

Report 15.195
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Committee Long Term Plan 2015-2025 Hearing Committee
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Report on feedback received from the Shape Your Region 10 Year Plan consultation

1. Purpose

This report provides an overview on the feedback received on the adoption of the 10 Year Plan, along with an outline of key submission points and issues, to assist the Hearing Committee in making recommendations to Council on the final Plan.

Consultation on the draft Revenue and Financing Policy, the draft Rates Remission and Postponement Policy and proposed amendments to the Resource Management Charging Policy was undertaken concurrently with the 10 Year Plan 2015-25 consultation. An overview of feedback on those policies is also contained in this report.

Report 15.194 sets out the process for handling submissions, both at this meeting and following the consideration of submissions.

2. Consultation process

Shape Your Region, the consultation document on the 10 Year Plan 2015-25 was approved by Council for consultation on 25 February 2015 (Report 15.18 refers). The consultation period was from 16 March to 20 April 2015.

A summary flyer outlining the four key issues and the responding six proposed project packages outlined in the consultation document was sent to all households in the region. The full Shape Your Region document was available to pick up from various drop box locations across the region. Hard copies of the supporting information to Shape Your Region was also made available at Council offices, major libraries and online.

A bespoke Shape Your Region website was developed where all consultation material was made available along with additional detail on proposed packages and projects per territorial authority boundary. This information helped residents understand how the proposals affected their area. The website was

supported by a comprehensive communications programme including advertising in national and regional newspapers and on radio and social media including Facebook and Twitter.

2.1 Concurrent consultation

Consultation on the draft Revenue and Financing Policy, the draft Rates Remission and Postponement Policy, and proposed amendments to the Resource Management Charging Policy were carried out concurrently with consultation on the adoption of the 10 Year Plan 2015-25.

3. Feedback Received

3.1 Pre-consultation on the 10 Year Plan

To inform the development of the 10 Year Plan a survey using the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) Citizens Panel was undertaken over August/September 2014. There were 450 responses. This survey provides a representative view of the regional community on priorities and affordability.

Respondents were asked to comment on whether the level of service for our current activities were at the right level, or should be reduced or increased. Overall a very low proportion of respondents (average of 3.3%) suggested reductions in levels of service for any activities. The vast majority of respondents considered an increase in the level of service were appropriate, particularly for public transport (77.4%); water supply (59.6%); and environmental management (47.1%).

Respondents were also asked to consider how much more they would be prepared for improved service levels. A majority were prepared to pay more, including 78% for water supply; 73% for public transport; and 71% for flood protection. The average extra amount respondents were willing to pay for improvements was \$13 for each activity, with the highest willingness to pay being for public transport at \$22 (a 13% increase).

