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Committee Environment Committee
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One Billion Trees programme (1B trees) Opportunities in the Greater Wellington region

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- Update the Committee on recent developments relating to the 1B trees programme, and
- To inform the Committee of how Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) will engage with the 1B trees programme.

2. Background

2.1. Overview

The One Billion Trees programme (1B Trees) is a ten-year investment plan, and one of three investment tiers of government's Provincial Growth Fund which aims to enhance economic development opportunities, create sustainable jobs, enable Māori to reach their full potential, boost social inclusion and participation, build resilient communities, and help meet New Zealand's climate change targets.



Figure Source: <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/sectors-industries/regions-cities/regional-economic-development/pdf-image-library/provincial-growth-fund.pdf>

The 1B trees programme is intended to result in a substantial increase in the area of land planted in, or allowed to regenerate into, woody vegetation. The

programme recognises that such land uses can bring a range of social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits to communities. The overarching theme of the 1B trees programme is succinctly captured in the phrase, *“the right tree, in the right place, for the right purpose.”* If this is achieved then the 1B trees programme will help to:

- Diversify income
- Invest in the future
- Improve land productivity
- Tackle environmental issues like erosion
- Reduce the effects of climate change
- Improve water quality
- Moderate river flows
- Provide important habitats for a range of native species
- Enhance natural landscapes
- Create jobs

2.2. 1B trees funding policy

GWRC staff attended a 1B trees funding policy workshop hosted by Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) senior staff on 3 May 2018. MPI anticipates completion of 1B trees funding policy by mid-year 2018. There are many challenges around building a 1B trees funding policy framework that will maximise the success of the core purpose, *“the right tree, in the right place, for the right purpose.”* Key policy issues include:

- Overarching alignment with the NPSFM (National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management) and NESPF (National Environmental Standard for Plantation Forestry)
- Funding balance between 1) funds allocated to Crown Forestry joint ventures vs. 2) other 1B trees supported programmes (e.g. our WRECI Hill Country Erosion programme, other new Regional Council work-streams developed through 1B trees funding bids, or private sector or NGO opportunities to achieve tree planting)
- Streamlining and further incentivising existing 1B trees programmes, including the Afforestation Grant Scheme, and Hill Country Erosion programme
- Consideration of incentive packages with potentially higher grant rates for native trees to incentivise against the economic popularity of pines, and additional criteria for sustainable pine funding – for example roading infrastructure requirements and appropriate land use capability assessment
- Appropriate funding streams for the entire tree planting supply and delivery chain. Such as labour force development, nurseries, research and development to assist planting and land use capability science

MPI has indicated that 1B trees funding applications that have already been received will be given a high level of scrutiny and may be held until such time that the policy framework described above is complete. This policy development is complex, and once finalised by MPI it is expected that competent applications for 1B trees funding will require significant planning work. Therefore, there is no urgency for 1B trees applications to be submitted to MPI at this early stage of the programme.

3. Alignment with GWRC's programmes

The intent of the Provincial Growth Fund and 1B trees programme aligns well with GWRC's goals for the region around social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes.

In particular, the 1B Trees programme is a good fit with our objectives relating to land management, biodiversity and flood protection. In particular, the recommendations of the Whaitua committees could be achieved at a faster rate.

3.1. Regional Whaitua outcomes

Many of our regions community led Whaitua processes are indicating that there is strong alignment with 1B trees drivers.

The Ruamāhanga Whaitua committee is due to release its implementation plan in 2018 and, following a plan change process, could be operable by as early as 2020. The committee's recommendations will include strong recommendations for widespread riparian planting, significantly increased planting on erosion prone hill slopes, and headwater retirements of erosion prone land in order to enable catchment communities to meet sediment limits for individual Freshwater Management Units (FMU).

The Porirua Harbour Whaitua process is underway and likely to release its implementation plan by 2019. Managing sedimentation in the Porirua Harbour is a major challenge. Mitigation of sediment generation on rural land, including GWRC park land, will involve a mix of planting riparian and hill slope areas and general afforestation.

The Eastern Wairarapa Whaitua will be the last of the region's five whaitua areas to commence its community lead planning process. This is likely to commence in 2021. Given that this whaitua area is dominated by high erosion risk hill country, it is likely that tree planting as a form of mitigation will form a big part of any implementation plan. Erosion control programmes are already active and have been for many decades in the region through programmes such as WRECI and its predecessors. This Whaitua will be well placed, timing wise, to engage with the later part of a ten-year 1B trees effort.

3.2. Existing Greater Wellington 1B trees programmes

The existing MPI-supported Hill Country Erosion programmes across the country are now being administered by MPI under the umbrella of the 1B trees programme.

In our region, the WRECI programme (Wellington Region Erosion Control Initiative) is currently operating under contract with MPI for a term ending on 30 June 2019. The WRECI contract renegotiation with MPI is being planned now and will take effect on 1 July 2019. This will allow a direct avenue to engage with 1B trees by expanding the WRECI programme in order to achieve better outcomes aligned with 1B trees objectives and with regional Whaitua objectives.

3.3. Our partnership with mana whenua

Council officers have started conversations with Wairarapa mana whenua Chairs on their economic development ideas and interests relating to 1B trees opportunities.

The proposed Natural Resources Plan confirms mana whenua support for a number of guiding principles in managing our natural resources. Of particular relevance to this project is the Mahitahi Partnership between GWRC, iwi and the community based on a commitment to active engagement, good faith and a commonality of purpose.

