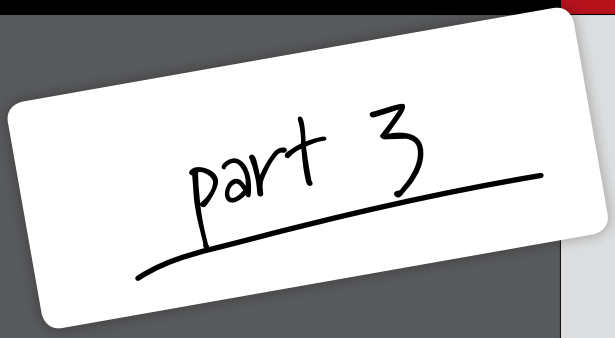
KEY ISSUES



KEY ISSUE: PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In the Wellington region

We have a high-quality well-used Metlink public transport network of bus, train and harbour ferry services. There are 103 bus routes, four train lines and two harbour ferry routes. In 2007/08 more than 34 million trips were made on the network. The Wellington region has the highest per capita use of public transport in New Zealand.

What we want

A well-patronised public transport network that helps people get around the region easily and reduces road congestion.

The big issues

- While we have a core of dedicated public transport users, our ability to increase our contribution to the economic growth of the region by reducing road congestion will only be met through attracting new users. However, people are reluctant to give up the use of their cars. To be attractive to users, public transport must be:
  - Convenient
  - Reliable
  - Simple to use
  - High quality
  - User friendly
  - Affordable

  Our current system does not have all these qualities. Rail has suffered from underinvestment over many years and bus services need to be expanded. Reliability is a key issue across the whole network. While considerable new investment has been committed to enhance rail services, further funding will be necessary if we are to attract more people to public transport.
- To attract more users, we need to modernise the network by introducing features such as real-time information and electronic ticketing. However, these things are very costly. In comparison with many other parts of the world, the region does not have a large population to easily fund such initiatives. Therefore, Greater Wellington is taking a measured approach to network improvements.
- People often have high expectations about service levels – frequency and coverage – without realising the cost implications of their demands. This is particularly the case for off-peak services which may please a few people but require a high level of subsidy. Also, congestion is often not a problem at these off-peak times, which makes car use even more attractive. Greater Wellington has to balance the cost of providing services with demand and patronage.
- A large part of Greater Wellington's public transport budget is comprised of contracted expenditure for bus, rail and ferry services. Our ability to control costs over the short term is limited by these contracts and by the appetite of Greater Wellington to reduce services or increase fares when costs increase. The cost of contractual inflation payments on bus and ferry services has been extremely volatile over the past two years primarily due to the price of oil on the world market and the NZ/US dollar exchange rate. This volatility increases the likelihood that in the future there will be major variations between budgets and actual expenditure.
- The full rating impact arising from the programme of rail improvements starts in 2010/11 when new Matangi trains start arriving in Wellington. While the majority of the costs are met by central government funding from the Wellington Transport Package, the rates impact is still significant. It is part of the additional $95 million that the region agreed to fund as a condition of receiving government funding.

- Improvements to public transport mean that the transport rate is forecast to double over the next 10 years.
- Currently 30% of rail commuters use Park & Ride carparks provided by Greater Wellington which are free of charge. With future patronage growth it will not be possible to sustain this level of Park & Ride use because of the shortage of additional land close to rail stations. In addition:
  - There are increasing coasts for providing and maintaining the carparks, including security service costs
  - Many people who use carparks live close by (50% within 1.85km)

Greater Wellington's response in this 10-Year Plan

- Focus on peak-period commuting, while trying to grow off-peak use
- Continue to improve the rail network by:
  - Purchasing new trains
  - Upgrading the rail network (with KiwiRail)
  - Extending the electric network to Waikanae, and double tracking from MacKays Crossing to Waikanae

