

By e-mail

Hon David Parker
Minister for the Environment
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19 August 2022

Dear Minister

Some time ago you received correspondence from Tracey Martin, Chair of the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee. This letter traversed a range of issues but included a suggestion that the Wellington region would be prepared to be an early adopter of the new resource management planning regime. In effect we offered to be a trial region for exemplar plans under the new planning framework.

Last Friday, 12 August 2022, the Mayoral Forum had one of its regular meetings and this topic was discussed again among the region's Councils. Our thinking has developed as the pathway to reform has progressed so I thought I would update you.

Reluctantly the Councils of the region have decided that we are not in a position to be an early adopter. There are several reasons for this.

- **Progress of current District Plan reviews and changes** – a number of the metropolitan Councils have notified significant district plan reviews (Porirua and Wellington) and plan changes (Upper Hutt, Lower Hutt & Kapiti) and are some way down the track to finalising these. Any diversion of staff away from this work will set back environmental protection and housing supply in the region.
- **The number of other reform programmes** – water reform is absorbing any spare capacity within Councils. Alongside the Future for Local Government Review, the sector is facing the biggest change since 1989. Our organisations are already Covid weary and these reform changes are taking a toll on the willingness of people to stand for election and to be employed by Councils. For the next two years we will be focussed on stabilising our workforce and readying them for change.
- **The impact of growth** - all of the Councils in the region are experiencing growth pressures. We are working hard to improve housing supply working with government agencies and developers. This is our current delivery priority.
- **Scale** – most of the Councils in the region are medium to small in size. This means our technical planning resource is correspondingly small. While your department could support us through financial assistance, the burden would still fall on a small number of experienced, knowledgeable staff who could translate local conditions into regional plans.

Overall we think that our already capacity-constrained region would fail to deliver what you need so we have concluded that our earlier offer must be withdrawn.

We look forward to being updated on the reform progress. We are committed to change that will bring greater environmental protection and more certainty for those in our communities who are building our future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Wayne Guppy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Wayne Guppy
Mayor Upper Hutt
Chair of the Mayoral Forum for the Wellington region