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Committee Environment
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Wellington Region Natural Hazards Management Strategy

1. Purpose

For the Committee to recommend to Council the approval of the Wellington Region Natural Hazards Management Strategy.

2. The strategy

The purpose of the Wellington Region Natural Hazards Management Strategy is to help create a region resilient to the impacts from natural hazards. It sets out a road map for council cooperation to deliver greater efficiency in hazards research and planning and greater consistency in the management of natural hazards. It provides a coherent regional framework that will allow us to develop consistent policy responses to inform planning documents, such as district or regional plans, annual plans, long term plans or asset management plans.

Local government has an important role to play in the management of natural hazards. We have the ability and mandate through our planning structures to focus on the role of *reduction* (ie, the 1st 'R' in the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 4 Rs of: reduction, readiness, response and recovery) through, for example: infrastructure planning, land use planning and decision making, agency coordination in statutory planning, knowledge building and understanding our hazards and risks. However, managing risk reduction through these mechanisms presents challenges in terms of resourcing, communications and engagement and implementation - challenges common to all councils.

This paper is a culmination of the work to develop the strategy and presents a final draft for the Committee to consider before seeking Council approval. It includes a summary of the progress in bringing the strategy to this point and outlines the next steps in its implementation.

2.1 Benefits of the Strategy

The co-benefits of collaborative work programmes are broadly recognised across our councils. Because the impacts from natural hazards cross our administrative boundaries it makes economic sense to work together to manage these impacts and make more efficient use of our human and financial resources.

The hazards strategy provides an opportunity for us to work together to address shared goals related to risk reduction. In particular it will allow us to:

- Set priorities for co-funded hazards research
- Undertake joint investment in hazard mitigation and reduction activities
- Develop consistent hazard planning approaches
- Cooperate in community engagement.

The strategy will help in this by explaining the nature of the challenge we face, outlining what good practice hazard management looks like and providing guidance for dealing with the issues and challenges we face as a collective group of councils and as a community. It will also facilitate collaboration on regionally related projects such as the 100 Resilient Cities programme or the Wellington Water Resilience Strategy.

The strategy includes an action plan that will provide coherent actions designed to carry out the guidance. A copy of the final draft for approval is attached as **Attachment 1**.

2.2 Vision and principles

A vision for the strategy was developed in conjunction with the regional planning managers and stakeholders at a large workshop in November 2014. The purpose of the vision is to encapsulate the aim of the strategy and keep it focussed and also act as a discussion point for consultation. The vision statement is:

The communities of the Wellington Region work together to understand and reduce risks from natural hazards

-- "to survive and thrive in a dynamic world" --

Supporting the vision is a set of principles that have guided the development of the strategy:

- Use the best available hazard information/science
- Identify and agree what is best practice for hazards risk management and reduction
- Identify and address what inhibits good practice hazards management
- Bring the community along on the journey
- Build on regular monitoring and review programmes.

3. Natural hazards management strategy background

Local government is at the front line of natural hazards management and planning in our region. Regional councils and territorial authorities have responsibilities for controlling the use of land, beds of lakes and rivers and the coastal marine environment for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating natural hazards. These overlapping responsibilities have been a matter considered by the Environment Court in a number of cases and without exception, the Courts encourage regional and territorial authorities to cooperate together to effectively and fairly manage the effects from natural hazards.

Recognising this, the Regional Planning Managers Group started a process to develop a Wellington Region Natural Hazards Management Strategy to enable us to begin resolving the difficult hazard issues we are all dealing with and which cross our administrative boundaries such as sea level rise, seismic hazards and flooding. A regionally agreed strategy offers benefits by delivering greater consistency and efficiency in natural hazard research, risk identification, information management, and co-ordinated hazard planning and risk management.

Importantly this work is occurring ahead of a probable natural hazards national policy statement and Resource Management Act amendments that are seeking to include natural hazards as a matter of national significance in section 7.

