
REPORT 1
(1215/52/IM)

ENVIRONMENTAL REFERENCE GROUP UPDATE

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the operation of the Environmental Reference Group (ERG) during the past year and an indication of planned ERG activities over the coming year.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Note that vacancies have been advertised publicly and new members appointed to the Environmental Reference Group.*
- 3. Note that amendments to the Terms of Reference will be considered later this year within the wider review of the Council's advisory/reference groups initiated in 2007.*

3. Background

The ERG was established in mid-2001, to provide the Council with a sounding board and peer-review group on issues relating to management of the natural environment. In August 2005, to match the responsibilities of the new Environmental Portfolio, the ERG's Terms of Reference was reviewed to clarify that the natural environment includes energy and waste issues and the membership was expanded accordingly.

The group has suggested further amendments to the Terms of Reference for 2008 onwards. These will be considered within the wider review of the Council's advisory/reference groups.

4. Discussion

4.1 *Recent Activity*

The ERG has met twelve times since the last update report to SPC in May 2006. Appendix 1 summarises the topics covered at each meeting, as well as attendance numbers. Topics ranged across the myriad elements of the environmental portfolio, including relevant linkages to transport and urban form.

4.2 *Membership Changes*

The group size stands at up to fifteen members.

Members of the ERG over the past three years are listed in Appendix 2. Three vacancies have recently been filled, based on the applications received from mid-December through to the end of January as the result of public advertisements. A new representative from Greater Wellington Regional Council has been identified and nomination of a new Youth Council representative is anticipated soon.

It should be noted that ERG members are not officially representing any organisation with which they may be affiliated, except for the Greater Wellington Regional Council representative and a standing invitation to the Council's Treaty Partners, Ngati Toa and the Wellington Tenth's Trust. That said, a number of members are involved, on either a paid or unpaid basis, with various environment-related agencies and groups, such as Victoria University's faculty and student body, Makara-Ohariu Community Board and Wellington Botanical Society. These connections enhance the two-way communication flow between the Council and the community.

4.3 *Added value*

The ERG membership has shown itself to be knowledgeable, engaged, committed, and extremely helpful. This has been evidenced in the group's interactions with Council staff and Councillors and through the group's contributions to policy development, and in particular, the draft Environmental Strategy.

The ERG members communicate well with each other, both at their meetings and through e-mail or phone contact, and with Council staff and Councillors. Most members of the ERG are linked to various other environmental networks, assisting the flow of information from the Council to the environmental community and the public at large.

These characteristics, combined with their diverse range of knowledge and background, make the ERG members a valuable resource to the Council.

Some members of the ERG have indicated that, in addition to participating in brainstorming and discussions about Council-related environmental issues,

they would appreciate more opportunities to review and influence key Council documents in the early stages of their development. This occurred in the past year with documents such as the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Council officers report that they have received useful feedback from the ERG on the projects and policies that they have brought to the group at an early stage.

4.4 Plans for 2008

The ERG will meet approximately every two months and will focus on papers being developed for upcoming SPC meetings, as well as other issues raised by group members or Council officers. Reports of interest to the group will include the Northern Reserves Management Plan and the Climate Change Action Plan.

Members have expressed an interest in selecting a theme for each meeting (e.g. energy, waste, parks) and grouping topics around those themes. Where possible, discussion of Council projects and documents will be matched with these themes.

5. Conclusion

The ERG has met twelve times since the last report in May 2006. A summary of the activity and contributions of the ERG has been provided. Vacant positions have been filled and recommendations made for changes to the ERG's Terms of Reference will be considered within the current review of the Council's advisory groups.

Contact Officer: *Ken Bowater, Senior Policy Advisor*

Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

This activity fits with the outcomes for the Environmental Strategy.

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

Minor financial impacts of this reference group relate to officer time, photocopying and other administration costs, provision of meeting rooms and refreshments.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

There are no Treaty of Waitangi implications from this report.

4) Decision-Making

This report does not require a significant decision.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

Expressions of interest for the vacant positions in the group were advertised publicly in the Our Wellington Page and on the Council website.

b) Consultation with Maori

Both mana whenua partners declined to become members of the group when it was formed on the understanding that officers supporting the group would maintain a communication link with the Wellington Tenth Trust and Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira to assist in providing a Māori perspective in the work of the Group. This agreed approach is reflected within the Terms of Reference for the Group.

