

# 5. RURAL CHARACTER AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

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## 5.1 Introduction

A key issue within the Horokiwi area is the impact of future management on the rural character of that area. This chapter looks at the features that contribute to the area's character, and suggests ways to sustain these elements into the future.

Relevant rural area objectives are also identified. These are based on the WCC Rural Area Objectives (Appendix One), with some change to reflect the issues and priorities within the Horokiwi area. Of particular importance is the proposal to retain the wording of WCC Rural Area Objective #2, but make it a primary, or over-riding objective, for the Rural Community Plan.

Other recommended changes to the wording of the WCC objectives are identified in the sections that follow. Additions to the objectives are shown in underline, and deletions indicated by ~~strikethrough~~.

## 5.2 Horokiwi's rural character

### 5.2.1 Identifying the issues

Horokiwi is situated on a high plateau just to the north of Wellington City, and spans an altitude of between 250 and 360 metres above sea level (compared with Mt Kaukau (445 m), Colonial Knob (458 m) and the Belmont Trig (456 m)). Horokiwi covers an area of approximately 960 hectares, and accommodates just over 70 households. Predominant uses in the area include lifestyle or small lot grazing and tree crops, commercial forestry, reserves, and primary and secondary native bush. All reserve land is currently zoned Open Space in the Wellington City District Plan. The areas directly surrounding Horokiwi are either regional park (to the north and east) or farmland especially Lincolnshire Farm and a portion of the Woodridge estates (to the south and west). There is a limited number of non-rural land uses occurring within the area, although these uses are relatively confined. The Horokiwi Quarry is a large operation located on the south-eastern boundary, just above the junction of Horokiwi and Hutt roads. Other non-rural uses in the area are relatively small scale, for example, the sawmill and a vehicle servicing business, sited immediately up from the Quarry.

This combination of land uses, especially the balance of lifestyle lots, bush and plantation forest land both within and adjoining the Horokiwi area, establishes a high degree of natural amenity. Combined with Horokiwi's high altitude, dramatic outlook and exposure to climate, both residents and visitors to the area have a strong appreciation for the wild ruggedness of the area.

The importance of Horokiwi’s rugged rural character was strongly emphasized in the feedback received at the Community Open Day, including the survey responses submitted by the many individuals that took the time to complete the WCC questionnaire. Feedback from the Community Open Day signalled a great passion amongst residents of, and visitors to Horokiwi, for the solitude and naturalness provided by the place. Some of the comments received are outlined in Figure 3 (over-page) and below:

*“Bush/bird life, harbour views. A place so close to the city that many people haven’t seen.” “Rural sanctuary, quiet, not overly developed.”*

*“Isolation, green space, quiet, clean, distance from neighbours, light traffic flows, small and medium-scale farming, no street lighting.”*

*“...no-exit road which maintains the unspoilt character of Horokiwi.....”*

*“Wind, wind, wind and horizontal rain. Misty days.”*

Suggested key issue for the area is:

- Horokiwi is a rugged yet tranquil rural enclave and this character is highly valued by both residents and visitors to the area. It is regarded as a sanctuary from city life, providing peaceful living within a close community environment. This character is vulnerable to change from new subdivisions, increased population, structures, the provision of additional services, and /or changes to the roading network to and within the area.

### 5.2.2 Objective

<b>PRIMARY OBJECTIVE</b>	To maintain and enhance rural character, amenity and identity for people living, working and visiting Horokiwi. (See WCC RAO #2, Appendix One.)
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### 5.2.3 Methods

<b>Community projects</b>	-
<b>Combined Community Association &amp; WCC projects</b>	Wellington City Council and the Horokiwi Community Association will work together to investigate a rural heritage district or similar concept. This work would investigate a range of implementation methods and underpin any future district plan change including changes to the rural area subdivision rules in Horokiwi. It will be progressed in close consultation with the Horokiwi community, and other affected parties including neighbouring communities. (See also District plan methods.)

