

12 August 2024

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-29578

By email: [REDACTED] -

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Request for information 2024-177

I refer to your request for information dated 30 July 2024, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on Monday 29 July 2024. You have requested the following:

- *A list from the past 12 months of all formal council meetings, briefings, workshops, councillor-only discussions, or meetings with other elected representatives from other councils in the Wellington region (either via a regional forum such as the Wellington Regional Leadership Forum, Wellington Mayoral Forum etc, or other one-one-one or group discussions) that GWRC's Chair has attended where the issue of local government amalgamation has been discussed.*
- *A summary of what was discussed at each event and any actions taken as a result.*

Greater Wellington's response follows:

The question of local government amalgamation has been discussed at the following meetings:

Date	Meeting	Key outcomes
20 October 2023	Wellington Regional Mayoral Forum	Action: Daran (Ponter) and Mayor Baker to provide a one-page summary of a potential model for local government in the Region for a session after the iwi forum in January. To be circulated prior to the next Forum. The Wairarapa as it is currently formatted is unsustainable and needs to reform in some way.

Date	Meeting	Key outcomes
16 January 2024	Meeting between Greater Wellington Chair Daran Ponter and Porirua City Council Mayor Baker	No notes taken. Minor updates to the A3 requested as a result.
17 January 2024	Working group meeting – included those who had expressed interest in getting regional deals started - some WRLC members and staff	No minutes taken. Broad preparation for the February workshop.
25 January 2024	Meeting between: Greater Wellington Chair Daran Ponter, Porirua City Council Mayor Baker, and Kāpiti Coast District Council Mayor Holborrow	These meetings (25, 25 and 30 January) were held after Chair Ponter made an offer to Mayor Baker in late 2023 to assist in facilitating initial discussions with Mayors from across the Region.
26 January 2024	Meeting between: Greater Wellington Chair Daran Ponter, Porirua City Council Mayor Baker, Carterton District Council Mayor Mark, and Deputy Mayor Masterton District Council Bex Johnson.	Mayor Caffell was away when the Wairarapa meeting took place. No notes were taken at the meetings. A draft A3 document was used as the centrepiece for the meeting discussions and updated following the conclusion of the meetings. The A3 document was subsequently included in information to both the WRLC and the Mayoral Forum.
30 January 2024	Meeting between: Greater Wellington Chair Daran Ponter, Porirua City Council Mayor Baker, Wellington City Mayor Whanau, and Deputy Mayor Wellington City Council Laurie Foon.	
2 February 2024	Meeting between: Greater Wellington Chair Daran Ponter, Porirua City Council Mayor Baker, and Upper Hutt Mayor Guppy	No notes taken. Minor updates to the A3 requested as a result.

Date	Meeting	Key outcomes
14 February 2024	WRLC working group meeting	Outline the key elements of a potential regional deal including purpose, principles and areas of focus.
16 February 2024	Wellington Regional Mayoral Forum	Refer extract from meeting notes below
26 February 2024	WRLC Workshop	<p>To discuss the contents of a framework for a regional deal with government</p> <p>Discussion points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Update on activity since December 2023 WRLC meeting ➤ Presentation as a “starter for 10” ➤ Round the room discussion on the starter for 10 ➤ Summing up feedback ➤ Next steps <p>Action: Prepare final draft framework for approval at the March 2024 WRLC meeting (see Attachment 1). (Note reference to local government reorganisation)</p>
19 March 2024	Wellington Regional Leadership Committee meeting	The WRLC endorsed the overall approach proposed in the paper and supported the Chair (Darren Apanui) and Deputy Chair (Cr Daran Ponter) to seek a meeting with government Ministers to discuss a regional deal.

Notes from Mayoral Forum 16 February 2024 – Extract regarding Regional Reorganisation

Mayor Baker introduced the discussion on potential reorganisation options and handed over to Daran Ponter to lead the discussion.

The Mayors and CEs have prepared an initial discussion document, based upon their conversations. The indicative option is three territorial authorities, a regional council, and to introduce local boards.

Some questions remain, including how far north any reorganisation would reach, and if this would include Horowhenua District, and if so, how much. Mayor Bernie Wanden has been part of this conversation.