  (This work is already underway.)
- Further improve rail services by increasing capacity, reliability and frequency in line with patronage growth (Regional Rail Plan Rail Scenario 1)
- Improve the bus network by:
  - Ensuring existing services are providing value for money by redeploying resources from poorly performing services
  - Providing future funding to expand the network
  - Supporting bus priority measures, particularly in the Wellington CBD
- Making the Metlink network more attractive to users by:
  - Providing a real-time information system
  - Working towards a network wide electronic ticket
  - Working towards standardised fare products
  - Ensuring the network is easy to use
- Managing the volatility of cost changes arising from changes in the price of oil on the world market and in NZ/US dollar exchange rate by making annual adjustments to budgets and using reserves to smooth costs.
- At some stage in the future, possibly introducing a charge for Park & Ride parking. Charges would be set at a level that remained substantially cheaper than parking in Wellington CBD, and would take into account the total cost of the trip so that public transport remained a competitive travel mode. Charges could be introduced on a trial basis and may be targeted at certain carparks where demand exceeds supply.

KEY ISSUE: **WATER SUPPLY**

In the Wellington Region

In our region we are fortunate to have a temperate climate with adequate rainfall to supply our needs.

Greater Wellington is a wholesale water supplier of potable water (tap water). We collect water from rivers and underground (aquifer) sources that are dependent on rainfall. The water is treated and delivered to reservoirs owned by the Lower Hutt, Porirua, Upper Hutt and Wellington city councils. Those city councils then supply the water to the public.

In the remaining part of the region (Kapiti and the Wairarapa), the district councils collect, treat and deliver water to their communities.

Greater Wellington and the four city councils in the region consider it important to have a secure supply system. The target is to have a very low risk of water shortage – less than 2% annual probability of a shortfall. This means that we would expect to have no more than one year in 50 years when there is not enough water to meet reasonable demand.

What we want

A safe and secure reticulated water supply that provides high-quality water to meet the reasonable current and future needs of the population, and which is cost effective and environmentally responsible.

The big issues

- Greater Wellington's system has relatively little storage capacity and we largely rely on there being enough water each day from our rivers and aquifers to meet the day's water use. In the past we have been able to meet demand, but there has been higher than anticipated population growth and climate change predictions are for drier than anticipated summers. It is becoming more difficult to meet an increasing demand during dry periods. Currently the system is operating at a 3.9% probability of an annual water shortage, which exceeds our security of supply target of 2%. The problem is likely to worsen over the next five years if the population increases as predicted. If we don't take any action, by 2013 the water supply network will technically only be able to provide for a 7% probability of an annual water shortage. This means that it would be difficult to operate the system without severe constraints on discretionary water use over summer. New water sources are required in the short term if we are to have a secure supply of water.
- A major new water storage facility will almost certainly be needed in the long term if we are to meet the demand of a growing population. However, this will be very costly and possibly have significant environmental impacts. Importantly, we can defer the need for increased storage if we reduce the demand for water to offset population growth. The more we can reduce the demand per capita, the longer we can put off having to build and pay for a new supply. If we compare our per capita water use with other areas, eg, Auckland, it appears possible to reduce consumption. On the other hand, it may be that people are willing to pay more to enjoy unrestricted access to water and some measures to conserve water will also have a substantial cost. Furthermore, having alternative water supply sources would provide greater security of supply following a major earthquake.

- Greater Wellington, in conjunction with the city and district councils, is developing a draft Regional Water Strategy, part of which will address water supply. Some of the short-to-medium-term options being considered to increase water supply in the metropolitan areas include reducing the minimum flow downstream of Kaitoke weir to allow more water to be abstracted, raising the maximum storage at Stuart Macaskill Lakes, building a treated water reservoir in central Wellington and taking water from the Upper Hutt aquifer. (Although the Kaitoke weir is on the Hutt River, there are other major river tributaries downstream of the weir.) A long-term option is building a dam, treatment plant and infrastructure in the Akatarawa Forest. Short-term options are required to restore the security of supply standard but the strategy will provide "option packages" for the medium to long term. Options may include various approaches to balancing between demand reduction and the development of future sources.
- Every litre of water we supply requires electricity to treat and pump it and chemicals to make it safe and clean. Approximately 75% of Greater Wellington's greenhouse gas emissions are from energy used in water treatment and distribution. Greater Wellington has set goals to reduce these emissions as part of the Communities for Climate Protection Programme. Conserving water would contribute to achieving these goals.