**Figure 3: Horokiwi's rural character**

Wind in pines, Magpies and some sort of small petrol engine

Space, altitude, wind, closeness to town, the hill itself

Rural backwater, oriented to outdoor life

Milking the cow on a sunny morning before going to work in the city.



People waving

**Smells and tastes like..**  
Country smells...Fresh air...Animals...the views, the sun, the space, the quiet, the natural topography, the native bush.....Clean...the country without the odour ...Uncooked and tough ... Hints of old flavours, things we could easy forget.

# HOROKIWI

**Sounds like...**  
Native birds...Sea breeze ... Frogs, Peacocks and Llamas...No industrial buzz whatsoever.... Quiet ... Silence! ... Lovely ... Rural: Sheep sounds at shearing, wind in trees ... Tranquil. City + Fresh + Wild + Stormy.



Rural, quiet, few neighbours

.....the lovely community spirit...is the most important cultural feature

A place where we live to get away from it all

**If Horokiwi was a person they'd be..**  
Quiet calm, friendly, waves to everyone. Smiles.... Robust, independent, friendly, versatile, able... Nature loving.

<b>Provision of WCC services</b>	<p>Wellington City Council manages an extended network of reserve and other land in and adjacent to Horokiwi. These reserves serve a combination of open space, ecological and recreation purposes, and contribute to the character of the area. It is a priority that WCC work to enhance those areas that have already been protected.</p> <p>WCC will also look at options to extend reserve initiatives in Horokiwi. Some of this work may be achieved by working with adjoining landowners and encouraging compatible initiatives. Priority actions include the establishment of east-west open space, recreation and ecological linkages. These actions could potentially involve the Belmont Gully and suitable ridge-top connection, and a part of the ex-Transpower land, now in Council ownership, above Grenada North. This work will be undertaken in close consultation with the Horokiwi community and other interested parties including Iwi and neighbouring communities. See also sections 5.3.3, 5.4.3, 5.5.3, 5.6.3, 5.7.3 and 6.6.3.</p>
<b>Provision of other services</b>	<p>-</p>
<b>Community Association and WCC advocacy, facilitation and/or education</b>	<p>-</p>
<b>Individual action</b>	<p>-</p>
<b>District Plan provisions</b>	<p>District Plan changes may be required as a result of the combined Horokiwi Community Association and WCC Rural Heritage Project, described above. These changes could include new objectives and policies to recognise and protect the “rural heritage” character of Horokiwi, the cultural, historic and natural elements that contribute to it, and their sensitivity to change.</p> <p>District plan methods could include a new Horokiwi rural heritage district to be identified in the Wellington City district plan. This precinct would need to be supported by an appropriate mix of regulatory and non-regulatory methods.</p> <p>This issue would also be further investigated in the joint HCA / WCC project, and include assessment of the subdivision rules and other methods needed to protect the special rural character of Horokiwi. One possibility is to retain the existing district plan rules controlling subdivision, where new lots of 50 hectares or greater are assessed as “discretionary activities”<sup>2</sup> and proposals for smaller lots must satisfy an even higher test as a “non-complying” activity<sup>3</sup>.</p> <p>The present rural rules also distinguish “rural” activities from “non-rural” activities and need to be examined. These currently give primacy to traditional rural activities and offer certainty on what can or cannot be done “as of right”.</p> <p>Any changes to the district plan should be developed in close consultation with the Horokiwi community and other affected parties including Iwi and neighbouring communities. Any new measures should provide scope for innovation while protecting the integrity and diversity of the Horokiwi landscape. It is recommended that these measures also be administratively supported by an appropriate design guide.</p>

<sup>2</sup> **Discretionary Activity:** This is a category of consent provided for under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). In assessing these applications, the Council has the power to accept, accept with conditions, or decline. Council decisions are based on the provisions of the RMA and the objectives, policy and rules of the district plan. A major test of all subdivision decisions will include whether adverse effects can be avoided, remedied or mitigated.

<sup>3</sup> **Non-complying Activity:** Council can only approve an application for a non-complying activity if they are satisfied that the effects of the activity will be minor or that granting the consent will not be contrary to the objectives or policies of the district plan.

