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Committee Regional Sustainability Committee  
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## Wellington Regional Strategy Office Update

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the activities of the Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS) Office.

### 2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

### 3. Work programme

Over the past few months the main activities of the WRS Office have been:

- Socialising the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) report
- Chairing and participating in the regional Broadband Operational Group (BOG)
- Facilitating the regional Open Space Working Group and sub-groups, and organising the first Wellington Regional Open Spaces Forum
- Facilitating the regional Urban Design Working Group and continuing to progress the work outlined in the Wellington Region Urban Design Action Plan and Stocktake. In conjunction with the Ministry for the Environment, the WRS Office is helping organise an Urban Design Symposium which is to be held in August
- Assisting Hutt City Council with progressing the Regional Industrial Land Project
- Assisting in the preparation of the WRS review terms of reference and the process for appointing a reviewer.

## **4. Broadband**

The BOG has been working hard on a range of efforts to progress the development of a widespread fibre network for the region. BOG has been holding meetings with Local Fibre Company (LFC) bidders to the Urban Fibre Broadband Initiative (UFBI).

Meetings are being arranged with the Rugby World Cup Office to determine ‘brown-out’ or “no deployment” areas and times so that any fibre deployment will not take place during the event. Potential LFCs have indicated a willingness to work with councils to ensure minimal disruption during this time.

The WRS Committee put forward submissions to the Ministry of Economic Development’s (MED) Urban Fibre Broadband Initiative, the Rural Fibre Initiative (RFI) and the Deployment Standards Initiative.

Four workstreams were established in late 2009 aligned with the MED outline of the role it saw for local government in assisting the rollout of fibre throughout the country. An additional workstream to assist in the deployment of fibre to the rural parts of the region is also included in our work programme. The workstreams are discussed below.

### **4.1 Region-wide rules for new trenching technologies**

Work collating the different policies and rules around the region for determining the depth of trenching in the road corridor, has been completed and information on recommended depths for broadband duct installation has been sent to all nominated council engineers for consideration. A workshop was held on 18 March to discuss and agree the use of particular technologies for setting reasonable regional conditions. A final report on this project is due shortly.

### **4.2 Region-wide rules for aerial deployment**

A stocktake of the various councils’ district plan rules for aerial deployment has been completed. A report of the findings and recommendations was provided to the Chief Executives’ meeting on 16 April. At this stage councils in the region are not keen to consider any changes to their regulations covering aerial deployment.

### **4.3 Coordination of road openings**

The scale of any new fibre build is considerable and may have several implications for the region. This workstream is focussed on determining how road openings could be better coordinated around the region. This will reduce the compliance costs for the operators and enable greater cooperation between the councils in the region. The project aims to provide councils with an outline of the implications for them of a significant increase in the number of road openings as a result of the fibre rollout. It will also provide an analysis of what is needed across the region to provide better road opening coordination.

One of the most immediate implications is councils’ capacity to handle the increase in road openings. Several thousand kilometres of roads are expected to

be opened over the next 2-3 years and this is likely to stretch councils' current capacity for processing road opening applications.

In addition, the coordination of road openings across council boundaries may become a significant issue. There will be considerable pressure to work closely with the nominated LFC to drive down the costs of coordinating road openings across the region and to reduce the disruption to our urban environments.

#### **4.4 Region-wide policy for access to local government assets**

The first piece of work from this workstream involved a stocktake and analysis of the various councils' policies on accessing their assets. The current piece of work involves exploring the feasibility of developing a common approach to accessing council assets by way of a common policy across councils.

LFC candidates were invited to meetings to discuss their potential needs for council assets. While indications are that there is not a great need for access to council assets, ducts and poles are the main assets most LFC's seemed to be interested in.

#### **4.5 Rural deployment**

The final Rural Broadband Initiative (RBI) was released on 17 March 2010. Funding for this initiative is set at \$300m. A call for expressions of interest to provide services was made in May, and a call for final proposals will be made in August.

A meeting with MED indicated that the Minister wants urgent progress on deploying fibre broadband in rural areas. He is not prepared to wait for the urban programme to get underway before deploying fibre in rural areas. The Minister wants continued focus on broadband infrastructure to address community access and not just schools and hospitals.

There are issues of the boundaries set for the rural broadband programme. The Wellington region comes within Zones 11 and 12, but is split vertically as opposed to the current regional boundary. The WRS Committee made a submission on the boundary issue to MED in June.

BOG was involved in a meeting of Wairarapa schools, councils and the Wairarapa District Health Board in late April to discuss the rural broadband initiative and what this might mean for Wairarapa. A meeting was held with Chorus to discuss their rural plans with the three rural areas in the region, Wairarapa, Makara and Kapiti and a further meeting with Wairarapa representatives is planned for early August.

### **5. Open Spaces**

The WRS Office gave a presentation to members of the New Zealand Recreation Association on 6 May about the WRS Open Spaces project, focussing on the development and implementation of the Wellington Regional Open Spaces Strategy and Action Plan.

The Wellington Regional Open Spaces Forum was held on 27 July at the Te Rauparaha Arena in Porirua. This Forum was aimed at open space managers and practitioners to facilitate sharing of information about key projects which are happening in the region. The Forum was very successful with over 60 people attending and a range of topics discussed.

An Open Spaces newsletter was established in March. The newsletter is available to the public on the WRS website. The newsletter is bi-monthly and outlines key projects that councils in the region are working on and key challenges they are experiencing.