Greater Wellington's response in this 10-year plan

- By 2012 return to a 2% security of supply standard by implementing the short-term options – Kaitoke (2009) and Stuart Macaskill Lakes (2011)
- Complete the central Wellington reservoir (2015) to retain the security of supply standard for another year
- Continue our water conservation programmes by promoting voluntary measures
- The region's commitment to demand management is unknown and at this stage we don't know the level of water saving that will be achieved. As we have to ensure a secure supply of water, we have planned conservatively and provided for alternative water sources to be developed as follows:
  - Complete construction of the Upper Hutt aquifer wells, treatment plant and pumping station by 2015 – $16.9 million (today's dollars)
  - Commence the design of the Whakatikei dam in the Akatarawa Forest and associated treatment plant, and start development of the dam in 2014. The dam and treatment plant will come into operation in 2022 – $135 million (today's dollars)

This approach may change if the four city councils and Greater Wellington commit to a more aggressive approach to water conservation through the Regional Water Strategy. A per capita reduction in water use would mean that new water supply infrastructure could be deferred for a number of years.

Possible measures range from encouraging the uptake of water flow technology, installing water meters and encouraging home collection/grey water use.

However, Greater Wellington is only a supplier of bulk water to the four cities and demand management is the responsibility of each of the cities.

KEY ISSUE: REGIONAL PARKS

In the Wellington region

Greater Wellington manages five regional parks (Battle Hill, Belmont, East Harbour, Kaitoke and Queen Elizabeth). It also manages significant recreation areas in the Akatarawa and Pakuratahi forests. Two new parks – Whitireia and Lake Wairarapa – are being included into the network.

Greater Wellington's current approach to these parks and forest areas is to offer open space near the urban centres for a variety of recreational activities, and preserve the biodiversity and heritage values of these areas.

What we want

Park and forest areas that provide a real and lasting benefit to the region – public open spaces that meet leisure and health needs, and support healthy natural ecosystems.

The big issues

- The community wants better quality parks at Whitireia and Lake Wairarapa. At present these areas are degraded. However, creating better parks comes at a financial cost. The Council has to decide whether to put resources into these new parks at the expense of existing parks, or charge the community more via rates to bring all parks to the same level.
- The park framework was developed in 1976 and, with increased urbanisation, people's leisure and recreational requirements have changed. For example, the popularity of cycling, motorised recreation and organised events has increased markedly. At the same time, there is increasing pressure to protect the environment and for park land to be used for other activities, such as heritage precincts or golf driving ranges. However, Greater Wellington's idea of using park land for wind energy generation has encountered resistance. There is a need to re-examine the purpose of our parks and forest areas, clarify community priorities, and avoid potentially competing and conflicting uses.

Greater Wellington's response in this 10-Year Plan

- Start improving the new parks at a slower rate than originally anticipated and seek funding from external sources where possible. This plan provides for $100,000 per annum for Lake Wairarapa and $75,000 per annum for Whitireia Park.
- Prepare a high-level Greater Wellington Regional Parks Network Strategy (for regional parks and recreation areas) that will clearly articulate a vision and purpose for our parks network. We will be consulting widely on the strategy. It may be, for example, that different parks should have different purposes and service levels.
  The strategy will address:
  - How parks contribute to community well-being
  - Future population trends, and associated recreation and leisure preferences
  - Public views and aspirations for regional parks and competing interests
  - The cultural and heritage values, environmental state and recreation potential of regional parks

  The intention is to not make any major development decisions about our regional parks and recreation areas until the strategy is completed (July 2010).
- Provide for any changes resulting from the Parks Network Strategy in our next 10-Year Plan 2012-22.
- Maintain current service levels in our parks and forests in the meantime.
- Develop a Regional Open Space Strategy, as part of the Wellington Regional Strategy, to promote a coordinated approach to open space development across the region.