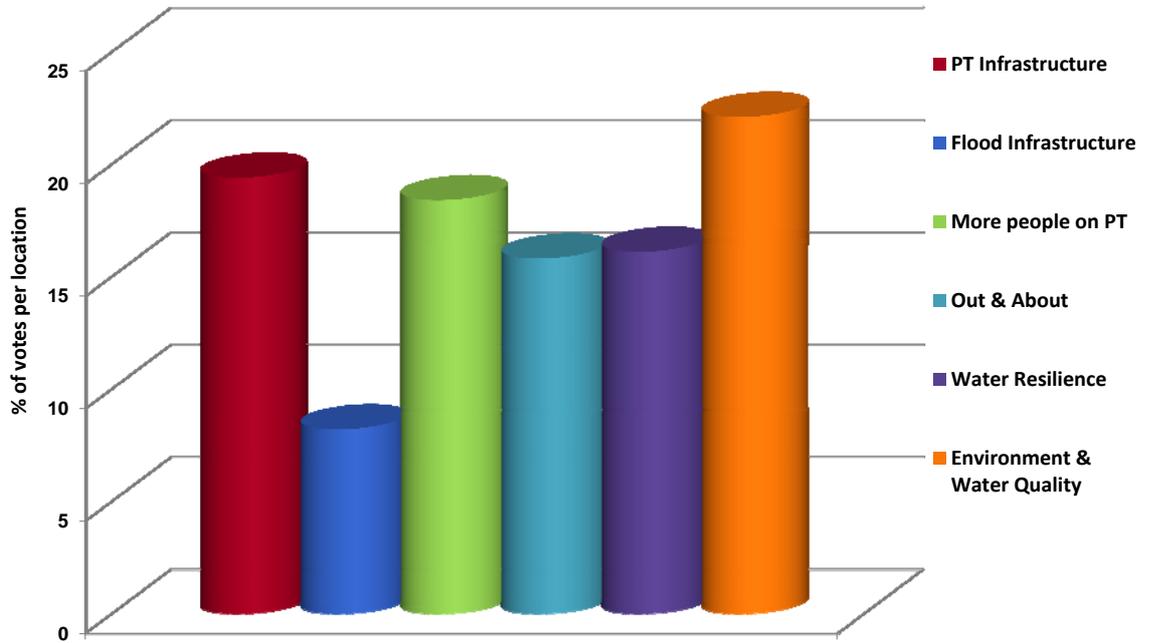
3.2 Feedback from open days

Seven open days were held across the region during the consultation period. During open days a voting box and tokens were used to promote awareness and to gauge community preferences for the six project packages set out in the consultation document. Approximately 440 people took part in the voting exercise.

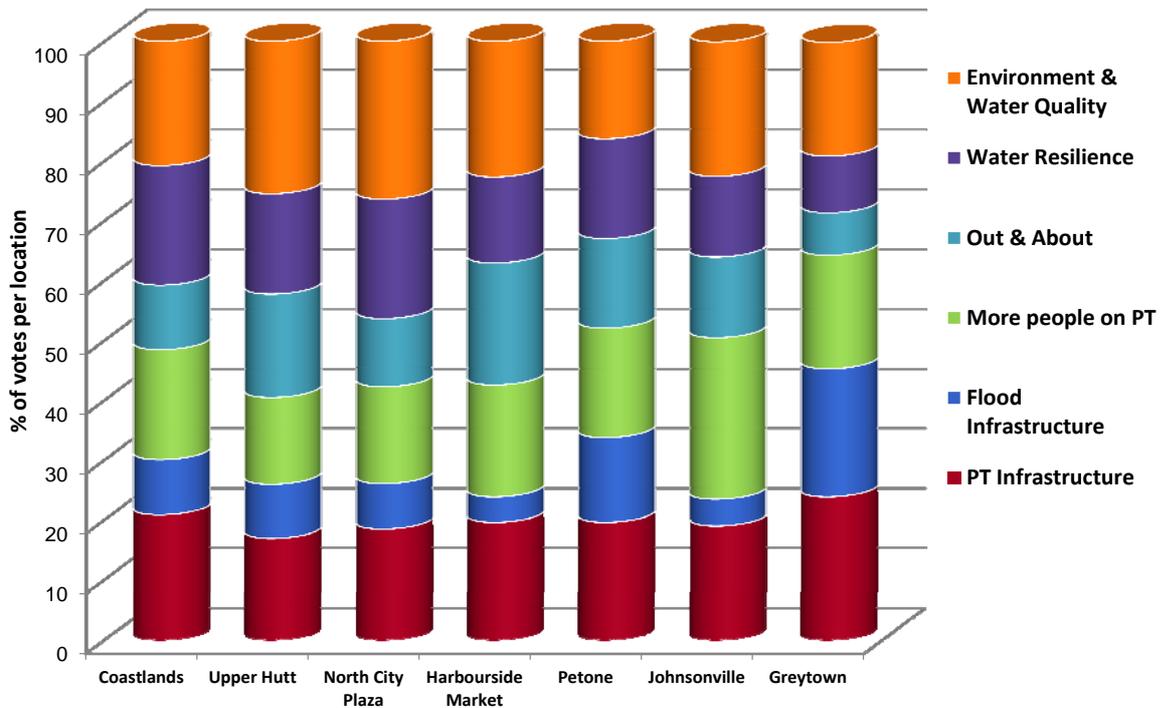
Of the project packages, “Package 6: Environment and water quality” was the most popular, closely followed by the two packages relating to public transport “Package 1: Public transport infrastructure” and “Package 3: Getting more people on public transport”. Package 2: Protecting communities from flood risk received the least votes, perhaps reflecting the limited geographical nature of this issue.

The following graphs show combined voting results for the six project packages across all open days and by open day location.