6) Legal Implications

There are no legal implications from this report.

7) Consistency with existing policy

The activities of the Environmental Reference Group are consistent with existing policy and provide robust input to ongoing environmental policy development.

APPENDIX 1: Environmental Reference Group Meetings, August 2005 to January 2008

Date	Topics Discussed	Number of Non-Council Members in Attendance
12 Jun 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming new members • Update on 16 May report-back to Council • Otari-Wilton's Bush Management Plan Review • Biodiversity Action Plan • Open Space Access (Tracks) Implementation Plan • Review of Subdivision Design Guide and Code of Practice for Land Development 	8
31 Jul 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LTCCP 06/16 Report-Back • Solid Waste Options • Peak Oil 	9
11 Sep 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biosolids Use • Northern Suburbs Passenger Transport Study • Sustainable Building Guidelines 	11
6 Nov 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Otari-Wilton's Bush Management Plan Review • Northern Reserves Management Plan 	7 + Ngati Toa rep
13 Nov 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour of Southern Landfill 	5
11 Dec 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Management Planning • Biodiversity Action Plan: Update • Draft Regional Land Transport Strategy and Draft Regional Passenger Transport Plan 	7 + Ngati Toa rep
12 Feb 07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Business Network • Sustainability Trust • Community Outcome Indicators 	7
16 Apr 07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2007/08 Draft Annual Plan • Moa Point and Carey's Gully Resource Consents • Council's Response to Climate Change 	7
11 Jun 07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Conservation • Draft Earthworks Rules (District Plan Change) • Targeting and Improving Residential Infill • Hazardous Tree Removal and Revegetation • Biodiversity Action Plan: Update • Climate Change: Update 	9
13 Aug 07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting Resource Consent Commissioners • Climate Change: Update • Environmental Reference Group: Past and Future 	9
3 Dec 07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change Action Plan • Membership Vacancies and Terms of Reference 	8
4 Feb 08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership appointments • Review of Reference Groups, and Terms of Reference • Northern Reserves Management Plan 	6

APPENDIX 2: Environmental Reference Group Membership

Membership as of 30 June 2006 (*joined June 06; R resigned)

1. Dr Ralph Chapman
2. Mr Mike Ennis
3. Ms Debbie Firestone
4. Ms Jennie Francke - R
5. Ms Liz Hibbs*
6. Mr Chris Horne
7. Admiral Ian Hunter
8. Mr David Kettell
9. Mr Tushara Kodikara
10. Ms Fiona McNamara* - R (replacement sought from Youth Council)
11. Ms Ruth Paul
12. Mr Stephen Sargent* - R (passed away April 2007)
13. Mr Ian Shearer
14. Ms Charity Stuart - R
15. Mr Murray McLea - R (GWRC)

Membership as of 4 February 2008 (*joined February 08)

1. Dr Ralph Chapman
2. Mr Mike Ennis
3. Ms Debbie Firestone
4. Ms Liz Hibbs
5. Mr Chris Horne
6. Admiral Ian Hunter
7. Mr David Kettell
8. Mr Tushara Kodikara
9. Ms Ruth Paul
10. Mr Ian Shearer
11. Mr Tim Park* (GWRC)
12. Dr Sea Rotmann*
13. Mr Hamish Allardice*
14. Ms Kathryn Maxwell*
15. To be advised* (Youth Council)

Ngati Toa and Wellington Tenth Trust representatives

WCC Representatives

1. Councillor Celia Wade-Brown (Chair) and Councillor Iona Pannett (Alternate)
2. Mr Ken Bowater (Policy Unit) (Replacing Mr Jim Ebenhoh (Strategy Unit, and ERG Co-ordinator) from January 2008)
3. Mr Mike Oates (Parks and Gardens / Open Space Planning)
4. Ms Nicky Karu (Treaty Relations), on behalf of Council Treaty Partners (Ngati Toa and Tenth Trust have a standing invitation to attend in person)
5. Mr Mike Mendonca (CitiOperations)
6. Others on an as-needed basis, depending on topics to be covered