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Committee Regional Sustainability Committee
Authors Melanie Thornton - Project Leader
Victoria McGregor - Policy Advisor

Wellington Regional Strategy Update

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on WRS projects to the Regional Sustainability Committee.

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 2002.

3. Wellington Region GPI Framework & Indicators

At the WRS Committee meeting 17 March 2009 the Committee signed off the GPI Framework and Indicator set (the WRS Committee report is **Attachment 1** with **Attachments 2, 3 and 4** being part of that report as tabled).

The main areas of discussion at the meeting were around selection of indicators in the areas of housing affordability, social cohesion, values and ethnicity.

The GPI working group has assessed numerous indicators in these and other areas against our indicator selection criteria and against advice from experts in the field. It has been a thorough and time-consuming process. As stated in the report, if new or better indicators become available they will certainly be assessed for inclusion in the GPI in the future.

4. Broadband

On 13 November the previous government's Broadband Investment Fund was put on hold and was subsequently discontinued.

The current government has signalled that it wishes to allocate approximately \$1.5 billion for fast, affordable, open access, broadband – with an objective of fibre reaching 75% of New Zealand homes.

The Government has said that commitment is unwavering in the face of economic uncertainty. As with the local government position, there is a strong emphasis on the medium-term future, wider applications and what is needed to increase productivity and innovation.

The Government has not yet announced its plans for the fibre fund, but has indicated that a proposal will be released around the end of March. The next stage for the councils' political processes would be to agree to a council role in response to this, and there may be an intermediate step of agreeing a submission on a draft proposal.

The hiatus in awaiting concrete plans from the Government has allowed the team working on this project to increase work in the areas of deployment technologies and policies that impact this area. It has also meant further development of uptake strategies.

4.1 Key work-streams and current status

The four work-streams of the Broadband Project are:

- Governance (Paul Swain)
- Funding (Paul Desborough)
- Deployment Technologies (Deb Gilbertson)
- Demand / Uptake (Suse Reynolds)

The first two of these have been put on hold pending further information on the fibre fund.

4.2 Deployment Technologies

A regional workshop was held on 1 December 2008 to look at deployment techniques and low-cost options. This was followed up by specific topic meetings on the following day. Industry and council representatives attended indicating considerable interest in this topic.

Key streams of work that have flowed from this are developing a shallow trenching trial, agreeing a regional position on road opening and RMA rules, and better ways of managing geospatial information.

A shallow trenching trial is being investigated. It could generate information on the likely costs and impacts of specific options, and would include a formal review of these aspects by an independent party. Councils will be particularly interested in the long-term impacts on the road structure of different options compared with the more conventional deep-trenching techniques.

In the area of road opening and RMA rules, all utility operators have access to the road corridor for installing infrastructure as of right, but this activity is controlled by council road opening rules. These take account of the technical requirements including trench position and depth, hours of work, traffic control and reinstatement. The project will look at how these relate to alternative

technologies like shallow and micro-trenching, and whether there can be more consistency in these rules across councils.

All councils operate GIS systems to record and manage information on the management of road assets and the location of utilities in corridors. There are some new software applications available to achieve this more effectively, and facilitate factors like the ability for utility operators to see when a road is due for resealing and planning to time their work accordingly.

4.3 Demand / Uptake

A critical part of the Broadband Project is addressing the demand aspects for uptake of new services, as well as the supply of fibre-optic connections. It is clear from several international examples that promotion of the services that are possible is needed if the full potential of fast broadband is to be realised.

In the economic development area, Grow Wellington is developing a programme to ensure that key businesses in the region are aware of and are using high speed connectivity. This extends to small and medium enterprises that operate from people's homes, which is an outcome envisaged in the Government's fibre-to-the-home plans.

Across the MUSH entities (municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals) the three major categories of users are councils, health service providers and educational institutions.

Councils are major users of information and communication technologies and purchasers of telecommunication services. They could leverage their purchasing power to support new fibre investments, and there is significant potential to use high-speed connectivity to improve services to residents (e.g. in libraries and community centres) and enhance efficiency (e.g. having more geospatial and asset management data available in the field, or enabling shared services across councils).

The health sector is looking for major efficiency gains and options like management of information, remote diagnosis and in-home health monitoring could be contributors. We are in discussion with primary health organisations and the district health boards on how they could utilise faster broadband connections.

In the education area, there are projects underway for greater use of computers by students (Computer Clubhouse) and trialling high-speed connectivity in secondary schools. This is possible now for some centrally located schools and the intention is to expand this activity as an urban fibre network grows.

4.4 Trans-Tasman cable

A further project related to broadband was advocacy for any new Trans-Tasman fibre-optic cable to land in Wellington. Kordia is a likely supplier as their partner Pipe Networks is laying a new Guam-Sydney link with this as an extension that will plug in offshore from Sydney.

