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Committee Landcare
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Entrance signs for regional parks and forests

1. Background

At the Council meeting held on 1 July 2003, Councillors questioned the size of the Greater Wellington Regional Council logo on the park entrance signs at the Te Marua entrance to Kaitoke Regional Park, and the MacKay's Crossing entrance to Queen Elizabeth Park. The view expressed was that the logos should be larger to increase recognition by motorists of the Council's role in providing parks.

2. Purpose of signs

The production of all GWRC signs (including the park entrance signs) has been based on the principle that the signs should be "fit for purpose". In the case of the Park entrance signs, the purpose is to identify and attract people to the park entrance.

Consequently, Parks and Forests have approached the redevelopment of highway signs with a focus on communicating a single key message (the park identity) in as bold a manner as possible. This has been done within an overall brand style, and with the Greater Wellington brand prominently identified in a white bar below the main sign. This approach is not a change in policy, the previous entrance signs also focussed on the Park name and icon.

The new signs are intended to attract people into the park with a clean, crisp presentation, implying that a high quality natural setting will be found there. Once they arrive in the park, visitors will see the Greater Wellington Regional Council logo on every interpretation sign, (as it is now at Battle Hill). We are confident that the visitor will be left in no doubt as to who provides this quality service.

This approach is similar to that used on other Greater Wellington facilities where public identification is important (i.e., Park and Ride signs), and is also very similar to the approach used by other organisations such as the Department of Conservation and Wellington City Council (see **Attachment 1**).

In contrast, the recently redeveloped Utility Service signage the Greater Wellington logo has received greater prominence (up to 50% of the signage). That is because we are not trying to attract visitors to water treatment plant or pump station but rather to identify them as GWRC facilities.

Parks and Forests have also taken note of Transit New Zealand's instructions regarding the design of signs alongside highways. Transit state that such signs should:

- have messages that are clear, concise and easily read
- assist drivers to locate entrances and activities on land adjacent to state highways.

3. Council intention

There is a general understanding that communication from the GWRC should primarily promote its purpose and activities, and thus create a positive perception of the Council as a consequence.

This principle is reflected in outcomes 1 and 4 of the communication strategy, approved on 30 June. They are:

1. A high degree of awareness and understanding in the regional community of the social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of achieving a sustainable region, and Greater Wellington's role in achieving this outcome.
4. There is a positive and consistent profile of the organisation and its key functions.

It is within this framework of understanding that the redevelopment of park entrance signs has been undertaken.

4. Role and impact of Greater Wellington brand on signs and other communications

The Greater Wellington logo is more than an identifying mark, it also communicates meaning – the name of the region, the nature of our role and the reason for our existence. The brand supports the intent of the communication strategy to shift from just seeking recognition (which a mark can do) to the objective of raising awareness and knowledge.

The Greater Wellington logo is more complex graphically than the 'green triangle' it replaces, and thus is more difficult to recognise at a distance from a vehicle travelling at speed. However, the application of the logo to highway signs is only one of the purposes for which it was designed. Achieving recognition of the logo is not dependent solely on its use on highway signage, rather it is part of a suite of tools designed to gain recognition.

The Greater Wellington logo is part of a branding package that has been integrated with, and is inseparable from our communications and promotions. The logo and the associated style is reflected in letterhead and business cards, publications, *Elements*, all LTCCP material, vehicles, banners, signs, print and television advertising, and on the website. In the coming three years the brand will be incorporated in the social marketing and communication programmes that are currently under development. This will see it appear on:

- direct mail
- presentations and displays
- advertising and promotions

The Council is also negotiating to apply signage to buses, ferries and trains recognising our funding of public transport. The logo will appear on this signage.

In addition to these applications of the brand, we have also been seeking appropriate opportunities for the promotion of the brand and organisation itself. For example, we are shortly to apply the brand to a bus on a Wellington route.

Councillors have previously discussed the need for signs to be placed at entrances to the region to advise people that they are entering or leaving greater Wellington. We are of the view that prominent and effective signs for this purpose can be developed and that that would be an appropriate way of promoting the GWRC as an entity.

5. **Why can't we emphasise both the GWRC logo and the park name?**

The short answer is that we can certainly try to do that (subject to Transit NZ's approval). However, there are likely to be drawbacks in trying to send two strong messages to highway travellers (by substantially increasing the size of the brand at the expense of the park name).

As an illustration, **Attachment 2** shows park entrance signage with increased space allocated to the brand within the confines of the existing sign.

In our view, trying to focus equally on the logo and the park name will probably compromise the clarity of the messages by effectively having two elements competing with each other on the same space. Highway drivers have very little time to read a sign and so the sign needs to be kept as simple as possible.

In reaching our conclusion we are aware that there is always a degree of subjectivity in assessing the effectiveness of signs and that our professional opinion is just that, an opinion. If Councillors wish to increase the size of the logo on the Park entrance signs then that can be done (subject to Transit NZ approval).

6. Other considerations

We are aware that both the Kaitoke and Queen Elizabeth Park entrance signs are not ideally placed and that the placement of the signs contributes to the difficulty in recognising the GWRC logo. The placement was determined some years ago and is subject to resource consents. However, both these entrances will be adjusted over the next 12 to 18 months to accommodate the planned road realignments. During this process we will ensure that the new placement gives the best possible visibility to our signs.

7. Communication

This report is in response to issues raised by Councillors. No specific external communication is required at this stage.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. receive the report.*
- 2. note the contents of the report.*

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Attachment 1: WCC and DOC signs

Attachment 2: Alternative GWRC entrance signs