

# Environmental Reference Group

## Meeting Minutes

Absolutely Positively  
Wellington City Council  
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

**Details:**  
Date: Monday, 11 May 2020  
Time: 5:05pm – 7:27pm  
Venue: Virtual Meeting  
Chair: Lynn Cadenhead

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**Members present:** Steven Almond  
Mike Britton  
Lynn Cadenhead  
Arron Cox  
Isla Day  
Sally Faisandier  
George Hobson  
Martin Payne  
Clare Stringer  
Michelle Rush  
Chris Watson  
Eleanor West  
Andrew Wilks

**Councillors present:** Cr Laurie Foon  
Cr Teri O’Neill

**Democracy Services Staff:** Hedi Mueller, Democracy Advisor

**ELT Member:** Moana Mackey (Chief Advisor to the Chief City Planner)

**Public:** Holden Hohaia

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Topic	Description	Start time
1.	<p><b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b> Apologies were received from Sally Faisandier and George Hobson for late arrival, Cr Paul for absence.</p> <p>Moved Lynn Cadenhead, seconded Martin Payne</p> <p>CARRIED</p>	5.05pm
2.	<p><b>Conflicts of Interest</b> No conflicts of interest were declared</p>	
3.	<p><b>Councillor Foon’s Update</b> Councillor Foon thanked the group for the work they had done and advised that she was happy to be at her first ERG meeting, as hadn’t been able to attend as yet due to commitments with the Waste Minimization Portfolio.</p> <p>The Annual Plan is coming up and as part of the COVID-19 response Council wants to help Wellingtonians regroup financially, so will be retaining landfill fees but not green waste fees. A dialogue needs to start that landfilling waste is not an eternal option. We are hoping that we will be able to take fees and put them into diversion of waste projects; no exact</p>	

figure is available but will hopefully be available by June.  
There will be a business case brought before the Long Term Plan next year regarding a resource recovery park, which is a transition that a lot of landfills are starting around the country. There will also be an organic waste trial put forward. Green waste and organic waste are 25% of what is going to landfill, so with analysis we can put money aside for what we can do going forward.

The landfill extension is going ahead but there have been a few holdups, and the next stage is getting resource consent. We are also awaiting a report on the impacts a landfill extension will have on ecological biodiversity, but don't have a timeframe on when the report will be available.

Members discussed:

- Media coverage about a better explanation of sludge transport costs. Cr Foon advised that the ratio is 4:1 landfill:sludge and that the pipes will be fixed in mid-May, which means an end to the sludge being trucked along the south coast, but a bigger solution is needed and ideally we would like that solution to be circular.
- Whether there is a time frame on the resource recovery business cases, Cr Foon advised that she couldn't say what the options are yet but may be able to discuss in the future.
- How many years are left in the current consent – Cr Foon advised the consent will be up in 2023, and that the lockdown period has reduced the amount of waste but reduction in waste has meant needing to use dirt to get the sludge ratio correct, which potentially fills the landfill faster.

#### 4. Presentations

##### **Backyard Taonga – Onur Oktem**

Onur gave an update on the Backyard Taonga project, which identified Significant Natural Area, Outstanding Natural Features/Landscapes and Special Amenity Landscapes.

We have worked with other councils to see what they have done, best practice and to learn from their examples. The Backyard Taonga team talked to each landowner individually, about any issues not just biodiversity, trying to be unassuming and not tell people how to protect their land. The consultation has been ongoing and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

##### **National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity – Tim Johnstone**

Tim discussed the WCC submission to the NPP IB, which the Ministry for the Environment consulted earlier in the year, with the intention for publication in June/July 2020. There is no time frame for publication anymore; and no decisions have been made yet.

We had feedback that our submission was overly negative, which was not the intention, and we made it clear that we do support it on the whole. We've done a lot of work so far through Backyard Taonga, and having national direction is a good thing, but the details of the statement were a concern. Non-regulatory measures, funding, advice or education were also wanted.

There will be a NPS Urban Development Capacity out later in the year too, so there are competing national directions, we are concerned that by meeting NPS IB we may hinder housing development.

The draft NPS IB set out that high and medium classifications are required, which we haven't done through Backyard Taonga, which is a bit arbitrary and might hinder enhancement due to stricter outcomes.

The draft NPS also states that areas be reviewed every two years – we felt it would be two years better spent working with landowners rather than being updated. Additional survey work required to be done through GRWC but would need to be put into the WCC District Plan, hence implementation is an issue.

We are in a good position with COVID-19 delaying the District Plan to next year. Part of that includes protection for Indigenous Biodiversity that is not currently in the plan.

