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Committee Hutt Valley Flood Management Subcommittee  
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## Hutt River Environment Strategy Review

### 1. Purpose

To inform the Subcommittee that the Hutt River Environment Strategy (HRES) is being reviewed and explain why this is needed at this time.

### 2. Background

Careful strategic management is required to manage the use of the Hutt River corridor in the future. The HRES (2001) sets the direction for the management and direction of the river environment and its margins. It does so at a strategic level, directing policy and identifying specific proposals for implementation.

The HRES was an outcome of the Hutt Valley Floodplain Management Plan.

### 3. The need for the review

The Hutt River corridor is both a confined and dynamic environment, with growing public demand to provide for a range of uses, maintain ecological standards and cultural values, while managing flood events which are predicted to intensify with climate change.

#### 3.1 Increase in competing and conflicting uses

The HRES describes the vision for the river corridor - *“a linear park that provides a tranquil environment where people can go to escape the hustle and bustle of urban life and enjoy the natural character of the river environment”*.

Since the HRES was prepared in 2001, demand for use of the corridor has both accelerated and altered. Parks and open space are regularly regarded as ‘left over space’ that can be utilised for various utilitarian purposes.

Recent estimates indicates visits to the Hutt River are in the vicinity of 2,000,000 per year which makes it the most visited park in the Wellington region.

New initiatives utilising the Hutt River corridor have developed over the past couple of years (eg. the National Cycleway), leading to national and international publicity, attracting more visitors to the area.

The Hutt City Centre Project is underway. With the implementation of Hutt City Council's "Making Places", buildings within the CBD will orient toward the river, opening further opportunities for public interaction with this environment.

With the increase in popularity of the Hutt River corridor, some conflict between active and passive use is already evident. The corridor is a popular commuter route for cyclists which can directly conflict with passive uses such as dog walking.

Some demands on the use of the corridor (eg. fencing dog run areas) have the potential to adversely impact on the ability to implement effective operation and maintenance for flood protection works.

The need to resolve these conflicts is increasing and the HRES does not currently give enough direction on these issues.

### **3.2 Ad hoc decision making**

While there is a requirement for event organisers to contact the Hutt River Ranger currently, this doesn't always occur and adhoc events and developments regularly take place without appropriate notification and regard to the overall agreed FMP or HRES. Situations of this type can create considerable pressure on the GWRC Flood Protection Department, often without the resourcing or funding to do so, in addition to the primary role of managing the flood risk.

There is a pressing need for a collaborative, coordinated and strategic management framework. This will require the collaboration of a number of interest groups. Improvement is needed to communication lines, asset ownership and management, event management and decision making for use of the corridor in future. At a core level this requires coordination between GWRC, Hutt City Council and Upper Hutt City Council.

Having this in place would ensure the GWRC Flood Protection Department and the Hutt River Ranger are kept closely involved in events and asset management decision making, reducing the likelihood of conflicts with flood protection functions.

## **4. Review timeframes**

Phase 1: (late 2015 to early 2016) Plan and complete the initial consultation with key stakeholders to inform them of the review of the HRES and report on any initial feedback provided.

Phase 2: (mid 2016 to 2017) Complete a full review of the HRES. This phase to be fully scoped following Phase 1 feedback.

We will also consider whether the review or elements of the review need to be timed to feed into the Hutt City Centre Project design or consenting.

## **5. The decision-making process and significance**

No decision is being sought in this report. The decision to commence the strategy review does not require HVFMS approval and was made at officer level.

Input will be sought from HVFMS during the course of the review.

### **5.1 Engagement**

Consultation with stakeholders will be extensive and ongoing during the review.

## **6. Recommendations**

*That the Subcommittee:*

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Notes the content of the report.*

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