3.1 Hazards strategy development

Because of the regional role Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) has in natural hazards and civil defence emergency management, the Regional Planning Managers Group invited GWRC to oversee the project. The governance and reporting structure is to the Coordinating Executive Group and the Wellington Region Civil Defence and Emergency Management Joint Committee.

On 22 November 2013 the Coordinating Executive Group approved the funding and development of a regional natural hazards strategy. A Request for Proposals for a consultant to provide resourcing for the project was also approved at this meeting and following a comprehensive tender process, MWH was selected to assist with the strategy development in July 2014.

GWRC has been managing the development of Strategy in conjunction with Kapiti Coast, Porirua, Wellington, Hutt City and Upper Hutt councils and with the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO). The Wairarapa councils are keeping a watching brief on the strategy and may partner the programme at a suitable time.

The strategy is included as a method in the Proposed Natural Resources Plan, but is a non-statutory agreement. This acknowledges that there are local differences in the natural, social and political landscape between councils that require local decision making.

4. Stocktake and gap analysis report

A core piece of work in the strategy development has been a gap analysis and stocktake report. This report summarises the hazards research that has been undertaken by the partner councils to date and looks at what is currently being done to manage the impacts from natural hazards.

It was found that there is variability in available hazards information and inconsistencies in how that information is identified, mapped and updated leading to different interpretations and application of the information for planning purposes. There is also difficulty in applying a risk based approach to hazards planning and management and gaps in the monitoring of hazard events and in monitoring the effectiveness of hazard reduction planning approaches.

The aim of the analysis has been to better understand what information currently exists across the partner councils on hazards, and how the risks from hazards are currently managed in order to identify gaps in our respective approaches when compared to best practice hazards management.

It sets out the key issues for natural hazards management in the region and has formed the basis of discussions with stakeholders and the community and ultimately to the development of the hazard strategy.

The stocktake was approved for public release by the Coordinating Executive Group in October 2015 and was made available with the launch of the strategy website in early 2016.

5. Consultation and community engagement

A communications plan was developed to identify key stakeholders and to ensure appropriate consultation was undertaken that was commensurate with the aims of the strategy. The development of the strategy has involved a number of stakeholder workshops to develop the vision and aims, the approaches and content. The workshops have been well attended with over 100 participants from across all the partner councils, central government, chambers of commerce, insurance, university and research organisations. Initial meetings were held with the partner councils and the programme advisory group to develop a preliminary working draft. This was released to the broader stakeholder group for feedback which allowed more detailed discussions on the content of the strategy during the workshops.

5.1 Community engagement

Broader community engagement started last year at the regional summer fairs that we attended in conjunction with WREMO and where we spoke to over 500 people about the strategy. The feedback from members of the public was overwhelmingly positive on this initiative, with almost all people in agreement that a joint council approach to managing natural hazards makes the most sense for us as a region. At the same time a webpage was setup that contains information about the strategy and related natural hazards content. The webpage is hosted on the GWRC website.

As the strategy has developed, key elements have been released for public comment and feedback, including the vision and objectives, the stocktake analysis and most recently, the draft strategy. As well as stakeholder workshops, the 'Have your say' facility on the website has invited people to comment on work. Several hundred people have viewed the site and a number of those have posted comments and ideas.

5.2 Social media

Publicity about natural hazards and the strategy programme has been raised through press releases and has been posted on the WREMO and GWRC Facebook pages. The WREMO and GWRC Facebook pages are followed by over 50,000 residents of the region and we have been able to capture feedback on the strategy through this group and direct them to the webpage and the work we have been doing.

5.3 Council updates and submissions process

The strategy was released for final public and stakeholder feedback in October and November last year. Update briefings on the progress of the strategy were presented to all partner councils in August and September prior to its release.

We received over 30 detailed written submissions with over 250 submission points on the strategy. Overall, the submissions have been supportive of the work with comments centred around the definitions of hazards and risk, applying the risk based approach, a desire for greater policy direction and a strong desire for widely inclusive consultation during the implementation phase. The submissions have been analysed and appropriate amendments have been incorporated in the final document.