There is also a remaining question regarding the Wairarapa, and its position within the structure. Given representation is calculated on a population basis, this could result in the Wairarapa being allocated around two members in a regional council model.

It is likely there would need to be bespoke legislation passed by Parliament to allow for a unique structure for the Wellington Region.

There is a lot more detail that would need to be worked through, particularly the next steps and how to approach Ministers on this.

Mayor Baker has spoken to Ministers regarding this topic, and they are of the view that all voices around the table must support this for it to move forward. Both Ministers are expecting to discuss this, and water delivery, on 22 March.

There are differing views around the table. Most mayors are up for the discussion. Questions were asked about the representation for the Wairarapa, and what would happen to the Tararua District. Conversations with Iwi to date show they are supportive of reorganisation in principle.

Daran noted that this conversation is very linked with the three waters conversation as well, and that it may need to move in step with any reorganisation proposals.

Jo Miller shared her experience from the UK, in that savings are made in years 2 – 6, but after year 6 the new structure would likely not result in further savings. These savings were accumulated over these six years, and this assisted in these years, but in any reorganisation, a change to the funding model would be required.

Mayor Baker noted that local representation is important, and this could be achieved by setting up local boards in the new structure.

Daran proposed putting the establishment of local boards into the “next steps” area, as a level of detail that can be worked out later.

It was discussed what the problem any reorganisation would be attempting to solve.

Mayor Baker and Daran will discuss the outcomes of this meeting and see if there is consensus on any options prior to the meeting with the Ministers.

16, 17 January and 2 February 2024

Greater Wellington does not hold a summary of the meetings that occurred on 16 and 17 January and 2 February 2024, except for the resultant actions. It is therefore necessary to partially refuse your request for a summary of what was discussed at each event under section 17(g) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 on the basis that the information requested is not held by Greater Wellington and there are no grounds for believing that the information is either –

- (i) Held by another local authority or a department or Minister of the Crown or organisation; or
- (ii) Connected more closely with the functions of another local authority or a department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where appropriate. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



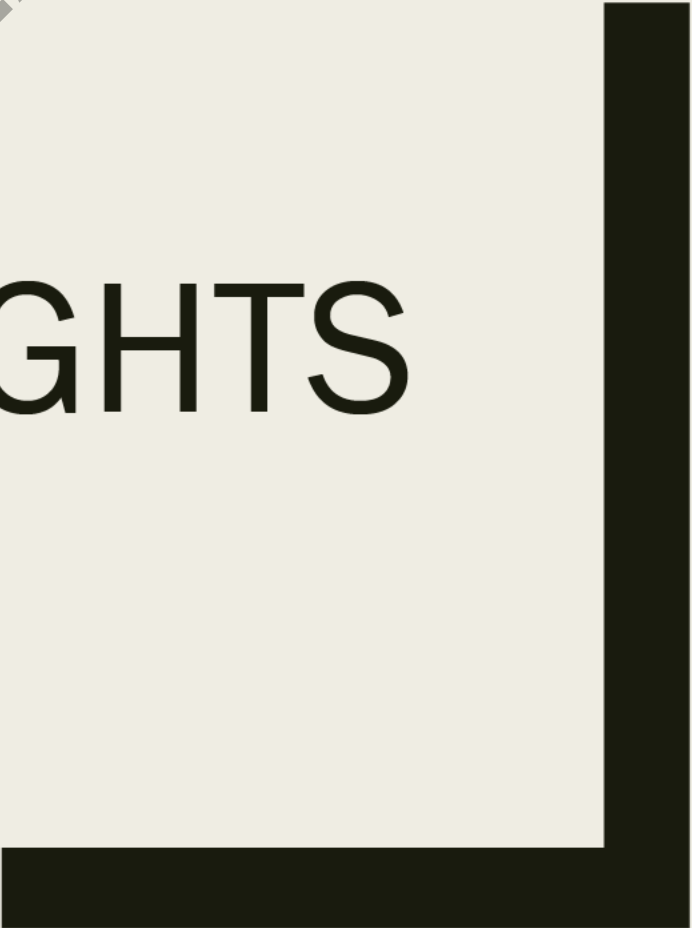
Nigel Corry
Tumu Whakarae | Chief executive

