

APPENDIX – Further information

About Greater Wellington Regional Council

Located in our capital city and including the Wairarapa and Kāpiti Coast, Greater Wellington is one of the largest and most diverse regional councils in New Zealand. We have core roles across environmental protection, public transport provision, regional leadership and co-ordination, and bulk water supply.

Regional councils play a critical role in both emissions reduction and climate change resilience. We have strong partnerships with our territorial authorities and local mana whenua, and we have key roles in both planning and practical implementation.

Greater Wellington has had an evolving formal relationship with six mana whenua partners for over three decades:

- Ngāti Kahungunu represented by Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa;
- Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga represented by Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki;
- Ngāti Toa Rangatira represented by Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira Inc.;
- Rangitāne represented by Rangitāne o Wairarapa Inc.
- Taranaki Whānui represented by the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust.
- Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai represented by Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai Charitable Trust.

The arrangements include Te Upoko Taiao – Natural Resources Plan Committee which was established in 2009 and having mana whenua representatives on various Council Committees including the Long-Term Plan committee as the most recent example.

Like the rest of New Zealand, the Wellington Region is facing significant challenges related to climate change. This includes increasing frequency and extent of rainfall-induced landslides, coastal erosion, flood risk and drought. This will have implications on our rich natural biodiversity, our above- and below-ground built infrastructure, our communities' well-being, and our economy. Repeated surveys in the Wellington Region have found that our communities are very concerned about climate change and are looking to Greater Wellington and central government for leadership and action.

Greater Wellington strongly supports your ongoing commitment to New Zealand's emissions targets and your commitment to work with stakeholders to develop an adaptation framework.

Additional context on key issues

Emissions Reduction

1. Invest more in public transport to reduce transport emissions.

Investing in public transport not only reduces transport emissions but provides cleaner and safer urban areas. However, the current funding does not reflect the level of urgency and ambition necessary to achieve the National Emission Reduction Plan transport targets and the 2021 Wellington Regional Land Transport Plans' emissions reduction target.

Current arrangements may lead to increased pressure on local and regional councils to increase their funding shares for public transport services, new and improved local roading projects, improving the resilience of local transport networks and maintaining existing local roads – further overextending the already constrained financial environment for the local government sector.

REQUEST

We ask that the Government:

- a) increases funding to set land transport on the trajectory to achieving the National Emission Reduction Plan transport targets.

2. Enable national road pricing (Congestion Charging) through new legislation.

We urge the government to pass legislation that will enable the use of road pricing tools, including congestion or corridor charging. This is an important prerequisite to reducing vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) and emissions at the pace required to meet our targets. Research¹¹ and transport modelling demonstrate that road pricing is an effective tool to manage travel demand and reduce kilometres travelled by light vehicles, which the Wellington Region can leverage alongside behaviour change programmes and active mode and public transport networks to effect lasting change in the region.

REQUEST

We ask that the Government:

¹¹ Pacheco, E., & Ivory, V. (2023). [A narrative literature review of the effectiveness of interventions to reduce light vehicle travel](#). Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency Research Report 707.

- b) enacts legislation that will enable the use of road pricing tools, including congestion or corridor charging.

3. Use climate policy to drive environmental restoration.

The current settings of the Emissions Trading Scheme do little to encourage landowners to plant indigenous forest or create or restore wetlands because the returns from planting pines to earn emissions units are much greater. On this basis, New Zealand will end up with a lot of permanent pine forests but no improvements to biodiversity or lower gross emissions. Intervention is needed to ensure we get better outcomes.

The government has been considering a ‘biodiversity credits’ scheme, where buyers can voluntarily purchase environmental improvements using standard units, like carbon credits.

We strongly suggest the government exercise caution in development of a generic biodiversity credit, given the scientific challenges of defining highly diverse environmental and ecological properties.

We can also learn from the track record of the voluntary carbon market, where most voluntary credits have been exposed as being ‘junk’². Beyond bad accounting, carbon forests can and have burnt down, undoing the benefits that the polluters who bought the associated credits have claimed³. These sorts of issues can also be expected within a biodiversity credits scheme. There are likely to be more straightforward ways that government could use to support and enable private investment in environmental restoration. Direct government investment is also critical.

REQUEST

We ask that the Government:

- c) amends the Emissions Trading Scheme to provide greater incentive to landowners to plant indigenous forest, to improve biodiversity outcomes over permanent pine forests.
- d) exercises caution in introducing a biodiversity credit scheme and consider more straightforward options to achieve desired outcomes.

² Revealed: top carbon offset projects may not cut planet-heating emissions | Carbon offsetting | The Guardian

³ US Forest Fires Threaten Carbon Offsets as Company-Linked Trees Burn - Inside Climate News

Climate Change Adaptation

4. Complete the National Policy Statement on Natural Hazard Decision-making

We support the submission of Regional and Unitary Councils Aotearoa/ Te Uru Kahika on the National Policy Statement for Natural Hazard Decision-making. New Zealand communities need this NPS to provide clearer direction and certainty in a very complicated policy and regulatory environment.