KEY ISSUE:
FLOOD PROTECTION

In the Wellington region

There are four major river systems in the region (Ruamahanga, Hutt, Otaki and Waikanae rivers) and a whole complex of smaller river systems (eg, Porirua Stream, Wainuiomata River, Waitohu Stream, Mangaone Stream, Waipoua River and the Waiohine River) that pose a range of flood and erosion risks. Flooding is only a risk when it affects people, property and the productive use of land.

The Hutt Valley, for example, is one of the most densely populated floodplains in New Zealand and, as the population of the Kapiti Coast grows, the potential impacts of flooding from the Waikanae and Otaki rivers increase. Similarly, as land use intensifies in the Wairarapa (agricultural and lifestyle developments), the importance of flooding becomes even greater.

In 2000, Greater Wellington committed to a 40-year flood protection programme of improvements for the major western river systems (Otaki, Waikanae, Hutt) and in 2006 we also committed to investing in a 10-year programme for two Wairarapa schemes to ensure they deliver the required level of service. We also have a programme of investigating the flood risk for a lot of our minor water courses so we can make sensible decisions about how these are managed.

What we want

Our community to understand the risks from flooding and erosion, and have acceptable and affordable solutions in place. We also want to ensure that inappropriate developments don't create new problems.

The big issues

- Flood protection works are expensive. The current commitments are already a significant part our rates bill and they are not yet at their peak.
- There is an expectation that we should be identifying flood risks so that we avoid inappropriate development in flood risk areas. However, by identifying these flood risks, we can create anxiety in the community along with expectations that we will carry out necessary flood-mitigation works – which, in turn, will add to the rates bill.
- Our funding arrangements provide for half of the costs of flood protection works to be paid by the region (rates) and half to be paid for by the local area of benefit. This funding model has advantages (we can get on and do necessary works) and disadvantages in that it can create a demand that cannot be reasonably met (not affordable to the region).

- There will shortly be a new National Policy Statement on flood risk. This will require Greater Wellington to continue carrying out flood risk investigations and drawing the risk to the attention of the affected community – thereby raising expectations. People understandably don't like us turning up and saying their house is at risk without a plan to do something about it!

Greater Wellington's response in this 10-Year Plan

For this 10-Year Plan, the Council reviewed its approach to flood protection in the region as it was mindful of the financial cost to the general ratepayers and those in flood prone areas. It considered a number of options, including slowing down the current capital programme, changing current funding arrangements, and reviewing how much money it should put aside each year for repairing flood damage.

The Council has decided to continue with its previously committed funding for capital works and with a measured programme of investigations. This means that we will maintain our existing schemes and continue with the planned environmental improvements. We will maintain the flood contingency reserve funding at existing levels.

Therefore, Greater Wellington will:

- Continue with the capital works programme for the Hutt, Otaki and Waikanae rivers, and the improvement to the Waiohine and Lower Wairarapa Valley development schemes at the rates that were agreed in 2000 and 2006, and included in our last 10-Year Plan.
- Clean up the contaminated sediments from the Waiwhetu Stream and improve the channel downstream of the Bell Road bridge to reduce the flood risk.
- Carry out flood risk investigations by completing the following:
  - Waiwhetu floodplain management plan (by 2012)
  - Pinehaven flood hazard investigation (by 2011)
  - Waiohine floodplain management plan project (by 2014)
- Complete the reviews of the Otaki and Waikanae floodplain management plans and the Waingawa River scheme (by 2011).
- Continue with implementing our environmental strategies that are associated with capital works to improve the river environment.

KEY ISSUE: LAND MANAGEMENT

In the Wellington region

The region has hill country farmland, lowland intensive agriculture farmland, urban developed land, peri-urban lifestyle land, and natural forests, wetlands and rivers, etc.