Attachment 1: Regional Deal Framework



LIFTING OUR SIGHTS

March 2024



PROACTIVELY RELEASE

One Region : Three Existential Issues

1

- Fragmented and sub-optimal local government challenged to manage for the future

- Future-fit local government (i.e. local government issue)
- Less of a focus for Iwi and government
- Not being led by public sentiment

2

- Three waters system unable to accommodate current and projected population (most councils)

- Future-fit infrastructure and services
- Identifiable models – legislation required
- High government, Iwi, council and public sentiment

3

- A region challenged to meet the needs of its current and future population

- The “Next” three waters issues – i.e. investment in key infrastructure
- Government to be seen to be supporting development
- No pressing public sentiment, but some ticking time bombs

Things we have heard

1

- Reorganisation Package
 - One Wairarapa TA
 - One Wellington Area TA
 - One Kapiti (Possibly Kapiti-Horowhenua) TA
 - One Regional Council
- Pragmatic approach to achieve bigger scale
- Requires government intervention

2

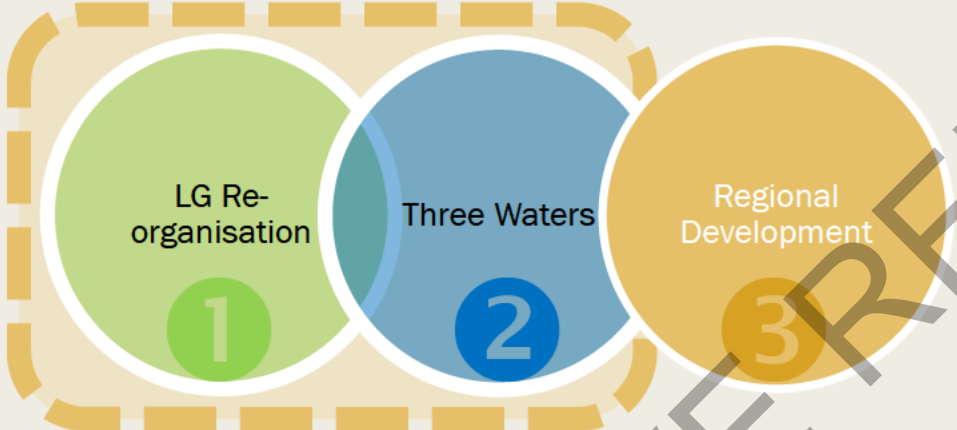
- Common issues
 - *Fragmented ownership model*
 - *Under-investment*
 - *Significant looming investment*
 - *Lack of rating base and debt headroom*
 - *Growing population*
- Basis of a model already developed
 - *Similar to Auckland Water?*
 - *Entity covers entire region?*
 - *Assets on Entity balance sheet?*
 - *GWRC gone?*
- Requires government intervention (i.e. Legislation)

3

- Less is more approach (i.e. focus down on a small number (discrete or aggregated) of initiatives)

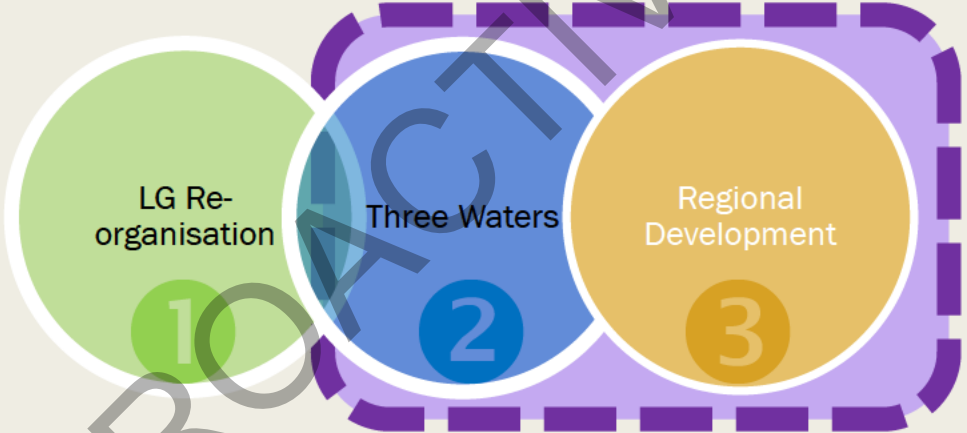
Scope for a Regional Deal (Big elements)?

