



Parks Network Strategy

Report analysis from territorial authorities, Central Government and other agencies

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Appendix

1	Questionnaire sent to Central Government Departments, territorial authorities and other agencies
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Executive summary

Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) is developing a Regional Parks Network. To inform the development of the strategy, views from a range of agencies with an interest in open space were gathered through a questionnaire.

There were 17 responses by three Central Government agencies, eight territorial authorities and six other agencies. The low response rate from Central Government means that national policies and perspectives may be underrepresented in the overall results.

Of these organisations' aims or policies in connection with parks, half provide park services and half support park services. The majority of these organisations (87.5%) offer complementary services with the GWRC parks. GWRC offers a different 'outdoors' experience which is typically more 'backcountry' when compared with territorial authorities parks and reserves. The remainder of the respondents (12.5%) considered that we competed with their services. In particular, an overlap with front country facilities such as picnicking, or small walks could be offered elsewhere by territorial authorities.

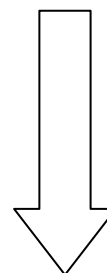
Key demand and pressure issues identified within the next 20 years are: health, urbanisation and adaptation. With health, there is concern over increasing obesity levels and the need to make parks accessible to an increasing ageing population as well as younger people and to the disabled. Increasing urbanisation could mean a decrease in open/green space. A change in population demographics, an increased demand for non-traditional use/diversified use and any new sport will require adaptation within our parks.

The focus and priorities over the next 20 years is to maintain parks with their current services and for various uses such as for recreational, environmental, cultural or heritage purposes. The parks should also be free for entry and accessible. This would mean that GWRC needs to keep its current services and be open to change for future generations.

In respect to development, the feedback from organisations is to maintain current activities in the parks, but provide additional parks in the Wairarapa and Kapiti, and develop a regional linear open space network. Furthermore, the majority of organisations seek an emphasis on conservation and also allow for development in parks or higher levels of commercial activity in the regional parks.

The following activities are considered (in order) of acceptability:

- Information centres (**very acceptable**)
- Education facilities
- Small commercial operations
- Wind farms
- Working farms/forests
- Motorised recreation
- Facilities for leisure activities (**just acceptable**)



The organisations are divided on whether facilities for organised sport and museums are appropriate within Regional Parks.

Many organisations have their own services or projects that would support GWRC's work within parks. A lot of these projects focus on issues like health and open space/parks within the Wellington Region. A number of territorial authorities are calling for more collaboration to have partnership in sharing projects with GWRC.

Overall, the questionnaire results have proved that our regional parks are a valuable asset within our Region. As one organisation has put it, *the regional parks work*.

Others have stated that it is important to retain Regional Parks for all user groups and to keep them free. This research concludes that currently GWRC is doing a good job and highlights the need to maintain such parks' services and facilities.

1. **Background**

Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) is working towards a strategy for our regional parks network. With increasing pressure to develop parks in a different direction from their original framework in 1976, GWRC wants to articulate the fundamental purpose for holding parks and develop a vision for their future. We need to be asking ourselves, do we affirm the purposes for which the parks were first created and, if not, what focus is needed? We want to ensure that the way we manage parks will make the best possible contribution to our community and wellbeing over the next 20 years.

Over the first half of 2009 GWRC Parks sent out an email survey to territorial authorities, Government agencies and other agencies. The purpose of the questionnaire is to understand how regional parks could contribute to their policies or programmes as well as how GWRC parks would benefit from their policies or programmes. It is important that we hear these different perspectives prior to developing a draft strategy.

To assess the current situation, and community perspectives, GWRC has undertaken a large body of research through various forms of data collection. This information will be collated and used for the Councillors' workshop in August 2009 and the subsequent development of a strategy for our regional parks' network.

2. Methodology

In April 2009, 46 questionnaires were emailed or posted to all of the Region's territorial authorities (with the exception of Tararua District Council), relevant Central Government agencies and non-Government organisations. All responses were required by 22 May 2009, although late responses were also included.

In all, 19 responses were received. However, only 17 were valid for the purposes of this report analysis. Eight of the territorial authorities within the Greater Wellington Region provided a response, these being Kapiti Coast District Council, Porirua City Council, Wellington City Council, Hutt City Council, Upper Hutt City Council, South Wairarapa District Council, Carterton District Council and Masterton District Council. We note that Tararua District Council was not consulted on the basis of containing a very small portion of land within the GWRC Region.

The Ministry of Health, Regional Public Health and the Department of Conservation were the Central Government agencies that responded. With only three responses, Central Government is well underrepresented and may mean that national policies and perspectives may be underrepresented in the overall results. The non-Government agencies that responded were Film Wellington, New Zealand Recreation Association (NZRA), Positively Wellington Tourism, Sport Wellington, Victoria University (School of Biological Sciences) and Weltec. Victoria University provided an individual response which has been incorporated into this analysis.

The role of the questionnaire (attached in appendix 1) is to hear from organisations that have specialist knowledge and policies and projects/programmes which directly or indirectly relate to parks. Section A covers parks generally, while section B relates to GWRC parks specifically. Finally, section C focuses on community collaboration in relation to parks. The questionnaire was designed around certain themes with closed ended questions. It also covers open-ended questions to gather technical knowledge from the various organisations and learn what research is currently being undertaken.

The responses covered all aspects of the questionnaire well, with the exception of question 1. Question 1 was broken down into a series of "themes". Question 1 asked respondents to break up their response into a series of themes. Most responses provided only a general answer. In this case, all the responses were factored into the analysis.

3. Report findings from questionnaire

3.1 Question 1 - Describing your organisation's aim and/or policies in connection with parks

Sixteen of the 18 respondents described their *organisations aims or policies in connection to parks*. A summary of their aims or policies are detailed below.

Government Departments

- **Ministry of Health** states local parks and amenities will support their communities to be healthy and help attain the goals of the *Healthy Eating – Healthy Action (HEHA) Strategy 2003*.
- The **Department of Conservation** fosters recreation opportunities on its public lands, i.e., walking tracks, huts, campsites and visitor centres.
- **Regional Public Health** promotes the positive health impacts of access to that of open/green space on physical activity and active living. We promote the benefits of mental health and social cohesion from investing in green space and parks.

