

Environmental Reference Group Meeting
31 July 2006
Minutes

Present:

Councillor Celia Wade-Brown (Chair)
Ralph Chapman
Mike Ennis
Liz Hibbs
Chris Horne
Ian Hunter
Ruth Paul
Stephen Sargent
Ian Shearer
Charity Stuart

Apologies:

Debbie Firestone
Jennie Francke
Dave Kettell
Tushara Kodikara
Fiona McNamara
Nicola Shorten

WCC Officers:

Jim Ebenhoh (Strategic Advisor)
Mike Mendonça (CitiOperations)
Zach Rissel (CitiOperations)

Information-Sharing and Announcements

Members shared information on upcoming environment-related events. Details were subsequently circulated by Jim via email on 7 August. It was agreed that this type of information-sharing and announcements should be a standing agenda item. Jim has also found out that the monthly Council booklet “Feeling Great” can include environmental events with at least 5 weeks’ notice.

In addition to the events circulated by email, the following items were highlighted:

- Ian S. asked if WCC will be submitting on the NZ Energy Strategy and the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy. Zach said WCC is on the consultation list. [NOTE: WCC officers have since attended a workshop by Ministry of Economic Development on the NZES and will prepare a submission later this year.]
- Councillor Wade-Brown said WCC officers are preparing a submission on the Building Code discussion document (deadline 31 August). Stephen said BRANZ is writing a bulletin on solar water heating, with a draft to be released 20 August.
- Mike said Sustainability Trust and Victoria University are teaming up to possibly create an “Eco-House” by renovating an existing home in Wellington. They have applied for a WCC Environmental Grant for a feasibility study.

Long-Term Council Community Plan 06/16: Report-Back

Councillor Wade-Brown reported that the Council approved the Environmental Strategy as part of the LTCCP 06/16, including new initiatives for an Energy Management Plan, EnviroSchools funding, a Biodiversity Action Plan, and Stream Protection. The Environmental Strategy and six other strategies will soon be posted on the WCC website, replacing the current drafts

Solid Waste Options

Mike Mendonça, CitiOperations Manager, gave a presentation on the Council's solid waste operations. He highlighted:

- The amount of commercial mixed waste entering the Southern Landfill, alongside domestic waste from Council's kerbside collections.
- The high proportion of putrescibles and paper, and options for diverting these (composting and recycling).
- Key principles of the Solid Waste Management Plan 2003 (including 'user pays').
- The planned consenting of the Stage 4 Southern Landfill expansion.
- The paper/cardboard recycling trial for central city commercial office buildings, funded by MfE's Sustainable Management Fund.
- Limitations to the recycling market in New Zealand, and the environmental effects of shipping our recycling overseas.

Mike said the Council is looking at its options for kerbside collection, including the possibility of using wheelie bins, and licensing operators for certain parts of the city to reduce duplication of routes.

Comments from the group included:

- Ian S. and Ralph said the price of wheelie bins would need to be increased to encourage waste minimisation.
- Mike Ennis said the Auckland experience with wheelie bins has been less than positive.
- Chris asked why we have wheelie bins in the mix, and why privatisation would be considered.
- Ralph said he has a Master's student looking at issues around the use of plastic shopping bags.
- Ralph said the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) just put out a good report on waste [NOTE: see http://www.pce.govt.nz/reports/allreports/1_877274_42_9.shtml]

The group also expressed interest in touring the Southern Landfill, including the Living Earth compost facility, at an evening meeting in November. Mike M said this would not be a problem.

Peak Oil

Jim told the group he was preparing a paper for the Council's Strategy and Policy Committee (SPC) on 24 August, and asked for responses to some discussion questions he circulated. A number of suggestions were made, both at the meeting and in follow-up e-mails. These included, generally:

- Though we will not run out of oil, costs will increase.
- Extracting oil from tar sands is expensive and will cause environmental damage.
- Plastics-to-diesel conversion has some potential.
- The oil crisis is not something you just 'get through' like a tsunami—it will be longer-term.
- Transport, including air travel, is the biggest culprit in terms of oil use.
- New roading projects like Transmission Gully should be a lower priority than rail upgrade (long-distance replacement for Toll, and commuter double-tracking to Otaki).
- Compact growth along key public transport routes, and travel demand management (TDM) are key ways to reduce oil dependence.
- Congestion levies in London might be relevant ways to reduce oil demand.
- Integrated ticketing for public transport should occur.
- Broadband technology could reduce travel demand by allowing more telecommuting, but the fewer trips could become longer.
- Electric plug-in vehicles (not hybrids) have potential.

[NOTE: Council's Strategy and Policy Committee approved the recommendations of the peak oil report on 24 August: see http://www.wellington.govt.nz/haveyoursay/meetings/committee/Strategy_and_Policy/2006/24Aug0915/pdf/5_Peak_oil.pdf]

Next Meeting

The group tentatively scheduled the next meeting for Monday, 11 September, from 5:30-7:30 pm at the WCC offices (Committee Room Two) at 101 Wakefield Street. (TO BE CONFIRMED)