



Report **09.625**
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Committee **Regional Sustainability**
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Draft Parks Network Strategy

1. Purpose

To present the draft Greater Wellington Regional Parks Network Strategy (The Strategy).

2. Significance of the decision

The matters 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. Background

In November 2008 (Report No. 08.887) Council approved a project plan and timetable for the development of the Greater Wellington (GW) Parks Network Strategy. This set out a detailed process of engagement with the community and stakeholders to assist the preparation of the Strategy.

Over the period December 2008 to May 2009 officers completed an extensive process of seeking community comment. Officers gathered information and sought comment through:

- Surveying views of 1000 members of the general public
- Surveying views of a diverse range of clubs and community interest groups and meeting with interested community members
- Seeking written feedback from, and meeting with Government agencies and territorial authorities
- Seeking feedback of iwi through an Ara Tahī workshop

The feedback from each area was recorded, analysed and reported. This is a significant body of research that provides valuable insights into the perspectives on GW's regional parks of local iwi, agencies, interests groups

and the general public. In addition, to this feedback from various groups and individuals there was considerable research on the values of open space and the role historically of GW regional parks for the Greater Wellington community. This information will be made available through the website and GW's library for those who may be interested.

The research and feedback was then presented to Council through a Councillors' workshop in August 2009 and a first opportunity given to participants to consider the direction and content of the Strategy. At the workshop Councillors identified that the core elements of parks are that they remain in public ownership, offer a variety of open spaces, and can be freely used by people. Councillors also agreed that our business is to:

- Protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment
- Offer a range of opportunities for experiences in outdoor environments
- Encourage healthy communities
- Continue to evolve and adapt to the requirements of the community

Following the workshop officers have developed the draft Parks Network Strategy in light of the research, community engagement and Councillor comments.

4. What the strategy does

4.1 Introduction

The draft GW Parks Network Strategy (Attachment 1) articulates a vision and purpose for our parks in a succinct way. It has been designed with a twofold purpose of:

- Providing a basis for marketing the regional parks
- Providing overarching guidance to the next generation of policy and planning documents for our regional parks and forests

4.2 Marketing

Previously we have not had a clear statement as to the purpose of our parks or the vision for their future. These are both important elements that need to be communicated well and in a consistent manner with the public. To this end, the strategy sums up the vision for our parks in a simple, memorable statement:

Enriching lives by connecting people with healthy natural places

This statement, developed in conjunction with GW's Communications Department, will provide the basis for future promotion. The Strategy provides the public with a clear point of reference about the role and aims of GW parks.

4.3 Guidance for future policy and plans

The strategy sets the direction for the management of regional parks and forest lands. It is appropriate that the next generation of management plans reflect the goals and objectives within the Strategy. It is anticipated that the next phase of work will be to review and update the associated network and park management plans and other documents.

At the Councillor workshop in August the possibility of a new framework for management plans was also discussed. A new generation of plans may be one integrated document with common policies for the parks and then park specific sections. This concept is similar to the management plan for Auckland's regional parks and others around the country. Officers were asked to report on this at a further Committee meeting. Refer to Report No. 09.626 for further detail.

5. Clarification or change?

The GW Parks Network Strategy mission describes who the organisation is and what it is about. It states that the mission of GW parks is:

To provide a variety of large natural areas that conserves our natural environment and reflects our cultural heritage for everyone in the Region to enjoy.

This mission agrees with the councillors' discussion at the August workshop. It does not represent a fundamental shift in GW's core business but assists to focus the work of Parks on particular areas (as identified in the goals).

For example, there is a stronger emphasis on accessibility, which was a dominant theme from the research. The parklands need to be places that are accessible to the community (both physically and through the information offered about them). There is much here yet to be achieved, both through linking open space areas to make it easier to get between green spaces, as well as improving people's ability to engage in the park environment. We cannot necessarily make regional parks closer to our cities but we can employ strategies that decrease the perceived distance and increase park visits.

Note that the Strategy has been developed in light of the work from the Wellington Regional Strategy and the Open Space project. GW parks' close relationship with the Wellington Regional Strategy has ensured that themes from the Open Space work are reflected in our own Strategy. For example, the goals in the Parks Network Strategy strongly reflect the vision of integrating open space and co-ordinating management of these areas. Further, the guiding principles in the Parks Network Strategy emphasise the need to and commitment of this agency to work with others to develop integrated open space and associated services – a core part of the Open Space work.

6. Finalising the draft Strategy

The attached draft of the Parks Network Strategy is for Councillors to consider and approve the content. In the future the Strategy will be the point of first reference for people interested in the role and vision of GWRC parks (previously we have provided people with a copy of the Parks Network Plan, a dense document containing the vision, objectives and detailed policies for the parks). GW envisages the document, while being part of the consolidated Regional Park Management Plan, as also being available to distribute separately.

Officers are currently reviewing the structure of the suite of regional parks and Forests planning documents (refer to Report No. 09.626). Discussion regarding consultation on the draft Parks Network Strategy should be made in relation to that report. It is anticipated that the Strategy will be finalised when the consolidated management plan is completed.

7. Communication

No communications are necessary at this point.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report and notes its content.*
2. *Endorses the draft Parks Network Strategy.*

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Report approved by:



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Attachment 1 Parks Network Strategy