Scope 1



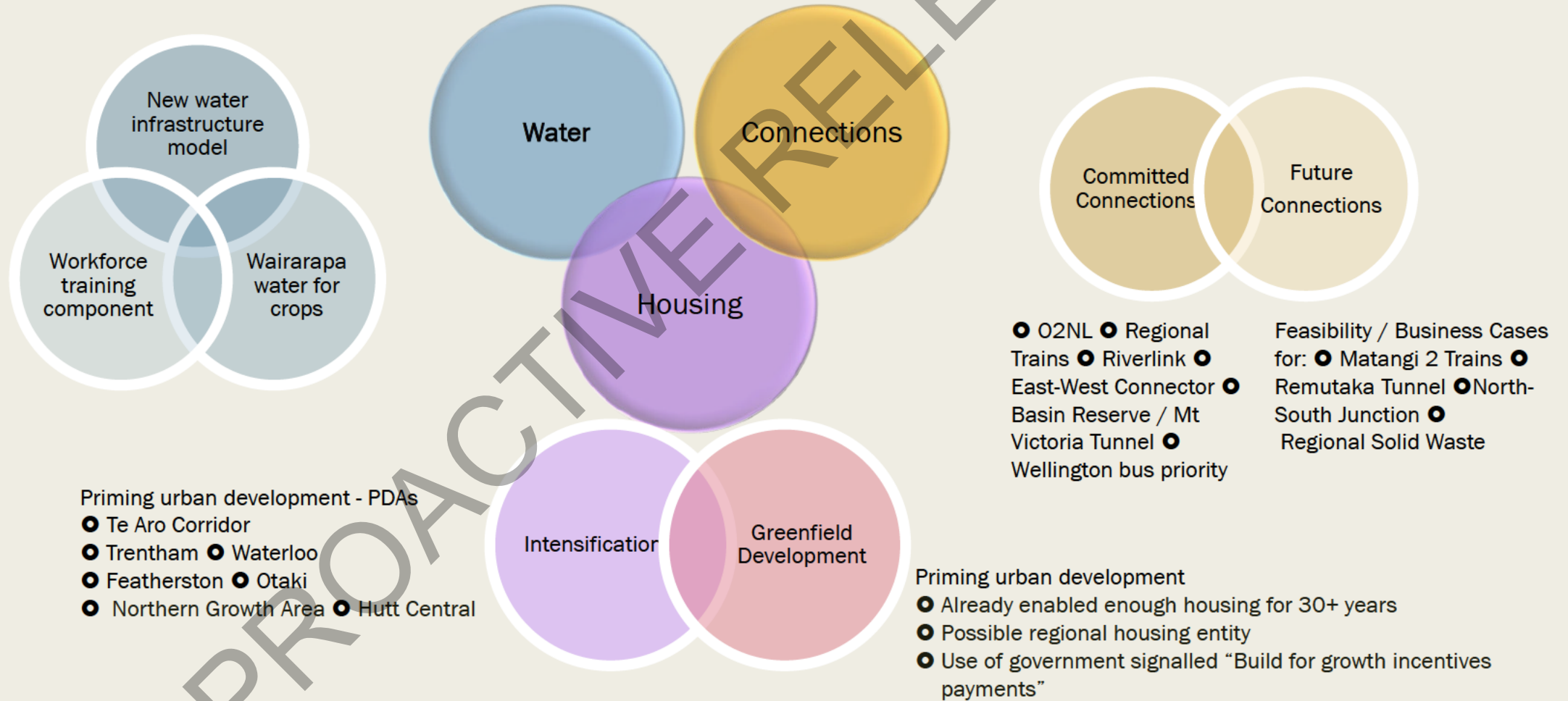
- Very local government focused
- Very organisational reform focused
- Two sticky and complex issues