COMBINED VOTING RESULTS (ACROSS ALL OPEN DAYS)



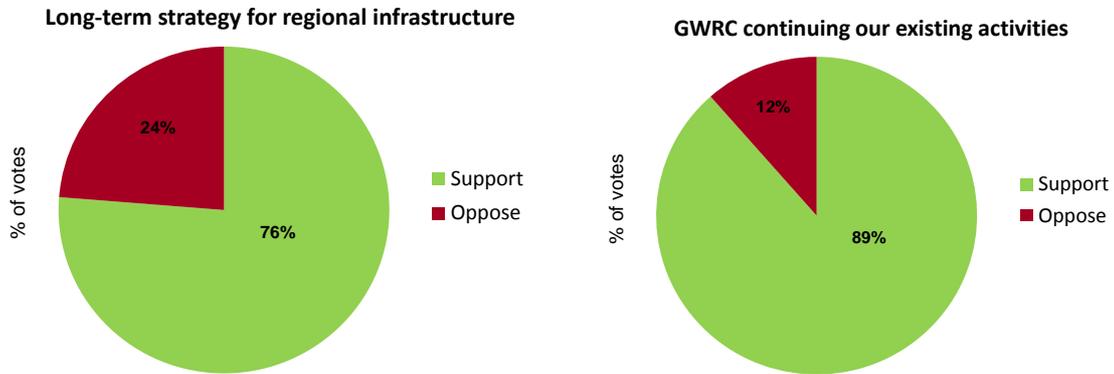
VOTING RESULTS BY OPEN DAY LOCATION



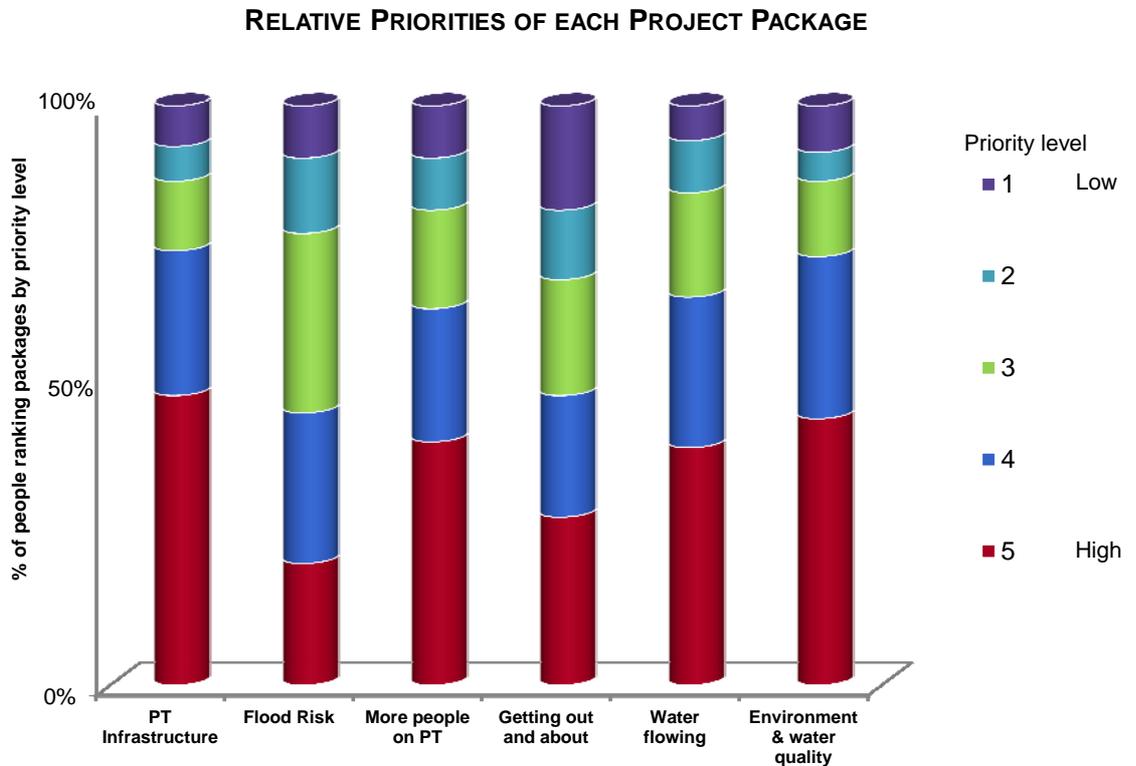
The full results from open day voting are provided in **Attachment 1**.

3.3 Feedback from submission forms

Submission forms were provided online and in hard copy. Submitters were asked specifically if they support the regional infrastructure strategy and existing activities and there was very strong support for both of these, as follows:



Submitters were also asked to prioritise each of the six project packages set out in the consultation document from 1 (low priority) to 5 (high priority). Overall the results show that most submitters consider all of the packages to be high priority, as follows:



3.4 Submissions

In total 876 submissions were received. The number of submissions grouped by type of organisation is as follows:

Organisations (including community groups)	52
Local government	7
Individuals	<u>817</u>
Total	876

Included in this total are 571 pro-forma submissions received from individuals as part of the 'Save the Capital Connection' campaign. The remaining submissions cover a diverse range of topics. Key themes were responses to climate change; transport planning and sustainable transport; water quality and water conservation; rates affordability. 25 submitters (four of them territorial authorities) suggested that rates increases be reduced.