	<p>The Northern Growth Management Plan (NGMP) process is likely to result in some district plan changes for Wellington’s northern area, potentially including the area of overlap between the NGMP and Horokiwi plan shown in Map 1. Effective management of the Horokiwi Rural Community Plan and future NGMP processes will be achieved through good communication by those concerned and using opportunities for ongoing community involvement in the development and implementation of any proposals by the Wellington City Council.</p> <p>Other outside influences may also impact on the area. Relevant organisations and/or consent applicants need to rigorously address rural character and amenity issues in any planning or development proposals.</p>
Other methods	-

### 5.3 Ridgelines, landscapes and views

#### 5.3.1 Identifying the issues

Comments received on the issues surrounding the management of ridgelines and hilltops include:

*“All ridgelines, landscapes and views are important”      “Subdivision of rural land is the greatest threat”      “Restrictions on pine plantings, height restrictions too”*

Suggested key issues for the area are:

- Horokiwi’s ridgelines, landscape, open spaces, and views are highly valued by residents and visitors to the area, and can be threatened by inappropriate development.
- In some places vegetation including trees planted or growing on road reserve detracts significantly from these views. At the same time, this and other vegetation can provide important shelter from the strong winds that buffet the area.

#### 5.3.2 Objective

OBJECTIVE	To protect important ridgelines, landscapes, <u>open space</u> , and views. (See WCC RAO #6, Appendix One.)
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### 5.3.3 Methods

Community projects	-
Combined Community Association & WCC projects	-
Provision of WCC services	<p>Establish and appropriately manage a suitable reserve network within Horokiwi to address open space, ecological and recreation priorities. Formally protect other Council land within Horokiwi as reserve, and administer as part of the WCC green belt. This work will be undertaken in close consultation with the Horokiwi community <u>and other affected parties including Transpower NZ Ltd (where the proposed reserve area is close to existing transmission lines)</u>. See also <u>Section 5.2: Horokiwi's rural character</u>.</p> <p>Traffic safety and some views would be enhanced by the trimming and/or removal of vegetation, including trees, from areas of road reserve adjoining the Horokiwi Road. This work will be done in consultation with adjoining landowners. See also <u>Section 6.4: Efficiency, convenience and safety of access</u>.</p>
Provision of other services	-
Community Association and WCC advocacy, facilitation and/or education	
Individual action	-
District Plan provisions	<p>See suggested changes to the WCC District Plan discussed in Section 5.2, including the recognition of a Horokiwi rural heritage district, proposals concerning subdivision rules, and the distinction between “rural” and “non-rural” activities. This work will also consider the methods necessary to protect and appropriately manage Horokiwi's ridgelines and hilltops.</p> <p>The current rule requiring a discretionary consent for structures or earthworks on ridgelines and hilltops is supported. Any future changes to these provisions must recognise and provide for the protection of Horokiwi's important ridgelines and hilltops, and be developed in close consultation with the community.</p> <p>Relevant organisations and/or consent applicants to rigorously address rural character and amenity issues in development proposals affecting significant ridgelines, hilltops and areas of open space.</p> <p>See <u>Section 5.2: Horokiwi's rural character</u> for management of the relationship between the Horokiwi Rural Community Plan and future Northern Growth Management Plan process.</p>
Other methods	-

## 5.4 Places of cultural and historic importance

### 5.4.1 Identifying the issues

Issues concerning the management of cultural and historic places include:

*“The ridgelines .... give great views in relation to the Maori and European history of Wellington.”*

*“Without a written record – knowledge of the areas history is dying and moving away.”*

*“...ignorance of historical value means some residents or visitors unwittingly destroy these places. Others don't consider places of cultural or historical significance as important as their commercial concerns.”*

The suggested key issues are:

- The cultural and historic places in Horokiwi are important to the area's identity. These values may be further threatened by new development such as subdivision or roading.
- Horokiwi's cultural and historic heritage is not well documented.