Territorial authorities

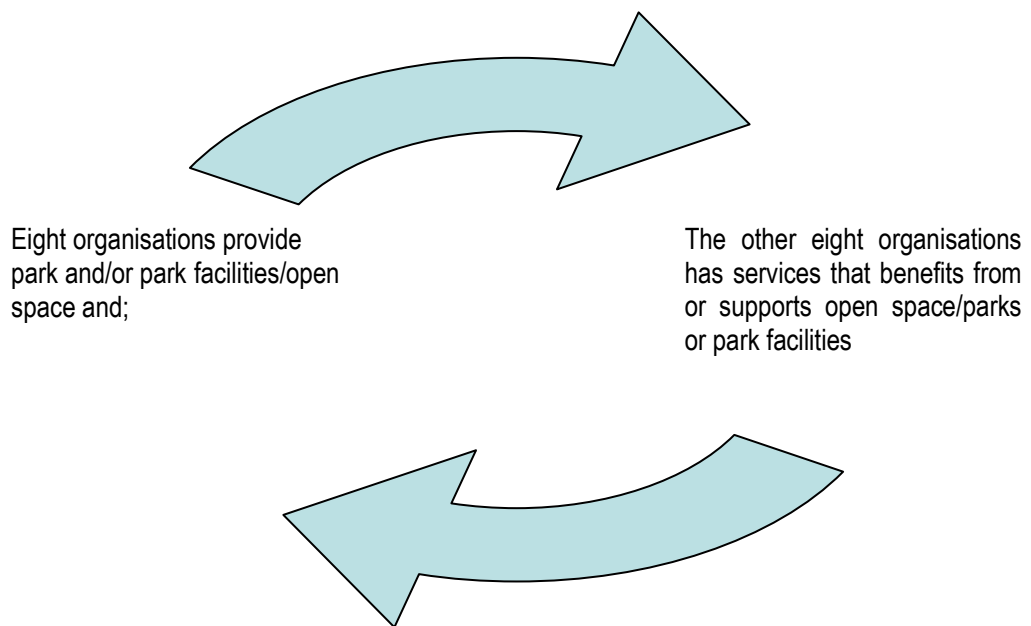
- **Hutt City Council** promotes affordable access to community facilities that includes cultural, sporting and recreational options.
- **Masterton District Council** provides a range of parks and park facilities to meet expectations of community groups.
- **Upper Hutt City Council** offers outstanding leisure opportunities and a green and attractive living environment. Encourages more people to be more active and to provide more outstanding leisure opportunities.
- **Wellington City Council** provides 34 m² of reserve land with multiple recreational facilities.
- **South Wairarapa District Council** – Works in partnership with Active Wairarapa and Wairarapa Moana project (Lake Wairarapa).
- **Carterton District Council** provides general reserve policy.
- **Kapiti Coast District Council** owns and manages a network of parks and reserves that provide for a range of recreation and fitness communities. The parks/reserves provide social interaction, include areas of significant ecological/landscape/amenity values and are an attraction to visitors and businesses/residents. Kapiti Coast District Council employs a cycleways/walkways/bridleways co-ordinator.

Other agencies

- **Sport Wellington** leads sport or physical activity in the Wellington region.
- **WelTec** – teaches a recreation and exercise science courses which focus on recreation and fitness, which also promotes health and well-being. The outdoor recreation module focuses on the natural environment.
- **Positively Wellington Tourism** – Gives support to the Wellington Region as a key and desirable visitor destination.
- **NZRA** – Promotes recreation and provide professional services to the recreation sector.
- **Film Wellington** promotes and supports screen production in the Wellington Region.

Overall, all the organisations have an overlap with the aims and policies to GWRC regional parks. Figure 1 below demonstrates this:

Figure 1



3.2 Question 2 - Do Greater Wellington regional parks compete or complement with services offered by your organisation?

Out of the 16 respondents, the majority of them (14) stated that the regional parks complement services offered by their organisations. The remainder state that their services overlap with GWRC parks and therefore both compete and complement with their own services.

GWRC parks complement	GWRC parks compete and/or complement
87.5%	12.5%

2(b) – How do the regional parks compete or complement with your services?

Government Departments

- **Ministry of Health**– Parks provide a setting for being active.
- **Department of Conservation** – There is an overlap in front country facilities, i.e., campgrounds, picnics, short walks with regional parks services. There might also be competing events.
- **Regional Public Health** – The regional parks are a vital part of community infrastructure in relation to low cost opportunities for physical activity. They improve mental health and give a sense of community cohesion.

Territorial authorities

- **Masterton District Council** –Because of distance of regional parks to Masterton, there is no competition.
- **Upper Hutt City Council** – The parks offer different experiences and are unique in their own right.
- **Kapiti Coast District Council** – The parks provide regional-scale facilities that serve the regional population.
- **Porirua City Council** – The parks offer large areas of open space and farmland and provide complementary recreational opportunities.
- **Carterton District Council** – Provide for environments/events not provided locally.
- **Upper Hutt City Council** – The parks provide a platform and environment for people to be active regularly. The Regional Outdoors Programme encourages locals to get more active.
- **Wellington City Council** – The parks both compete and complement services that Wellington City Council offers. The parks offer rural farm experiences, camping, hunting and 4WD opportunities which Wellington City Council does not.

Other agencies

- **Sport Wellington** – Parks provide active and passive recreational facilities for public enjoyment and well-being.
- **Weltec** – Parks value to our recreation courses.
- **Positively Wellington Tourism** – Could compliment if they were developed to encourage light commercial/recreational tourism activities/operations.
- **NZRA** – NZRA works with GWRC to ensure best practice delivery of recreation and recreation facilities.
- **Film Wellington** – The parks are a huge asset for screen production because of their variety and ease of access. An example of this is having access to that of “farm scenes” close to Wellington’s CBD.

From the above, the emerging themes are in Figure 1.1 below:

Figure 1.1

Complement		Compete
Offers different recreational experiences		Overlaps in front country facilities
Provides a variety of experiences		GWRC parks compete with services offered elsewhere
Offers an outdoor programme	Versus	
Asset for filming		
Offers farm experiences, camping, hunting and 4WD opportunities		

3.3 Question 3 - From your organisation’s perspective what demands and pressures do you see for Wellington’s regional parks in the next 20 years?

The Central Government agencies standpoint of demands and pressures

In the “Health” sector:

- Gaining access to GWRC parks for the lower income groups.
- Access for Wellingtonians to GWRC parks. 11.3% of Wellingtonians do not have a car, which is the highest for non-car ownership for any region in New Zealand. Public transport access to parks is not well promoted or always available regionally.
- Facilities to address increasing rates of obesity.

- Finding ways to engage with young people to appreciate the parks.
- The increasing pressure to reduce expenditure on parks because of difficult economic times. There may be increased need to explain the benefits of green and open space to our policy makers, politicians, developers and communities. Need to spread resources so that it does not lead to demise of precious large tracts of land and prioritise investment in areas for access to our priority populations.
- Managing the green/open space infrastructure to ensure that its development responds to existing needs and to future patterns of urban development, e.g., increasing density within key centres.
- Need to ensure that GWRC parks are relevant to a diverse population.
- Ensure that our regional parks *do not* just service those who are healthy, wealthy and well.

In the “Conservation” sector:

- Easy access sites for an ageing population.
- The change in public space use with immigrants who have different demands to our “traditional use”.
- Adaptation to new sports. Need to anticipate what sport will develop in next 20 years, e.g., the take-off of mountain biking occurred in the last 15 years.

The other agencies’ standpoint of demands and pressures:

- Indications are that trends for physical activity trends are changing.
- The potential for biodiversity, conservation, restoration or enhancement could be diminished as a consequence of attempting to meet social and financial objectives of the land.
- Demand for diversified use of regional park land and demand for concessions.
- For the parks not to be rezoned for purposes of urban sprawl or for industrial pressure. Balancing the biodiversity issues with community use. Encourage co-management of services.
- As land becomes more developed, the parks become more important to film makers as potential locations. In the next 20 years there will be less open spaces for film and screen production.