A summary of the key points raised by submitters and officer comments for the Council to consider in their deliberations is contained in **Attachment 2**. A full set of submissions has been provided separately to Councillors.

Eight late submissions were received after 22 March. These were distributed separately to Councillors, but have not been included in the summary of submissions and officer comments.

4. Draft Revenue and Financing Policy

4.1 Submissions received

Two submissions were received. Both opposed an aspect of the proposal.

4.2 Summary of submissions

One submitter considered that GWRC should look to alternative methods to allocate the rail transport rates between territorial authorities, and requested that GWRC prepare a breakdown of cost apportionment by territorial authority for the rail transport cost on a use of rail transport (boardings) where 50% of the costs is allocated to the territorial authority of origin and 50% to the territorial authority of destination.

Federated Farmers recommended the Uniform Annual General Charge (UAGC) be used to its fullest extent (30%) to fund activities that reflect 'public good' with a broad whole of region benefit, requested clarification of the objectives for the public transport review, and signal interest in any proposed changes.

4.3 Officer Comment

GWRC regularly reviews its rating policies and has informed territorial authorities that it is reviewing the transport rate policy next year.

GWRC regularly reviews its rating policies and has determined that its general activities are more equitably funded via capital values rather than via a UAGC.

5. Draft Rates Remission and Postponement Policies

5.1 Submissions received

One submission was received. It opposed one aspect the proposal.

5.2 Summary of submissions

Forest & Bird Upper Hutt stated that while many local authorities in New Zealand (including Upper Hutt City Council) provide rates remission on QE2 covenanted land as required under section 8 of the Local Government (Rating) Act (the Act), GWRC currently does not due to a different interpretation of the Act. Forest & Bird Upper Hutt ask GWRC reconsider its position on requiring rates payment on QE2 covenanted land.

5.3 Officers Comment

Our rating policies provide for rates remissions and postponements to the extent required by statute (the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002), with the sole addition of a policy for the remission of rates in special circumstances. This policy approach reflects the longstanding view of Council that rating should be fair to all ratepayers, and the recognition that a remission of rates to one ratepayer transfers the rating burden to all other ratepayers.

6. Proposed amendments to the Resource Management Charging Policy

6.1 Submissions received

Five submissions were received on the proposed amendments to the Resource Management Charging Policy (RMCP). One submission opposed the amendments, one submission opposed/supported the amendments, and three submissions were neutral. All submissions have been provided separately to Councillors.

6.2 Consultation process

All consent holders (approximately 1000 in total) who have received annual consent monitoring charges in the past two years were individually notified by e-mail or letter about the proposed amendments to the RMCP.

In addition to the five submissions received, seven enquiries were received on the proposed amendments. These enquiries focused mainly how any changes would affect individual consent holders. Responses were provided in each instance. None of those persons making enquiries followed up their enquiry with a verbal or written submission.

6.3 Summary of submissions and officer comments

6.3.1 Wairarapa Water Users Society (Neville Fisher / Leo Vollebregt)

Submission: The Wairarapa Water Users Society (WWUS) opposed the increase in charge out rate of \$5/hour. WWUS were concerned about the large increases to some of the initial fixed application fees, particularly when consent terms in some instances are short. WWUS supports the move to a strategic risk based approach to compliance monitoring. Finally, whilst there are no changes proposed to state of the environment monitoring charges, WWUS are concerned at the present yearly increases.

Comment: The proposed charge out rate for consent processing services is at the mid-point of the charge out rate for other regional councils. The changes to initial fixed application fees reflect the median cost of processing various consent types. This essentially resets the costs expectations for processing consent applications and reduces additional invoices after the consent process but does not alter the overall costs of processing applications. We are constantly looking at procedures and processes to make the consent process as efficient as possible e.g. we regularly standardise reports and consent conditions to reduce assessment and reporting writing time. The strategic risk based approach benefits many members of the WWUS as water take compliance monitoring charges will reduce if consent holders are complying with their consent conditions and supply us with approved electronic water use data.