### 5.4.2 Objective

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To recognise and preserve the cultural and historic heritage of Horokiwi. (NEW)
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### 5.4.3 Methods

<b>Community projects</b>	-
<b>Combined Community Association &amp; WCC projects</b>	There is not much information around to help residents identify culturally or historically important sites. Where appropriate, survey and identify Horokiwi's cultural and historic sites. Assess feasibility of an interpretative history track, possibly linking with the Northern Walkway. (See also <a href="#">Section 6.6: Recreation.</a> )
<b>Provision of WCC services</b>	-
<b>Provision of other services</b>	-
<b>Community Association and WCC advocacy, facilitation and/or education</b>	Support the accurate identification of important sites and make this information easily accessible, in consultation with the Horokiwi community, Iwi and other interested parties.

<b>Individual action</b>	-
<b>District Plan provisions</b>	Provide appropriate levels of protection for important cultural and historic sites through the district plan rules. The Wellington City District Plan currently recognises and provides for sites of significance. The district plan will be responsive to new information that requires changes to existing provisions. <i>Any changes to the district plan will be progressed in close consultation with the Horokiwi community and other affected parties including Iwi and neighbouring communities.</i>
<b>Other methods</b>	-

## 5.5 Native bush and wildlife – ‘biodiversity’

### 5.5.1 Identifying the issues

There is approximately 110 hectares of native vegetation in the Horokiwi area, made up of primary remnants, advanced secondary re-growth, and regenerating scrub. Primary remnants largely occur in the gully areas falling east and west from the main Horokiwi ridge. Some of these gully remnants are further surrounded by advanced secondary regrowth, regenerating scrub and in some cases commercial pine plantations. These plantations work to reduce the ‘edge effect’ on remnant areas, as well as providing habitat for some wildlife. Individual landowners have also put significant effort into replanting, particularly with native species.

Vegetation in the area provides home to a range of bird life and other interesting wildlife. For example the Wellington Green Gecko can be found in bush and scrub areas in Horokiwi. Residents also report a build-up in bird life as more trees are re-established in the area.

A lot of people have commented on the future of Horokiwi’s native bush and wildlife, with considerable support shown for the protection of these areas. The distribution of existing bush areas is shown on Map 2. Comments about the future management of these areas include:

*“Adds to rural backwater character. Brings back birdlife. Breaks the wind.”*

*“Encourage community planting, manage reserve land in community properly.”*

*“changes to the rural zoning of Horokiwi will affect flora and fauna.”*

*“Possum eradication.”*

The suggested key issue for the sustainability of the area’s native bush and wildlife is:

- Horokiwi’s natural areas and wildlife are highly valued by residents and visitors to the area, but are threatened by the effects of new development including subdivision, roading, and animal and plant pests.



## 5.5.2 Objective

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To improve indigenous biodiversity by protecting and enhancing natural features, indigenous vegetation and regenerating bush. (See WCC RAO #9, Appendix One.)
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## 5.5.3 Methods