Wellington Region territorial authorities’ standpoint of demands and pressures:

- Urbanisation puts pressure on natural and open space. New Zealanders are increasingly disconnected from farms and food production. Increasing demand for non-traditional uses of regional parks, especially on flat land. Flat land in Wellington is at a premium, so competing demands for alternative uses of flat regional park land may develop.

- Demands on the parks are likely to come from Wellington’s growing population, changing population demographics, more demand for recreation options closer to the Wellington City, e.g., camping/tramping, greater public expectations on service levels and proposals for exclusive use of land for commercial interests like wind farms. GWRC may need to “defend” their role as providers of open space and recreation etc against housing and energy requirements for the Wellington Region.
- The biggest pressure on regional parks is to balance conflicting and competing demands, especially with neighbouring uses, i.e., a noisy activity versus being within an ecological site. The demands may conflict in terms of physical space as there is not enough flat land in regional parks to meet all of the requests for new activities. The challenge is to identify which activities do not belong in regional parks and where they can be accommodated.
- To avoid activities that may overwhelm the existing parks systems ability to absorb change without negative spill over to adjoining areas.
- Development and promotion of wilderness walkways.
- Provision of suitable areas for motorised recreation.

Site specific demands and pressures for territorial authorities:

- The allocation of sports grounds is well accommodated at Upper Hutt and the clubs do not appear to be growing at a great rate. There are sufficient amount of parks in Upper Hutt to cope with increase in demand.
- A key pressure is continued growth in the northern part of the district being Waikanae north and Otaki, as there is increasing demand for regional park facilities in the northern part of the district, in particular in Otaki. Recommend a park around Otaki River.
- With regard to Kapiti, suggest expansion of the regional parks network in northern part of the Kapiti Coast District.
- Recommend a linear network in Kapiti (include cycleways, walkways and bridleways – CWB) connecting the regional parks and wider open space network. To create a north-south network from the existing Queen Elizabeth park north to any new regional park and other significant open spaces in the CWB network. This should be considered in the regional parks network strategy so that existing and future large regional parks constitute a true physical network. The existing linear open space and CWB networks along the Otaki and Waikanae Rivers are an important regional scale asset that could be enhanced and complemented with network expansion.

A summation of the above is provided in figure 1.2 below:

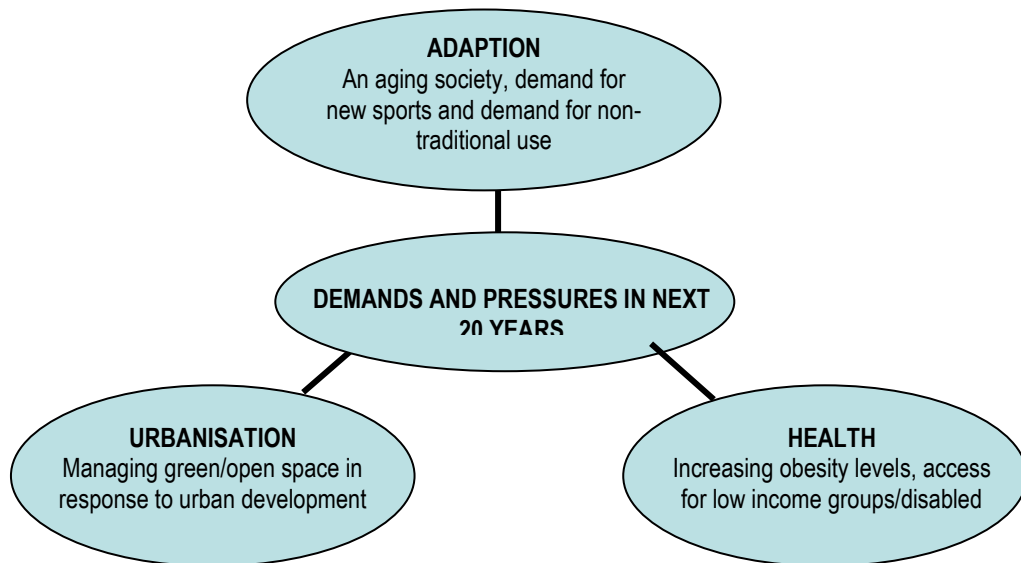


Figure 1.2

3.4 Question 4 - What focus and priorities do you believe the regional parks should adopt over the next 20 years?

From a “Health” standpoint:

- Maintain existing parks and look for opportunities to work with other community groups on new ideas, i.e., bike track creation, community gardens, promotional events in parks involving children and young people.
- Consider where parks may be best located to provide the most potential health gains.
- Promote and improve access for priority groups, e.g., those with disabilities, children and young people.
- Advocate for improved access and marketing of public transport to the regional parks.
- Promote the importance of parks and open space for health, social and cultural well-being, the economy and the environment.
- Find innovative ways to draw people into parks and for people to feel a connection to regional parks.

From a “Conservation” standpoint:

- Work with other providers/agencies to accommodate trends. Cater for a range of outdoor activities and user groups.

From the standpoint of Wellington Region territorial authorities:

- Prioritise natural and cultural heritage of regional parks. Activities that compromise these values should only be considered in limited, tightly controlled circumstances where no other viable options exist. There should be a strong focus on biodiversity and sustainability in the parks.

- Focus on balancing competing uses, consider the unique context/characteristics of each regional park.
- Keep regional parks free and accessible. The parks should be protected from inappropriate development that undermines the core values for users. More focus is to be placed on supporting restoration planting, recreation programmes and volunteer groups. Involve the community.
- Focus on recreation that requires extensive open space. Need to accommodate the changing recreational needs. Provide complementary provision of recreational opportunities for Wellington residents.
- Focus on access, whereby parks and reserves are more accessible by means other than by the car. Linkages to remote reserves and townships.
- Demonstrate best practice land and catchment management.
- Make opportunities with open space to bring communities together, i.e., youth rehabilitation.
- Green the areas surrounding our cities to improve resilience of the effects of climate change.
- Provide for landscape protection/conservation, recreation opportunities and habitation protection/conservation.

Other agencies' comments:

- Keep regional parks mostly undeveloped.
- Advocate and support local projects/initiatives that strengthen regional developments.
- Keep regional parks accessible and low cost for communities with more activities utilising parks, i.e., buggy walks.
- Provide more walking trails linking to parks.
- Have biodiversity restoration and enhancement as an integral part of park management. Invite more community participation.
- Widen the scope for use of the parks to include tourism/diversified recreation.

In summary, respondents see that the key focus and priorities for regional parks are:

- Maintain the regional parks and keep them free and accessible
- Promote/improve the regional parks access and for priority groups.
- Maintain/provide for natural and cultural heritage and recreational opportunities.

3.5 **Question 5 - Are there any specific changes or developments that you would like Greater Wellington to consider?**

Recommended changes or developments

From a “Health” standpoint:

- Consider access to the parks network for populations with the most to gain from wide open space and green infrastructure.
- Maintain and/or enhance picnic areas and places for community groups.
- Improve signage to access points to regional parks – track times/loop tracks of varying degrees of difficulty. Allow for more achievable walks for a range of abilities/family groups and destinations for families.