What we want

- Sustainable and profitable agriculture production
- Quality urban and peri-urban living and quality rural communities
- Healthy natural ecosystems

The big issues

- The way we manage all our land determines the health of our natural environment and the risk from natural hazards, such as flooding. The way we manage our agricultural land underpins our economic prosperity and the way we manage our urban land affects our quality of life. The challenge is to manage our land in a way that recognises these interrelationships. All too often we make decisions about land use without considering the wider implications.
- The Animal Health Board's bovine Tb vector control programme in the northern Wairarapa has resulted in a Tb-free area. Therefore, the Animal Health Board will no longer be funding any possum control in this area. The farmers have asked Greater Wellington to put in a replacement possum control programme to keep possum numbers low, thereby maintaining the biodiversity and farm production gains that have already been made. The Council has decided to introduce such a programme, starting in 2011/12.
- The National Pest Management Strategy for Bovine Tb is currently under review (due to be presented to the Minister of Biosecurity in September 2009). Under this Strategy, Greater Wellington has been a very active participant in the bovine Tb vector control programme in the Wellington region. However, the Animal Health Board has recently made changes to the programme by moving vector management in-house. As a result, Greater Wellington's role in the programme has reduced. Greater Wellington will need to decide whether it should retain any role in the bovine Tb programme.
- In the Wairarapa hill country there are still large tracts of land that remain vulnerable to soil erosion even though Greater Wellington has been working with landowners over many years to encourage sustainable farming practices. There is an opportunity for some Crown funding to speed up our hill country erosion control work. This funding will be matched by a financial contribution from Greater Wellington and the landowners. Joining this scheme is an attractive option as the amount of work that can be achieved greatly exceeds the additional cost to the ratepayer. It is also likely that the effects of climate change on this country will strengthen the need for sustainable land management practices.
- Enhancing or even maintaining the biodiversity of this region and creating healthy natural ecosystems is a massive task and it is difficult to decide on priorities, approaches and quantum of work. Biodiversity management crosses a number of Greater Wellington's functional responsibilities, eg, water supply, regional parks, resource management and land management, etc. The challenge is to develop an integrated programme that is part of our overall land management programme to produce tangible results for biodiversity.

Greater Wellington's response in this 10-Year Plan

- Take a whole-of-catchment approach to flood risk, soil conservation, biosecurity (pest control), biodiversity and land use planning in the region by:
  - Developing regional plans under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) as the framework for integrating our approach to land management
  - Considering the effects on catchments when processing resource consents under the RMA
  - Supporting the development of farm sustainability plans that integrate economic productivity with sound resource management practices
  - Maintaining our commitment to the current biodiversity work programmes and integrating them with our other land management programmes, including our pest control programmes
  - Working with our territorial authorities on land-use planning issues
  - Supporting the Good Regional Form programme of the Wellington Regional Strategy
- Continue funding support for the regional share of the Animal Health Board's bovine Tb programme, at least until the new national strategy becomes operative. The Council is reserving its position on supporting the new strategy.
- Carry out a regional possum control programme, starting in the northern Wairarapa in 2011/12. ($30,000 for pre-monitoring in 2010/11 to determine work required and $190,000 for control work in 2011/12 – increasing over the 10-year period.) This plan does not provide for any possum control work in the western part of the region.
- Support the hill country erosion-control scheme by taking advantage of the available Crown funding and providing the additional regional share ($89,000 in 2009/10 and increasing thereafter). The Akura Conservation Centre will be expanded to meet the anticipated demand for trees for the enhanced erosion control scheme. Both these initiatives will speed up the protection of erosion prone land in the region.

KEY ISSUE: CLIMATE CHANGE

In the Wellington region

In our region climate change is likely to result in more damaging winds and flooding. There may be an increase in rainfall and cloudy days during winter and spring for the west of the region (Kapiti, Porirua and Wellington) but in the Wairarapa the opposite may happen. The Wairarapa may experience prolonged dry periods, lower rainfall and more drying northwest winds, resulting in drought conditions and water shortages.

