

## **Report 99.209**

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Report to the Environment Committee  
from Dr Jane Bradbury, Divisional Manager, Environment

### **Divisional Manager's Report**

#### **1. Purpose**

To inform the Committee about the activities and progress of the Environment Division and about any matters which have arisen since the Committee's last meeting.

#### **2. Managers' Reports**

The Department Managers' reports and the Divisional Accountant's report are attached.

#### **3. Update on RMA Amendments**

Councillors will be aware that the Minister has announced that any new legislation will not require Commissioners to be used for all consent hearings. The Minister has taken a step back and now applicants and submitters will be able to request Commissioners. This reflects our current practice (which seems to work well) and is what we requested in our submission.

We are still unsure where our other issues are going, particularly contestable consent processing.

#### **4. Ara Tahī**

We continue to try and address the complex and difficult issue of the relationship between iwi and this Council. It is my contention that this is one of the biggest issues facing the Council. I hope that Councillors will be able to find the time to meet iwi representatives when they possibly can. Such meetings are highly valued by iwi.

## 5. **Compliance Cost Reduction Group**

Rob Forlong's report refers to the first meeting of the Compliance Cost Reduction Group in the Region. This is a joint approach between local authorities and businesses in the western part of the Region that this Council has been working on with the Wellington Chamber of Commerce. The idea arose from a seminar that we conducted for the Chamber on RMA issues. Hopefully, this will be the beginning of a more co-operative approach and better mutual understanding. Results from a recent survey indicated that businesses were in agreement with the direction of the RMA – but they had problems with implementation and costs. Certainly, the indications from the first meeting of this group was that things had improved markedly and that the issues were now minor rather than major.

## 6. **Audit of Consent Conditions**

Similarly, in another attempt to improve our performance and address the concerns of some sectors, particularly farming and industry, we have initiated an audit of consent conditions. The question behind the audit is whether this Council is too risk averse in its consent conditions. The audit is currently taking place. It is referred to in Rob Forlong's report.

## 7. **Emergency Management Group**

I have been working with Stephen McArthur, Group Manager, City Environment, The Hutt City Council, to progress the Emergency Management Group (EMG) for the Central New Zealand area. We were requested by the Regional Chief Executive Officers Group (RCEOG) to build on the work already carried out by the Region's emergency management officers. This has now been completed and a paper is ready to be put to the next RCEOG meeting. It is hard to be too definitive in this work because the draft legislation is quite loose, especially regarding the basis issue of funding. Hopefully, when the legislation is eventually introduced into the House, it will contain some guidelines about the operation of EMGs. Meanwhile, we have to try and create an entity that will work.

## 8. **Kapiti Coast District Council**

Rob Forlong and myself went to the Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) recently to meet with Kevin Jefferies the new Manager, Consents and Compliance. It was heartening to hear Kevin talk of working together with the Regional Council, especially on monitoring programmes, with a view to avoiding duplication and doing "more for less" or at least "more for the same".

In addition, Cr Buchanan and myself, as well as Cr Turver, attended KCDC's last Council meeting where Cr Buchanan announced the decision on the Kapiti sewage treatment plants. This personal approach, the first time a Hearings Committee has

delivered a decision in this way seemed to have been well received – in spite of a rather embarrassing typo of ours!

## 9. **Regional Policy Statement**

Although Geoff Skene reports on this separately, after some of the discussions at the Councillors' strategic workshops, I wanted to highlight that the Regional Policy Statement is at the heart of this Division's work and is an operational document. We believe we have a contract with the community to implement the many methods in the document.

Our most important methods are the completion of the regional plans. But there are many other projects going on which have their basis in the RPS. Some coming to fruition in the near future are particularly exciting, e.g., the *Good Plant Guide*. I have seen some of the proofs of this guide and was very pleased. Similarly, it is good to see the stream enhancement projects progressing and a focus being put on implementing the Ecosystems chapter (the subject of the Councillors' workshop on 27 May). The latter is particularly important, given the recent release of the Biodiversity Strategy.

## 10. **Recommendation**

*That the reports from the Divisional Manager, the Departmental Managers and the Divisional Accountant be received.*

Report prepared by:

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