Recommended changes and developments by Wellington Region territorial authorities:

- Establish and develop at least one regional park in the Wairarapa. Possible development of a regional park on eastern side of the Rimutaka. Walk/bike link from Featherston to Rimutaka Rail Trail.
- Develop the following activities: huts for overnight trampers/hunters, classrooms for education on ecology/environment. It would be difficult to justify investment in leisure facilities. Motorised recreation and camping should be encouraged if impact on the environment and park users is minimised.
- Demonstrate environmentally sustainable working farms/forests. Move away from exotic plantation forests in favour of native vegetation.
- Improve access to Belmont Regional Park from Porirua City. Complete track network at Whitireia. Links across Transmission Gully (Belmont Regional Park and Battle Hill).
- There is demand for small and mid-sized trail biking. Provide opportunities for motorised vehicles.
- Develop a park in the northern part of Kapiti Coast District Council. Develop a regional linear open space and Cycleways, Walkways and Bridlepaths network. More linkages between Queen Elizabeth Park and Whareroa Farm from a public access and biodiversity perspective.
- Queen Elizabeth Park - Allow for low impact, spill over sports field use, complementary activities to the existing Tramway Museum without compromising the ecological and open space amenity of the park. Biodiversity of Queen Elizabeth Park to be protected and enhanced particularly with coastal dune restoration.

Recommended other agencies changes and developments:

- Open parks to enable the introduction of light commercial tourism/recreational operations/attractions.
- Ensure park promotions and signage is effective.

- Provide for filming in the parks as it is a good way to promote and let the public appreciate the beautiful areas in the Wellington Region.

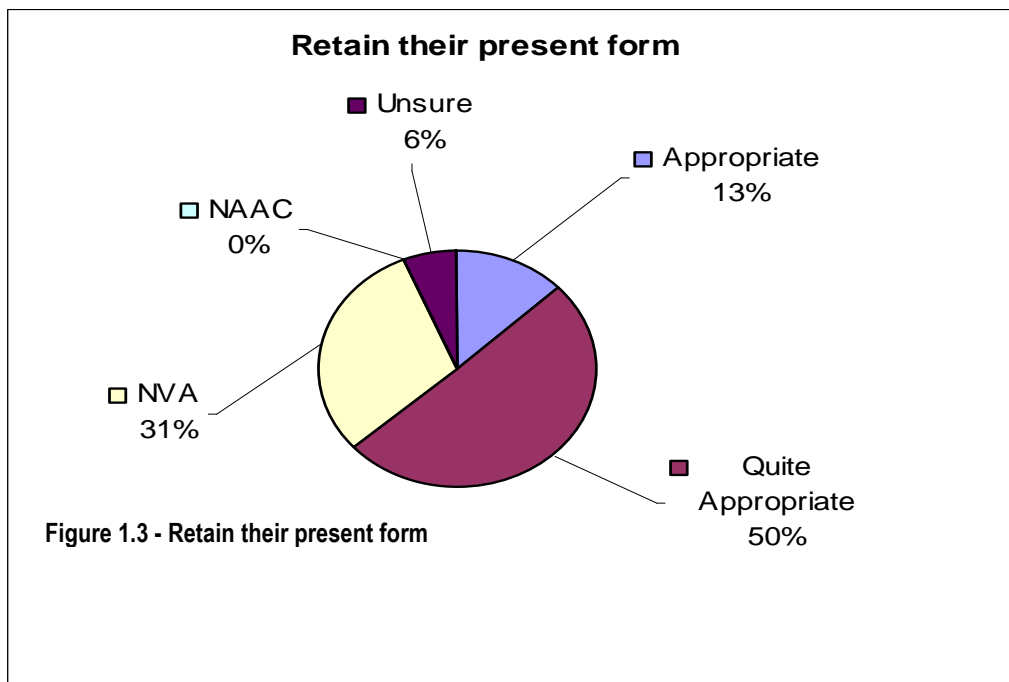
In summary, respondents see that the key specific changes or development for regional parks should be:

- Develop an additional regional park in the Kapiti Coast and in the Wairarapa.
- Develop a regional linear network of cycle ways, walkways and bridle paths. To include connecting the GWRC regional parks and the wider open space network within the Region.
- Develop Queen Elizabeth Park to allow for low-impact/spill over sports field and to include complementary activities to the existing Tramway Museum.
- Maintain activities within the parks that are currently provided.
- Improve signage.

3.6 Question 6 - How acceptable or unacceptable would each of the following development options be from your organisation’s perspective?

A large majority of 63% of respondents believed that it is “more appropriate” to retain the regional parks in their present form.

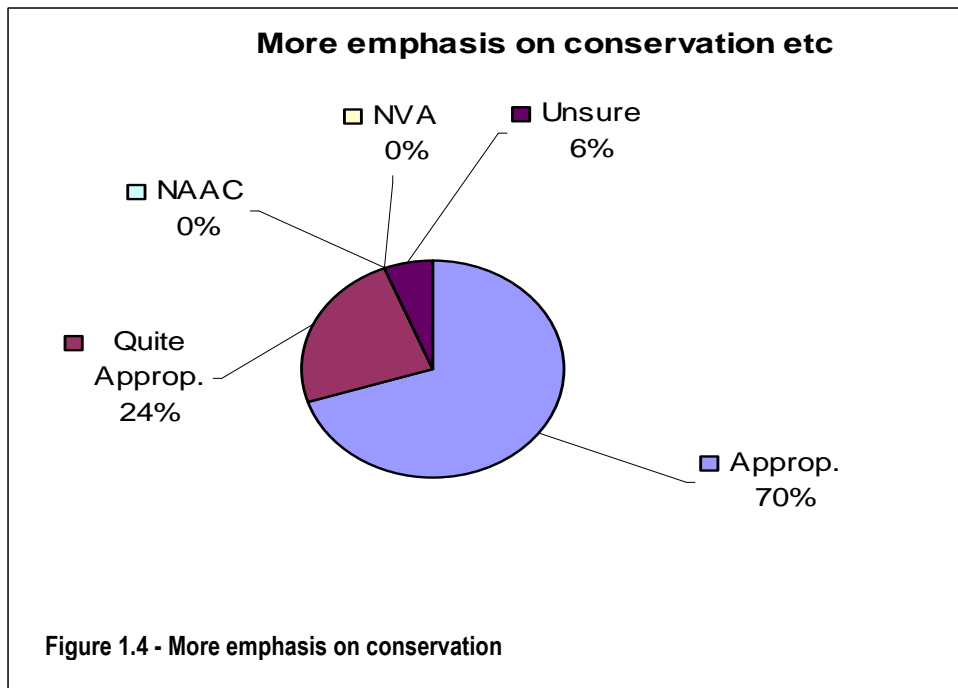
Only 31% believed it is not very “appropriate to retain the parks in their present form.



