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Committee Strategy and Policy Committee
Author Wayne O'Donnell, General Manager, Catchment Management
Nigel Corry, General Manager, Environment Management
Wayne Hastie, General Manager, Public Transport

General Managers' report to the Strategy and Policy Committee 11 February 2015

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of Greater Wellington Regional Council's (GWRC's) activities relating to the Committee's areas of responsibility.

2. Catchment Management

2.1 Land Management

2.1.1 Forestry Cutting Rights

The cutting rights sale process was finalised on 28 October 2014. In the intervening time an agreement has been reached on ten outstanding environmental issues relating to slash management, road construction, and land preparation.

The Principals Plan, relating to Health and Safety of visitors in the forests, is still in its draft form. However, staff from PF Olsen conducted the first of their Health and Safety induction courses prior to Christmas. This involved GWRC Parks and Land Management staff, and representatives from two recreational groups that use the forests on a regular basis. Further induction courses will be held with third parties that have access rights to the forests, such as apiarists, hunters, contractors and other recreational groups.

2.1.2 Farm Plans

A new application for funding from the Hill Country Erosion Fund (administered by the Ministry for Primary Industries) was lodged on 5 December 2014. The application is currently in front of the assessment panel and a decision is expected in March. This application built on the initial 2009 funding that enabled the establishment of the Wellington Regional Erosion Control Initiative (WRECI). In essence, the WRECI programme has been expanded to cover all erosion-prone hill country in the Wairarapa, rather than the five selected catchments that made up the initial WRECI application.

2.1.3 Afforestation Grant Scheme

The Afforestation Grant Scheme (AGS) was a government initiative to plant new forests on private land in order to gather carbon credits to offset New Zealand's carbon emissions. The AGS ran from 2009 to 2013 and was particularly successful in the Wellington region where a total of 1,100 hectares of erosion-prone land was planted. Grants totalling \$2.4M were paid out to local landowners.

This Scheme complements current land management programmes being run throughout the region. While the detail of the design of the new Scheme is yet to be finalised, it is envisaged that erosion-prone land will still be a focus of the work. Regional councils, particularly those in the southern and eastern parts of the North Island, are being consulted on the design and implementation of the Scheme. A national pool of \$22.5M is proposed, which could afforest up to 15,000 hectares. Grant rates are expected to be \$1,300 per hectare, which would require some additional landowner contribution to effectively plant qualifying land.

2.2 Biodiversity

2.2.1 Key Native Ecosystems

The Wainuiomata Mainland Island Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) site has received additional ground-based rat control as part of continuing work to control the very high rat numbers found there in 2014. This complements the ground 1080 operations that were carried out in September 2014.

Control of pigs, goats and deer has been undertaken by contracted professional hunters. Goat culling took place at the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area, Akatarawa Forest, Pakuratahi Forest, Parangarahu Lakes Area, Kaitoke Regional Park, Hutt Water Collection Area and Belmont-Dry Creek KNE sites. Deer and pig culling was carried out in the East Harbour Northern Forest KNE site.

2.2.2 Biodiversity Advice

The Biodiversity Department has contributed to pre-feasibility investigations on the range of potential water storage sites for the Wairarapa Water Use Project. Staff carried out a multi-criteria analysis to compare the environmental impact of developing each of these sites. This work will be combined with other analyses (such as social impacts) to allow the project team to refine the sites for further planning work.

2.2.3 Collaborative Restoration: Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Project

Planned aerial spraying of willows and alders in wetlands on the edge of Lake Wairarapa has almost been completed. Work is occurring in an area of approximately 167 hectares. The objective is to open up waterways to provide better water flow between wetlands, and to halt the progressive infestation of sedge-lands and waterbodies by willows and alders.

A community event that focuses on wetlands is being planned for early March and will be hosted by GWRC at Lake Domain.

2.2.4 Biodiversity Advocacy

The Biodiversity and Parks departments are supporting Restoration Day 2015, which will be held in April or May. This is a free, annual conference for community groups and individuals undertaking ecological restoration. GWRC have run Restoration Day in partnership with the Department of Conservation (DoC), territorial authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for over a decade and the event has now gained a national reputation with agencies in other regions attempting to replicate it.

2.3 Flood Protection

Investigations on the Integrated Concept Design options for the City Centre Upgrade Project are progressing, with the aim of commencing community consultation in mid-2015.

A preferred option for the reconstruction of the Jim Cooke Park stopbank will be recommended to the Strategy and Policy Committee on 11 February.

Urgent Hutt River edge protection works (Belmont and Ebdentown) design and rock procurement are underway.

The Pinehaven flood hazard mapping independent audit recommendation will be presented to the Hutt Valley Flood Management Subcommittee on 24 February.

The Waikanae River Environment Strategy has been published and officially released.

