plan will be through an adjustment to the Parks and Gardens Open Space Asset Management Plan, for consideration during the 2008/2009 Annual Plan round.

5.4.3 Additional resources: other

Other actions that will require additional funding to be sought through the new initiative process include:

- *Protection of biodiversity on private land (Actions 2.1.6, 2.4.1, 3.2.2):* These actions are scheduled for years 3-5. Costs for these actions are difficult to estimate given that planning work is required first. The planning work for these actions will be achieved in years 1 and 2 (see actions 1.2.1, 2.1.1 and 2.4.1b).
- *Restoring sites of ecological significance and important linkages (Actions 3.1.1, 3.1.3):* These actions are scheduled for years 2-5. Costs for these actions will depend on the planning work carried out in actions 1.2.2, 2.1.1, 2.2.1 and funding will be site specific.
- *Community engagement (actions under Objective 2.5):* While new funding has not been explicitly identified, current levels of community engagement are accommodated within existing resource capacity. To

foster new community engagement opportunities, an increase in resources will be required.

It is noteworthy that any major biosecurity incursion may require additional Council emergency funding (Action 2.1.11).

7. Conclusion

In general, submitters were extremely supportive of the draft Biodiversity Action Plan. Many submissions were highly detailed and most have resulted in some form of amendment to the Plan.

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Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

The Biodiversity Action Plan is a key implementation action of the Council's Environment Strategy, contributing to a number of Environmental Outcomes. It also contributes to the Economic and Development Strategy, the Cultural Wellbeing Strategy, the Urban Development Strategy and the Social and Recreation Strategy.

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

Funding for biodiversity conservation is covered under many different budgets. The key ones with direct biodiversity outcomes are A004 (Open space and recreation planning), C524 (Town belt management), C514 (Town belt planting), C513 (Community greening initiatives), C510 (Animal pest management) and C509 (Pest plant control and monitoring). Many of the implementation actions will be funded through existing budgets. Some additional funding will be required and deliberated through the annual plan process.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

Our indigenous biodiversity is important to Mana Whenua - for its intrinsic value, its historical importance, for its potential in matauranga maori (traditional knowledge) and rongoa maori (traditional medicine). Both the Tenth's Trust and Te Runanga o Toa Rangatira have been involved with the steering group and the development process.

4) Decision-Making

Committee are asked to approve this Biodiversity Action Plan. The action plan represents key strategic actions required to meet Wellington City Council's responsibilities to biodiversity conservation over the next 10 years and for the Biodiversity Action Plan the decision-making focus is establishing priorities.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

Consultation has been carried out in accordance with Council policy. In addition, workshops were held with interested parties on identifying direction and actions for the plan. Key stakeholders are on the steering group.

b) Consultation with Maori

Mana whenua have been involved on the steering group. Their comments have been incorporated into the plan and in particular actions.

6) Legal Implications

None.

7) Consistency with existing policy

This report and Biodiversity Action Plan are consistent with existing policy, including the Pest Management Plan (2005), the Outer Green Belt Management Plan (2004), Capital Spaces (1998), the Otari-Wilton's Bush Management Plan (2007) and the Bush and Streams Restoration Plan (2001).

Appendix 1