

Chair's foreword

Imagine the Wellington region in 10, 20 or even 50 years' time. What will our environment look like? What will be driving our economy and what resources will we need for these activities? How will we travel long and short distances? How will we deal with our waste and ensure our rivers and beaches are clean enough for swimming?

Greater Wellington's proposed Regional Policy Statement addresses these sorts of questions. It sets out how we'll manage our land, air, water, soil, minerals, energy and ecosystems in a way that provides for the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The law requires that regional and district council plans give effect to the Regional Policy Statement, so the contents of this document will ultimately have a direct bearing on how you can manage your own property and, more importantly, how your local council manages its physical environment.

Because of its importance, this proposed Regional Policy Statement has been shaped by detailed work in collaboration with other councils in our region and extensive feedback on the draft document released last year. It is basically a set of agreed parameters for activities that have an impact on our physical environment

However, we know that behaviour changes are most likely to occur if they spring from knowledge and belief rather than regulation. Thus, even if this Regional Policy Statement was not required by law, the worsening state of the global environment would be a compelling reason for us to be having these sorts of discussions and making these sorts of proposals.

Many believe that our planet has reached a tipping point in terms of the sustainability of life. Even if that is not the case, there is clear evidence that boundless consumption has depleted or damaged physical resources to the extent that we must fundamentally change our approach to the environment if we want to continue with reasonable living standards in the future.

Now with the world also in major recession – possibly the worst since the 1930s – it is tempting to forget about environmental needs and focus on economic measures. But previous experience tells us that this is neither a sensible nor a necessary trade-off.

Environmental and economic progress in the 21st century both demand that we use our resources more sensibly, especially those in limited supply or those which are highly valued. This Regional Policy Statement represents a turning point in how we'll approach these difficult decisions.

It's important that we continue to have feedback on these proposals before the document is finalised, so please read it carefully and take advantage of this opportunity to help us shape the future of the Wellington region.



Hon Fran Wilde QSO
Chair, Greater Wellington Regional Council

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