Members discussed:

- Whether Councillor Officers received a copy of the ERG submission, not directly but had had feedback via Councillor Paul
- Concerns that NPS timeframe might mean delays with District Plan draft; Tim advised that we are maybe overly cautious but if final version of NPS IB requires high and medium classifications, then WCC will need to redo a lot of work, and it will no longer be fit for purpose. When final NPS IB is available is happy to return to ERG to discuss
- Moana advised that District Plan delay is also due to inability to publically engage other than online only, which disadvantages some community groups. Moana emphasised how passionate the WCC staff are about increasing biodiversity
- Congratulations to the Backyard Taonga team, as some ERG members have seen disasters of SNA attempts, and they have done a good job. Feedback from initial Backyard Taonga presentation to ERG was positive.

### **Annual Plan – Baz Kaufman, Lloyd Jowsey and Amy Jackman**

Baz discussed the 2020/21 draft Annual Plan and how the lockdown has impacted this. There has been lots of uncertainty with COVID-19, as a Council we are losing revenue through the lockdown to the tune of \$20 million loss this financial year, and potentially \$38 million in 2021. We are facing significant financial challenges and we were already facing those prior to the pandemic anyway.

Regarding the Pandemic Response and Recovery Plan – Councillors signed off on this two weeks ago; a range of initiative that provide immediate support such as rates/rent relief, fee rebates for hospitality industry, and additional funding in community grants.

Annual Plan (AP) – trying to balance services and investments and rate increase when households/businesses can't accommodate increases in expenses. The AP draft is currently out for consultation.

Three key things:

- Loss of revenue – borrowing instead of raising rates, does mean future rates higher to cover debt
- Not taking austerity approach – still investing in future. Good for job creation and economic catalyst
- Tipu Toa/Build Back Better – community sees opportunity to improve initiatives.

Rates – options offered are either 5.1 % increase or 2.3% increase. 2.3% increase would put too much debt into next year and impact on future projects.

The consultation is open for one month; WCC wants feedback so please encourage people to submit.

Members discussed:

- The draft AP doesn't have a table that shows the differences between was planned in the 2018 Long Term Plan (LTP) and what is planned now; Baz advised this will be taken on board and it's important to make changes as we go along as unexpected things crop up such as the Library issues. Amy advised that on the consultation website, an excel sheet about the budget will be uploaded, unsure if it includes a comparison to last year but will pass that feedback onto the finance team. Also hoping to have an interactive tool to allow people to play with the budget.
- What effect the central government budget has on shovel ready projects? Baz advised that central government funding will have an impact if we get the funding, and that he is keen to see what central government decided so that WCC can coordinate and line up initiatives. Lloyd advised that if we do get funding, we are still unsure when that funding will come through. The government will be prioritising

projects and we need certainty around that.

- If the government provides funding, whether the councils in the Greater Wellington area are working to share employees around the region and how they can collaborate better? Baz advised that the list of shovel ready projects had a high level of coordination between the councils in the region. The market can only carry so much work and if there is too much demand, prices will go up. The Long Term Plan in 2021 will look at that.
- How unknown scenarios due to COVID-19 are built into the Annual Plan – such as homeless people in temporary housing, public servants working from home, lack of cruise ships? And how things are prioritised, such as a second Mt Vic Tunnel? Baz advised that prioritisation is done through the Long Term Plan in the capital programme, whereas the Annual Plan signals that the existing work programme will continue and indicates stability. We don't think austerity is the way to go; communities want us to continue with all services, and be sustainable and liveable.
- The need for significant major transformation in relation to environmental issues, if COVID-19 impacts on road use, would it make good sense to look at levels of use now? Baz advised that we are doing scenario planning and looking at behaviour changes and what will stick after the pandemic is over. Also looking at population growth with borders closed and there are a number of unknowns. This forecasting will start over the next couple of months as the LPT is underpinned by significant forecasting assumptions. We are working with research companies but it will be a bit of a moving feast over the next couple of months.
- With the uncertainty in how the economy will recover or change, what are the main principals in terms of assessing where things sit in terms of priority? Baz advised this is really the work of the LTP as opposed to the AP. The first workshop will be held on this later in the month, where councillors will be thinking about outcomes in June and what they are working towards building, then about the prioritisations of workforce and the levels of services we provide. There is a robust programme of work that sits around it; decisions will be starting in June-August in draft form, and the published later in the year.
- How the principals on which the priorities are based is important, as environmental issues seem to fall by the wayside. How those ideas integrate – getting good environmental outcomes as well as job creation. Bringing principals to bear as work is coming forwards is really important. Moana advised that Planning for Growth has clear principals which guide the work, but not necessarily capital projects. Barbara McKerrow has restructured the City Planning Directorate and a Tier 3 Climate Change Manager role has been established.
- How does the AP reinforce the good behaviour established over lockdown, and not provide an avenue for negative behaviour to return? Some Councils have been very quick to implement measures, what is holding up WCC? Baz advised that WCC hasn't been delayed and has had a report to Council about living streets, making more