An increase in storm intensity across the region is a possibility. This may lead to more damaging floods, a greater number of landslips and higher storm surges that could increase erosion in the high country and along vulnerable coastlines, and cause more coastal flooding.

The models of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicate that, by 2080, there will be 10-50% more days with very high and extreme fire danger in the Wellington region.[1]

Indications are that sea level rise is likely to be at least 0.2-0.5 metres by 2100, with a real possibility it may reach one metre or more. When the effects of the rise in sea levels are added to the storm surge effects of more frequent and more intense adverse weather events, the implications for our region's coastal communities could be serious. Further, the upstream effects of sea level rise are likely to add to or compound the number and frequency of floods.

Climate change has the potential to cause both economic and social disruption.

What we want

A resilient community that, as far as possible, is reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate the effects of global warming, but is also adapting well to any changes caused by climate change.

The big issues

- The scale and complexity of climate change issues are such that addressing them can seem overwhelming for any one institution, let alone individuals, in a small city, in a small country, in the middle of the ocean miles from any other. New Zealand's historical contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions is small despite our per capita emissions being very high – sixth in the world by some counts. This leads to an argument that the Wellington region should not worry about reducing its emissions and should simply focus all its attention on adapting to whatever results from the rest of the developed world's activities. The countering argument is that if, to achieve a liveable future, we wish to persuade the rest of the developed world to mitigate the effects of global warming, we only acquire the moral right to do so by doing our bit.
- There is great uncertainty about how the effects of climate change will play out. Although scientists agree that global warming is occurring and is human induced, different climate models deliver different results as to what effects will be felt and when. This makes it difficult to plan how we are going to adapt to any effects. For example, will sea level rise be small enough to make building more substantial sea walls a cost-effective option or should we be thinking about how to migrate housing away from certain parts of the coast? If climate change is going to threaten the viability of current farming in the Wairarapa, what should we be doing to transition the community to a new economy and, given a new climate regime, what should be the nature of that new economy? Despite the uncertainty, we need to start thinking now about how we are going to adapt to the effects of climate change.
- Greater Wellington has been supporting the development of renewable energy in the region through making Greater Wellington-owned land available to private developers for wind farms. However, there has been opposition to proposals from affected communities, highlighting the tension between the need for renewable energy, environmental protection and community well-being.

[1] IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, 2007 (Working Group II Report) Ch 11 Australia and New Zealand p515

Greater Wellington's response in this 10-Year Plan

Greater Wellington is currently working with the city and district councils in the region and around New Zealand, and is leading the region's planning for dealing with climate change. Local authorities have agreed to work collaboratively on developing goals and a shared plan for the region to reduce the region's greenhouse gas emissions. We will also take the opportunity to develop strategies to support our communities to be resilient and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Greater Wellington has already developed targets and a plan for reducing its own corporate greenhouse gas emissions and will be working to implement this plan. For example, three quarters of our emissions are from energy used in water treatment and distribution.

We will also:

- Implement the Regional Land Transport Strategy that has:
  - A target to hold transport emissions to 2001 levels by 2016, an effective cut of approximately 25% once population growth is taken into account
  - Measures to reduce transport emissions, such as more public transport, school and business travel plan programmes and a web-based ride-share programme
- Continue to provide for the effects of climate change in our flood protection programme. Since 2000, we have allowed for climate change in our structural works, eg, through design standards or alignments. As flood protection schemes are reviewed, we will incorporate the latest climate change information in our planning.
- Work with other local authorities and organisations to identify potential renewable energy options for this region, eg, marine, solar.
- Support renewable energy in the region by making Greater Wellington-owned land available for private developers to construct wind farms at Puketiro in the Akatarawa Forest and Stoney Creek in the Wairarapa.
- Investigate mini hydrogeneration projects for water supply purposes. Construct a mini hydrogenerator at the Wainuiomata, Water Treatment Plant.
- Continue to develop our integrated approach to catchment management.
- Continue with our hazard identification programme that investigates the potential for climate change to exacerbate natural hazards that already occur in the region, eg, storms, landslips, coastal erosion.
- Ensure that our pest plant and animal eradication work is responsive to any increase in existing pests or to any new pests arriving in the region as a result of climate change.
- Continue with our biodiversity programmes as, for example:
  - Revegetating vulnerable coastal dunes will help mitigate the effects of coastal erosion
  - Encouraging reversion of open spaces to bush will expand the region's carbon sinks
- Support Grow Wellington, the region's economic development agency, at least until June 2012. Grow Wellington's statement of intent includes supporting the development and export of carbon neutral technology
- Ensure that we have the civil defence emergency management capability to respond to any major weather events.