<b>Community projects</b>	See below.
<b>Combined Community Association &amp; WCC projects</b>	<p>There is considerable support in Horokiwi for the protection of existing bush and stream areas, and revegetation of other areas with suitable native plant species, with strong interest in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To build on community interest to restore the Council reserve area between Horokiwi Road and Woollaston Way;</li> <li>• To look at options to make native plants available for planting in the area;</li> <li>• To support landowners / families with other information e.g., identification of priority areas, species and site selection and management, pest control, and community based monitoring;</li> <li>• To facilitate or support community planting days and rural workshops to promote planting, pest control &amp; other methods.</li> </ul> <p>WCC and HCA will facilitate a range of suitable methods, and will also have regard to the efforts and interests of neighbouring communities and the ecological priorities of the wider area,</p>
<b>Provision of WCC services</b>	The Council administers a significant area of land in and around Horokiwi. Some landowners feel their protection efforts are wasted when they see significant pests roaming or growing uncontrolled on neighbouring Council land. The Horokiwi Community Association strongly supports appropriate reserve status and effective control of plant and animal pests on lands administered by Wellington City Council within or adjoining the area.
<b>Provision of other services</b>	The Horokiwi Community Association will investigate potential funding sources to support community planting and restoration initiatives, including pest control.
<b>Community Association and WCC advocacy, facilitation and/or education</b>	<p>Wellington City Council will advocate for the protection and enhancement of regenerating bush and wildlife habitats. Landowners will be encouraged and supported to protect natural areas through sympathetic management, replanting, pest control, fencing and covenanting.</p> <p>The Horokiwi Community Association will establish a “Horokiwi Bush and Streams” subcommittee to support these efforts. The “Bush and Streams Restoration Plan” adopted by Wellington City Council in September 2001 identifies priorities and methods to support sound bush protection in the Wellington area. The Council will make available its information on important natural sites in Horokiwi, and protection options.</p>
<b>Individual action</b>	Individual landowners and families have a significant part to play in supporting bush protection in Horokiwi. Some additional individual effort may be possible with support, encouragement and appreciation by the Council.

<b>District Plan provisions</b>	The District Plan could be changed to be more proactive in preventing the loss of indigenous vegetation, and protecting wildlife habitats, particularly when considering the effects of new development including subdivision, roading and/or new dwellings. This could be achieved through general indigenous vegetation protection rules, and/or the identification and protection of significant sites.
<b>Other methods</b>	<p>The Government is currently developing a Biodiversity National Policy Statement, to be administered through the planning and consent provisions of the Resource Management Act 1991. Once operative, Councils will be required to have regard to this policy statement.</p> <p>A number of Regional Council initiatives are relevant, including the Wellington Regional Pest Management Strategy. This strategy prioritises Key Natural Ecosystems in the area (including Belmont Regional Park) for sustained pest control.</p>



## 5.6 Natural waterbodies

### 5.6.1 Identifying the issues

Horokiwi has a number of small streams, seasonal springs, and wetland areas. Some residents draw directly from streams for their potable water, rather than relying solely on rainwater collection systems. The distribution of these areas is shown on Map 2. Horokiwi's streams are relatively small, but feed into the larger more well-known Porirua (to the west) and Korokoro (to the east) Streams. The Porirua Stream is adjacent to major urban and road areas and is therefore quite degraded in terms of water quality and habitat value<sup>4</sup>. In contrast, the Korokoro Stream is in very good condition, benefiting from its location within the Belmont Regional Park, and providing habitat for a number of native fish species including Shortfin and Longfin eel, Giant kokopu, Inanga, and Common, Bluegill and Redfin Bullies. Brown trout have also been found in the Korokoro Stream.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the relatively small number and size of these waterbodies, quite a few comments were received on the future management of these waterbodies and their immediate margins (known as riparian areas):

*"Regular random water testing and enforcement."*

*"Riparian strips/native cover over streams."*

*"Control run-off."*

The suggested key issue is:

- Horokiwi has a number of small streams and wetlands, and these may be threatened by vegetation clearance, land disturbance, possums, and stock effluent, although the nature and scale of these effects are not known.

### 5.6.2 Objective

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To preserve and enhance the natural character of <u>natural waterbodies and their margins</u> <del>coastal and riparian environments</del> . (See WCC RAO #10, Appendix One.)
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### 5.6.3 Methods

<b>Community projects</b>	-
<b>Combined Community Association &amp; WCC projects</b>	See methods in <u>Section 5.5 Native bush and wildlife – 'biodiversity'</u> .