Scope 2



- Government will be looking for development oriented initiatives
- Re-organisation and three waters can still go down a common pathway, but LG reorganisation not formally part of Regional Deal

Regional Deal: A growing Region

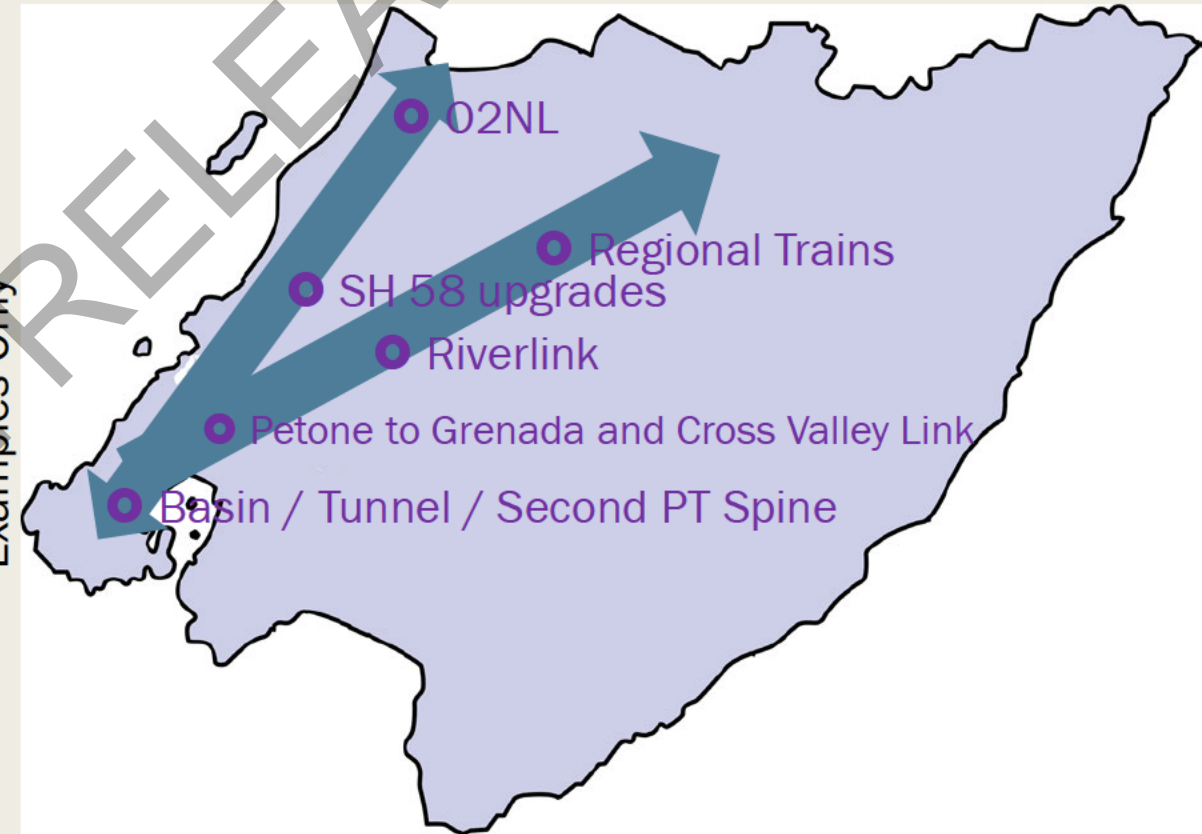


Regional Deal: Scope for Regional Development

Existing Initiatives

- That we recognise current government investment across the region – A connected and resilient region
- Rationale:
 - Recognises and reinforces significant government investment
 - Underlines projects that local government has advocated for and/or are partners with government
 - Costs nothing to include these as regional development projects

Examples Only



Regional Deal: Scope for Regional Development

New Initiatives?

- That we lift our heads up to the next set of looming challenges: **A connected and resilient region**
- Rationale:
 - *Three waters not the only long-term challenge – need to position region for other challenges*
 - *Need to have time manageable initiatives (3 year bites)*

