

SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

20 FEBRUARY 2019

AGENDA ITEM C4

REPORT ON THE PROPOSED REVIEW OF THE WAIRARAPA COMBINED DISTRICT PLAN

Purpose of Report

To inform Councillors of the need to undertake the proposed review of the current Wairarapa Combined District Plan. To request from Council approval to commence a review of the District Plan.

Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Council:

1. *Receive the Proposed Review of the Wairarapa Combined District Plan Report.*
2. *Confirms approval for the commencement of the review of the Wairarapa Combined District Plan.*

1. Executive Summary

Under section 79 of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), the review of a District Plan must commence at least every ten years. As the Wairarapa Combined District Plan (Combined Plan) became operative in May 2011, and has largely been unchanged, its review must commence by 2021. However, a review of a plan can occur at any time, and in practical terms the current plan largely came into effect around 2009, well before the last appeal was resolved.

Consideration of the upcoming review and the best approach to the review of the Combined Plan has been undertaken during recent inter-council officer discussion in January 2019.

2. Background

Over the last decade the Combined Plan has managed land use across the three districts, addressing a wide range of subdivision and land development proposals, as well as well as new and changing activities and environmental issues. This experience has tested the effectiveness of not only the rules and standards, but also the policy framework and the compliance and enforcement regime. A review will provide the opportunity for introducing improvements into the Plan framework, drawing on the last ten years' practice.

Recently, the Wairarapa has been facing significant growth pressures, with a major increase in development pressures, particularly in the urban areas. A plan review allows for a comprehensive review of the provision for growth in the Plan, particularly in those towns where accommodating pressure for urban development which is becoming urgent.

In addition, since 2009 –

- Most of the current suite of five National Policy Statements have either been introduced or reviewed
- The number of National Environmental Standards has increased from two to six, with several under review, and three new ones currently being drafted
- There have been five Resource Management Amendment Acts, including two significant reforms in 2009 and 2017, plus numerous amendments through other legislative changes (such as the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014)
- The Wellington Regional Policy Statement was reviewed, becoming operative in April 2013

In addition, best practice in planning has evolved since the Combined Plan was developed in the mid-2000s, leading to changes in the way that plans are drafted and in the use of rules and policies. New or revised technical standards since 2009 may also require to be taken into account.

There are other impending changes that also indicate a need to review the Plan in the near future. In particular, the imminent introduction of the first set of national planning standards in April this year is likely to require changes to be made to the Combined Plan to ensure compliance. While some standards will be mandatory and not subject to a Schedule 1 public notification process, the implementation of other standards will need to go through such a process.

Recommendations to Council are that while these pressures will require a relatively comprehensive review of the Combined Plan, a substantive review of the Combined Plan is not likely to be required, in terms of major wholesale revisions of its key policy foundations. However, if a substantive issue does arise, it may well be relatively easy to 'ring-fence' it in terms of research, consultation, and policy development.

3. Discussion

A District Plan may be reviewed either progressively in parts, in what is usually referred to as a 'rolling review', or comprehensively through a full review under s 79(4) RMA.

Many Councils across New Zealand have been undertaking 'rolling reviews' of their first-generation plans, in principle to stagger the resourcing involved in such reviews, but also to enable a more focused, better researched and more thorough consultative approach to addressing their major resource

management issues than that which occurred in the promulgation of first-generation plans.

However, a rolling review can, cumulatively, result in a very lengthy and costly process, and leave those parts of a Plan that have yet to be reviewed becoming increasingly out of date. Further, many rolling reviews are never fully completed for example, the Wellington City District Plan review, started in 2003, was never fully completed. Wellington City Council are now about to commence a full review. New Plymouth has a similar history.

Advice from the consultants working in this area suggest it would be more efficient to review the Plan on a one-time but comprehensive basis to –

- Give effect to new or revised National Policy Statements and the revised Wellington Regional Policy Statement
- Align the Plan with recent National Environmental Standards
- Give effect to the proposed National Planning Standards making any adjustments needed to the structure, definitions and zoning appellations
- Give effect to the proposed National Planning Standards to make the plan align with requirements for electronic plans and address any consequential amendments required
- To rezone areas to accommodate growth pressures and/or modify existing zones and standards to enable growth
- Conversely, if needed, to tighten up protection of resources of important values
- Enable opportunities to align the Plan with recent strategies, such as the Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan
- Revise any objectives and policies in response to any issues arising from their implementation or to respond to any statutory amendments (for example, the two new section 6 matters of national importance since 2009)
- Revise any rules and supporting requirements in response to any implementation issues since 2009.

4. Continuance of a Combined District Plan

Prior to the formal proceedings of undertaking a review of the Combined Plan each Council must first decide if they wish to continue under a combined plan or withdrawal from it and revert to either a two council or individual council plan.

A single council plan is possible and relatively straightforward to accomplish although a review would still be required. However, the current plan was the first Combined District Plan prepared under the Resource Management Act in New Zealand and the first, second generation plan to become fully operative. At the 2010 New Zealand Planning Institute Conference, the

plan was awarded the Nancy Northcroft Award for Excellence in Planning Practice.

5. Conclusion

Under the statutory process of the RMA a review of a District Plan must commence within 10 years.

SWDCs experience and that of the other councils is that the combined plan has worked well with excellent cooperation with, and between, council officers in both neighbouring Councils. A combined plan provides efficiencies for Council and benefits the users in the Wairarapa providing consistency of rules and rule interpretation which in turn provides certainty for economic development.

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