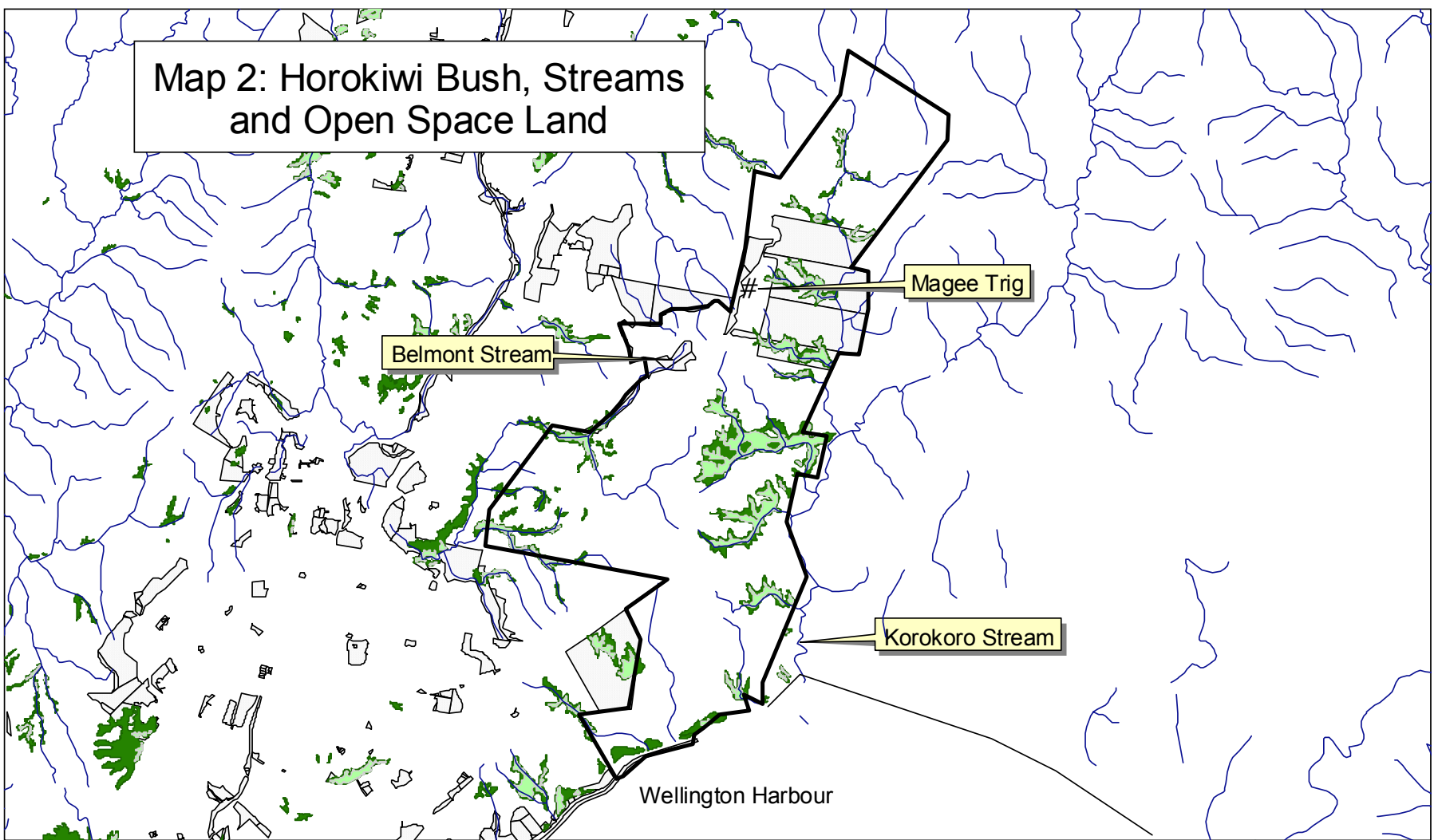
<sup>4</sup> Wellington City Council (2001), Wellington wet and wild: bush and streams regeneration plan. 140p.

<sup>5</sup> National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research Ltd (NIWA) (1997), Freshwater fish database.

