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Committee Landcare
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Concessions Policy for Wellington Regional Council Parks and Forests

1. Purpose

To report to the Committee on the proposed process and timetable for the review of the 'Policy for Recreation and Tourism in Wellington Regional Council Parks and Forests' also known as, and now referred to in this report as the 'Concessions Policy'. This includes a review of the associated concessions process and fee structure for concessions in Greater Wellington's (GW's) parks and forest areas.

2. Significance of the decision

While this report does not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002, it is worth noting that prior to making any decision on the revised Concessions Policy, and in particular, changes to the fee structure, a special consultative procedure as set out under the Local Government Act will need to be followed.

3. Background

The Concessions Policy for GW's parks and forest areas was adopted in July 2001 and sets out the general policy direction relating to commercial and non-commercial recreation and tourism in those areas, and when and how much the Council will charge for using them and their respective facilities. Under the existing policy, concessions are required for all commercial uses and some non-commercial uses.

The concessions policy is a non-statutory document, and it is intended that the document remains an operational one for a maximum of five years, after which it is reviewed. Reviews for concessions fees and charges were intended to take place every two to four years to keep pace with any changes that occur in the range of uses available, what other agencies are charging for similar services or facilities, and the Council's cost recovery targets. However, they have not been reviewed since the policy was adopted in 2001.

The policy is summarised in a brochure designed for use by park users including members of the public, recreation and tourism operators, recreation clubs, charities and all other users of GW's regional parks and forest areas.

4. Scoping and direction setting

An initial scoping period commenced in late 2006, where parks policy staff initiated a number of meetings with park rangers to identify the main activities in the respective parks, the ideal charging regime, preferred points of contact for concession applications and issues that ranger's were experiencing with the concessions process.

In tandem with reviewing the policy, officers are also reviewing the management systems that process and monitor concession activities in the parks and forests. This has included:

- Identifying when a concession is required?
- The differentiation between commercial and non-commercial activities
- The development of standardised application forms
- The development of a "Post event assessment form" with the intention of providing feedback on event statistics, park facility improvements, the carrying capacity of the event, the appropriateness of the conditions of the concession and whether or not they have been met, outstanding matters to be addressed, whether or not there were complaints about the event, whether or not the bond can be returned
- The development of a monthly park usage form for ongoing concessions with the purpose of recording the number of visitors that have been conveyed through the park for a particular activity
- A review of the current concession contract

It is also proposed to review and update the existing concessions booklet/brochure to bring it in line with the updated concessions policy.

5. The way forward

After consulting with current concession holders, representatives from various outdoor recreational groups/clubs (e.g. tramping, mountain biking etc) and other interested parties, a revised Concessions Policy will be drafted and presented to the August Landcare Committee meeting. The draft policy will then be approved for formal public consultation. At this stage it is intended that a Special Consultative Procedure will be followed as outlined in section 83 of the Local Government Act. This process is essentially a formal community consultation process. This process will commence following council approval of the revised draft Concessions policy.

The proposed timetable for the Special Consultative Procedure is as follows:

Regional Council approval of draft Concessions policy	Landcare Committee Meeting - 8 August 2007
Formal Public Consultation period commences 1 st Public Notice	11 August 2007
2 nd Public Notice	25 August 2007
Close of Submissions	14 September 2007
Hearing of Submissions	November or early December 2007
Report back to Council and seek approval of policy	February 2008
Concession brochure prepared	March 2008
Concessions policy comes into effect	1 April 2008

6. Communication

A media statement will be prepared to inform the public of the intention to review the concessions process, concessions policy and the associated concessions fee structure. The Council website will also be updated to provide details of the review.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report and the work done to progress the production of a revised Concessions policy.***
3. ***Agrees to the proposed process and timetable for the special consultative procedure.***

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