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Committee Regional Sustainability Committee
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Proposal to merge the Greater Wellington Environmental Awards and Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservation Board/DOC Conservation Awards

1. Purpose

To seek the Committee's approval to merge Greater Wellington's Environmental Awards with the Wellington Conservation Awards, which were sponsored by the Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

At the meeting of the Regional Sustainability Committee last August a report (09.418) was presented seeking the Committee's approval to merge the Greater Wellington Environmental Awards with the Wellington Conservation Awards. Although supportive of the idea, the Committee sought more information about how the merger would work in practice. This paper seeks to provide that information.

As noted in the earlier report Greater Wellington (GW), Department of Conservation (DoC) officers and Conservation Board members see multiple benefits from merging the awards such as:

- Potential for cost savings by having two organisations pool resources for judging, administrative and event requirements
- The ability to create a premier environmental awards for the region that recognises our environmental champions in a unique way

- Reduced competition from multiple awards (and a reduction in staff time nominating organisations for separate awards)
- The ability to enhance collaboration between central and local government
- Greater credibility and recognition for the awards from having both central and regional governments involved as sponsors; and greater status for groups
- Potential to grow a larger community with a common interest in conservation and environmental restoration
- An opportunity to reinforce the already strong relationships between DoC's Wellington Hawkes Bay Conservancy and GW.

Arguments against merging awards, such as potential to both lose GW's identity and our awards' focus on acknowledging and rewarding GW partnerships with community groups, schools and businesses, were also canvassed in the August 2009 report.

Having worked closely on further developing the proposed new awards, officers believe these issues can be managed and that the positives from merging outweigh the negatives. Greater Wellington's identity will be maintained through branding for the awards which recognises each organisation as an equal partner. A focus on rewarding and building existing relationships with our partners is something both organisations wish to retain.

It is therefore recommended that the Committee approves the merger of the two awards so the new Encore Awards can be put in place for the 2010 year.

4. **The proposed Encore Awards**

Greater Wellington, Department of Conservation Wellington Hawkes Bay Conservancy staff and Conservation Board members have worked together to develop a merged awards design. The proposed name, Encore, is a play on the first two letters of the words '**E**nvironment, **C**onservation and **R**estoration'. Greater Wellington, DoC and Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservation Board also suggested this name because the work of the groups we are honouring is very special and deserves extra acknowledgement.

Attachment 1 shows how the eight new award categories have been developed from the existing Wellington Hawkes Bay Conservancy Conservation Awards categories and the eight Greater Wellington Environmental Award categories.

The Encore Awards would recognise the individuals, groups and businesses whose work on environmental restoration, nature and conservation in the Wellington region is improving the state of our environment, minimising the impact of their activities, educating people about the environment, and contributing to the protection and restoration of significant cultural and historic sites.

The Encore Awards would be promoted as a partnership between Greater Wellington Regional Council, the Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation. Any group, individual or business in the Wellington region demonstrating a **sustained commitment** to a project involving voluntary effort and/or community involvement with a positive environmental, nature or conservation outcome would be able to enter the awards.

4.1 Proposed award categories

There would be eight award categories -

- **Community Partnerships Award** – honouring the work of community groups and organisations on environmental restoration, nature and conservation initiatives
- **Community Leadership Award** – honouring the leadership and vision of an individual working on environmental restoration, nature and conservation initiatives
- **Business Leadership Award** – honouring those businesses reducing the impact of their own activities and making a positive and sustained contribution to environmental restoration, nature and conservation
- **Emerging Environmental Business Award** – awarded to businesses who have recently begun work to reduce their environmental impact and make a contribution to environmental restoration, nature and conservation
- **Meridian School Sustainable Project Award** – honouring projects led by school students that contribute to improving the health of their environment, to nature and conservation and to promoting environmental education for sustainability in their school community
- **Meridian School Environmental Leadership Award** – awarded to individuals within schools (students, teachers and others) leading a school project or initiative that improves, conserves or protects the local or regional environment
- **Excellence in Compliance Award** - acknowledging Greater Wellington consent holders exceeding their compliance requirements to reduce or avoid adverse effects on the environment
- **Historic Heritage Award** - acknowledging groups and individuals engaged in the restoration or preservation of historic and cultural sites and features

4.2 Applications

Applications could open on 22 May and close on Friday 20 August. Application forms, criteria and other information about each award category would be on the Greater Wellington website.

4.3 Judging

Applications would be judged by a panel of experts from Greater Wellington, the Department of Conservation and the Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservation Board. Judging would take place in September. Judges would visit shortlisted groups and candidates.

4.4 Awards night

Finalists would be invited to an awards ceremony to be held at Parliament in late November.

Although DoC's Wellington and Hawkes Bay conservancies have merged, the Encore Awards would be open only to groups/ individuals and businesses in the Wellington region (as determined by the local government boundaries).

5. Budget

Greater Wellington spent \$12,200 (excluding staff time) preparing, running and presenting the 2009 Greater Wellington Environmental Awards. Staff estimates the cost of the joint awards would be \$12,000 in total. The reduced overall cost, which would be split equally between the two organisations, (\$6,000 each), results from changes to the process (no longer using paid external judges) and the ability to absorb some of the costs for the venue and the design.

6. Communication

A media release, article in Greater Wellington's Quarterly Magazine *Our Region* and the Wellington Conservancy's Footnotes e-newsletter and flyers advertising the awards would be produced in time for Restoration Day on 22 May. Information would be uploaded to both GW and DoC's websites.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes its contents.***
3. ***Approves the proposed merger of Greater Wellington's Environmental Awards with the Wellington/Hawkes Bay Conservancy Conservation Awards to take effect from 2010.***
4. ***Approves the format of the Encore Awards, as outlined in this report.***

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Attachment 1: Greater Wellington Awards & Wellington Hawkes Bay Conservancy Conservation Awards – existing and merged categories