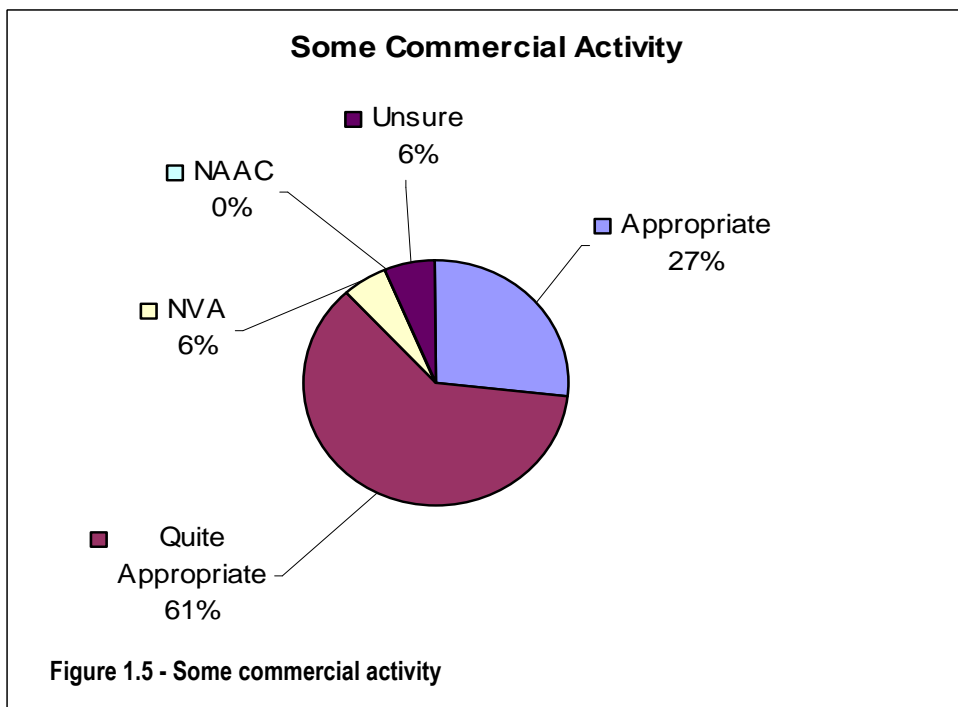
Legend (for figures 1.3 to 1.7)

NAAC – Not at all acceptable

NVA – Not very acceptable

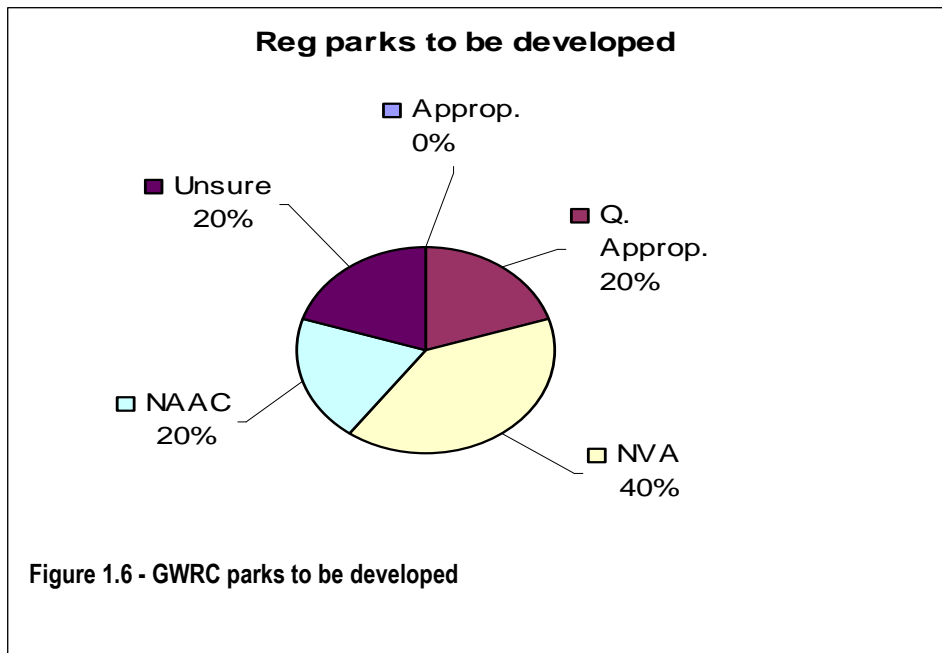


The vast majority (94%) of respondents believed that it is “more appropriate” to have more emphasis on conservation within the regional parks. Out of this 94%, 70% of respondents state that it is “definitely appropriate” to have more emphasis on conservation.

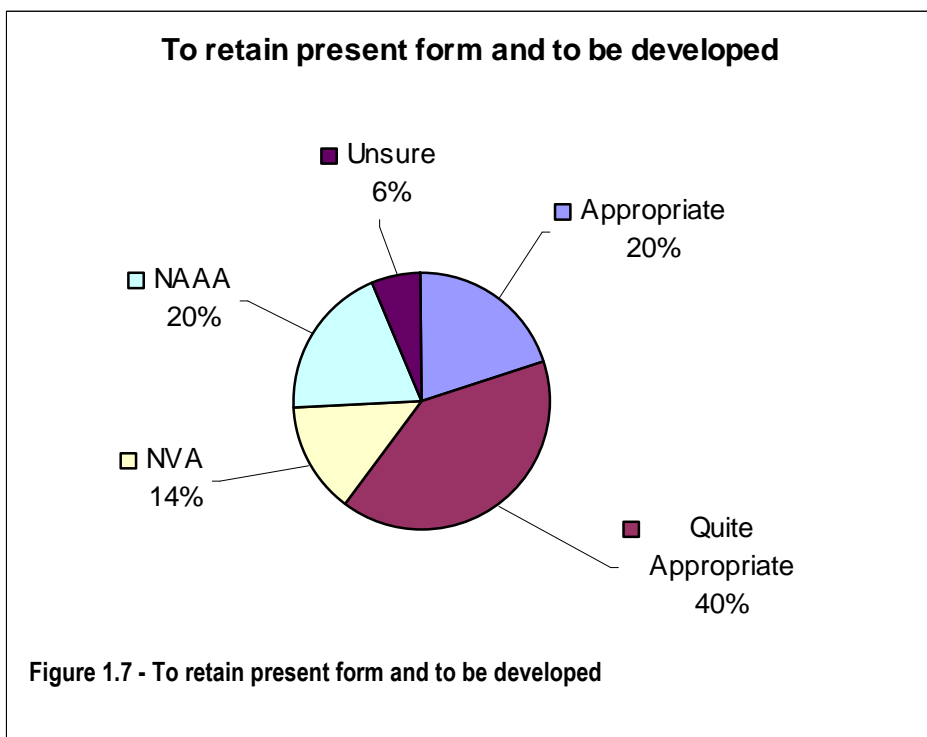


A large majority (88%) believed it was “appropriate” or “quite appropriate” to have commercial activity at the regional parks.

An overall minority at (6%) felt it was deemed in “appropriate” to have some commercial activity at the regional parks.



