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Committee Hutt Valley Flood Management Subcommittee
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Hutt River Environmental Strategy update

1. Purpose

To update the Subcommittee on progress with the Hutt River Environmental Strategy Review.

2. Background

In November 2015 the Subcommittee approved a review of the Hutt River Environmental Strategy 2001. The purpose of the review is to assess and update the strategic vision for the management of the river environment and its margins between the river mouth and Kaitoke Regional Park by identifying issues and objectives, making recommendation and proposals and providing guidance on management priorities.

3. Environmental Strategy Review

Phase 2 of the Hutt River Environmental Strategy Review continues and a first draft of the Hutt River Environmental Strategy and Action Plan is with GWRC, HCC, and UHCC officers for comment. This will be presented to the Hutt Valley Flood Management Subcommittee at its September meeting in draft format seeking endorsement of the draft plan to enter a community engagement phase in November 2017, before returning for endorsement of the plan review in February 2018.

The review has identified several key aspects for improvement;

- Inclusion of an Action Plan
- Vision and focus change
- Updated plans and aerial imagery
- Improved presentation media

4. River Trail Barrier Assessment

A verbal update on the River Trail Barrier Assessment will be provided at the meeting

5. Taita Landscape and Environmental Plan, Robin Maud Memorial Planting and Hutt River Trail 25th Anniversary

The concept for a trail along Te Awakairangi/Hutt River was developed between Rotary and GWRC in the early 90s, initially making connections between existing vehicle service tracks. For the first few years the Rotarian responsible for promoting the initial developments with staff was Ron Wilson. For the past 18 years, until his death late last year, Robin Maud has been Rotary's Hutt River Trail coordinator and during that time his voluntary contribution has been enormous. He was the driving force behind many developments ranging from the small detail through to wider planning and policy, not just for the trail but the wider river corridor. Highly regarded by staff, he was the 'go to' man for anything involving the community and the Hutt River Trail.

Shortly before his death, Robin wrote a paper outlining how Rotary was re-focusing its aspirations on enhancing environmental and recreational values on the whole river corridor and not just the Trail:

“Our vision is for the Hutt River Corridor to become the spine of the Hutt Valley with plantings along its length that will create a passage-way for birds crossing from the vegetated hill Valley each side and to create a pleasant environment for recreation users of the Hutt River Trail”

5.1 Objectives

The design development for the Taita-Pomare reach is recommended by the Hutt River Environment Strategy review and will address identified issues within that reach. This design project will commence with a planting event to recognise the efforts of Robin Maud and the 25th anniversary of the Trail and will also promote:

- Enhancement of the biodiversity and habitat of the river corridor
- Encouragement of improved connections between the river corridor and adjoining communities to enrich community engagement, ownership and understanding of the river, its open space value and its management
- Support the development of destination spaces and facilities which will support recreation opportunities for local communities and river trail users along the river corridor.

This proposal aligns with the Te Awa Kairangi/Hutt River Management Plan and the current Environmental Strategy (being reviewed). It is also informed by the user intercept survey carried out in 2016 and public consultation on the review as well as more generally by feedback received about RiverLink.

It is intended that further design, plantings and care will be carried out involving GWRC, HCC, schools, community and interest groups. The Concept Landscape plan [to be tabled at the meeting] indicates opportunities

for design of this area as a framework for further development. This will be displayed at the planting and be followed up with further opportunity for public comment and design suggestions.

5.2 Taita area landscape

Currently the area is open grass separated by a straight vehicle track cabled off from adjacent grassed areas. The vision for the landscape plan is to work with iwi, HCC, the community and interest groups to modify this to have an informal park appearance in keeping with other successful and popular areas up and down the river corridor at Moonshine Park and Totara Park.

Based on experience, the plantings will be a combination of native and exotic trees. Totara will be one of the key native species planted and it is proven to establish well on the river berms at Moonshine Park and Totara Park. Poplars, Eucalyptus, Willows would be the main exotic species. All plantings will be spaced to allow for tractor mower maintenance and to not be overly restrict water flow during periods of flooding. The quick growing exotic species will provide shelter and will perform a ‘nursery crop’ role for the native plantings.

5.3 Community design input

Rotary, the adjacent community and schools are the target engagement audience for further development of the Taita-Pomare plans. To date Rotary and schools have participated in environmental activities up and down the river and it is proposed this successful model is continued for this project.

6. Consideration of Climate Change

The matters addressed in this report have been considered by officers in accordance with the process set out in the GWRC Climate Change Consideration Guide.

6.1 Mitigation assessment

Mitigation assessments are concerned with the effect of the matter on the climate (i.e. the greenhouse gas emissions generated or removed from the atmosphere as a consequence of the matter) and the actions taken to reduce, neutralise or enhance that effect.

The review of the draft of the Hutt River Environmental Strategy and Action Plan will acknowledge the importance of reducing emissions and enhancing sequestration where possible and contains actions that will help achieve this end.

6.2 Adaptation assessment

Adaptation assessments relate to the impacts of climate change (e.g. sea level rise or an increase in extreme weather events), and the actions taken to address or avoid those impacts.

The review of the draft of the Hutt River Environmental Strategy and Action Plan will acknowledge the need to adapt to a changing climate. This review will consider GWRC plans for climate change in assessing appropriate responses.

7. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

7.1 Engagement

Engagement on this matter is unnecessary.

8. Recommendations

That the Subcommittee:

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

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