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## Project title: Stream Protection Programme

### Strategy area: Environment

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#### 1. The Proposal

- Examine the role of regulatory tools, such as the District Plan and the Regional Freshwater Plan, that are available to protect streams in the city. This will include working with Greater Wellington to clarify the roles of the two organisations.
- Apply this understanding to a review of the effectiveness of Project Kaiwharawhara in protecting and enhancing the stream and its catchment.
- Examine the applicability of Project Kaiwharawhara as a model for developing community catchment plans for Porirua and Owhiro streams.
- Develop and implement catchment restoration plans based on these conclusions.
- Make recommendations to the Council on the need to make changes to the District Plan or the Regional Freshwater Plan.

#### 2. Strategic Fit

This proposal falls within the Environment Strategy, and relates to the Strategic Priority 10: *Stream Protection*.

The project will contribute directly to stream protection by physical catchment enhancement for Porirua and Owhiro Streams. This may include revegetation, creation of fish passages, and bank stabilisation. The project will also add value to current catchment planning processes and community stream plans by evaluating what has worked well and where improvements can be made. Clarification of council roles and regulatory tools will also aid stream protection, enabling effective and efficient decision-making.

#### 3. Relationship to Existing Activities

##### Council Outcomes

This project will contribute to making Wellington more **liveable** through the active management of open space ecosystems. It encourages **active engagement** by information sharing between Wellington City Council and the Regional Council and across the community, as well as collaborative decision making, significant community involvement and environmental education. Stream protection is a fundamental part of protecting the environment, creating sustainable recreation, enhancing water quality (contributing to making Wellington **healthier**) and conserving biodiversity. Stream protection is needed to ensure that Wellington is ecologically **connected**.

### **Existing projects and policy**

Documents such as *Wellington Wet and Wild: Bush and Streams Restoration Plan* have created an expectation that Council will develop regulatory tools to protect streams from the effects arising from residential subdivisions and other types of development.

The Council currently funds a number of projects that will contribute to the planning and regulation of development around streams. The Northern Growth Management Framework advances the principle of green and blue networks and its implementation offers the opportunity to protect and enhance streams in new urban areas. Projects are also underway on a review of the Subdivision Design Guide in the District Plan and the Code of Practice of Land Development, which may offer new design and engineering solutions for the management of streams. A review of the *Watercourses Bylaw* has also been initiated however the final outcomes of this are dependent on the clarification of roles and regulatory tools.

Council also funds and supports stream restoration projects, the best example of which is Project Kaiwharawhara. Project Kaiwharawhara is an innovative community catchment management plan<sup>1</sup> – lead by Wellington City Council in collaboration with Greater Wellington Regional Council and driven by community stream plans. The project is integrating thinking across Council Business Units (e.g. Parks and Gardens, Planning, Capacity, Roding, Infrastructure) and has been the first catchment based study in the city that has coordinated multidisciplinary design and planning. The Project Kaiwharawhara vision is to protect and enhance the natural landscape, ecosystems, homes and recreation areas, and for the stream to be the focus for local communities.

By utilising the momentum created by Project Kaiwharawhara, the Council has an opportunity to lead the way in developing a framework for a multidisciplinary approach, working together with communities and the Regional Council. It is appropriate for City Council to lead this initiative as the primary land managers at catchment level and the clarification of regulatory tools will help to improve on the Project Kaiwharawhara model.

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<sup>1</sup> A catchment is a system of streams and tributaries that flow into one basin, for example the Kaiwharawhara Catchment comprises all streams and tributaries that flow into Kaiwharawhara stream. Management at catchment level is necessary for high water quality and for the protection and restoration of Wellington's ecosystems.

## 4. Proposal Costs

<i>Outline project costs per year</i>										
Project Component	Operating expenses \$000									
	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
<i>Review Project Kaiwharawhara and develop model</i>	#	#	#	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Review regulatory tools for stream protection: Consultants and legal advice (Budget: Planning Policy Team)</i>	-	10+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Develop Community Catchment Plans: consultants and facilitators (Budget: C513)</i>	-	15	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Implement Plans: officers time (Budget: C513)</i>	-	-	30*	30*	30*	30*	30*	30*	30*	30*
<i>Consequential Opex impacts of Capex work</i>	-	-	-	2*	2*	2*	2*	2*	2*	2*
<i>Total</i>	#	25+	45*	32*	32*	32*	32*	32*	32*	32*

Project Component	Capital expenses \$000									
	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
<i>Implement Plans: resources (Budget: CX437)</i>	0	0	20*	20*	20*	20*	20*	20*	20*	20*
<i>Total</i>	0	0	20*	20*	20*	20*	20*	20*	20*	20*

+ The project may identify a need for specialist research on stream catchments to support and underpin both regulatory controls and catchment plans. This would require additional operational expenditure. This will be assessed on the outcomes of the project.

# Existing officers' time (work programme prioritised to absorb this cost).

\* The implementation of community catchment plans is likely to require some capital expenditure (e.g. interpretation signs, access tracks, stream reinstatement, stabilisation, fish passages) as well as operational expenditure (e.g. planting, staff time). The amount given is indicative only and will be finalised based on the outcomes of the project.

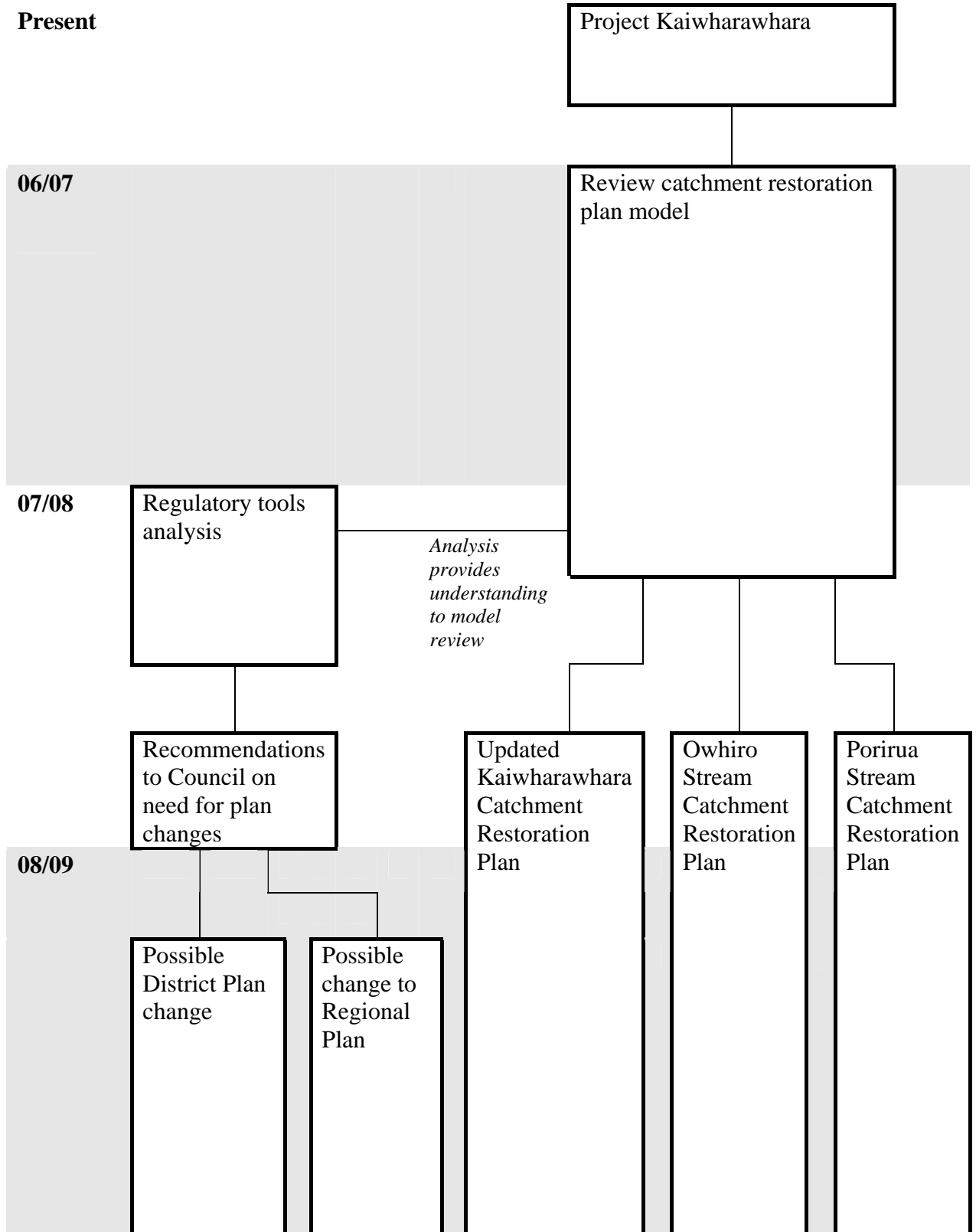
## **5. Project Outline**

The proposed new initiative project has two areas of work. Their interrelationship is shown in Diagram One. The first area is to continue the approach developed by Project Kaiwharawhara. The Open Space Planning Team will lead a review of the strengths and weaknesses of the catchment restoration plan model and work to improve it. Restoration plans will then be written for the Owhiro and Porirua stream catchments.

The second area of work is to analyse the regulatory tools that could be used to protect streams from the adverse effects of development. The work is linked to Project Kaiwharawhara and the catchment restoration approach to stream protection. This was recently demonstrated in meetings of Project Kaiwharawhara where community groups expressed strong and continuing dissatisfaction with the Council's inability to limit new subdivisions or the piping of streams within the Kaiwharawhara catchment, which they perceive to have a major impact on the stream system.

The analysis of regulatory tools will be lead by Planning Policy. It will provide two potential outcomes (see Diagram One). Firstly, it will allow officers to make recommendations to the Council on the need, and the best ways, to change the regulatory environment to protect streams. Secondly, it will provide information to the review of the stream restoration model, enabling community and Council works projects to be better integrated with the controls on the effect of private developments.

Diagram One: Relationship between the Regulatory Tools Analysis and Community Catchment Restoration Plans



### **Modelling Project Kaiwharawhara**

Project Kaiwharawhara will be reviewed with respect to its effectiveness in community stream planning and its strengths and weaknesses. This will be developed into a model which will then be applied to two key streams in Wellington City; Owhiro Stream and Porirua Stream.

Owhiro Stream is a prominent peri-urban stream, currently much degraded south of the southern landfill. As with the Kaiwharawhara Catchment, the Owhiro Catchment is close to the inner city giving it potential as an excellent show-case and educational tool. Porirua Catchment is the largest in the City and Porirua Stream is a significant suburban stream of high amenity value that is an important part of the blue corridor of the Northern Growth Management Framework. Both streams have dedicated community groups and are of cultural significance.

This project will enable the Council to take a proactive approach to stream protection, and to work collaboratively with the community in recognising the multiple values of streams, including ecology, health, and cultural significance to Tangata Whenua. It will enable the implementation of policy outlined in *Wellington Wet and Wild: Bush and Streams Restoration Plan*, and the principles of the *Northern Growth Management Framework*.

### **Regulatory tools analysis and relationship clarification**

The proposal is to review existing regulatory controls and explore the most appropriate approaches and methods for protecting streams under the District Plan, the Code of Practice, bylaws and the Regional Freshwater Plan. It should however be noted that it will not be legislatively possible to protect all streams.

The Resource Management Act is the appropriate legislation to regulate the effects of development on streams. Under the Act the Regional Council is responsible for the quality of water in streams and the protection of the ecosystems in streams. Wellington City Council is responsible for the control of the use and development of land adjoining streams, activities that affect the quality of water and health of stream ecosystems. In turn, the Regional Council can determine the minimum extent of these Council controls through the content of its Regional Policy Statements. Wellington City Council is also directly answerable to the Regional Council for the discharges from its stormwater system into streams. These over-lapping roles and responsibilities of the two organisations lead to frustration, both between the organisations and amongst the public. This project will clarify these roles and responsibilities.

The regulatory tools project may identify a need for specialist studies of the hydrology, ecology and character of the different stream catchments. Without good quality information it may be difficult to justify any change to the regulatory controls. At this time, it is not possible to provide project costs for these specialist studies because it is necessary to first do the work to understand the nature and constraints of the existing and potential regulatory tools. However, it is likely that whole catchment studies will be relatively costly (the multi-disciplinary consultancy, Sinclair Knight Mertz, has estimated \$40,000 to provide specialist mentoring to Capacity staff preparing a catchment management plan for the Te Aro catchment).

## **Risks and alternatives**

Delaying the project or doing nothing will mean:

- Continued changes to the environment of key streams, which may lead to long term degradation and fragmentation of stream ecosystems.
- A continuing lack of knowledge of the impact of infill and greenfield subdivisions and the piping of streams on the quality of stream systems.
- Continued dissatisfaction amongst community land care groups over Council's inability to protect streams.
- Potential erosion problems from increased development and stormwater flow.
- Community land care groups working in isolation and becoming increasingly disillusioned about the Council's commitment to stream protection.
- Ongoing confusion and duplication (for customers, officers and the community) around Council's and Greater Wellington's differing roles in the regulation of streams.

### **5.1 2006/07 Actions**

- Continue on-going restoration work on Kaiwharawhara Stream, and begin to review effectiveness and applicability of model to other catchment systems.

### **5.2 2007/08 Actions**

- Initiate review of stream protection regulatory tools and clarify roles of Council and Greater Wellington in relation to stream protection. The regulatory tools project may identify a need for research studies of the hydrology, ecology and character of the different stream catchments to underpin regulation (this role may most appropriately fall to Greater Wellington or the two Councils may agree to share the cost of research).
- Complete review Project Kaiwharawhara and develop model to apply to Porirua and Owhiro catchments.
- Begin to develop community catchment plans via consultation and facilitation.

### **5.3 2008/09 Actions**

- Apply Kaiwharawhara model, including regulatory tools, to Porirua and Owhiro catchments and develop catchment plan.
- Begin to implement catchment plans.

## **6. Conclusion**

The Council now has an opportunity to lead the way in developing a framework for a multidisciplinary approach and to collaborate with communities and Regional Council. Greater Wellington has overall responsibility for stream health in the Wellington Region, however City Council is the leader in catchment based land management.

Delaying this project puts two of the City's key streams at further risk from degradation and ecosystem fragmentation. Commencing this project is an opportunity for implementing stream protection policies, putting the Northern Growth Management Framework into practise, and building and strengthening community relationships.

## **7. Recommendation**

This project should proceed with the review commencing 2006/07. It will be an interdisciplinary project with the planning and modelling work lead by Open Space and Recreation Planning, the review of regulatory tools lead by the Planning Policy Team, and the development and implementation of catchment plans lead by Parks and Gardens.