<b>Provision of WCC services</b>	Appropriate management of Council land, including reserve areas, is an important issue for Horokiwi landowners. See methods in <u>Section 5.5 Native bush and wildlife – 'biodiversity'</u> . The Council will lead by example in the sustainable management of its own land.
<b>Provision of other services</b>	-
<b>Community Association and WCC advocacy, facilitation and/or education</b>	<p>The Horokiwi Community Association and the Wellington City Council will be good advocates for the protection and enhancement of Horokiwi's natural waterbodies and their margins. Landowners will be encouraged and supported to protect these waterbodies through sympathetic management, riparian planting, fencing and covenanting.</p> <p>The Horokiwi Community Association will establish a "Horokiwi Bush and Streams" subcommittee to support these efforts. The "Bush and Streams Restoration Plan" adopted by Wellington City Council in September 2001 identifies priorities and methods to support sound bush protection in the Wellington area. The Council will make available its information on important natural waterbodies in Horokiwi, and protection options.</p>
<b>Individual action</b>	-
<b>District Plan provisions</b>	Advocacy and other non-regulatory methods are generally favoured as the means by which the natural character of streams is safeguarded, although regulatory methods may be needed when the preferred tools are not effective. See also WCC 'Bush and Streams Regeneration Plan' (see above).
<b>Other methods</b>	The Government is currently developing a Biodiversity National Policy Statement, to be administered through the planning and consent provisions of the Resource Management Act 1991. This policy statement will address the sustainable management of streams and wetlands, and once operative, Councils will be required to have regard to this policy statement.



# Map 2: Horokiwi Bush, Streams and Open Space Land



Wellington Harbour



Scale: 1:45000

- Key**
- Horokiwi boundary
  - Primary Remnant Sites
  - Advanced Secondary Regrowth Sites
  - Streams
  - Land zoned Open Space



## 5.7 Sustainable management by landowners

### 5.7.1 Identifying the issues

Many residents have expressed interest in sustaining the key elements of the Horokiwi landscape, in particular bush and stream areas. Such management is more rewarding if applied consistently, particularly across the large areas administered by the Wellington City Council.

*“Provide cheap native plants.”*

*“..provide incentives for the community to work together in common projects for common goals”*

*“Advice on planting.”*

*“WCC has been of absolutely no help in assisting with pest (possum etc) destruction!”*

*“There is little point in us doing all of this when we border council land full of gorse, goats and vermin which are not controlled”*

*“Pest Control – subsidised bait/poison, as well as native trees/shrubs for those that wish to regenerate bush.”*

*“The planting of pines on my place has brought back Tui’s as we have been able to establish many other plants. Next step for my place is natives in large numbers.”*

The sustainability benefits of native and introduced vegetation are also sometimes intertwined. For example, in some parts of Horokiwi, commercially sustained land uses, such as pine plantations, have been managed to provide other benefits, such as shelter for emergent bush and habitat for wildlife. Sensitive and progressive harvesting can also be used to lessen the impact on these bush areas once the trees are ready for removal.

A suggested key issue for the area is:

- Landowners need support for pest control and replanting areas with natives. At the same time the Council needs to adequately manage its own nearby reserves.