Together, the consultation and feedback from stakeholders, community engagement and input from the Coordinating Executive Group has allowed the development of a robust set of objectives and approaches to implementing the strategy.

6. Objectives and outcomes

The strategy is underpinned by four objectives discussed in the following sections. Across all these objectives and approaches a key combined outcome will be to encourage a better understanding of our hazards and risks and the consequences from natural disasters on the community, infrastructure and assets. Ultimately it is about providing for ongoing community resilience through education and information about long-term risk across a range of natural hazards.

Objective 1: Our natural hazards and risks are well understood

This addresses the principle of increasing our science, knowledge and understanding of the risks from natural hazards.

Outcome: Councils and communities have a good understanding of the risks associated with natural hazards and will be in a position to make well informed decisions.

Objective 2: Our planning takes a long term risk-based approach

This objective addresses the principle of sound and robust natural hazards planning.

Outcome: Councils and communities understand and agree what is an acceptable level of risk, and base land use and asset planning decisions on this agreement.

Objective 3: Consistent approaches are applied to natural hazard risk reduction

This objective addresses the principle of consistency.

Outcome: Councils follow a consistent approach in implementing hazard management and planning practices.

Objective 4: We have an agreed set of priorities to reduce the risk from natural hazards

This objective addresses the principle of prioritisation.

Outcome: Councils and communities work towards an agreed set of priorities that are reflected in the appropriate planning documents such as long term plans.

7. Action and Implementation plan

A number of approaches have been identified to fulfil the objectives and these have been developed into an action plan that contains expected outcomes and performance measures. The action plan table can be viewed in strategy document in **Attachment 1**, but a summary is provided in Table 1.

It is proposed that implementation of the objectives is undertaken in three manageable work streams recognising the broad themes of the Strategy:

- Research
- Planning
- Education/Consultation.

Much of this work will be able to be undertaken within existing work programmes and budgets currently funded in the long term plans of the partner councils.

It will also be possible to leverage off other work programmes. For example, it may be possible to undertake parts of the education workstream in conjunction with WREMO and its community education programme. However, there may be additional resourcing required to implement particular aspects of the strategy, for example, if expert advice is required on a particular hazard or a legal opinion is sought in relation to some aspect of hazards planning provisions or resourcing some additional FTE to maintain a regional natural hazards database.

Table 1: Summary of outcomes from the hazards strategy action plan

Objectives	Key Projects
Objective One	Natural Hazards information portal
	Shared research programme
Objective Two	Application of risk based approach
	Agreeing on acceptable levels of risk
Objective Three	Consistency in regional/city/district plans
	Develop common approaches and standards for LIM reporting
Objective Four	Priority action plan for research/planning and education

8. Next steps

Currently this paper is being presented to all the partner councils in order to seek approval for the hazards strategy.

Successful implementation of the hazards strategy will require appropriate oversight. Thus, the first order of business will be to set up a steering group. The primary purpose of the steering group will be to provide oversight, support and advice for the strategy implementation and help navigate a pathway through the challenging issues that will inevitably arise. It is expected that one of the first pieces of work to be completed will a prioritisation exercise of the work programme.

The programme advisory group is currently made up of each of the planning managers from the participant councils, WREMO, flood protection and iwi representation via GWRC's Te Hunga Whiriwhiri. It is envisaged that a similar structure would continue with representation from each partner council but from different groups that will be involved in the work. For example, there could representatives from resource management planning, assets and infrastructure, iwi, flood protection, hazards and climate change. A draft terms of reference for the steering group is attached in **Attachment 2**.

To support the Steering Group it is proposed that they be able to call together a Technical Advisory Panel that could be used to provide expert technical advice on specific matters related to the science, planning or communication of natural hazards. In addition, the steering group should also call upon other groups to provide advice and input at important moments in the decision making process such as community reference, industry or engineering groups.

Implementation of the strategy will also require a programme manager to oversee and drive the day to day work. This will require some dedicated resourcing and it could be in the form of a secondment or a backfill position from existing staff. This may require a little resourcing from each council to fund a part-time FTE. It is proposed that that steering group make a decision on how the project will best be managed, with the agreement and support of the regional planning managers group.

