
Project title: Biodiversity Action Plan
Strategy area: Environment

1. The Proposal

Develop a Biodiversity Action Plan to coordinate Council's current biodiversity activities, identify any gaps, build relationships with other biodiversity stakeholders, and prioritise implementation programmes. The Action Plan will include clear objectives, actions, and performance indicators for biodiversity protection.

Key milestones will be:

- Discussion Document (review of existing information, scope of plan, issues for discussion): 30 Jun 2006
- Initial consultation with stakeholders and interest groups: Dec 2006
- Filling any gaps in baseline ecological data: Mar 2007
- Modelling biodiversity outcomes for a variety of implementation scenarios: Apr 2007
- Draft Biodiversity Action Plan: 30 Jun 2007

2. Strategic Fit

This proposal falls within the Environment Strategy and relates directly to the strategic priority #17: **Biodiversity Action Plan**.

3. Relationship to Existing Activities

Council outcomes

Biodiversity management is fundamental to protecting the environment, creating sustainable recreation, enhancing water quality and water conservation, and protecting intrinsic values and natural heritage. A biodiversity action plan can contribute to the following Council outcomes:

- More liveable by actively managing open space ecosystems and balancing various uses of public open spaces.
- Stronger sense of place by protecting culturally significant features of the natural environment.
- More actively engaged by facilitating information sharing among agencies and across the community, collaborative decision-making and community participation.
- Better connected by ensuring that Wellington has a network of green spaces and corridors linking the coastline, Town Belt and Outer Green Belt.
- More sustainable by actively managing local biodiversity (a non-renewable resource).
- Safer and healthier by protecting natural habitats, biological resources and ecosystem services.

Current projects

There is increasing pressure from community groups on different business units of Council to deliver on biodiversity outcomes. The Council currently funds many activities that relate to biodiversity such as Project Kaiwharawhara, revegetation planting, pest management, environmental groups, environmental grants and hazardous tree removal.

There are also a number of existing policies and management plans covering a range of biodiversity issues, for example; Capital Spaces, Wellington Wet and Wild, Northern Growth Management Framework, Outer Green Belt Management Plan, Town Belt Management Plan, and South Coast Management Plan.

However, the lack of an overall plan means that current biodiversity projects and policies are disconnected, have gaps, and may result in ineffective resource allocation. The Biodiversity Action Plan will link current biodiversity activities, address any gaps, and prioritise existing plans and projects.

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>Prepare Draft Biodiversity Action Plan</i>	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Consultation and facilitation (Budget: A004)</i>	B	B	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Implementation - staff time (Budget: C513)</i>	-	15 #	30 #	30 #	30 #	30 #	30 #	30 #	30 #	30 #
<i>Implementation – Opex projects affected: C514 (revegetation), C510 (animal pests), C509 (pest plants), A008 (hazardous trees)</i>	-	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
<i>Total</i>	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C

- A** Existing officer's time (work programme prioritised to absorb this cost).
- B** Existing budget (*A004 Open Space Planning*) prioritised to absorb cost.
- C** The implementation of this plan is likely to have a long term impact on the budgets of existing projects and final costs will depend on the outcomes of the Action Plan. Projects likely to be affected include revegetation (C514), hazardous tree removal (A008), and plant and animal pest budgets (C510 and C509). For example, current funding for implementing the pest management plan is only operative until 2006/07.

- # The implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan is likely to require staff time to supervise, monitor and review its effectiveness.

5. Project Outline

Aim

The Biodiversity Action Plan will put the Council's current biodiversity management projects into context and prioritise their implementation. It will also identify and address any gaps in the City's biodiversity management. A key part of this process will be building partnerships with biodiversity stakeholders.

Outcomes

In addition to contributing to the outcomes listed in section 3, the Biodiversity Action Plan aims to: build relationships with key organisations and agencies; share information among agencies and across the community; enable community participation in decision-making and achievement of goals including recognition and respect for *matauranga Maori*; build a shared vision for biodiversity in Wellington. The Biodiversity Action Plan will be based on quality information and will lead to action.

Milestones

- Establishment of a steering group comprising representatives from key organisations and stakeholders.
- Discussion document to facilitate dialogue on the action plan.
- Consultation with stakeholders, interest groups and general public.
- Identification and filling of gaps in baseline ecological information.
- Modelling biodiversity outcomes for a variety of implementation scenarios.
- Workshops on the proposed Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Draft Biodiversity Action Plan.

Justification

The community has expressed a desire to see the protection and show-casing of natural landforms and indigenous ecosystems, the preservation and improvement of parks, trees and open spaces, and protection of and access to green open spaces and the coast. Biodiversity is fundamental to these outcomes and is a key indicator of a sustainable city, with economic (ecosystem services e.g. clean water, soil conservation, waste decomposition), social (natural areas and sense of place) and cultural (intrinsic value) benefits. The Local Government Act 2002 provides a broad mandate for local authorities to involve themselves in economic, social, environmental and cultural issues; in other words, promoting sustainable development. The Resource Management Act (1991) also outlines City Council's role in protecting biodiversity, particularly with respect to the use and development of land. The New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy also lists Local Authorities as key players in putting into action many of the Strategy's objectives to "turn the tide" on biodiversity decline.

Alternative options and risk of postponement

1. Do nothing – *Risks*: Existing policies and plans are disconnected and irregularly used (e.g. *Wet and Wild, Naturally Wellington*). There is the need for a unifying document which integrates thinking (externally and internally), and provides a clear and accountable action plan. Doing nothing puts vulnerable, marginal and unprotected ecosystems at risk.
2. Postpone development of the Plan – *Risks*: Communities are becoming more biodiversity aware (e.g. number of Community Groups involved in revegetation planting doubled over the last year). Postponement of the Biodiversity Action Plan will result in more fragmented projects, ineffective resource use, and ultimately community dissatisfaction at Council's progress in managing biodiversity. Further degradation of unprotected ecosystems and irreversible biodiversity loss is a likely outcome.

5.1 2006/07 Actions

- Draft Biodiversity Action Plan developed in collaboration with biodiversity stakeholders; including External Entities that contribute to City's ecology and biodiversity.

5.2 2007/08 Actions

- Confirmation and implementation of biodiversity action plan with effective prioritisation and resource allocation.

5.3 2008/09 Actions

- Implementation of biodiversity action plan with effective prioritisation and resource allocation.

6. Conclusion

Council has a clear mandate to manage indigenous biodiversity under the Resource Management Act (1991) and the Local Government Act (2002) and has made significant advances in biodiversity work in recent years. There is now the need for a plan that unifies Council's current biodiversity projects, identifies any gaps in biodiversity management, and strengthens relationships with other biodiversity stakeholders.

7. Recommendation

This project should proceed as part of an existing officer's work programme and should be lead by Open Space and Recreation Planning. The implementation of this plan is likely to have a long term impact on the budgets of existing projects such as revegetation, hazardous trees removal, and pest management; however such costs will depend on the outcomes of the Biodiversity Action Plan.