

## **Report 99.410**

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Report to the Environment Committee  
from Richard Peterson, Policy Advisor (Statutory)

### **Implementing the Regional Policy Statement: Integrated Urban Management**

#### **1. Purpose**

To summarise the results of a project undertaken in response to Method 5 of the Built Environment and Transportation chapter of the Regional Policy Statement. (Copies of the detailed report are available on request).

#### **2. Background**

The Regional Policy Statement (RPS) provides for the management of urban areas through a discrete chapter on the built environment. This chapter recognises that the management and development of the Region's urban areas deserves specific consideration in order to promote their integrated management and sustainability.

Consequently, at the time of writing the RPS, it was accepted that we would return periodically to the literature and to the state of the urban environment to see what was occurring. This intention is expressed through Method 5 of the Built Environment Chapter.

This project was a partial response to Methods 5(1) of the Built Environment and Transportation chapter (review how the integrated management of the Region's urban areas can be best achieved) and 5(4) (consider the preparation of an urban development strategy as a means of providing guidance on regionally significant urban issues). Its key objective was:

To investigate environmental issues of significance faced by urban areas in order to identify how they might best be dealt with, and to determine their potential for management in an integrated fashion.

The study was not intended to be a full scale assessment of the need for an integrated resource management strategy for the greater Wellington area. We did not make any assessments of population trends, city growth and development issues, or social

changes. These are resource-hungry questions and there were not the resources available to do this. It was accepted when the RPS was prepared that the Wellington peninsula urban area did not have the growth and expansion issues of Auckland. The RPS's approach to urban development was not to seek to control the development of the Region's cities in the Auckland way. We framed the study with this assumption still intact, although we did seek to identify any "standout" issues or changes that could cause a reassessment of this.

This study was not intended to make judgements about such matters as new development, or where major regional facilities should go. We did not consider transport issues (which are already dealt with in the Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS)), river management issues, or utility provision issues. Rather the study took an initial look at a range of less strategic urban issues and their potential for a more co-operative form of management. In putting some of the larger issues to one side (e.g., transport, utilities), we sought to identify the potential for more creative or innovative ways of managing the less strategic ones. Some of the issues we considered could be relevant were: heritage, biodiversity, stormwater, odour, on-site effluent disposal, energy efficiency, urban encroachment into rural areas, amenity, conflicting land uses, and so on.

### **3. Methodology**

The main source of information for this project was a round of meetings with various agencies that have a responsibility for, or interest in, urban resource management in the western part of the Region. We also made a short assessment of current social and population trends to identify potential "drivers" of new resource management issues.

Meetings were held with staff from all five territorial authorities in the more urbanised western part of the Region. These meetings were requested with senior officers who could take a strategic overview of their Council's activities. In the event, while the responses of the authorities we talked to were always helpful, it was not always possible to interview people with the best strategic overview of their city's needs.

### **4. Project Results**

The interviews identified four main environmental issues that may deserve a more integrated approach to their management. These issues were:

#### **4.1 Urban/Rural Interface**

Several councils noted the impacts that urban areas were having in the rural parts of their districts. Specific reference was made to the cross boundary effects of subdivision, the impact of greenfield developments on rural values and overlaps between the territorial authorities and the Regional Council in relation to the management of on-site effluent disposal.

## 4.2 Urban Functional Interdependence

Porirua City Council respondents also made reference to the relationship between urban areas and their rural hinterland and, in addition, noted the functional interdependence of the various parts of the greater urban area.

They noted that urban activities rely on the surrounding rural areas for many of their infrastructural needs and that these needs can extend beyond territorial authority boundaries. These include such matters as waste disposal, water supply and transport. While transport is given a regional overview, through the RLTS, similar thinking is not currently given to waste management. This perhaps reflects the changes to the Local Government Act 1974 which have placed greater emphasis on the management of waste by territorial authorities. Certainly, the Regional Council's original intention, as expressed in the RPS (Waste Management Method 1), to produce a regional framework for waste management was no longer valid in the face of the amendments to territorial authorities responsibilities under the Act. However, this project suggests there are aspects of waste minimisation management that may need to be reassessed.

## 4.3 Natural Areas and Ecosystems

The third major issue to arise is the management of human impacts on natural ecosystems and the protection of significant natural areas (SNA's). Within this general topic several specific concerns were aired. Most authorities are dealing with this issue in one form or another.

Staff from both Hutt City and Porirua City expressed a belief that the resolution of this issue could benefit from better information and specialised expertise, both of which might be found if territorial and regional councils combined their efforts and resources.

Interestingly, staff at Kapiti District noted that there is a need to look beyond regulatory protection to active enhancement of significant natural areas. This type of approach is one which the Regional Council has recently discussed through its consideration of how to implement the ecosystem provisions of the RPS. We will continue to develop this further. It is encouraging to see other councils also thinking how best to provide for natural ecosystems within their boundaries. We will pursue this matter with these Councils to explore the potential for joint initiatives and management.

## 4.4 Monitoring

All five councils foresaw benefits from a collective approach to monitoring and information gathering. It was encouraging to see this willingness to co-ordinate environmental monitoring throughout the Region. We have been considering the potential of such an approach and will further investigate the potential of this with our territorial authority colleagues.

## 5. Conclusions

This survey suggests there is support for an integrated, or at least collective approach, to some of the resource management issues of the Region's predominantly urban

authorities. The interesting thing is that the most relevant of these issues are those to do with the management of "natural resources" as opposed to the built environment.

While we have not undertaken a detailed investigation of population or social trends, we did not find evidence through the interviews for any dramatic growth changes that might suggest the need for intervention or assistance on a regional scale. We did not unearth such a number of issues that might warrant a move away from the Council's existing, largely "hands-off" policy approach, to the built environment in the RPS. Of course, this does not preclude further consideration of these issues or the need for an urban development strategy, should the need arise, in the future.

We will pursue the identified issues further with the councils to develop ways which they might be addressed in the interests of all relevant parties.

## 6. **Communications**

While the contents of the Report will not be of wide interest to the public generally, copies of the Report will be circulated to the participating authorities. A presentation of the results will also be given to the Wellington Region resource managers group co-ordinated by the Ministry for the Environment. As the issues discussed in this Report are further developed, there may be opportunities to promote this work more widely.

## 7. **Recommendation**

*That the report be received and the contents noted.*

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