To make the programme manageable it is proposed that the work be divided into three work streams aligned around the areas of research, education and planning. These could be coordinated or overseen by the programme manager, but with work groups drawn from existing staff to undertake the work.

Reporting would be first to the steering group and then to the Coordinating Executive Group. Where outputs require political decision making this would be taken up to each council for individual approval.

A proposed structure for the implementation of the Hazards Strategy is outlined in Figure 1.

It is recommended the programme has a ‘political champion(s)’ who could present a consistent voice in the media and in political circles and maintain political momentum of the programme. GWRC and Porirua City Council have previously supplied this leadership during the development of the strategy and it would be appropriate for GWRC to continue to do so, given our regional role.

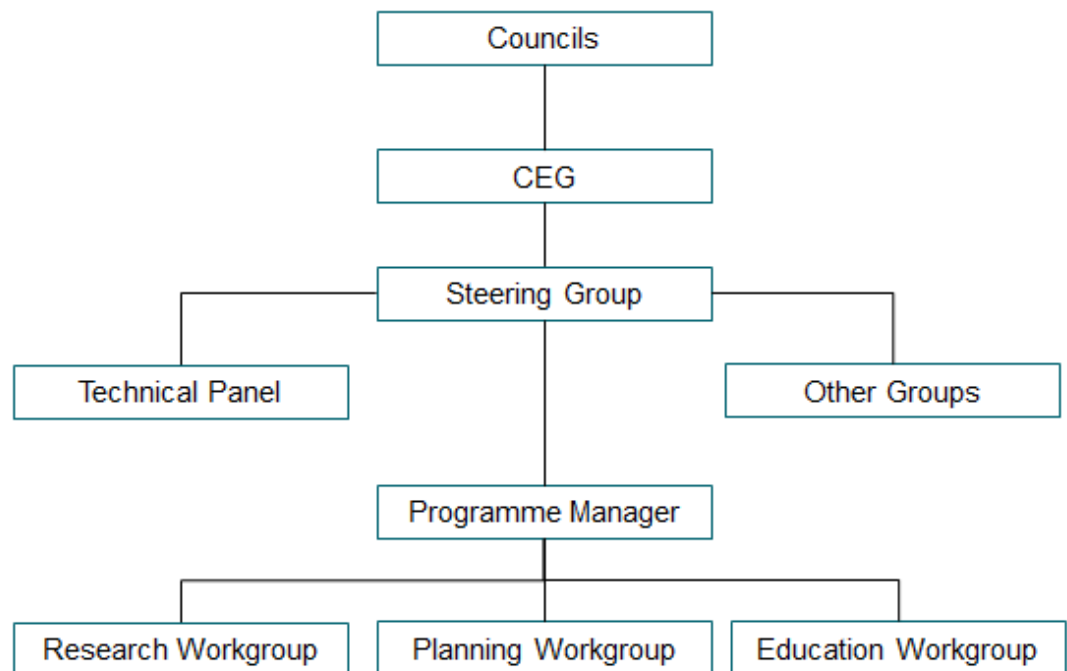


Figure 1. Proposed structure for the implementation of the Hazards Strategy

9. The decision-making process and significance

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

9.1 Significance of the decision

The subject matter of this report is part of a decision making process that may lead to the Council making a decision of medium significance within the meaning of the Act. In keeping with this assessment of significance, section 5 of this report outlines community views and preferences in relation to the proposed strategy.

9.2 Engagement

There will be ongoing engagement with the region's territorial authorities in the implementation and oversight of the strategy.

10. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the direction and content of the strategy and its implementation action plan.*
3. *Recommends that Council:*
 - i) *Approves the Wellington Region Natural Hazards Management Strategy and the programme structure for its implementation.*
 - ii) *Approves the formation of a steering group to oversee the strategy implementation.*

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Attachment 1 Draft Wellington Region Natural Hazards Management Strategy

Attachment 2: Draft terms of reference for Wellington Region Natural Hazards Management Strategy steering group