We have had several discussions with Kordia and they understand the argument for a landing point south of Auckland to enhance national resilience. However their engineering investigations have shown the additional cost of a southern North Island landing would be significant because the cable would need to cross a major undersea trench. So a northern North Island landing outside Auckland would achieve resilience while avoiding that cost. Therefore the likelihood of swinging this decision in favour of Wellington now seems low. Kordia has confirmed that this project is still viable in the current economic climate.

5. Wellington Regional Open Spaces Project

5.1 Background

Page 36 of the Wellington Regional Strategy document identifies that:

“Quality open spaces are fundamental to world-class cities and regions. There are opportunities to improve the open space network and to gain economic benefits from these assets.”

Open spaces provide a wide-ranging contribution to the promotion of individual and community health and social inclusion assisting with economic prosperity. Four of the WRS community outcomes link to a quality regional open space network. These include:

- Healthy Community
- Sense of Place
- Quality Lifestyle
- Healthy Environment

The Regional Policy Statement also recognises the importance of compact, well designed sustainable regional form through integrated public open spaces.

The Open Space project is part of the work being done to ensure there is an investment in good regional form. By identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in our public space network, this action area will help to identify where greatest regional benefit could be gained through collective action.

It should be noted that Greater Wellington Regional Council’s Parks department is currently reviewing the role of regional parks. This is a separate

project, but will help to inform the development of a strategy for the regional open space network.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for this project has been signed off by the Wellington Regional Strategy committee at their March 2009 meeting. See **Attachment 5** for full TOR.

5.2 Regional Open Space working group

The Open Spaces Working Group is a sub-group of SORT and is comprised of members representing the region's territorial authorities, Regional Council, Department of Conservation and Queen Elizabeth II Trust.

The working group is jointly led by Victoria McGregor (Wellington Regional Strategy Office), Murray Waititi and Bruce Geden (Greater Wellington).

The working group is being championed by David Benham, CEO of Greater Wellington Regional Council.

5.3 Phased approach

This project has been divided into two phases. The indicative timeline is below.

Phase 1 By 30 June 2009:

Development of a Wellington Regional Open Space Strategy to 2025

Phase 2 By 31 October 2009:

Investigate the development of a regional portal for public open space – to promote, educate, raise awareness of open spaces, accessibility and opportunities, and promote quality of life (for public use).

5.4 Open Space Definition and Vision

For the purpose of this project, *open space* is defined as:

“Any area of land or body of water to which the public has physical and/or visual access.”

The working group has developed a vision for the Wellington region open space network to 2025. This vision reads:

“The Wellington region will provide its residents and visitors with a safe, convenient, appropriately maintained, linked and integrated regional open space network. This vision will provide opportunities for a wide range of leisure activities for residents and visitors, recognise the region's rural and natural open space character, and contribute to the wellbeing of its communities.

In particular, the vision will ensure that:

1. *Members of the public are well informed about the Wellington regional open space network*
2. *There is a coordinated approach for the development and protection of open space across the Wellington region*
3. *The needs of the Wellington community are well met*
4. *There is collaboration across partner organisations so that resources and solutions are shared and exchanged*
5. *Opportunities and mechanisms to enhance the regional network are identified across the partner organisations*
6. *A Wellington Regional Open Space Strategy will be in place with a realistic and achievable programme of action.”*

The vision will be implemented through voluntary participation of partner organisations namely: Greater Wellington Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Queen Elizabeth II Trust, Hutt City Council, Upper Hutt City Council, Kapiti Coast District Council, Porirua City Council, Wellington City Council, South Wairarapa District Council, Carterton District Council, and Masterton District Council.

5.5 Regional Open Space Strategy

- A Regional Open Space Strategy to 2025 will be developed. This strategy will be owned and monitored by the Wellington Regional Strategy Committee. The strategy aims to:
 - Identify and recognise the scale, role, function and values of a regional open space network
 - Develop a list of opportunities and priorities to better integrate and link the regional open spaces network in the future
 - Promote the sharing of resources and collaboration across open space providers in the Wellington region
 - Assist in promoting, educating, raising awareness of open spaces, accessibility and opportunities (for public use)
 - Develop a programme of action - short-term (1 year), medium-term (2-3 years) and long-term (3-5 years)
 - Establish a regional open space steering group to oversee the implementation of the strategy
 - Develop a review process to monitor the successful implementation of the Wellington Regional Open Space Strategy

- Require all partner organisations open space strategies to take into account the vision and outcomes of the regional open space strategy

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. **Receives the report.**
2. **Notes the content of the report.**

Report prepared by:

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

Melanie Thornton

Project Leader

Wellington Regional Strategy

Victoria McGregor

Policy Advisor

Wellington Regional Strategy

Jane Davis

Divisional Manager

Wellington Regional Strategy

Attachment 1: WRS Committee report on GPI Framework

Attachment 2: Indicator set for Wellington Region GPI

Attachment 3: List of expert commentators

Attachment 4: Indicator selection criteria

Attachment 5: Terms of Reference for Open Spaces Working Group