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Report to the Hutt River Floodplain Management Advisory Committee
from Alison Newell, Resource Planner, Flood Protection

Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan : Environmental Strategy Update

1. Purpose

To update the Advisory Committee on progress to develop the Environmental Strategy for the Hutt River.

2. Background

The Advisory Committee, at its 13 March 2000 meeting, received a report on the development of the Environmental Strategy based on the Linear Park concept.

Since then the landscape architects have finalised the concept designs, and we have produced a draft report. The report is in two volumes:

- Part One gives the overall vision for the Linear Park, general recommendations that apply to the whole Hutt River environment and specific recommendations for each reach. It outlines what we are aiming for in the long-term. These are discussed in more detail below.
- Part Two describes the roles and responsibilities of various agencies, groups and individuals with an interest in the river environment, priorities, the statutory framework and the issues and objectives identified. It describes how we are going to achieve the long-term vision.

The Environmental Strategy working group¹ has given initial feedback on the draft Environmental Strategy. Flood Protection Group managers are currently reviewing the draft.

¹ Officers from Hutt City Council, Upper Hutt City Council, Iwi and Department of Conservation, and Parks and Forests, Environmental Division and the Flood Protection Group from the Wellington Regional Council.

3. **Updating the Public**

The May *Living with the River* newsletter (number 5) included a short section updating the public on the development of the Environmental Strategy. The newsletter gave examples of concepts for reaches in Upper and Lower Hutt and gave contact details where the public can find out more information.

4. **Key Recommendations and Concepts**

The draft Environmental Strategy includes numerous recommendations and concepts, some of which relate to the Hutt River environment in general, and others to specific character areas. The following are some of the key recommendations and concepts:

4.1 **General Recommendations**

- An Ecological Strategy for the whole Hutt River catchment should be prepared.
- Plant native species eco-sourced from the Wellington Ecological District wherever possible.
- Prepare a plan for the review of all existing sites and areas of cultural significance and their future management and protection.
- Establish a heritage trail and erect information boards at sites of historic importance wherever appropriate.
- Provide a mix of open and planted areas, selecting species that reflect the theme or focus for each reach.
- Bring the Linear Park into public ownership or formalise access across private land.
- Establish a mechanism for ongoing Tangata Whenua and Community input into the management of the Linear Park.

4.2 **Area Specific Recommendations and Concepts**

- River Mouth and Harbour: focus on the estuarine character of the river mouth and develop the Seaview Harbour and river edge recognising the industrial/urban character.
- Ava: emphasise the estuarine character and create habitats using native coastal and estuarine species (for example providing suitable whitebait spawning grounds).
- Hutt City Central Business District (CBD): develop a unique identity for the “City” section of the river, connecting the CBD with the Hutt River.
- Avalon: plant to enhance the recreational and visual experience.
- Taita: enhance the eastern berm as an important recreational area for the local community and improve community links with the river.
- Taita Gorge: strengthen recreational spaces and restore large areas of indigenous habitat.

- Heretaunga: link Barton’s Bush with a wider ecological network and enhance the recreational experience by emphasising links with the river.
- Moonshine: enhance the berms with planting, and develop the Whakatikei confluence area as an important recreational focus point.
- Totara Park: restore areas of lowland forest and wetland habitats linking the Western Hills with the river.
- Maoribank: strengthen community links with the river, for example develop a community park for Totara Park residents.
- Birchville: protect and enhance the natural character by planting native trees. Formalise access to and along the river.
- Te Marua: formalise public access along the river and protect natural character.
- Kaitoke Regional Park: reinforce the natural character by planting native species only and link Kaitoke Regional Park with the Hutt River Trail.

Some of the ideas and concepts were called “kite-flying” ideas. They are projects that would fit in with the overall theme for each character area, but would involve significant investment, land purchase and a whole host of other changes. We have suggested these “kite-flying” projects not on the basis that they should go ahead, but that it would be great if they did in the long-term. Further investigations as to feasibility, landowner aspirations, costs and benefits will have to be considered carefully before any steps are taken towards implementing these ideas.

4.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The recommendations and proposals in the Environmental Strategy place no additional obligations upon the parties involved. Instead, they are actions which can be adopted if funding is available. The Strategy contains proposals involving significant changes in the river environment. These changes can only be implemented incrementally, as funds and opportunities become available.

We acknowledge that:

- Each agency and party has its own mandate and responsibilities which must be recognised.
- There are limited financial resources, and recommendations that involve significant costs may only be achieved over a long period of time.
- The rights of private landowners within the area covered by the Environmental Strategy must be respected.

Achieving the Environmental Strategy therefore relies on the goodwill, enthusiasm and co-operation of the community and all the agencies involved.

5. Implementation and Management

It is likely that a committee, comprising officers and councillors from Upper Hutt City Council, Hutt City Council, Wellington Regional Council and iwi representatives, will be needed for the implementation and management of the strategy. The committee must ensure a variety of requirements are met, including those relating to flood protection, while implementing the Environmental Strategy.

Initially this committee will need to investigate, consult and recommend on options for a management framework, which includes the community/Tangata Whenua group. There may also be advantages gained by forming a charitable trust.

The Regional Council and the two City Councils will be key players in implementing the strategy. The Regional Council's proposed ten year plan provides a total of \$1.86 million for environmental enhancement works on the Hutt River.

5.1 Works for Consideration through the Proposed Regional Council's Ten Year Plan (2000-2010)

The budget for Hutt River environmental enhancement works, proposed through the Regional Council's Ten Year Plan, is \$1.86 million made up of:

Hutt River Ranger (eight years from 2002/03)	\$ 922,000
Habitat Enhancement (four years from 2003/04)	\$ 34,000
Environmental Strategy Implementation (2007/08)	\$ 50,000
Environmental Enhancement associated with Capital Works (5% of \$17 million)	\$ 850,000
TOTAL	\$1,856,000

6. Programme

Work on the Environmental Strategy is on programme and will be presented to the June Advisory Committee meeting for approval. **Attachment 1** shows the programme as a flow chart, with completion dates of each phase indicated.

7. Communication Opportunities

The current process for consultation on the Regional Council's Long-term Financial Strategy provides an opportunity for agency and community input on funding some aspects of the Hutt River Environmental Strategy, for example:

- funding a river ranger, and
- trialing whitebait habitat restoration.

8. Recommendation

That the report be received and the contents noted.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

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Attachment 1 : Revised Environmental Strategy Programme