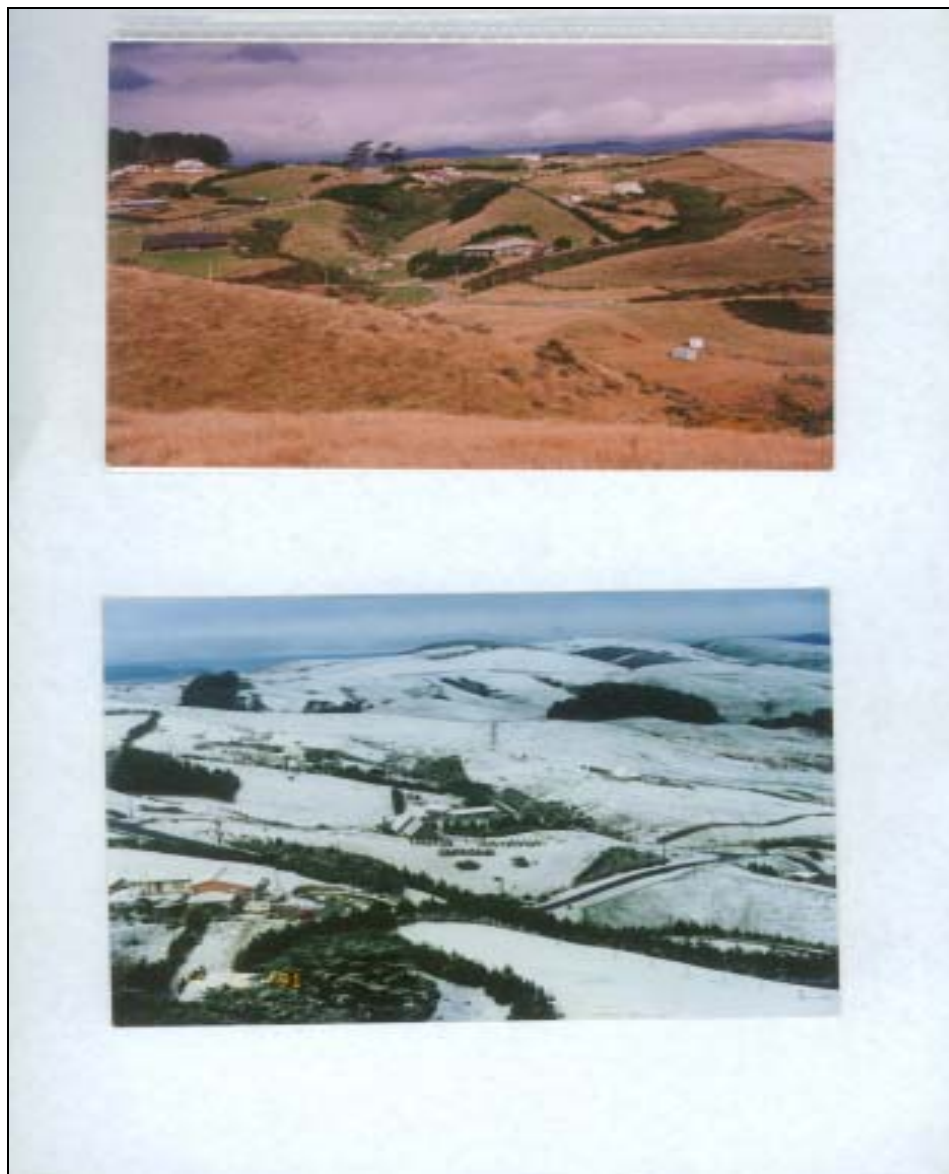
### 5.7.2 Objective

OBJECTIVE	
	To support the sustainable management of land by private landowners, <u>Wellington City Council and Wellington Regional Council</u> . (See WCC RAO #7, Appendix One.)

### 5.7.3 Methods

Community projects	-
Combined Community Association & WCC projects	See methods in <a href="#">Section 5.5: Native bush and wildlife – ‘biodiversity’</a> and <a href="#">Section 5.6: Natural waterbodies</a> .
Provision of WCC services	-
Provision of other services	-
Community Association and WCC advocacy, facilitation and/or education	<p>The Horokiwi Community Association and the Wellington City Council will be strong advocates for the protection and enhancement of natural waterbodies in the area. Willing landowners will be encouraged to protect waterbodies through sympathetic management, riparian planting, fencing and covenanting.</p> <p>The Horokiwi Community Association will establish a “Horokiwi Bush and Streams” subcommittee to support these efforts. The “Bush and Streams Restoration Plan” adopted by Wellington City Council in September 2001 identifies priorities and methods to support sound bush protection in the Wellington area. The Council will make available its information on important natural sites and waterbodies in Horokiwi, and protection options.</p>
Individual action	Horokiwi’s value today reflects the many efforts by existing and previous landowners to sustain those things that define the area, such as its rugged rural character and many bush covered areas. Present and future owners have a significant role to play in sustaining these values into the future.
District Plan provisions	-
Other methods	-





**Top: Looking East at Hillcroft Downs (1991)**

**Bottom: Looking South after snow (August 1991)**