REQUEST

We ask that Government

- e) introduces the National Policy Statement for Natural Hazard Decision-making.

5. Implement the Climate Change Adaptation Bill to prescribe responsibility and funding for managed retreat from high-risk areas.

Greater Wellington supports the continuation of the Environment Select Committee Inquiry into community-led retreat and adaptation planning, and the introduction of the Climate Change Adaptation Bill. We also support the ongoing development of Ministry for the Environment guidance for undertaking local climate change risk assessments and adaptation plans. We welcome the introduction of the recent changes to the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act LGOIMA (1987) to ensure Land Information Memorandums provide better information about the climate risks affecting properties.

Central and local government should be taking action to adapt to climate change. Recognising this, we are developing the first Wellington Regional Climate Change Impact Assessment in partnership with the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee. This is the first stage of a regional adaptation planning process designed to inform the next iteration of the Wellington Region Future Development Strategy, as well as councils' long-term and spatial plans.

As a collective of councils, we would benefit significantly from clearly understanding the finance and funding arrangements available from central government, and clear roles and responsibilities. Councils are hesitant to initiate community engagement on adaptation planning before knowing who is going to pay and have liability for what. It's important to agree methods for prioritising and initiating pre-emptive community-based adaptation engagement so that we avoid maladaptation and exacerbating existing inequities.

The essential ingredients are fair, repeatable, scalable, and efficient processes, clarity about individual and institutional responsibilities, integrated legislation, robust funding mechanisms, and a defendable evidence-base.

REQUEST

We ask that Government

- f) enacts a Climate Change Adaptation Bill to prescribe responsibility and funding for managed retreat from high-risk areas.

6. Fund iwi and hapū Māori to undertake climate risk assessments, adaptation planning and emergency response and recovery activities.

Empowering Māori is one of the five key principles in New Zealand's emissions reduction plan. The national adaption plan recognises the importance of embedding Te Tiriti across the climate response.

In the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle in Hawkes Bay and Tairāwhiti, iwi leaders stepped up to lead recovery processes for their communities. They led both the immediate response to provide for basic needs, and then the longer-term design and resourcing of the recovery process. Mana whenua relationships around the motu saw iwi leaders send practical, grounded aid flowing through to their people.

This took place against a backdrop of a delayed Government response, which did not meet the needs of people in a crisis. In Te Karaka, hundreds of people were marooned on a hill in dire need of water, food, shelter, and communications with family outside the area. In Hawkes Bay, communities suffered loss of life, their homes and irreplaceable wharenui and urupa.

In many cases, but not all, small towns and villages across NZ are home to mainly Māori people. Their hapū and iwi need long-term, reliable funding to build their capacity and capability in addressing the impacts of climate change, such as increased temperatures and extreme rainfall. This should include Government's development of the Māori Climate Platform to empower Māori to adapt. Māori can bring their long-held knowledge of the area to inform adaptation solutions in their role as kaitiaki, which all communities benefit from.

Our mana whenua partners have acknowledged that climate change will exacerbate existing inequities experienced by Māori and threaten both the tangible and spiritual components of well-being. They also note that our indigenous biodiversity, mahinga kai and taonga species are more vulnerable to environmental change, and they are well-placed to partner in adaptation planning if appropriately resourced.

REQUEST

We ask that Government provides long-term, reliable funding for mana whenua to exercise tino rangatiratanga to:

- g) build their capacity and capability in preparing for the impacts of climate change and applying iwi and hapu expertise and perspectives at the readiness level.
- h) lead their community response to its impacts and developing capability to enable a shared and coordinated approach to recovery.

7. Flood Protection “infrastructure protecting infrastructure” and nature-based solutions to create resilience:

Regional and Unitary Councils of NZ/ Te Uru Kahika seeks to partner with Government to oversee a 3-year programme of new and upgraded flood protection infrastructure, and a 10-year pipeline of nationwide co-investment. More fully described in the report **Before the Deluge 2.0**, this will enable us to protect infrastructure (roads, bridges, railway lines), communities (homes and businesses), productive land and people from the devastation arising from the intensity of such events as Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle.

A significant investment is required. Te Uru Kahika is seeking co-investment of \$197m from central government to accelerate delivery of 80 urgent shovel-ready projects. The case for taking immediate action is irrefutable. Both national and international studies show the return on investment from well-designed flood protection works is considerable: \$1 spent protecting a community avoids \$5-\$8 in clean-up costs afterwards, before considering the less tangible health, social, cultural, and environmental benefits.

The climate is rapidly changing. The frequency and magnitude of floods is accelerating. There is a distinct national interest and national assets to be protected. Co-investment from central government acknowledges shared accountabilities. Regional councils have demonstrated their capacity and capability to deliver flood protection infrastructure. This remains the first line of defence against flood risks, and a primary means of building community resilience until other longer-term measures are put into effect.

REQUEST

We ask that Government

- i) co-invests \$197million with regional government to accelerate the delivery of 80 urgent flood control projects, all of which are shovel ready.