Interestingly, a small minority of 20% believed that it is “quite appropriate” for the regional parks to be developed. A majority of 60% of the respondents believe that it is “not very appropriate” or “not at all very appropriate” to develop the parks. None of the respondents believe that the regional parks should be developed, e.g., for built accommodation or for wind farms.



The majority (60%) believed that the regional parks be used for other operations to include developments (e.g., built accommodation wind farms) and at the same time place more emphasis on conservation, education and community interest. The other 34% believed that it would be “inappropriate”.

3.7 Question 7A - What following developments do you consider to be appropriate for regional parks?

In relation to these questions, respondents were given a list of possible developments to gauge their comfort levels on what they thought were appropriate or inappropriate in GWRC regional parks.

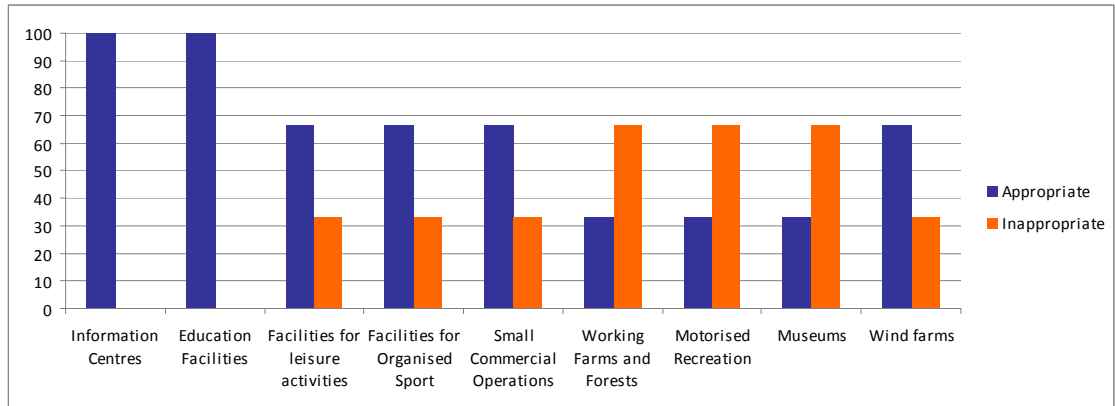


Figure 2.1 - Government Departments

With three responses there were misled opinions for all other developments. However, all three of the Central Government agencies believed that information centres, education facilities, leisure activities, facilities for organised sport, small commercial operations, and wind farms are appropriate within GWRC regional parks.

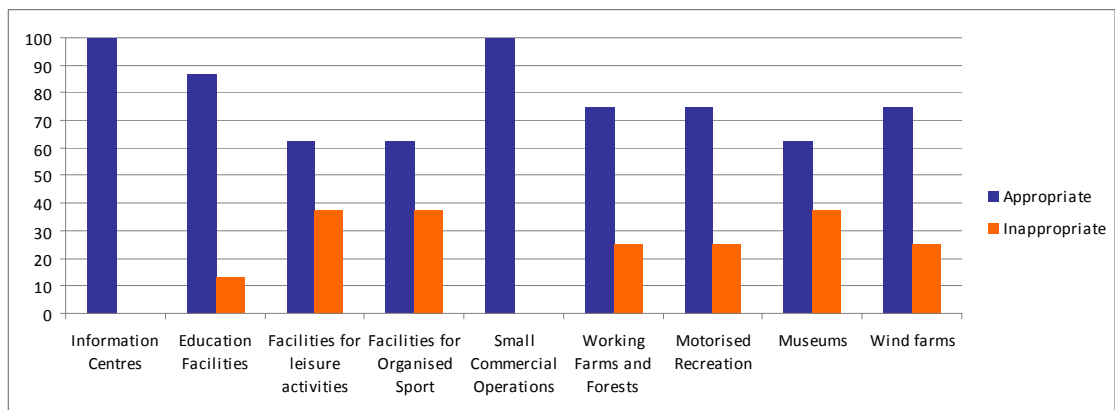


Figure 2.2 - Territorial authorities

One hundred percent of territorial authorities believed that information centres and small commercial operations are “appropriate” within the regional parks.

The majority of respondents believe that educational facilities, facilities for leisure activities, facilities for organised sport, working farms and forests, motorised recreation and wind farms are “appropriate” developments in the regional parks.

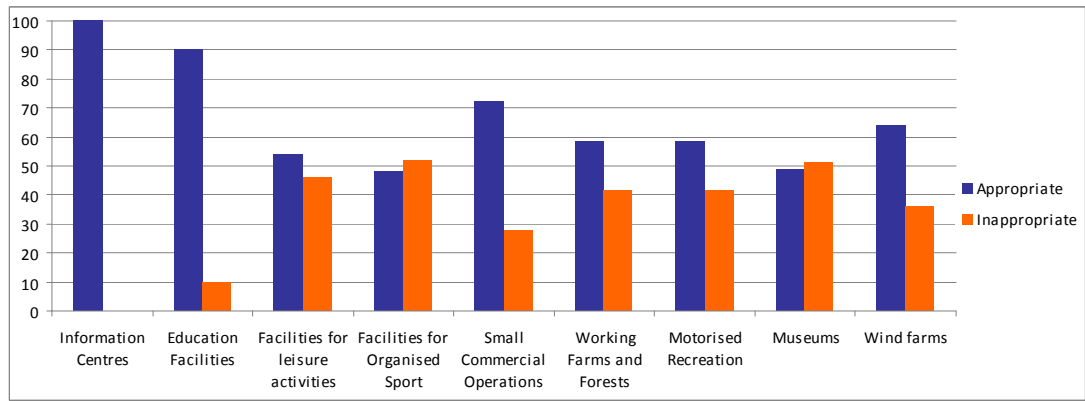


Figure 2.3 - Other agencies

All non-Government organisations view that information centres are “appropriate” within regional parks. Between 66% and 83% of respondents believe that working farms and forests, motorised recreation and education facilities are also “appropriate”.

The respondents were split 50:50 on whether small commercial operations, museums and wind farms were appropriate developments. In contrast to Government Departments and territorial authorities, the majority are against having facilities for leisure facilities and organised sport within the regional parks.

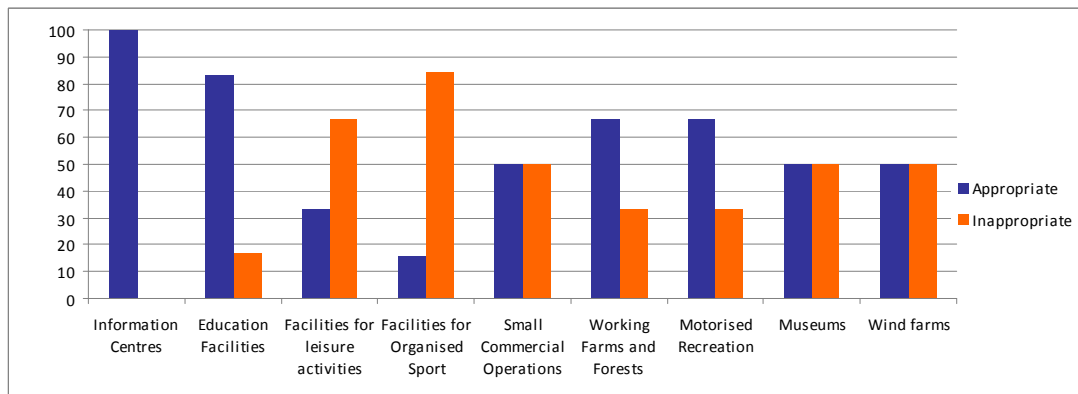


Figure 2.4- Average of all territorial authorities, Central Government organisations and other agencies

With all responses considered, it is clear that information centres are considered an “appropriate” development within the regional parks.

