

Appendix One

Main points raised at the landscape workshops and Conclusions from the Landscape Technical Report

1. Summary of points made by the landscape professionals

- District plan landscape provisions are very generic and would benefit from some sort of depiction of types of landscape on maps.
- Landscape management is something that applies to all areas. It's not about "picking winners" or "protecting the best and forgetting the rest". It's about managing change in all areas and recognising different characteristics in those areas. Note: Although a much maligned and misunderstood document, the Regional Landscape Plan did have this stated intention see page 2 of the Plan - but fell over for a mix of reasons, some political and some about how the Plan was prepared with insufficient engagement with key stakeholders.
- Having said that it's not about "winners", there are definitely outstanding landscapes in the region – there are examples at each of the local, regional and national levels within the Region. We do need to hold on to the notion of "outstanding", both because there are such areas which need recognition, and because this is the terminology of the Resource Management Act.
- There is no context for landscape decisions, and while work has been done for some of the territorial authorities for their areas, cross-boundary issues arise for landscape. A consistent framework (including common terminology) would help coherent decision making.
- A collaborative approach is needed to developing any such framework, incorporating the landowner interests as well as specialists, statutory bodies and the community.
- The Wellington Region's landforms are so rugged and robust that there is a lot of inherent resilience in the landscape. Major structural change is unlikely and quite a lot of development can be absorbed because the land form remains dominant at the broad scale.
- Nonetheless, there are new and emerging pressures on landscape, notably from renewable energy generation but also from major road proposals. Another significant issue is the effects of earthworks – technology and machinery allows massive earthworks to be undertaken, dramatically modifying landform. Subdivision (coastal especially, but more generally too) is leading to fragmentation of land. While these are all genuine pressures, they also need to be seen in comparison with the scale and pace of change of some other parts of New Zealand (e.g. Auckland, Tauranga). Some of the changes (e.g. viticulture in the Wairarapa) have produced positive landscape and economic benefits.

- A way forward (acknowledging the mistakes of the Regional Landscape Plan process, but learning from them) could be for a landscape character assessment to be carried out, identifying the attributes of areas, different types of areas, and how well represented the Region is with different types. The focus for management would then be on managing development and change to respect and reflect the attributes and characteristics rather than setting up landscape as a “hoop” for development to have to get through. A more collaborative and inclusive approach is needed, with the Regional Council facilitating the process.

2. Summary of points made by territorial authority staff

- There was a general acknowledgement that there had been an unwillingness to address landscape issues at all levels in the Wellington Region, compared to other parts of New Zealand. The RPS has identified some sites in the Coastal Environment chapter, and there are some generic policies in the Heritage and Landscape chapter, but generally, these are not translated to specific places or areas on maps. District plans are also rather incoherent in the way they deal with landscape, and in some cases, have not taken on those ideas or areas mentioned in the RPS.
- Using district plan provisions to assess landscape values is not easy in the case of several of the plans. Some plans have good policy wording but this good intention is not followed through into rules and standards. There are also examples of inconsistencies between what the words say and what is shown on the maps. In some plans, it is hard to work out whether they are seeking ecological protection or landscape protection. Sometimes the two terms are used interchangeably, indicating a lack of understanding about what each of them involves.
- A significant problem is staff turnover, which results in inconsistent interpretation and application of plan provisions.
- As with the landscape professionals’ workshop, earthworks and vegetation clearance were seen as significant issues. For the territorial authority staff, there are pressures (from politicians and developers) that development should be allowed and there is a feeling that sometimes, significant and cumulative effects are being overlooked.
- At the heart of the concern about landscape is change in the character of an area. Amenity planting and on-site issues could perhaps be managed, but it is much more difficult to manage character change. We needed to understand what the mix of components and attributes that creates a particular “character” as a first step. Then guidance might be possible as to how to manage change so as to be able to maintain the essential character of an area.
- Participants were unsure as to what status (e.g. statutory or informal guidelines) and where (e.g. wording provisions and a map in the RPS, each district to have a choice about how and where to use it; rules and maps in district plans) a character area depiction could sit. There was, however, a general agreement that a Region-wide consistent base from which territorial authorities could develop their own ways to “give effect” to the landscape character information would be desirable and helpful.

3. Conclusions from the workshops

Despite a perception of poor performance by Greater Wellington on landscape management guidance - through the RPS, but more especially, through the withdrawn Regional Landscape Plan and Landscape Guidelines exercises, there is currently a feeling of support for Greater Wellington to facilitate a process and provide some necessary leadership and consistency for landscape management in the Region. The next version of the RPS offers the formal opportunity to provide a process of sorts, but the consensus was that something less formal might be appropriate as a precursor to what might find its way into a statutory set of procedures and documents.

Amendments to the RMA currently being progressed include changes to the way that district plans relate to the RPS. If the proposed amendments go through (NB. they have), district plans will need to “give effect” to the provisions of the RPS, rather than the present requirement to be more passively “not inconsistent”. Participants saw this as a way of giving a bit more bite to the RPS, and could therefore see the potential significance of getting something in the RPS about landscape management that had a good measure of support across the range of “stakeholders”.

4. Broad conclusions from the Landscape Technical Report

This section of the Technical Report provides some concluding comments about data availability, the process of assessment and the implications of the results for the review of the Regional Policy Statement (RPS).

In terms of **data availability**, much of what has been reported is soft information. The assessment of the pressures and state of the nationally and regionally outstanding geological features, landforms, soil sites and other natural features of the region has relied totally on personal communication from people that have some familiarity with the sites. There have not been any site visits specifically aimed at assessing condition or identifying pressures.

In the case of the outstanding regional landscapes, and landscape management generally, there are a few hard facts. Most of the analysis has centred on the opinions and experience of those who have been working at the “coal face” of landscape change – territorial authority staff that develop district plans and process resource consents, and landscape consultants and professional landscape architects that have to work within the statutory framework. Their comments, ideas and criticisms have been important because one of the main purposes of the SER work is to assess how effective the RPS has been, and where improvements might be made. Those people that work with the RPS are a significant indicator of effectiveness and a source of experience for developing future provisions.

The **process of assessment** has been primarily based on the feedback from the two workshops and limited personal communication from specialists. It has not involved input from some of the community interest groups or those who objected to the Regional Landscape Plan.

Suggestions for the **Review of the RPS** have been touched upon through the Technical Report. Specifically, the following suggestions are made:

- That officers “investigate other ways of being involved in landscape issues” for the Region as part of the review, including exploring the potential for a landscape character depiction/assessment exercise with results for possible inclusion in the next version of the RPS;
- That Greater Wellington take a positive lead in engaging a wide range of “stakeholders” as part of the analysis and review of landscape provisions of the existing RPS, and for the (possible) development of new/similar provisions in the next version of the RPS.
- In the public consultation process for the review, the same sorts of questions as were posed to the territorial authority staff and the landscape professionals (about the adequacy of the provisions in the RPS and statutory plans) should be offered for public comment;
- If still appropriate, nationally and regionally outstanding geological features, landforms, soil sites and other natural features of the Region should be specifically identified in the next version of the RPS rather than being generically referred to by simply citing source documents and criteria that have to be met;
- Landscapes and seascapes of regional significance should be clearly linked to, and have consistent provisions with any outstanding landscapes that may be identified and included in the next version of the RPS; and
- The approach that should be taken in the next version of the RPS is that landscape is an encompassing concept that applies to all parts of the Region, recognising also that the Region does have “outstanding” landscapes (at national, regional and local scales). Landscape management is about managing change in all areas, reflecting their different characteristics, and not about stopping development in some places and “anything goes” elsewhere.