space available and taking out carparks allowing people to walk and cycle. Moana advised that Auckland City Council and Nelson City Council were very quick to implement measures, but are now needing to re-do work as the public are not happy. WCC had legal advice to consult first, and are working as fast as we can. There is a duty of care to health and safety of residents that things are done well, not just done quickly. WCC has also used emergency powers to reduce the speed limit on the South Coast.

- Whether the AP includes parking fee increases? Baz advised that initially the AP did include parking fee increases, however this has been removed and there will be no parking fee increase next year. It was proposed to extend free parking through later COVID Alert Levels however fees were reinstated on 12 May. The Parking Policy itself doesn't recommend particular prices, but does recommend a dynamic pricing model, where prices increase when demand is high. There is a goal of 85% occupancy. The Parking Policy consultation also closes on 8 June 2020.
- Amy advised the group of ward-based webinars over the next two weeks, and encouraged the group to let their friends know.

#### **Annual Report – Hedi Mueller**

Hedi Mueller advised that the Advisory Groups' Annual Reports are still intending to be presented to the Strategy and Policy Committee on 4 June 2020, which means that a report will need to be received by 21 May. Martin advised he would circulate the report he had drafted later in the week.

#### **5. Portfolio Updates**

**Waste:** Stephen advised he has talked to Cr Foon waste – great to see circular economy in Council vocabulary, ERG will need to support that, push a lot more, and help as much as we can for Council to be brave. Arron recommended that ERG also advocate to GWRC, Martin agreed with looking at a regional approach. Moana advised that sludge does take a regional approach as it's an issue dealt with by Wellington Water Limited, not by WCC. Michelle queried whether WCC is lobbying Central Government about a national approach to landfill alternatives such as high quality incineration, Moana advised that WCC takes every opportunity to have this conversation, and would love a more joined up approach as other councils have been found to truck waste across country if closest landfills are more expensive.

**Transport:** Michelle has put together a presentation for the Safer Speeds Hearing Subcommittee, asking for volunteers to assist. Chris, Arron, and Sally agreed to help. Michelle advised that the Parking Policy Consultation closes on 8 June, prior to next ERG meeting, and Michelle will draft a submission that supports it as it talks about hierarchy of parking. There are concerns about fuzziness of implementation, Michelle has been talking to Helen Bolton and it sounds like fragmented approach has caused issues internally and

any constructive ideas would be useful for ERG to contribute. The submission is not yet at draft stage but will be available in a week or two and is open to feedback.

Michelle has also been working on the principals of the transport portfolio, and is concerned that it does not yet include information about ports, airport, arterial routes or trucking. Chris W, Sally and Martin to assist with making changes and keeping the principals strategic and balanced. Lynn recommended that transport principals include disability access and service vehicles.

The group clarified the use of Google Drive and DropBox, Google Drive being for pieces that are under construction and DropBox being for the final version only.

**Climate Change:** Chris W discussed the recent council decision to fund capital expenditure for the airport, which will worsen emissions and only benefit a small number of travelers. The WCC was reported to have provided a financial guarantee to the airport. The airport is one of the ways that the council speeds up climate change; reportedly accounting for some 20% of Wellington CO2e emissions. Chris pointed out that outbound tourists spend money abroad, thereby slowing the Wellington economy and draining Wellington businesses of income. Chris illustrated the point with examples of Wellingtonians on shopping sprees in Singapore (council-subsidised flights) and renting villas in Tuscany. Chris noted that Wellington is neither Rotorua nor Queenstown - tourists escaping Wellington may exceed those visiting. Lyn suggested the group could include that they do not support funding of the airport within the AP submission. Cr O'Neill advised that the airport Shareholder Proposal was discussed at a Council meeting on April 23, however this was in the public excluded section of the meeting due to commercial sensitivity. There is a letter of expectation in the works.

**Heritage:** Lynn advised that Mark Lindsay would be presenting at ERG in June and that the principals for the Heritage portfolio have been drafted and are awaiting feedback. Some pieces of heritage legislation are being rewritten which is beneficial as current legislation is messy.

**Biodiversity:** Mike discussed the noticeable increase in biodiversity over lockdown. The Biodiversity principals have been drafted and Eleanor will upload those to Google Drive for review.