An overall majority between 70% and 90%, of the respondents believe that education facilities and small commercial operations are “appropriate” developments.

A large proportion of around 50% to 65% believe that it is “appropriate” to have facilities for leisure activities, working farms and forests, motorised recreation and wind farms.

Respondents are divided over the possibility of having museums and facilities for organised sports in regional parks.

3.8 Question 7B - Why would you consider these developments appropriate?

A table below details the organisations' standpoint on various developments within the regional parks:

Activity	View of organisation	
	For	Against
Information centres	Information centres would give public appreciation for the parks	Allow for nature with less man-made structures in the parks
Education facilities (e.g., classrooms)	Allow for built accommodation for schools or community groups. Supports use of regional parks as educational settings for schools and early childhood centres.	Allow for nature with less man-made structures in the parks Education facilities are already available throughout the Region and there is no need to duplicate these facilities.
Facilities for leisure activities (e.g., playgrounds, skate bowls)	Facilities for leisure activities (e.g., toilets, picnic areas and water).	Only use natural environment for leisure activities.
Facilities for organised sport (e.g., sports fields)	If territorial authorities cannot provide this, the regional parks could be used for these purposes. Should only provide organised sport that cannot be provided at city or district level.	Are sport fields, museums and motorised recreation more of a city council responsibility? Facilities for leisure activities/ organised sport – more of a territorial authority role? Sports fields are already available throughout the Region and there is no need to duplicate these facilities.
Working farms and forests	Working farms/forests - Okay if demonstrates environmental sustainable practices and could be useful to build on recreation opportunities. The farming activities provide an important link between urban dwellers and our agricultural economy.	
Motorised recreation	Motorised recreation is okay with appropriate conflicts managed	Motorised recreation is not compatible with other uses of regional parks because of noise. Is motorised recreation more of a city council responsibility? The other use of motorised recreation is already available throughout the Region and there is no need to duplicate these facilities.
Museums		Are museums more of a city council responsibility?

Activity	View of organisation	
	For	Against
Wind farms	Supports wind farms as long as operation and scale do not deter people from using the parks or reduce amenity of the parks. In favour of wind farms, as can work with working farms.	Wind turbines would drastically alter the parks. Wind farms have a high impact on amenity and landscape values.
Small commercial operations (e.g., refreshments, outdoor equipment hire)	Small commercial operations, with appropriate limitations in place Seeks light commercial tourism/recreational ventures. Provide refreshment opportunities.	Allow for interaction with nature and less man-made structures in the parks. If commercial activities can be established, then allow them to be established with open space use.

Respondents state that, in light of the above developments, the following should be considered:

- Open space and nature should be the focus.
- Activities in the regional parks should be focused on people that you want to use the parks and have more activities that encourage higher visitor numbers.
- Retain/enhance recreational opportunities and education services but never at the expense of the heritage/environmental/natural experience that GWRC regional parks has to offer.

3.9 Question 8 - Are there any projects or initiatives in your own organisation that Wellington's regional parks might support?

From Central Government Departments:

- **Department of Conservation** - Outcomes of the Wellington Regional Strategy open space working group will be informed about projects, land use and/or initiatives that we can work on.
- **Regional Public Health** - There are potential links to Regional Public Health physical activity focused projects, and our role in providing public health information and advice to local and regional authorities.

From Wellington Region territorial authorities:

Hutt City Council

- To provide consistent methods of monitoring across GWRC and territorial parks, e.g., bird counting, and to provide free fish passage at Pencarrow Lakes/Fitzroy Bay interface.
- The process of reviewing reserve public lands. This may lead to the gradual increase of Belmont and East Harbour Regional Parks.

Upper Hutt City Council

- Territorial authority/GWRC partnerships with shared projects need to continue.
- The regional outdoors programmes needs to be expanded and partnered with other agencies to get better participation in the parks activities.

Wellington City Council

- Notes only one regional park on Wellington's boundary.
- Wellington City Council is working with GWRC on a number of joint projects being; Regional open space strategy, At the heart physical activity plan, ecological restoration training for volunteers.
- To improve the links to the Belmont Regional Park in the draft Northern Reserves Management Plan.
- More joint projects to include programmes and activities to extend the regional outdoor programme to include more parks, improve ecological connectivity, research and monitoring of ecological and recreation benefits.

Kapiti Coast District Council

- From the Wellington Regional Strategy open space working group, a number of areas for collaboration have been identified. They include:
 - Control of pest flora and fauna
 - Biodiversity enhancement
 - Public access, including cycleway, walkway and bridleway (CWB) connections

Carterton District Council

- Wairarapa Moana should be a regional park.

From other agencies:

- **Sport Wellington** – To support the planned initiative with the Wellington Urban Physical Activity Strategy.
- **Positively Wellington Tourism** – To promote tourism activities within the regional parks.
- **Film Wellington** – GWRC may support the promotion and facilitation of filming in the Region.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Organisations' aims and policies with parks

Half of the organisations that responded provide park and/or park facilities/open space. The other half benefit from or supports open space/parks or parks facilities.

GWRC parks complement with the services that many organisations offer. In particular, GWRC offers a different “outdoors” experience, which is typically more “backcountry” when compared with territorial authorities’ parks and reserves. Where we compete is limited to an overlap with front country facilities such as picnicking, or small walks that could be offered elsewhere by territorial authorities for instance.

4.2 Organisational perspectives on demands and pressures

Health, urbanisation and adaptation are identified as the main issues over the next 20 years. GWRC parks have health benefits as they offer an array of physical challenges for fitness. However, they provide poorly for access because of limited or, in a lot of cases, no public transport to the parks. This is particularly important given car ownership in Wellington is the lowest for any region in New Zealand. As GWRC parks are on the peri-urban fringe, they do provide well for the trend of increasing urbanisation within the Region. In respect to adaptation to societal trends such as an ageing society, providing for the changing youth demands and demand for new sports, GWRC parks are currently inflexible because of legislative restrictions and policy processes.

4.3 Focus and priorities over the next 20 years

Respondents assert that GWRC should maintain the current services within parks for various uses for example for recreational, environmental, cultural or heritage purposes. The parks should also be free for entry and accessible. This would mean that GWRC needs to keep its current services. Regarding accessibility, the challenge for GWRC is to provide more access to the more marginalised (i.e. elderly or from low income groups), given that there is limited public transport to the parks.

