



## ENVIRONMENTAL REFERENCE GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2013

### 1. Purpose of report

This report outlines the work and achievements of the Wellington City Environmental Reference Group in 2013.

### 2. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Environment Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Note the work and achievements of the Environmental Reference Group in 2013.*

### 3. Background

The Environmental Reference Group (ERG) is an advisory group set up under a Terms of Reference<sup>1</sup> to inform the work and activities of Wellington City Council 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 and policies.
- be an information conduit to and from the Council via liaison officers.
- identify and comment on the broad spectrum of community expectations and concerns associated with the management of the natural environment.

Officers are undertaking a review of all the Council's advisory groups including the Environmental Reference Group. The review will be conducted under the Council's Engagement Improvement Plan as set out in the Council's new Engagement Policy, which was adopted in October 2013.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://wellington.govt.nz/~media/your-council/meetings/files/torenvironment.pdf>

#### **4. Discussion**

The Annual Report from the Environmental Reference Group is attached as Annex one. It contains details of the advice and feedback provided to Council on a wide range of topics during 2013.

The Environmental Reference Group has used this past year to consolidate its focus and identify how it can better contribute positively toward council thinking and activities. Key conclusions arising from this work by the group are as follows:

- ERG Terms of Reference are currently limited. It is recommended they are extended to include the urban environment, and the Council's operational activities.
- 6 meetings per year is insufficient to effectively transact the work directed toward the ERG. It is recommended that the ERG meet monthly.
- Officers should use the expertise available via the ERG to peer review or otherwise test their thinking, ideally in the early stages of policy development and planning (experience to date has been that late engagement undermines an effective ERG contribution).

These factors will be considered in the context of the review of advisory groups.

Appendix one includes member profiles outlining the skills and background of the group.

#### **5. Conclusion**

This report provides a summary of the work and activities of the Environmental Reference Group in 2013 and flags some issues they would like the Council to consider.

Contact Officer: Graeme Shimmin, Advisor, Consultation & Engagement

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 1) Strategic fit / Strategic outcome

*This report supports the outcomes of the Council's governance activities.*

### 2) LTP/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

*No significant decisions need to be made.*

### 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.*