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**Committee** Environment Committee  
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## Heritage Management Update

### 1. Purpose

To advise the Committee about an investigation that has been made into the need for a regional plan for regionally significant cultural heritage matters.

### 2. Background

Method 9 of the Landscape and Heritage chapter of the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) proposed that the Regional Council:

*“Investigate the need for, and prepare if necessary, a regional plan for regionally significant cultural heritage matters.”*

This Method has been previously raised in reports to the Committee (most recently in Report 01-304 to the meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> May 2001). However, a decision on implementing the Method was deferred, pending the legislative and other outcomes that might eventuate from the Ministerial Advisory Committee’s (MAC) formal review of heritage management in New Zealand.

Although the MAC Review was completed in 1999, some of its recommendations are yet to be acted upon. One recommendation was to elevate historic heritage to a matter of national importance in Section 6 of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). This is being enacted through the Resource Management Amendment Bill (No. 2) which is currently before parliament.

While heritage will soon have greater significance within the RMA, Greater Wellington Regional Council’s statutory role in heritage management will not specifically change. It is timely, therefore, to consider what the Council’s role might be in the light of the Amendment Act, and in particular, to reconsider Method 9 of the Landscape and Heritage chapter of the RPS.

### **3. Discussion**

#### **3.1 Greater Wellington's recent involvement in heritage management**

In the period since the RPS became operative, the Council has adopted a low-key but positive approach to heritage management. The approach acknowledges the primary statutory roles provided for the Historic Places Trust (under the Historic Places Act, 1993) and the territorial authorities (under the RMA). The Council's role has been to focus on responsible management of its own heritage assets, commenting on resource consents that affect Category 1 heritage items from the Historic Places Trust Heritage Register, and in facilitating good practice and outcomes with other heritage players in the Region.

Examples of Council activities in the last year are as follows:

- The preparation of a report on Heritage for the Wairarapa Coastal Strategy (November 2002);
- Consideration of heritage management within regional parks in the Draft Regional Parks Network Management Plan (February 2003); and
- Three informal meetings attended by staff from the Council, the Historic Places Trust, the Department of Conservation and many of the territorial authorities. Emerging from these meetings is a strong feeling that no one agency can be as effective as a collective regional approach, with all players sharing experience and information.

#### **3.2 Issues arising**

From the above work, it has become clear that there are a number of issues and questions that might be addressed through a regional plan or through some other mechanisms.

These issues and questions include:

- How can appropriate recognition be given to Maori heritage?
- How can archaeological site identification and protection be improved?
- What financial and/or other incentives might be provided for heritage management?
- What roles and responsibilities do the different heritage players have?
- How should GWRC balance operational functions with responsible and effective management of the Council's heritage assets? and
- What is the most effective way to record and maintain a clear and accessible record of just what heritage the Region does possess?

#### **3.3 Would a regional plan help?**

Method 9 in the RPS asks that a regional plan be assessed as a means of addressing significant heritage matters. Experience in preparing regional plans shows that:

- Preparing a plan does provide an opportunity to address significant resource management issues, to gather new and critical information about those issues, to engage community debate about preferred policy direction and to identify means of achieving that preferred direction;
- The process of preparing a plan can be long, contentious and resource consuming (staff and councillor time, money, community goodwill) without necessarily getting an outcome (e.g. the Landscape Plan);
- Regional plans cannot have rules unless they deal with activities over which the regional council exercises statutory control (neither landscape nor heritage fall into this category). Without the extra strength of rules, the plan can only provide policy direction in the management of a resource, a role that the RPS can equally well fulfil; and
- Regional plans can only achieve so much through their statutory strength and what they can achieve may be small compared with non-statutory means for managing a particular resource.

### **3.4 Analysis**

These last two bullet points are especially relevant to a consideration of the usefulness of a statutory regional plan for heritage management. There is a statutory Review of the RPS that is due in two years time, which could provide an appropriate opportunity to discuss these matters. There seems little point in creating a separate policy based plan for heritage now, when the same effect can be achieved through a redrafted RPS.

A regional plan may be not only a long and expensive process, but the product may be an ineffective tool for the variety of jobs that it needs to have. The following suggestions more directly and effectively address the diverse mix of issues for heritage management outlined earlier.

### **3.5 Alternative approaches**

- Working with the Department of Conservation, territorial authorities, the Historic Places Trust, iwi and heritage interest groups/agencies (including liaison and data exchange, advice on building and archaeological site management, district plan provisions, leaflet production and practical guidance for heritage owners/managers);
- With these authorities and groups, contribute to a “state of heritage” chapter for the GWRC’s State of the Environment report, preparatory to the review of the RPS;
- Provide more specific policy direction and methods for heritage management in the RPS at the time of it’s review;
- Collaborate with DoC, the Historic Places Trust, iwi, heritage agencies and the territorial authorities in developing an accessible database, especially with regard to archaeological sites (e.g. consider funding “high importance” archaeological site identification and protection work with iwi, as suggested in the Wairarapa Coastal Strategy heritage report’s recommendations);

- Actively disseminate such data to key stakeholders (e.g. consent officers, development interests, Transit NZ) along with guidance notes on how the data might effectively be incorporated in their decisions;
- Continue to manage heritage assets on GWRC land in a “role model” manner.

These actions can be accommodated within current staff resources and reflect the mix of support for heritage management that the Council has developed during the last few years.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Greater Wellington Regional Council does not have a significant statutory role in heritage management, but clearly, a sustainable region is one that sustains its historical heritage and actively manages the values that make that heritage and the region so distinctive.

Preparing a regional plan to manage those special values and places does not, however, appear to be a cost-effective tool. Rather, a bag of tools, customised to the region’s needs and resources would be more appropriate.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the Council continue to develop and implement the sorts of non-statutory initiatives identified in this report.

#### **5. Communications**

No further public communication is needed for this report.

#### **6. Recommendations**

*It is recommended that the Committee:*

1. *receive the report; and*
2. *endorse the actions suggested.*

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