

1 September 2006

Wellington Regional Strategy and its governance and funding structure

Consultation plan

Background

The launch of the Growth Framework (August 2005) included a mix of communications tools:

- A launch event – regional bus tour
- Quantitative research of residents and business
- A re-designed web site www.wrs.govt.nz
- A news media programme around the launch
- A “wrap round” advertorial in the community newspapers.
- Public exhibitions.
- Use of existing council communication vehicles.
- Newspaper advertising

This range of communications vehicles was consistent with the main objective of the original plan:

- *Communicate the regional strategy, especially the growth framework, via a range of communications vehicles thereby maximizing the uptake of information*

It was noted that the Growth Framework was necessarily a directional document and short on specifics meaning it was difficult to engage the public.

In the event 420 submissions were received. The most effective tool in terms of soliciting submissions was a letter and copy of the document sent to 1400 stakeholders.

The next stage of the process – the launch of the proposed Strategy and its governance structure – will adopt a similar communications plan to that used for the Growth Framework.

The communications relate to:

- The Growth Strategy document
- The statement of the proposal
- The summary of the statement of proposal

Target audiences

The internal audiences are:

- Councils
- Chief Executives' Group.
- Project Executive Group.
- The Communications Working Group

- Positively Wellington Business (PWB) and other economic development agencies, including their staff
- Positively Wellington Tourism
- Regional iwi. The Ara Tahi group.
- The Strategic Partners Forum
- Regional Tourism Offices outside Wellington City

The external audiences are:

- Ratepayers
- Key stakeholders (approx 70) those who have been intimately involved in the Strategy development
- Other potentially interested parties including those who made submissions on the Growth Framework – a database of 1400
- Local authority staff, not directly involved in the project

Media

- Media will be a key information conduit, especially during the consultation period.

Objectives

There are three broad objectives for the communication and engagement plan:

- To engage key stakeholders and ensure their input, where valid, is accurately reflected in the final strategy. This objective recognises that key stakeholders have been important in developing the Strategy and its governance structure. These stakeholders will also be important in the implementation of the Strategy.
- To facilitate awareness and understanding of the Strategy so interested parties have the opportunity to make submissions. The Strategy potentially affects everyone. This means that everyone needs the opportunity to be involved, as they are for other initiatives such as district plan or community outcome consultation rounds.
- To ensure the communications programme meets the requirements of the special consultative section of the Local Government Act 2002. In particular sections 83 and 89 which include the need to:
 - *give public notice and other such notice as the Local Authority considers appropriate, of the proposal and consultation being undertaken*
 - *distribute a summary of the information contained in the statement of proposal as widely as reasonably practicable (in such a manner as is determined by the local authority, having regard to the matter for which the proposal relates) as a basis for general consultation*

Consultation Elements

The consultation will involve a LGA submission process. Written submissions will be invited, with submitters then being given the opportunity to present their submissions verbally. In order to provide the opportunity to submit the following will communications tools will be used.

1. Direct communication with key parties

The external audiences we will communicate directly with are:

- Key stakeholders (approx 70) those who have been intimately involved in the Strategy development eg Wellington Airport regarding the long haul strategy
- Other potentially interested parties (business associations, ratepayers groups, Government departments etc) including those who made submissions on the Growth Framework – currently a database of 1400

We have current databases that have been ‘cleaned’ to ensure the contact details are accurate. They will also be checked by the Project Executive Group to ensure there are no gaps.

Each party on the databases will receive:

- The Strategy document
- A summary document incorporating some Statement of Proposal information
- A covering letter (two versions – one for each group)

Prior to this mail out, key stakeholders will have received a copy of *Strategy update*, an electronic newsletter, to inform them of the proposed governance structure and proposed consultation process. This group has been closely involved in developing the Strategy and the early notice reflects their importance to the Strategy development and its implementation.

2. Regular electronic update for key stakeholders

Strategy update (the WRS electronic newsletter) will continue to be published until at least the end of the year. Its purpose is to retain engagement among those who are likely to be involved in implementing the Strategy.

3. Research

Quantitative research was undertaken in September 2005 among a database of 1500 ratepayers and businesses. The research assessed the extent to which respondents agreed with 54 statements that were potentially relevant to the Strategy. The results of this survey were used when formulating the Strategy. However some components of the Strategy – for example the proposed level of funding required – were not known at the time the original survey was undertaken. For this reason it is proposed that a further quantitative survey be undertaken to assess important components of the Strategy that have not already been tested.

The sample size for the last survey was 1500. This is much larger than necessary for a robust region-wide result, but gave some accuracy at a local authority level. In fact, the variations between local authority results were small and for this reason a sample size of 500 is proposed for this survey.

4. Media coverage

Up until now our media focus has been to target the Dominion Post and Community newspapers. With the exception of the Dominion Post (see below) coverage has previously been difficult to generate. Sustainable growth strategies don't make great stories. However the picture is changing as the Strategy becomes more tangible, and certainly the governance and funding issues are likely to be considered more relevant to the newspapers.

