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Committee Wellington Regional Strategy Committee
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Wellington region open space strategy and action plan

1. Purpose

The regional open space working group, a sub-group of SORT (senior officers resource team), presents to the WRS Committee the “Wellington region open space strategy and action plan”, for adoption.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002.

3. Background

The WRS identifies three focus areas, one of which is achieving good regional form. This recognises the importance of the physical arrangements of rural and urban communities and that they link together well and thus contribute to a good quality of life. The open space project was one of the work-streams associated with this regional form focus area. The main outcome of the open space work-stream was to develop a regional open space strategy and action plan to help guide collaborative planning for the public open space network in the Wellington region.

The Open Spaces Working Group is a sub-group of SORT. The working group is comprised of members representing the Region's territorial authorities, Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC), Department of Conservation, Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, and iwi.

The SORT endorsed the draft strategy and action plan at their 22 September 2009 meeting, and the regional chief executives endorsed the draft strategy and action plan at their 2 October 2009 meeting.

4. Strategy review

A review of open space management by the regional open space working group has identified four key issues that should be addressed, including a lack of integrated strategic planning, limited mechanisms to share best practice and resources, future co-management/partnership with iwi as managers and owners of open space and public access and opportunities to open spaces across the region.

The strategy aims to ensure that Wellington Region residents and visitors have a safe, convenient, appropriately maintained, linked and integrated regional open space network that recognises the region's rural and natural open space character and ecological functions, and contributes to the wellbeing of its communities. Implementation of the action plan will result in a coordinated approach for the development, management and protection of open space across the Wellington region, collaboration across provider and partner organisations so that resources and solutions are shared and exchanged, and opportunities and mechanisms to enhance the regional network are identified across the provider organisations. Together with consistent spatial data collection and management across the region, there will be improved outcomes and greater efficiencies across the region's open space providers, members of the public will be well informed about the Wellington regional open space network, and their needs well met.

Seven key outcomes of the strategy have been identified to ensure:

- There is a **coordinated** approach for the development, management and protection of open space across the Wellington region
- There is **collaboration** across provider and partner organisations so that resources and solutions are shared and exchanged
- Opportunities and mechanisms to **enhance** the regional network are identified across the provider organisations
- There are improved outcomes and greater **efficiencies** across the regions' open space providers
- There is **consistent** spatial data collection and management across the region
- Members of the public are well **informed** about the Wellington regional open space network
- The **needs** of the Wellington community are well met.

For the first time all public open space in the Wellington Region has been organised and mapped according to the same scale and function criteria utilising a regional open space matrix.

5. Summary of action plan

In attachment 1 is the proposed Wellington regional open spaces strategy and action plan. Eight work-streams and sub-actions under each of these work-streams are included in the action plan. These are the priority areas that open space providers and strategy implementation partners in the Wellington region intend to take over the next 1-3 years (2009-2012). A summary of these is found below.

5.2 Network development

This work-stream focuses on analysing the regional open space network in order to identify gaps and opportunities, missing links and cross boundary issues. There also has been a mechanism put in place to provide for ongoing meetings across open space providers to discuss planning development, maintenance and marketing across the region.

5.3 Skills development, information exchange and reporting

The main outcome of this work-stream is commitment by open space providers and strategy implementation partners to an annual open space forum. Mechanisms to encourage the sharing of information and training opportunities across agencies, and reporting to central government on regional issues around open spaces have also been included as well as understanding the differences and commonalities between iwi and other open space providers.

5.4 Community engagement

This work-stream will investigate good practice principles on effective engagement with the community, volunteer and interest groups and funding opportunities with non local government agencies and groups.

5.5 Policy development

This work-stream promotes information exchange around the development of planning and policy documents and in particular, investigating the development of regional criteria and principles around acquisition and improvement of public open space land.

5.6 Marketing and communication

This work-stream focuses on the development of a regional information portal for public open spaces.

5.7 Collaboration

The main outcome of this work-stream is to encourage collaboration across open space providers and partners through maintaining a regional database of future projects, holding updated regional GIS data layers for open spaces and investigating ways to align asset management systems across the region.

5.8 Biodiversity and climate change

This work-stream focuses on investigating consistent approaches to carbon credit schemes on reserve land and opportunities around the linking of catchments and green corridors throughout the Wellington region.

5.9 Strategy and action plan implementation review

This work-stream focuses on a review of progress towards the action plan in 2011 and the effectiveness of the strategy and action plan in 2012.

6. Implementation

The Wellington region open space strategy will be implemented through voluntary participation of provider organisations namely: Greater Wellington Regional Council, Wellington City Council, Porirua City Council, Hutt City Council, Upper Hutt City Council, Kapiti Coast District Council, South Wairarapa District Council, Carterton District Council, Masterton District Council and with support from Department of Conservation.

Queen Elizabeth II Trust is a strategy implementation partner with a focus on working with private landowners. Most of QEII covenanted land is in private ownership or management and this falls outside the majority of the councils and DOC open space areas considered in the strategy document. However, the links between QEII land and other public open space land have been recognised as part of this strategy and identified on the public open space network map.

Iwi of the region are also a strategy implementation partner as they are currently not open space providers in the region. In the future, however, through treaty recognition of their status as kaitiaki, iwi will be more actively involved in the management of open space, and we want to ensure that there are mechanisms within the action plan going forward to provide for this.

The WRS Committee will be responsible for the implementation of the Wellington region open space action plan through the coordination of the regional open space working group.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***
3. ***Adopts the Wellington region open space strategy and action plan.***

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Attachment 1: Wellington region open space strategy and action plan