

Environmental Reference Group Meeting
20 February 2006
Minutes

Present:

Councillor Celia Wade-Brown (Chair)
Ralph Chapman
Mike Ennis
Chris Horne
Ian Hunter
Tushara Kodikara
Ruth Paul
Ian Shearer
Geoff Skene
Charity Stuart
Jim Ebenhoh (WCC Strategic Advisor)

Apologies:

Victor Anderlini
Debbie Firestone
Jennie Francke
Rex Gillman
Andy Hollings
David Kettell
Jack Morris (WCC Treaty Relations)
Mike Oates (WCC Parks and Gardens)

Environmental Grants

Deborah Hope from WCC's Grants Team gave a presentation on available grant funding. One of the grant pools is Environmental Grants, with \$50,000 this financial year and an increase likely in 2006/07. There will be three grant rounds per year, with the next one in July 2006. Deborah handed out materials from the website (<http://www.wellington.govt.nz/services/grants/index.html>). The Grants Team can be reached at 801-3127.

Review of Council Consultation Processes

Adele Gibson and Joe Laufer of WCC's Policy Team led a discussion on the Consultation and Participation Project. They explained that they have been discussing this project with residents' associations, advisory groups such as the ERG and the Disability Reference Group, and resident focus groups. Following is some of the feedback that ERG members provided:

- Council officers need a "contact list" to spread the word beyond public notices.
- Direct approaches should be made to known groups.
- The Thursday Dominion Post feature ("Our Wellington") is good.
- The Thursday feature needs a list of "currently consulting on..." and "ideas sought on..."
- The "tick-box" on the V8 consultation was good.
- It's good to get ideas from the community early on.
- Timing is the issue; often the Council seems to get fairly formed ideas early on.
- Don't frame the questions to get predetermined answers; you don't want the whole thing to be a token exercise.
- There is a "my mind is made up" impression from the Council and Mayor sometimes, eg with the Western Corridor debate.
- The removal of many Council Committees and replacement with a Strategy and Policy Committee has improved consultation and participation.

- Community groups should comment on whether things should occur, not just the form in which these things should be implemented.
- Businesses need to be heavily regulated by local and central government; otherwise it doesn't matter what people do.
- Council communication to central government is important, so the grassroots can move up.

Adele asked for specific feedback on the operation of the ERG itself including:

- How you expected the Council would use the advisory group for the purpose of consultation, and whether your expectations have been met
- Concerns you may have with the way the Council consults with you (the ERG) and with residents generally
- How you think the Council could improve how it consults with you (the ERG) and with residents generally

ERG members can provide comments directly to Adele at adele.gibson@wcc.govt.nz or (04) 801 3346.

Council's Climate Protection Initiatives

Zach Rissel from WCC's Policy Unit gave a presentation on the Council's participation in the Communities for Climate Protection (CCP-NZ) initiative. He highlighted the greenhouse emissions inventory that has been done for Council operations and the wider community. He discussed the energy management plan that will be done for the Council and the community as part of WCC's commitment to CCP-NZ and as part of implementation of the draft Environmental Strategy.

Ralph pointed out that the Local Government Act (LGA) requires local governments to mitigate the effects of climate change, including through transport decisions. In this way the LGA is more proactive than the amended Resource Management Act (RMA), and there is a lot of room for interpretation.

Zach mentioned that WCC is currently participating in a study by the NZ Centre for Ecological Economics on climate change's long-term impacts on New Zealand infrastructure (CLINZI). The study is led by Dr Nigel Jollands of Landcare Research in Palmerston North.

Jim mentioned that he would make a recent NIWA report on climate predictions for Wellington City available to interested ERG members. *[see e-mail accompanying these minutes]*

Draft Environmental Strategy: an update, including Environmental Education

Jim provided a brief update on the progress of the draft Environmental Strategy. The Strategy's long-term outcomes and three-year priorities have been incorporated into the draft Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP), which will be out for consultation from 12 April through 12 May. The LTCCP also includes a number of new environmental initiatives responding to the priorities of the Environmental Strategy.

The discussion then focussed on the Council's role in environmental education, since the Council has been considering new initiatives in this area. ERG members' comments included:

- The environmental education programme needs to start with a vision and an overview, and it needs to have a balanced programme.
- Get clear objectives and clarify target groups.
- If a target group is schools, develop something that could attract LEOTC funding. A lot of schools come in from outside Wellington for a couple days.
- Cover the curriculum; don't let industry provide all the resources.
- Make use of existing facilities and resources, eg Otari-Wilton's Bush and the Botanic Gardens, Karori Wildlife Sanctuary and the Southern Landfill.
- Don't centralise it at the Botanic Gardens, or it might be pigeonholed as parks/biodiversity topics only and might miss waste, energy, air quality etc.
- Don't just preach to the converted.
- Important role of opinion leaders, eg leaders of sports clubs.

Geoff described Greater Wellington's "Take Action" programme for schools, which he coordinates. Take Action is a fairly intensive programme based in the classroom and in the community. Geoff said it's not eligible for LEOTC funding because it's too comprehensive; LEOTC funds things like going in and out of a garden for a day. Take Action costs \$60-70 per child. Geoff said WCC has tremendous resources in the Sanctuary, Otari and the Kaiwharawhara catchment.

Councillor Wade-Brown said that what is needed for WCC is someone to co-ordinate the activities of various WCC officers already engaged in elements of environmental education. She also suggested that WCC need not develop its own material from scratch, unless it's geographically specific to Wellington City.

Update on Other Six Strategies

The group did not have time to discuss this, but Jim can answer any questions ERG members have on how their comments from 17 November were or were not incorporated into the draft strategies. All seven draft strategies' long-term outcomes and three-year priorities have been incorporated into the draft LTCCP that is out for consultation from 12 April through 12 May.

Next Meeting

The group agreed to meet on Monday, 1 May, from 5:30-7:15 pm at the WCC offices at 101 Wakefield Street.

[Note: the meeting will be held in the Tangi-te-Keo Room on the Fifth Floor, so please meet in the ground floor foyer before 5:30].