4.4 Changes and developments for consideration

In general, respondents believe GWRC needs to maintain current activities in the parks, provide an additional park in the Wairarapa and Kapiti, and to develop an open space regional linear strategy. Interestingly, Hutt City and Upper Hutt City Councils claim they have surplus open space and parks, while Kapiti Coast District Council stated that it has an overall deficiency of open space and parks. With the Kapiti Coast District experiencing one of the highest population growth rates in the Region, new open spaces will need to be provided. A challenge for GWRC would be to develop an open space regional linear network connecting the GWRC regional parks with the wider open space network. The Wellington Regional Strategy open space strategy would provide a forum for this.

4.5 Future developments within GWRC parks

A large majority of 63% of respondents believe that it is “more appropriate” to retain parks in their present form. Furthermore, the vast majority (94%) of respondents believe it is more appropriate to have emphasis on conservation within the regional parks. Out of the 94%, 70% stated that it is “definitely appropriate”.

The majority of respondents find it acceptable to have some built development and commercial activity in parks. This includes activities such as information centres, education facilities, small commercial operations, working farms/forests, motorised recreation and wind farms. Respondents are divided over the possible development of facilities for organised sport and museums. Some state that sport fields, museums and organised sports are a territorial authority responsibility.

In relation to these various developments, even though the majority may support this, it is noted that some activities would not be able to legitimately operate within the parks under current management plans and Reserves Act limitations. Therefore, these operations may need planning approval to establish such activities.

4.6 Organisations' projects or initiatives

The organisations that responded identified their own services and projects that could support GWRC in achieving its goals. For example, the Ministry of Health has a healthy eating/healthy action project to increase physical exercise. The Wellington Regional Strategy open space strategy is a joint project with territorial authorities and other agencies. Wellington City Council has a number of joint projects with the *At the heart physical activity plan*. A number of territorial authorities are calling for more collaboration to be in partnership with shared projects with GWRC.

Appendix 1

**Questionnaire sent to territorial authorities,
Central Government Departments and other agencies**

Questionnaire: Greater Wellington Parks Network Strategy

Contact details for this response

Organisation / Department:

Contact Name:

Phone number:

Address:

Email:

Focus for Section A:

The values of open green spaces, such as our regional parks, are well documented internationally and becoming more widely researched and recognised in New Zealand. Our Regional Parks Network Strategy will help us to maximise the benefits of our parks for the Wellington region. It may be that your organisation can utilise regional parks to fulfil your own goals and policies.

Question 1:

Describe your organisation's aims and/or policies that currently connect with parks and....

1. ... recreation / fitness?
2. ... community wellbeing?
3. ...maintaining and enhancing our natural environment?
4. ...embracing our local history and cultural diversity?
5. ...attracting visitors and promoting our region?

Question 2:

A) Do the regional parks including their management, marketing and public relations aspects complement or compete with services offered by your organisation?

B) In what way?

Focus for Section B:

Our parks were proposed in the 1970's in the context of the early environmental movement, urbanisation and people becoming less connected to farms. The network of parks sought to protect and enhance open space, natural and cultural features and be available for passive recreation. Today's context is different. We need to re-think the purpose of these open spaces in light of:

- **Changing leisure and recreation needs: with more choice available and less free time – outdoor activity now must compete with gyms and playstation!**
- **The focus on “preventative” and rehabilitation options to improve public health and wellbeing. Stress, mental illness and low levels of physical activity are costing our society.**
- **Growing recognition of the benefits of open space to bring communities together and give opportunity for education, youth rehabilitation and cultural expression.**
- **Needing to green the areas surrounding our cities to improve our resilience to the effects of climate change and disappearing ecosystems, particularly with more urbanisation.**
- **New demands for alternative uses of regional parks, especially on flat land (e.g. a heritage precinct, facilities for motorised recreation or organised sport).**

In the light of the changing needs of our community and environment, we want to give focus and direction for developing regional parks in the future.

Question 3:

From your organisation's perspective what demands and pressures do you see for Wellington's regional parks in the next 20 years?

Question 4:

With the 'Focus for Section B' in mind, please describe what focus and priorities you believe the regional parks should adopt over the next 20 years?

Question 5:

Are there any specific changes or developments that you would like Greater Wellington to consider?

Question 6:

How acceptable or unacceptable would each of the following development options be, from your organisations perspective, for the regional parks in the future? (circle or highlight)

	Very acceptable	Quite acceptable	Not very acceptable	Not at all acceptable	(Unsure)
<p><u>Option 1:</u> That the regional parks are maintained for preservation, access and use, in their present form</p>	01	02	03	04	05
<p><u>Option 2:</u> That the regional parks are developed, with even more emphasis given to their conservation, environmental improvement, education and community interest roles</p>	01	02	03	04	05
<p><u>Option 3:</u> That the regional parks are developed as per Option 2, plus they include a limited amount of commercial activity that can enhance the recreational park experience, e.g. refreshment facilities, hirers of outdoor equipment such as bikes, tents, or clothing.</p>	01	02	03	04	05
<p><u>Option 4:</u> That the regional parks are developed, with some of the land use going to other operations (e.g. built accommodation, wind farms), with some change to the current park experience</p>	01	02	03	04	05
<p><u>Option 5:</u> That the regional parks assign some of their land resource for other operations (as per Option 4), but at the same time place more emphasis on the conservation, education and community interest roles (as per Option 2)</p>	01	02	03	04	05

Question 7: We have been asking the public what is the nature and extent of development they are comfortable within in our regional parks.

A) Which of the following developments do you consider to be appropriate for regional parks?

- Information centres
- Education facilities (e.g. classrooms)
- Facilities for leisure activities (e.g. playgrounds, skate bowls)
- Facilities for organised sport (e.g. sports fields)
- Small commercial operations (e.g. refreshments, outdoor equipment hire)
- Working farms and forests
- Motorised Recreation
- Museums
- Windfarms

B) Why? [You may wish to consider the impacts on other users, keeping with natural character, protection of environment and heritage, enhancing recreational opportunities etc]

Focus for Section C:

Collaboration is essential for getting the best outcome for our communities. As a result of the development of a Regional Open Space Strategy (a project under the Wellington Regional Strategy) Greater Wellington is involved in a process of working together with other open space providers to provide open space goods and services for the Wellington Region. GW Parks are interested in opportunities for making stronger connections between Greater Wellington and other organisations.

Question 8:

Are there particular projects or initiatives in your own organisation that Wellington's regional parks might support?

Question 9: Could you provide us with details of any research projects, plans or initiatives which may be useful as we consider the future of our regional parks in Wellington? Detail below:

Project Initiative	Relevant to regional parks	Contact

Thanks for your comments.

They provide us with valuable perspectives and information to help us to develop a strategy for our regional parks. If you have any other comments then please include them below. We will endeavour to stay in touch with you throughout this process so your contact details are important.

Please send your completed response to:

Sonia Chisholm, Policy advisor, Parks & Forests
04 381 7784
sonia.chisholm@gw.govt.nz

Remember, the closing date for your feedback is Friday 22 May 2009

Other comments: