
REPORT 5
(1215/52/IM)

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REFERENCE GROUP

1. Purpose of Report

To report on the work and achievements of the Environmental Reference Group (ERG) in 2011, and to provide an overview of the ERG's advice on key issues for the Council to consider and options for the 2012 forward programme. The ERG's Annual Report for 2011 is attached as Annex 1.

2. Executive Summary

The ERG has written its own Annual Report for 2011, which is attached as Annex 1.

The ERG feels 2011 has been another good year of input into the Council's work and is pleased that it is being engaged earlier in policy and projects.

The ERG has commented on issues raised during the 2010 Terms of Reference review, and noted that improvements are starting to show.

A stronger induction has resulted in new and existing members of the group having a clearer understanding of how the Council works. This, along with the increased use of productive engagement activities, such as prioritising workshops, has helped focus the ERG on achieving useful outputs that can feed into the Council's decision making process.

The ERG would also like a stronger mandate to address and feed into transport issues. While currently covered under the wider umbrella of the group, officers propose to investigate whether there is a need to formally include this in the Terms of Reference when they are next reviewed.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*

2. *Note the work and achievements of the Environmental Reference Group (ERG) in 2011, including responses to the issues identified in the 2010 review of Wellington City Council's advisory groups*
3. *Note that officers plan to address the issues raised by the ERG for consideration by Wellington City Council through the ERG's work planning process for 2012.*
4. *Agree that officers investigate formally including transport issues in the ERG's Terms of Reference when they are next reviewed.*

4. Background

The Environmental Reference Group (ERG), established in 2001, is an advisory group set up under a Terms of Reference (TOR)¹ to inform the work and activities of Wellington City Council (WCC) on issues relating to the natural environment, including water, energy and waste management. The purpose of the ERG is to:

- provide feedback and advise the Council on its natural environment policy, planning and asset management matters (including the development of the Council's Long Term Plan) in the developmental stages of all relevant projects;
- be an information conduit to and from the Council; and
- identify and comment on the broad spectrum of community expectations and concerns associated with the management of the natural environment.

The TOR, which were revised in March 2011 following a 2010 review of WCC advisory groups, require the ERG to report annually on the "work undertaken, number of meetings held and attendance, the group's achievements and any issues it wishes the Council to consider further".

5. Discussion

The ERG's report for 2011 is attached as Annex 1. It contains responses to the reporting requirements set out in the TOR. It also reports progress on issues raised during the 2010 review of WCC's advisory groups, particularly in relation to inductions and the purpose of the group.

During the 2010 Terms of Reference review for advisory groups, which was signed of in March 2011, the ERG raised a number of issues including the need for a better induction and 'clarity around what the Council needs the group to achieve'. The ERG was transferred to the Consultation & Engagement team in November 2011 and has started addressing these issues.

¹ <http://www.wellington.govt.nz/haveyoursay/meetings/termsoref/torenvironment.pdf>

Some initial changes have included a better induction process and a greater emphasis on workshops and other engagement techniques at meetings, to help focus discussions and produce more beneficial outputs. The Consultation and Engagement Team will continue to work closely with the ERG and Council Officers to maximise the effectiveness of the group in aiding the Council's decision making process and raising awareness of community concerns.

The ERG's draft work programme for 2012 is included in its report. This focuses on key areas of the policy and strategy forward programmes which the group and officers feel would benefit most from its input. The ERG is looking at creating sub-groups to focus on specific projects and policies and hope this will enable it to address capacity issues associated with only meeting six times a year.

The ERG would also like a stronger mandate to address and feed into transport issues. While currently covered under the wider umbrella of the group, officers propose to investigate whether there is a need to formally include this in the Terms of Reference when they are next reviewed.

5.1 Consultation and Engagement

The ERG has written its own report, which is attached as Annex 1.

5.2 Financial Considerations

None of the issues or initiatives contained in the ERG's report require increased funding.

5.3 Climate Change Impacts and Considerations

None of the issues or initiatives contained in the ERG's report has climate change impacts or considerations.

5.4 Long Term Plan Considerations

None of the issues or initiatives contained in the ERG's report will impact on WCC's Long Term Plan.

6. Conclusion

This report provides a summary of the work and activities of the ERG in 2011. It also reports progress on issues raised during the 2010 review of WCC's advisory groups.

Contact Officer: *Graeme Shimmin, Advisor, Consultation and Engagement*

Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

This activity fits with the outcomes for the Environmental Strategy and Governance Strategy.

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

The Environmental Reference Group is managed within existing budgets.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

There are no Treaty of Waitangi implications from this report.

4) Decision-Making

This report does not require a significant decision.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

No general consultation has been undertaken for this report.

b) Consultation with Maori

No consultation with Maori has been undertaken for this report.

6) Legal Implications

There are no legal implications from this report.

7) Consistency with existing policy

The activities of the Environmental Reference Group are consistent with existing policy and support ongoing policy development.

Annex 1. Annual report for the Environmental Reference Group

The Environmental Reference Group (ERG) is an advisory group set up under a Terms of Reference² to inform the work and activities of Wellington City Council (WCC) on issues relating to the natural environment, including biodiversity, water, energy and waste management. The purpose of the ERG is to:

- provide feedback and advise the Council on its natural environment policy, planning and asset management matters (including the development of the Council's Long Term Plan) in the developmental stages of all relevant projects;
- be an information conduit to and from the Council; and
- identify and comment on the broad spectrum of community expectations and concerns associated with the management of the natural environment.

This annual report is for the 2011 calendar year but touches on recruitment and induction of new members who joined ERG in early 2012.

Overall assessment of 2011

We feel that we had another year of good input and feedback, to and from the Council. In particular, we are impressed with the continually high quality presentations from Council officers. We provided verbal and written feedback to Councillors on several occasions, and hope that some has been taken on board.

Issues for Council to consider

The main issue this group is concerned with, and which it feels does not easily translate into its mandate, is transport. We believe that access and (sustainable) mobility in Wellington is one of the overarching issues combining all four pillars of the 2040 strategy. Particular concern around the impacts of RONS has been expressed at several occasions.

Currently we engage on transport issues under the umbrella of the wider implications that poor transport planning can have on the natural and built environment. The ERG would like to express an interest in having a more formal approach adopted, to allow easier collaboration on strategic planning areas such as transport, and with the Safe and Sustainable Transport Reference Group where possible.

² <http://www.wellington.govt.nz/haveyoursay/meetings/termsoref/torenvironment.pdf>

Governance and administration

Review and a new Terms of Reference

A review of advisory groups including the Environmental Reference Group was carried out in 2010 and a slightly revised Terms of Reference was signed off by WCC in March 2011. Key changes were:

- better member induction and work programme planning to enable earlier and more effective involvement in WCC policy and decision making.
- formal inclusion of water (storm, sewage and potable) into the purpose statement of the ERG

One issue raised by the ERG in the review was ‘a lack of clarity around what Council needs the group to achieve’. The recent change in support outlined below is looking to address this by facilitating more opportunities for feeding into the decision process and early engagement.

Support

WCC’s support for the Environmental Reference Group transferred from the Policy team to the Consultation and Engagement team in November 2011. This will develop a stronger focus for the group and brings consistency, in terms of management, after three of the Council’s other advisory groups transferred to the Consultation & Engagement team earlier in the year.

We would like to thank Zach Rissel for the great work he did with the group and commend Graeme Shimmin for the enthusiasm he has brought to this portfolio. We would also like to thank all the council officers who have made presentations to us; we acknowledge the quality of presentations, willingness to listen, responsiveness and appreciation for our feedback. Lastly, we would like to thank the Councillors who have listened to our concerns and priorities, in particular Councillors Ritchie and Lester.

Membership

As of January 2012 the Environmental Reference Group consists of 15 members. A list of Environmental Reference Group members is contained in Appendix 1.

Two members resigned over the course of the year, while two members reached the end of their second three year term and, as per the Terms of Reference, stepped down from the group.

A recruitment drive during the last quarter of 2011 attracted 36 high-calibre applications, from which seven new members were chosen to join the group. New members were selected to complement the existing expertise and experience of the group and to provide a better-balanced demographic. While a youth representative has been added, it is acknowledged that a Māori perspective is still needed. The group is working with the Council’s Treaty Team to achieve this.

Number of meetings and attendance

The Environmental Reference Group met 6 times in 2011, as per the Terms of Reference. A record of agenda topics and meeting attendance is contained in Appendix 2.

Member inductions and development

An excellent change has been made to provide a stronger induction process, to bring the seven new members up to speed and to give the longer standing members an update on council processes and issues such as:

- How the Council interacts with Māori and Iwi
- Conflict of interest issues
- ERG and other reference groups' relationship with Council
- Bylaws, long-term planning, strategic planning etc
- Understanding the relationship between GWRC, WCC, TAs and Central Government.

Achievements during 2011

Key achievements in 2011

A full list of topics discussed at ERG's meeting during 2011 can be found in Appendix 2. Key achievements the group feel are worth noting are:

- Engagement with staff at various stages of Council's strategic planning processes, e.g. Wellington 2040, Wellington CBD, possible priorities for the LTP.
- Increased opportunities for early engagement in the formative stages of policy and strategy reviews the Regional Waste Minimisation and Management Plan (February 2011), the Capital Spaces Open Space Strategy Review, and the Town Belt Management Plan, town-planning for Miramar.
- Co-chair's presentation on 2040 strategy to Council and report-back including ERG's strategic input from the 2010 'Briefing to Incoming Council'.
- Increasing awareness of the benefits of aligning our deliberations with matters on Council's policy and strategy work (work programme planning).
- Motion was tabled at extraordinary Council meeting on RONS.

Forward programme for 2012

The ERG will continue to meet bi-monthly and will focus on key areas of the policy and strategy forward programmes for 2012, including;

- 2012/22 Long Term Plan development
- Climate Change Action Plan implementation
- Water Conservation Plan
- Waste Minimisation & Management Plan
- Capital Spaces Open Space Strategy Review
- District Plan Review

ERG members are keen to host more workshops and early engagement sessions during their meetings. Both officers and ERG members feel this early engagement can add more value to the decision-making process and has helped address some of the issues raised during the ToR review around the purpose of the group.

The ERG is also looking at adopting sub-groups to work on specific projects that require a larger amount of time during 2012. This will help address a capacity issue that comes with only holding six meetings a year, and will allow those with specialist skills or interests to be utilised more effectively by the Council.

APPENDIX 1

Environmental Reference Group Membership as at January 2012

	Year joined	Title	First Name	Last Name
1	2008	Dr	Sea	Rotmann
2	2008	Mr	Hamish	Allardice
3	2009	Ms	Peter	Gilberd
4	2009	Ms	Bev	Abbott
5	2010	Ms	Sarah	Free
6	2010	Mr	Phil	Hancock
7	2010	Ms	Claire	Graeme
8	2010	Mr	Marc	Slade
9	2012	Mr	Charles	Barrie
10	2012	Ms	Josephine	Newman
11	2012	Mr	David	Rohan
12	2012	Ms	Jane	O'Loughlin
13	2012	Ms	Sophie	Mormede
14	2012	Mr	Howard	Markland
15	2012	Mr	James	Wall-Manning

Resignations during 2011

	Title	First name	Last name
1	Mr	Mike	Ennis
2	Mr	Tushara	Kodikara
3	Ms	Kathryn	Maxwell
4	Dr	Phillip	Mladenov

APPENDIX 2

2011 Environmental Reference Group Meetings

Date	Agenda Topics	ERG members in attendance
21 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regional Waste Minimisation and Management Plan• Capital Spaces Plan Review	11
18 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2011/12 Draft Annual Plan• Wellington 2040	9
13 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biodiversity Action Plan and performance measurement• Miramar Structure Plan• Climate Change Action Plan update	10
12 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town Belt Management Plan Principles• Wellington 2040• City Spatial Structure Plan Workshop	8
3 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long Term Plan Workshop• ERG Chairmanship and Recruitment	6
21 November	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long Term Plan & Draft Annual Plan update• Annual Report Back to Council• Forward Planning & Ways of Working• Recruitment update	8

The full minutes of the meetings can be found at:

http://www.wellington.govt.nz/haveyoursay/meetings/comgroup/Environment_Reference_Group/2011/schedule.html

In addition formal written or oral submission and feedback was given on;

- Roads of National Significance
- Wellington 2040