

14 December 2023

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-24533

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

**Request for information 2023-291**

I refer to your request for information dated 24 November 2023, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 24 November 2023. You have requested the following:

1. *“All or any GW policies which could assist Farmers as Ratepayers control their own pests including possums*
2. *All discussion to form such policies”*

In the same correspondence you had also asked for advice (if there was no such policy) on how to form a policy to assist ratepayers wishing to reduce or eradicate possum numbers.

**Greater Wellington’s response follows:**

1. *All or any GW policies which could assist Farmers as Ratepayers control their own pests including possums*
2. *All discussion to form such policies*

We do not hold any policies regarding pest control for ratepayers. We are therefore refusing your request for information under section 17(g) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (the Act) on the basis that the information requested is not held by Greater Wellington and there are no grounds for believing that the information is either–

- (i) Held by another local authority or a department or Minister of the Crown or organisation; or
- (ii) Connected more closely with the functions of another local authority, or a department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

We have provided two documents which may be of assistance to you.

**Attachment 1** is the Regional Pest Management Plan 2019-2039 (RPMP). This plan guides our obligations to control pests and in what manner, including our interactions with private landowners in relation to pest management.

**Attachment 2** is the Greater Wellington Biodiversity Strategy 2016, which has some more information that may be of interest to you. This Biodiversity Strategy sets a framework that guides how Greater Wellington protects and manages biodiversity in the Wellington Region.

### ***Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP)***

As this activity falls under the RPMP, changing existing policies would require a review of this document.

At a minimum, our RPMP 2019-39 is due for review in July 2029 (actual work would likely start in 2028 to meet this timeframe). This would be in line with the Biosecurity Act Section 100D(1)(c), *Reasons for Review* '(1) The Minister or council must initiate a review of a plan as a whole if— (c) the plan was last reviewed as a whole more than 10 years previously'. There are several other reasons given to prompt a review.

We can initiate this process earlier, if it makes sense to do so (a substantial amount of time and resource would be required). Having a new programme to add would be such a reason, where we believe that item does not fit the criteria for a minor plan change (Biosecurity Act Section 100G.4), i.e., there are significant effects on any person's rights and obligations.

To instigate a review, a proposal can be made by anyone – the Minister, Council, general public, as detailed in Biosecurity Act Section 100D *Review of plans – Proposal for review*. The proposal needs to clearly set out exactly what the changes would be and why the changes are sought. Note that a review does not have to involve the whole plan (unless it is in response to criteria stated in Section 100D *Reasons for Review*).

To determine whether the proposal requires a minor change or a review, officers and subject matter experts would need to investigate the consequences of the proposal and we would need to seek legal advice on whether there are significant effects on any person's rights and obligations.

### ***Key Native Ecosystem programme***

The other option that is available to private landowners wishing to have Greater Wellington support pest control on their land would be to become part of the Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) programme.

The objective of this programme is to protect and restore a representative examples of original indigenous ecosystem types of high value in the Wellington region through effective biodiversity management.

The 'Identification and prioritisation of high value terrestrial biodiversity sites for selection within the Key Native Ecosystems programme in the Wellington region' report (Attachment 3) recommended adding sites to the KNE programme that contain ecosystem types not currently being managed by the programme, thereby working towards the programme's inclusion of the full range of ecosystem types in the region.

There are currently 58 sites in the programme (approximately 48,000 ha) and through a desk top exercise we can see that your property contains MF2/MF5 forest type (Rimu, matai, hinau/black beech) (Attachment 4). This was the largest historical ecosystem in the region, but there is now less than 30% of its original vegetation remaining and only a few sites are being managed in a way that will maintain the future of this ecosystem type. There are no examples of this ecosystem type in the current KNE programme, so there is potential for your property to be included.

Prior to this happening we would need to groundtruth the forest type and if it is MF2/MF5, identify the threats to the forest and identify the actions to reduce the threats to ensure the long-term future of the forest. This may include actions to reduce the number of browsing ungulates as well as reducing possum numbers. If agreement is reached on management that would achieve the goals of the programme as well as those of the landowner, then the site could be included in the programme. There is no additional budget for this site, so funding would also need to be found.

Once in the KNE programme, the site would be managed in accordance with five-year KNE operational plans prepared by Greater Wellington's Environment Restoration team. Any work undertaken on private land as part of this programme is at the discretion of landowners and their involvement in the programme is entirely voluntary. Involvement may just mean allowing work to be undertaken on that land as outlined in the KNE operational plan.

Greater Wellington is more than happy to work with Te Awaitei to explore whether this programme would be a possibility. Please get in contact and we can arrange a visit to discuss what options would be available and what help and assistance we could give.

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



**Lian Butcher**

Kaiwhakahaere Matua, Taiao | Group Manager, Environment

PROACTIVE RELEASE