2.4 Biosecurity

2.4.1 Rooks

The annual spring rook nest survey has taken place and very limited control has been completed. One limited baiting round was completed on 24 September 2014; the ongoing westerly gales prevented any further attempts at control. Extreme wind events during the 2013 and 2014 springs destroyed nests and reduced the success of the aerial nest poisoning. What impact this will have on the overall rook population is unknown, but it is expected that a lift in the population is likely.

Ongoing night shooting of rabbits on behalf of local authorities has been undertaken around Wellington, Lower Hutt and Kapiti reserves, and in GWRC forestry areas.

A Memorandum of Understanding for possum control in former KNE areas has been signed with Kapiti Coast District Council and an agreement with Wellington City Council is progressing. These will ensure financial security for possum work in these areas for the immediate future.

A science technician has been employed for six months to assist with the harvest, transfer and establishing baseline monitoring processes for a selection of biocontrol species. The programme works closely with Landcare Research and AgResearch, complementing current national research projects.

The 2014/15 Regional Possum Predator Control Programme (RPPCP) will expand to include another 20,300 ha in the Wairarapa. It will also include 16,500 ha of maintenance operations. In the Wellington/Kapiti programme, staff are establishing an additional 7,200 ha and working on maintenance of an existing 20,800 ha.

Staff have also commenced control in Ohariu, Porirua, Moonshine, North Wairarapa, Homebush, Kopuaranga and Rangitumau.

Landowner consultation for an eastern Tararua Range aerial 1080 TBfree NZ operation, covering 11,089 ha, is due to commence in February 2015.

3. Environment Management

3.1 Parks

At Queen Elizabeth Park, implementation planning for the first phase of the Heritage Precinct project is well underway. Noting potential efficiencies available through combining road and landscape works with Transmission Gully Motorway operations outside the park, officers are now focussing on construction of a new visitor centre/ranger office. This will be on the site of the current ranger office and will connect seamlessly with the current toilet building.

At the same time, conversations have been continuing with the Wellington branch of the Riding for Disabled Association (RDA), which is still seeking a new home base. A site at Battle Hill, which would accommodate a new arena, has been identified. RDA is also interested in renting from GWRC office and storage space which is currently occupied by the Western Depot staff.

As a result of the MacKays to Pekapeka Expressway project, Goodman's Contractors has sought a new resource consent to deposit cleanfill on peat land at the north end of Queen Elizabeth Park that is part of the pony club licence area. This proposal presents significant opportunities to GWRC and an agreement with Goodmans to undertake the works over the next 12-18 months will be finalised shortly.

4. Public Transport

4.1 Rail Patronage

Rail patronage has reached an all-time rolling 12 month high of 12.0 million trips. Overall, year-to-date patronage is up 6.0% and the peak is up 6.4%. Particularly pleasing is that the growth is consistent across all lines.

4.2 Kapiti and Wairarapa Operational Reviews

Initial planning has begun on reviewing public transport services in both the Kapiti and Wairarapa areas. Both of these reviews face the challenge of a diffused population over a wide catchment area.

A service review was undertaken in the Wairarapa in 2011 and implemented in 2012. The purpose of the operational review is to ensure the findings from 2011 are working efficiently. Upcoming roading changes in Kapiti mean it is important that the ground work for the public transport network is laid with

these changes in mind, whilst ensuring our current services operate as efficiently as possible.

4.3 Porirua Station Road renewal works

The purpose of this project is to provide public transport customers with a high quality interchange facility which encourages use of the public transport network. OPUS consultants are managing this project on our behalf and we are also working with Porirua City Council to ensure a collaborative approach.

Work on the road and kerb renewal will begin in late February/early March, with the bus shelters being replaced next financial year.

4.4 Upper Hutt Railway Station

Work on the replacement of Upper Hutt's railway station is under way. The contractors, Fulton Hogan, are preparing for what will be permanent improvements at the station's south end platform ahead of the demolition.

Cycle lockers have been shifted to the grass area opposite the station and an access ramp to the platform has been put in at the former loading bay near the ticket office.

Work on the station's south end is expected to take more than three months, with buses continuing to replace trains between the Upper Hutt and Trentham stations from 9am till 2.30pm on weekdays.

New cable routes and pits for electricity, communications and signals will be put in under the platform, but railway users will first benefit from four "butterfly shelters," to be installed between the station's main and layby train lines (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Butterfly bus shelter

These bus shelters will remain after the new station is finished and augmented by security lighting.

5. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

5.1 Engagement

Engagement on this matter is unnecessary.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

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

Report approved by:

Wayne O'Donnell
General Manager, Catchment
Management

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Nigel Corry
General Manager,
Environment Management

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Wayne Hastie
General Manager,
Public Transport