OTHER ISSUE:
WELLINGTON REGIONAL STRATEGY

The Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS) is a sustainable growth strategy for the region that has been developed by the nine local authorities in conjunction with central government and the region's business, education, research and voluntary sectors. It aims to make the region "internationally competitive" – in other words, a region that offers the competitive package of a great lifestyle and job opportunities, supported by a strong economy.

Greater Wellington was asked by the other local authorities in the region to be the "keeper" of the WRS and to fund this through regional rates. The WRS office coordinates all the WRS projects and has a leadership role for some of them. Greater Wellington also funds, through a targeted rate, Grow Wellington, the regional economic development agency. Funding for the Wellington Regional Strategy (including Grow Wellington) for 2009/10 is proposed at $4.5 million and $5 million per year thereafter.

Since adoption of the WRS in May 2007, a number of projects have begun, including the following (lead agency in brackets): regional Genuine Progress Index (WRS office); regional urban design (WRS office); industrial land (Hutt City Council); rural residential development and subdivision design (Kapiti Coast District Council); regional open space strategy (WRS office/Greater Wellington); regional broadband (Wellington City Council/WRS office).

Broadband is seen as key to economic growth. Local authorities in the region have agreed that there is a role for the public sector to facilitate and support new investment in a fibre-optic broadband network for the region. In the region's rural areas wireless broadband will be appropriate. However, getting connections across the region is very costly and will need a coordinated approach from major providers, the Government and councils. The Government has announced an investment proposal for ultra-fast broadband to the home with an emphasis on fibre-optic cabling. Exact details of the programme are not yet available but Greater Wellington and other councils in the region will work with the Government as it develops the proposal. Grow Wellington is promoting the uptake of higher capacity broadband and Greater Wellington will be working alongside Grow Wellington to promote better broadband for the Wellington region.

OTHER ISSUE:
NEW MASTERTON OFFICE

Greater Wellington has two main offices in the region (Wakefield Street, Wellington, and Chapel Street, Masterton) as well as some depots (Upper Hutt, Lower Hutt, Otaki and Masterton) and the Harbour department's offices (Queen's Wharf, Wellington) along with Beacon Hill Communications station (Seatoun, Wellington).

There are significant problems with the Masterton office. It is very cramped for the 87 staff it currently houses, has limited disability access and is inadequate to serve as an alternative Wellington Civil Defence Group Emergency Operating Centre. The existing building will soon require substantial maintenance expenditure. Some staff have had to be located in older-style premises adjacent to the main office building.

The Council has considered a number of options over many years to deal with the problem. It has investigated leasing or purchasing an alternative building in Masterton, or purchasing, leasing or developing a building outside the town. It has also looked at refurbishing and extending its existing office.

Other options have been the development of a new building on Greater Wellington's current land in Chapel Street, Masterton or on its current depot site in Ngaumutawa Road, Masterton.

In considering all these options, the Council has taken into account the financial implications, transport links, zoning and staff considerations. It has concluded that the optimal solution is to construct a new two-storey building on its Chapel Street, Masterton site, to the north of the existing office, and subsequently sell the existing building and surplus land.

The estimated net cost of the new building is $5.96 million. This includes the sale of the surplus building. It will be funded by a loan with a total servicing cost of $576,000 per annum. This means an average cost per ratepayer of $3.16 per annum over the term of the loan (20 years). This 10-Year Plan provides for the new building in Masterton.