We are aware that mana whenua across the country are working on proposals with relevant councils and other stakeholders. This includes the Ngāti Kahungunu ki Heretaunga who has partnered with the Hawkes Bay Regional Council and territorial authorities with their collaborative proposal to this fund. Council officers have participated in a presentation to iwi members and two Wairarapa Mayors.

Ngāhiwi Tomoana (Chair of Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated) shared an overview of their proposal for consideration by Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa and councils in our region as background for any submission we may make. Ngāhiwi confirmed that they and their regional council partners would be happy to present their proposals to Council if required.

In summary their proposal:

- Targets 250,000 hectares of low productivity land
- Identifies projected returns on investment to landowners and investors
- Specifies 50% native, 25% harvestable and 25% long term planting
- Focuses on carbon credit opportunities and returns
- Identifies increased infrastructure needs, e.g. roading, port facilities and employment opportunities
- Projects significantly improved environment outcomes
- Acknowledges the challenges of sourcing sufficient numbers of eco-sourced seedlings for the programme.¹

4. How to engage with the 1B Trees programme?

The 1B trees programme is stimulating considerable interest in the community as multiple potential benefits are recognised around economic, environmental,

¹ Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa "Kahuntia Accord" 26 March 2018

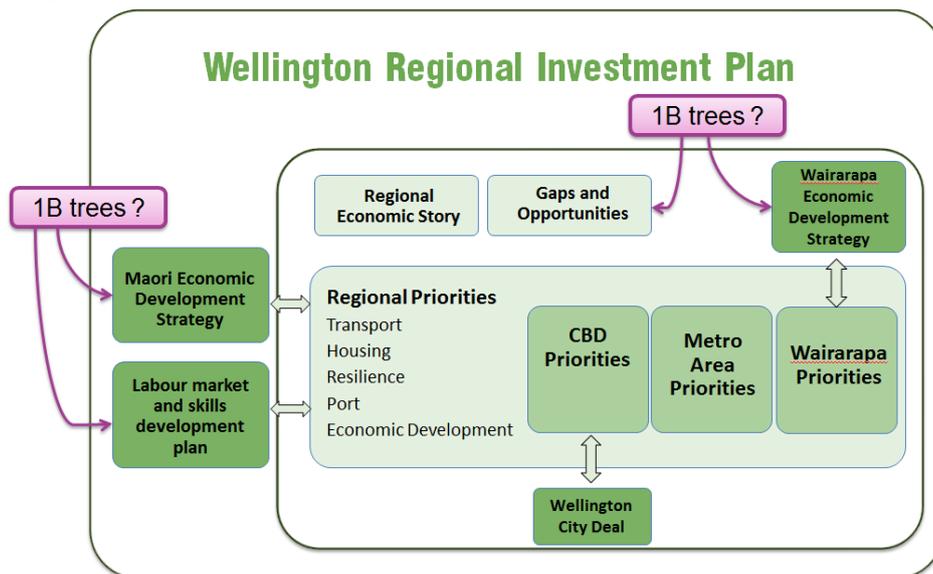
social and cultural outcomes. There are many sectors of the community that will wish to seek funding from the 1B Trees programme. However, a fragmented approach to funding bids may put good outcomes at risk and MPI has expressed its desire to see a high degree of coordination at the regional level.

This provides an opportunity for GWRC to demonstrate regional leadership. The question then becomes what is the best vehicle for providing this coordination role?

GWRC is currently project managing the development of a Wellington Regional Investment Plan (WRIP). This includes a Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy.

The WRIP will likely form the main mechanism for discussions with the Crown aimed at accessing the Provincial Growth Fund. Including regional 1B trees opportunities planning in a comprehensive Regional Investment Plan will mean that multiple parties will be part of developing and would “own”, such a proposal, which is likely to give it a greater regional coordination.

A visual display of where 1B trees planning could sit within the Wellington Regional Investment Plan is shown below:



Draft Regional Investment Plan diagram

The WRIP project is being managed by GWRC through the Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS) Office, with a steering group of senior managers from all councils, Wellington Region Economic Development Agency (WREDA) and the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA). Council CEOs are providing guidance to the project and the project team regularly reports to the Mayoral Forum and WRS Committee.

4.1. 1B trees engagement coordination

Engagement with the 1B trees programme, having relevance to a number of GWRC functions, will require officers from across GWRC to contribute to a coordinated planning effort. In addition to internal coordination, any regional planning will involve iwi partners, territorial authorities, and other relevant stakeholders in the sector. The Wellington Regional Investment Plan (WRIP), including 1B trees alongside other PGF opportunities, is considered to be the best mechanism to coordinate this regional approach for preparing a PGF funding bid.

In addition to the regional coordination process being led by the WRIP, it is intended that the Land Management Department will develop 1B trees opportunities within the capabilities of expanding the existing WRECI programme which may lead to a bid for PGF/1B trees funds as part of the WRECI contract extension application in early 2019. Land Management staff, while developing WRECI expansion opportunities throughout 2018, will be in contact with the WRIP team. It is likely that it will be more sensible to manage the WRECI component of 1B trees engagement through the Land Management Department whilst planning wider regional 1B trees opportunities through the WRIP project. Budget capacity to expand WRECI is already available in GWRC's LTP. The degree of programme expansion is dependent on MPI's completion of 1B trees funding policy.

5. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*
3. *Notes that GWRC's engagement with the 1B trees programme is developing in two fronts,*
 - 1) *By the Land Management Department developing appropriate expansions of the existing WRECI programme, and*
 - 2) *Co-ordinating regional opportunities as part of the Wellington Regional Investment Plan.*
4. *Notes that further updates to the Committee will be provided following MPI's completion of 1B trees funding policy.*

Report approved by:

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