

Report 13.634  
Date 20 May 2013  
File SP/07/01/01-v1

Committee Annual Plan 2013/14 Hearing Committee  
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## **Report on Submissions on draft Annual Plan 2013/14 and other matters that are the subject of concurrent consultation**

### **1. Purpose**

This report provides an overview and highlights the key issues contained in the submissions that the Greater Wellington Regional Council received on the draft Annual Plan 2013/14. A full copy of all submissions has been provided separately to all Councillors.

This report complements Report 13.632 which sets out the process for handling submissions, both at this meeting and following the consideration of submissions.

### **2. The decision-making process and significance**

The matter requiring decision in this report has been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act).

The subject matter of this report is part of a decision-making process that will lead to the Council making a decision of high significance within the meaning of the Local Government Act 2002. The decision making process is explicitly prescribed for by the Local Government Act 2002 and requires the use of the special consultative procedure.

### **3. Community views and preferences**

Officers have also considered the need to take account of the community's views and preferences in relation to these matters. The Local Government Act 2002 requires the use of the special consultative procedure. This report details the results of part of that consultation process.

## **4. Background**

### **4.1 Annual Plan 2013/14 consultation**

The draft Annual Plan 2013/14 was approved by Council for consultation on 26 February 2013. The consultation period was from 25 March to 26 April 2013. The summary and full draft Annual Plan were available on Greater Wellington's website, and to view in all local government offices and in at all libraries in the region. A public meeting was also held in Upper Hutt.

### **4.2 Concurrent consultation**

#### **4.2.1 Resource Management Charging Policy (2013)**

The draft Annual Plan 2013/14 included a proposal to review State of the Environment monitoring rates. Submissions on this proposal could be made on the same submission form as that for the draft Annual Plan.

#### **4.2.2 Parks Concessions Guidelines**

The proposed Parks and Forests Concessions Guidelines 2013 ("the PFCG") was approved by Social and Cultural Wellbeing Committee for public consultation on 18 January 2013. Submissions on this proposal could be made on the same submission form as that for the draft Annual Plan 2013/14.

## **5. Submissions on the draft Annual Plan 2013/14**

In total 41 submissions were received. The number of submissions grouped by type of organisation is as follows:

Organisations (including community groups)	21
Local government	3
Individuals	<u>17</u>
Total	41

A summary of the key points raised by submitters and officer comments and recommendations for the Council to consider in their deliberations is contained in **Attachment 1**.

## **6. Resource Management Charging Policy**

### **6.1 Submissions received**

Six submissions have been received on the proposed changes to the Resource Management Charging Policy (RMCP). Two submissions support the RMCP, two submissions oppose, and two submissions are neutral.

## **6.2 Additional consultation**

In addition to the formal consultation on the draft Annual Plan, specific consultation with persons and organisations directly affected by the proposed changes to the RMCP has been undertaken, including:

- All consent holders who receive annual consent monitoring charges were individually notified by letter about the proposed changes.
- All territorial authorities were invited to meetings that explain the basis to the proposed changes.

As a result of this specific consultation, 13 consent holders requested estimates of annual consent monitoring charges relating to 149 resource consents. The majority of estimates provided were for territorial authorities. Only one of these consent holders made a submission on the proposed changes.

## **6.3 Comments on submissions opposing or neutral**

### **6.3.1 Masterton District Council**

Masterton District Council (MDC) has requested a number of clarifications and improvements to the RMCP. These are minor in nature and it is proposed to include these in the final RMCP.

### **6.3.2 Federated Farmers of New Zealand**

Federated Farmers (FF) does not support the proposed recoverable amount from consent holders of 23% of the SOE monitoring costs. FF requested more robust analysis on the transfer of SOE monitoring costs to consent holders and how other regions transfer SOE monitoring costs to consent holders. Other regions recover between 20-35% of the cost of their SOE monitoring programmes. Also there are a number of SOE monitoring and investigation programmes undertaken principally due to the effects of consented activities. Further information has been provided to FF on the assessment of costs and how other regions transfer SOE monitoring costs.

Some more detailed analysis on the impact on the rural/urban sector (particularly in the Wairarapa) has also been completed as requested by FF. The estimated cost to the rural sector in the Wairarapa with water take and discharge to land consents is \$401,890. This is approximately 40% of the amount to be recovered from all consent holders, and 10% of the total cost of the SOE monitoring programme.

FF have recommended that compliance inspections for dairy effluent discharges to land be not more than once per year, with less frequent inspections for consents with a good compliance history. The compliance schedule provides scope for completing additional inspections on winter milkers and consents in the Lake Wairarapa and Mangatarere catchments. These activities present higher risks to the environment and should therefore be monitored twice per year. If there is good compliance with these consents (i.e. appropriate effluent storage is in place and the discharge is well managed) then

compliance inspections could be reduced to annually. We do not believe that inspections less than once per year are appropriate as there are frequently changes in farm staff and operation/practice, which means that levels of compliance can vary from year to year. For example, in the last three years, over 80% of the cases where infringement notices were issued had good compliance prior to observed non-compliance.