**Urban Design:** Eleanor, Sally and Lynn have been working on Urban Design principals and will continue to work with Michelle to integrate transport principals within them.

**6. General Business**

**Titahi Bay Waste Water Treatment Plant:** Martin discussed the information that had been circulated about the Titahi Bay Wastewater Treatment Plant – a group of residents are concerned about under capacity and lack of information they've been able to get. The group were aiming to raise awareness within ERG and are planning for further interaction with WCC later in the year as the plant is coming up for temporary consent. Michelle noted that that performance agreement was poor and there were no KPIs related to the performance of the asset, but she understands this is being fixed. Unsure what else ERG can do – WCC is an owner but also facing a similar issue at Moa Point. Moana noted that Mayor Foster has put together the Three Waters Task Force, and that Stu Farrant, who was formerly a member of ERG, is a member of the Task Force. The learnings by the taskforce will also be applied across the region, and the Council's relationship with WWL is better than it's ever been.

**ERG efficiency:** Arron discussed how the group can make ERG more effective and contribute more to council. Arron has created a document with the following main ideas:

- Emphasise need to pre-reading
- Use half of ERG meeting for workshops
- Taking time to explain acronyms/technical terms when using them
- Keep meeting admin to the end

Arron will circulate the document for further consideration. Lynn queried what has happened with the Advisory Group review since lockdown, Moana advised that this has been picked up again. Moana also discussed the lack of clarity in when Advisory Groups can be sent information – whether Councillor Portfolio leads and the Mayor need to see all information first. Martin suggested that agendas need to be controlled quite carefully as there isn't enough time to do all items justice, and that the principals processes was intended to provide clarity otherwise there would be a feeling of a lack of a decision making process. We need to think about our own processes so that we are not just in the process of criticising other people's process.

**Recording of minutes:** Lynn moved that the minutes of the unofficial meeting of 6 April 2020 be confirmed as accurate, Michelle seconded.

Sally discussed the minutes of the 9 March 2020 meeting and the lack of finality in the recording of decisions. Suggestion that in the future speakers need to be more definite, Sally had gone over the 9 March minutes and amended these to reflect more accurately the decisions the group had made. Sally's amended minutes to be recirculated and feedback provided, and then confirmed at 8 June meeting.

Lynn suggested that part of the improvement could be in the way the meeting is Chaired, as it's not an easy task. Martin suggested that the role of Chair could be to summarise the decision made by the group, which will give people the opportunity to people to speak up.



	<p><b>Annual Plan Submission:</b> Martin raised that there was no plan as yet for ERG to submit on AP due on 8 June, suggested that Portfolio leads to think about AP and how it impacts on their portfolio, then put together something succinct for others to comment on. Stephen suggested that the group start with a skeleton document, Lynn, Michelle and Sally happy to contribute. Martin to start AP submission document and to circulate Google Drive link. Lynn emphasised that it's important to comment on the things you like and support.</p> <p><b>Rotating Chair:</b> Lynn suggested it would be better for the group to not have a rotating Chair for each meeting, as a person would get better at chairing with practice. George agreed and advised he would support this when brought up at the next meeting.</p> <p>The chair declared the meeting closed at 7:27pm.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Next meeting</b> 8 June 2020 Heritage – Mark Lindsay Improving ERG efficiency – chairing of meetings</p>	

**Actions:** The following tables the actions, responsibilities and deadlines from previous meetings

Action Points	Responsibility	Deadline
1.		
2.		

General Business		
1.		
2.		

Portfolio Groups	ERG Lead		Council Officer
Transport	Michelle Rush		Joe Hewitt, Team Lead Transport Strategy and Siobhan Procter, Manager Transport and Infrastructure
Climate Change	Chris Watson	Isla Day, Steven Almond	Tom Pettit, Sustainability Manager
Waste	Steven Almond	Clare Stringer	Emily Taylor-Hall, Waste Operations Manager
Water	Chris Paulin		Derek Baxter, City Engineer
Resilience	Lynn Cadenhead		Mike Mendonca, Chief Resilience

			Officer
Urban Development Agency/Urban Growth	Eleanor West	Sally Faisandier	Vida Christeller, Manager City Design & Place Planning
Mana whenua iwi & Treaty Relations			Nicky Karu, Manager Tira Poutama-Iwi Partnership
Biodiversity/Open Space	Mike Britton	Clare Stringer	Michele Frank, Urban Ecology Manager
Heritage	Lynn Cadenhead	Clare Stringer	Mark Lindsay, Heritage Manager