The Dominion Post has shown real interest in the development of the strategy and has run a series of fortnightly opinion pieces (including our logo). These will continue until the Strategy is finalised. Alongside this we have 'piggybacked' on relevant issues that have received media coverage – for example the long haul debate.

During the consultation period it is probable we will have significant feature coverage in the Dominion Post, subject to our ability to provide good news angles.

Media coverage between now and the finalisation of the Strategy is likely to encapsulate the following:

- Opinion pieces – fortnightly ongoing
- Coverage of the 'launch' – start of consultation period
- Feature on the 'regional form' focus area
- Feature on the 'increasing exports' focus area
- Key conclusions of submissions
- Strategy finalised

In addition to the above story ideas there will likely be ad hoc 'opportunities' that arise. This could include debate over subjects of potential public interest – for example funding and governance.

We aim to replicate Dominion Post coverage in community newspapers, albeit in a form that is relevant to each area. For example the Hutt News would mainly cover Strategy initiatives that are relevant to Hutt City.

Although the Dominion Post is the main focus other media will be targeted when relevant – for example TVNZ’s *ASB Business* at the time of the Strategy launch.

Media coverage during September and October in particular, will increase the Strategy’s profile and with that, debate over its merits. When this occurs it is important a consistent view is conveyed by Strategy spokespeople. It is also important to have the Strategy endorsed by opinion leaders.

The following spokesperson structure is proposed:

Subjects	spokesperson
Spokesman on Strategy governance funding and statement of proposal	The Chair of the Interim WRS Committee (initially Ian Buchanan as the Acting Chair).
Spokesman on Strategy detail – for example long haul, broadband, centres of excellence etc	Murray McCaw
Strategy endorsement. These spokespeople will mainly comment when the Strategy is launched for consultation	Business and community leaders who have been involved in developing the Strategy. Actual spokespeople to be defined

5. Key messages

The Strategy embraces many initiatives, some of which are complex. For the most part the external communications will not cover initiatives in detail. To do so would be a reader ‘turn off’ and in any event, the few who want the detail can access it elsewhere (eg www.wrs.govt.nz).

However some initiatives will be used where the subjects are important and their impact easily understood, for example the long haul strategy and the need for region-wide broadband.

The following key messages are proposed:

- The region’s leaders are working together for the long term prosperity of Greater Wellington – regional cooperation, not competition
- Prosperous regions offer great lifestyles AND strong economies. Explain that one without the other is not sustainable and corroborate with facts.
- Wellington leads New Zealand in the extent of its planning and its governance

6. Update the web site

The existing web site was designed with the Growth Framework in mind. While much of its content remains valid, it requires updating to reflect the proposed strategy and governance and funding arrangements. This will occur prior to the consultation period.

7. The Strategy document

The Strategy document has the difficult task of catering for a broad audience. For this reason it provides several 'entry points'. Those who want a quick overview can obtain it through the highlighted quotes, diagrams and detailed captions with the photographs. Those who want detailed information can obtain it from the text, while those who require in-depth information can access full reports on the web site.

The design of the document is similar to the design of the Growth Framework which received favourable feedback.

8. Launch Function

A launch function is consistent with the second broad objective - facilitating awareness and understanding. It reflects the importance of the Strategy, is a demonstration of the Councils working cooperatively for the regional good, and aids the objective of optimising media coverage.

A function at the Westpac Stadium is proposed. This is a 'neutral' venue which is also an excellent example of what regional cooperation can achieve. We have provisional agreement from Michael Cullen to attend, although this will depend on the launch date being suitable. His potential involvement is strong endorsement of the Strategy.

As well as all the Councils, the audience should include all key stakeholders, especially the Strategic Partners Forum and in doing so serve as an acknowledgement to those who have assisted in putting the Strategy together.

9. A communication to all households

A communication to all households is necessary to meet the requirements of 89(c) of the Local Government Act. i.e.

“distribute a summary of the information contained in the statement of proposal as widely as reasonably practicable”

This summary will be distributed to households at the beginning of the consultation period using *Elements*.

10. Advertising

We will run public notice advertisements in accordance with the Act. Our experience with the Growth Framework was that further newspaper advertising was useful in boosting awareness and understanding but did not result in action. In other words numbers requesting copies of the Growth Framework did not increase significantly after the advertisements appeared.

We also expect there to be good media coverage during the consultation period. This will increase awareness and we do not propose running awareness advertisements in addition to this news coverage

11. Public exhibitions

A display is planned for the Airport and for the Greater Wellington ground floor area. The display will consist of free standing banners and copies of the Strategy document.

12. Tap into existing Council communication vehicles

Councils will be encouraged to use their existing internal and external communication vehicles (for example WCC's *Absolutely Positively Wellington*) to communicate the Strategy.

13. Public Meetings

We may hold public meetings around the region to provide an opportunity for people to talk with the Committee and officers about the proposal.

Conclusion

This consultation plan aims to reach every community and household in the region. All individuals who are potentially interested in the Strategy will have had an opportunity to learn about it and to make submissions. In achieving these aims the plan also meets the special consultative requirements of the Local Government Act.

The plan has been prepared with advice from Philips Fox.