Also FF has recommended that splitting SOE monitoring costs for dairy effluent discharges to land based on potential toxicity to particular receiving environments should be removed. If this were to be removed, the SOE monitoring costs to be recovered would be spread evenly across every consent. This would mean that some consents would receive higher charges, others lower charges. Discharges in more stressed receiving environments should proportionally pay more than those discharges in less stressed receiving environments. The difference is considered to be minimal - \$400 per year for the least stressed environments compared to \$600 per year for the most stressed environments. Hence it is recommended to keep the current method of recovering costs for dairy discharge to land consents.

### 6.3.3 Jim Hedley

Jim Hedley believes that the charge-out rates are excessive and that 100% of charges to direct beneficiaries is inappropriate. Whilst 100% of consent processing and compliance monitoring charges are recovered from consent applicants and consent holders, only 23% of SOE monitoring charges are recovered from consent holders, which is on par with other regional councils.

### 6.3.4 Pikarere Farm Ltd

Pikarere Farm Ltd has requested that small dams are not subject to monitoring fees. In this instance the consents are presently being activated and inspections have been required to determine compliance with resource consent conditions. Once established and full compliance has been achieved, no further monitoring charges will apply in this situation.

## 6.4 Officer recommendations

Some minor changes are recommended to be made to the RMCP to respond to submissions lodged. The recommended changes are as follows:

- Clarifying when SOE monitoring charges for multiple consents for the same activity will not be applied.
- Adding background material on the cost of various SOE monitoring programmes and how the costs of those monitoring programmes have been attributed to consent holders.

No changes are recommended to the proposed charges to consent holders and the phasing in of SOE charges over the next five years.

## **7. Parks Concessions Guidelines**

### **7.1 Submissions received**

Three submissions have been received on the Proposed Parks and Forests Concessions Guidelines 2013 (“the PPFCG”). Two submissions support and one submission opposes the PPFCG.

### **7.2 Comments on submissions received**

#### **7.2.1 Upper Hutt City Council**

Upper Hutt City Council (UHCC) opposed the increase of \$25.00 to \$50.00 per weekend, for the firewood collection (non-commercial) permit fee. The proposed increase reflects the administration time for issuing keys, organising deposits and associated paper work. Officers believe this fee is reasonable and provides an affordable option for local residents to source firewood for domestic purposes at a price that is well below commercial levels. Without this modest increase the ratepayer would effectively be subsidising the private collection of firewood.

UHCC has also requested an amendment to section 1.5 Fee Waivers, to include an additional fee waiver for not-for-profit organisations that can demonstrate public good outcomes as a result of their proposed activity.

The PPFCG differentiates between non-commercial and commercial activities within the definitions section. For the majority of events of a non-commercial nature with less than 150 participants, the organiser of the event is not charged. Events with more than 150 participants, commercial or non-commercial, have considerably more impact on parks, forests and public facilities and in recognition of this impact organisers of these events are charged a small fee of \$2.50 per participant. This fee contributes to the maintenance of parks and forests, enabling this level of activity to be sustained over the longer term.

Providing an additional fee waiver for an event with over 150 participants would mean that GWRC would have to allocate additional funding to cover maintenance activities, and in effect would be contributing to the designated organisation or event organiser.

It is not straightforward for GWRC officers to establish how charities, organisers and sponsors each benefit from large events and the approach to date has been to treat all applicants consistently. Applying additional assessment criteria to consider an applicant’s suitability for a fee waiver and ensuring transparency for both the applicant and GWRC will inevitably increase administration time and cost as well as delaying the processing of applications. As such this is not recommended.

### **7.3 Officer recommendations**

No changes to the proposed PPFCG are proposed in response to submissions received.

## 8. Communication

All submitters who made submissions on the draft Annual Plan will, subsequent to Council adopting the final Annual Plan, receive a response outlining the decisions of the Council and any key changes.

The final Annual Plan 2013/14 will be considered for approval by Council on 26 June 2013, and this will be notified by public notice and media release.

## 9. Recommendations

*That the Hearing Committee:*

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*
3. *Considers the information in this report and attachments in determining its findings and recommendations to Council.*
4. *Recommends to the Council changes to the draft Annual Plan 2013/14 as agreed at the meeting.*
5. *Recommends to the Council approval of the Proposed Resource Management Charging Policy with minor amendments as provided.*
6. *Recommends to the Council approval of the Proposed Parks and Forests Concessions Guidelines 2013.*

Report prepared by:

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**Attachment 1:** Summary of Annual Plan submissions, officer comments and recommendations