A workshop of open space providers/managers was held in February 2010. Outcomes of the workshop resulted in establishing sub-groups to drive four major areas related to improving open spaces in the region. These are:

- Information sharing: This workstream is looking at establishing a regional portal of recreational information for the public to access so that information is easily accessible and is gathered and shared in a common way across all the councils in the Wellington region.
- Biodiversity: This workstream is focussed on establishing a regional portal of the top 100 biodiversity sites in the Wellington region to promote these sites to the public.
- Motorised recreation and conflicting uses: This workstream has been established to identify the major issues with motorised recreation and the need to provide more areas within each council boundaries and to separate the areas/uses more formally. The group is developing a stocktake of regional rules and existing tracks, and exploring ways of working with users in the region. The group will also look at education of users and common approaches to management of the areas.
- Sports fields: This sub-group will explore the quality of turfs in the region, the expectations of turf quality and the availability for codes. There are shortages of sports fields in some parts of the region and this workstream will look at how these can be addressed.

## **6. Urban Design**

The WRS Office gave a presentation to an Urban Design Forum on 19 May. The Forum focussed on urban centres and urban design. Melanie spoke on the regional work done on centres' planning and urban design.

The WRS Office has compiled a register of urban design practitioners which is now available to councils throughout the region. This register was developed to provide councils with a list of experienced urban design practitioners who have worked with councils across the region.

Next steps for the Urban Design Working Group are:

- Information-sharing: This is taking place through the WRS website. An urban design information hub has been developed and provides useful links to regional, national and international urban design-related websites. There are also links to urban design-related courses being held both within New Zealand and in Australia.
- Developing training initiatives: This includes holding regular ‘walk and talk’ sessions around the region. At these sessions, council officers discuss key urban design issues and any examples of best practice. The first session was held in Porirua on 8 June, and the next session will be held in Wellington city in September. These sessions are open to practitioners and urban design champions from across the region.
- WRS Urban Design Symposium: This symposium will be held on 19 August in conjunction with the Ministry for the Environment’s Urban Design Protocol. Speakers are currently being finalised.

## **7. Genuine Progress Index (GPI)**

A draft GPI report was discussed with the WRS Committee at a workshop in February. The Committee agreed that the WRS Office should engage with relevant organisations that have an interest in the GPI and its potential use for the region. Accordingly, meetings have been held with representatives from the School of Medicine, the Ministry of Social Development, the Social Development Forum, and the Hutt Valley and Capital Coast District Health Boards.

All organisations consulted so far have shown considerable interest in the GPI. In particular the Chief Executive of the Capital and Coast DHB advised that he would be interested in using the GPI in his District Strategic Plan. He was also interested in the WRS Office giving a presentation on the GPI to the hospital’s senior doctors - a group of approximately one hundred staff. He was happy to dedicate a staff member to join our GPI Working Group.

The Chief Executive of the Hutt Valley DHB was also interested in using information from the GPI work to inform the District Strategic Plan and other documents measuring health outcomes.

Discussions have also taken place with Kapiti Coast District Council to explore developing a case study of how local councils could utilise the GPI information. Prior to the development of the regional GPI, KCDC had discussed the idea of developing a local GPI.

A table of indicators is being developed which will provide comparisons of data gathered at local and regional levels. A list of indicators that could be used for the Regional Foundations community outcome is currently being assessed. Additional indicators are being gathered and assessed for incorporation into the GPI.

## **8. Industrial land**

The WRS Office has been working with Hutt City Council as the lead council of this project. A workshop was organised in June to explore possible future scenarios for industrial land needs for the region. Participants included people from the business community who are directly linked with industrial activities, including Centreport, Paraparaumu Airport and Colliers, and representatives from the region's councils, universities, BERL, and the Regional Chamber of Commerce.

On-going work includes understanding how future economic growth for New Zealand and the region might impact on industrial land requirements in the future. An assessment of whether councils may need to establish more secure means of protecting current industrial land from further encroachment by residential and commercial needs is being undertaken. A paper is to be presented to the Chief Executives by the end of the year.

## **9. Other workstreams**

The Senior Officers Resource Team (SORT) determined that its on-going work for the coming year will be to continue driving the five key projects of the strategy. These are: broadband, open spaces, industrial land, urban design and the GPI. In addition it will work on rural residential development guidelines.

SORT members had previously agreed that it would be valuable for council officers to discuss and share information about District Plans and any other long-term strategies around the region. This will help to inform members about any matters of regional significance. Accordingly, SORT has held regular workshops at which particular councils' District Plan reviews have been discussed.

In relation to this, the recommendations emerging from the two projects "Centres" and "Intensification" prompted the SORT to propose that a group of senior staff working primarily on District Plan matters be established. This group would meet at least every three months to discuss relationships between the various councils' District Plans, the Regional Policy Statement and its implementation and monitoring processes, and regional plans developed by Greater Wellington. This would enable the SORT to be provided with any information that is of regional significance to the wider group for consideration.

## **10. WRS Review**

The WRS Office has been working with a sub-group of the region's Chief Executives to develop the Terms of Reference for the WRS Review. It has also helped establish a process for inviting and assessing proposals for the Review. The Chief Executives Group will make a final recommendation of the selected reviewer. to the WRS Committee at the 2 September meeting.

## **11. Communication**

WRS matters relating to the workstreams above will be communicated as relevant information is identified.

## **12. Recommendations**

*That the Committee:*

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Notes the content of the report.*

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