6.3.2 John Barton

Submission: John Barton opposes the proposed amendments as in the current economic climate there is virtually no inflation and that the rural sector is presented experiencing a severe recession. John Barton believes that the performance and productivity of the Environmental Regulation Department is unacceptably low and needs to be significantly raised before any increase in fees can be justified.

Comment: The proposed charge out rate for consent processing services is at the mid-point of the charge out rate for other regional councils. In terms of changes to charges as a result of our strategic compliance framework, activities traditionally often undertaken by the rural sector are will get less monitoring and associated charges e.g. bridges, culverts, and river works. Also monitoring charges for complying water takes that provide approved electronic water use records (predominantly undertaken by the rural sector) will reduce.

6.3.3 Pikarere Farm Ltd (Dan Stevenson)

Submission: Dan Stevenson commented that the customer service charge is small and should be included in other parts of the monitoring charge. Dan Stevenson believes that consents held by Pikarere Farm Ltd are small/minor and therefore should incur nil or minimal monitoring charges.

Comment: Considerable work would be required to adjust database systems to incorporate the customer service charge into other monitoring charge components, hence it is recommended to keep this unchanged. All consents

will be individually assessed to see how they will fit within the strategic compliance framework. Recently staff have worked through and agreed on future compliance monitoring charges with Dan Stevenson, which are consistent with the strategic compliance framework.

6.3.4 David Kernohan

Submission: David Kernohan commented that the increase to the charge out rate was modest and not unreasonable. It was commented that irrelevant and inappropriate work adds to the median costs reflected in initial fixed application fees, and that any additional costs should be clearly outlined in writing during the consent process. David Kernohan commented that a strategic approach to compliance monitoring is good in principle, but raised a number of questions about what criteria is adopted to determine more important and less important consents to be monitored.

Comment: Any irrelevant and inappropriate time spent processing resource consents can be remitted at our discretion to ensure consent applicants only incur the actual and reasonable costs associated with processing any consent application. Our current procedures require staff to advise consent applicants if charges will exceed initial fixed application fees. In regard to the strategic compliance approach, a robust process has been undertaken to determine more important and less important consents which is reflected proposed compliance charges released for consultation. The submitter holds two consents to take groundwater and discharge winery wastewater. It is likely that less monitoring (and cost) will be undertaken for the submitters water take consent. Initially, more monitoring (and cost) is likely for the submitters discharge consent, however if good compliance is achieved and the discharge poses minimal environmental risk, the monitoring will then reduce to a similar level to that currently undertaken.

6.3.5 Federated Farmers of New Zealand (Jamie Falloon, Elizabeth McGruddy)

Submission: Federated Farmers of New Zealand (FFNZ) generally support the move towards a more strategic risk based compliance framework, and would like to see this extended to a strategic based consent framework. FFNZ acknowledge the waiver of fees for wetland restoration, but believe that wetland restoration should proceed within a positive partnership framework and a not a regulatory framework. Also there are other beneficial activities (e.g. consents for culverts associated with stock crossings) where consent fees could be reviewed.

Comment: When developing the rule framework for wetlands in the draft Natural Resources Plan (NRP), it was signaled that whilst a regulatory framework would be adopted for wetland restoration, efforts would be made to minimise regulatory cost. The proposed amendments ensure that there are no costs for controlling wetland restoration works in the current draft framework in the NRP. No consideration has been given to extending the waiver of consent fees to other activities such as those noted by FFNZ at this point in time.

6.4 Officer recommendations

Less than 1% of those directly affected and consulted about the proposed amendments to the RMCP made a submission. No changes to the proposed amendments to the RMCP are recommended in response to the submissions received.

7. Communication

Officers have 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.

All submitters who made submissions on the adoption of the 10 Year Plan will, subsequent to Council adopting the final plan, receive a response outlining the decisions of the Council and any key changes.

The 10 Year Plan 2015-25 will be considered for approval by Council on 30 June 2015, and this will be notified by public notice and media release.

8. 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.

8.1 Significance of the decision

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking into account the Council's significance and engagement policy and decision-making guidelines. 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 for by the Local Government Act 2002 and requires the use of the special consultative procedure.

8.2 Engagement

Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2002 requires a council to use the special consultative procedure when preparing a long term plan.

Consultation was carried out on the adoption of the 10 Year Plan 2015-25 consistent with the principles of section 93. A description of the consultation methods is provided in section 2 of this report.

9. Recommendations

That the 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 10 Year Plan 2015-25 as agreed by this Committee.*

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Attachment 1 – Results of open day voting on packages

Attachment 2 – Summary of key submission points and officer comments