

AGENDA ITEM NO: 9	SUBJECT MATTER: REGIONAL POLICY STATEMENT REVIEW
REPORT: Council	DATE OF MEETING: 26 April 2006
FILE REFERENCES:	PORTFOLIO: Democratic PROJECT: Regional Policy Statement Review OUTPUT: Consultation
REPORT BY: Richard Ball Coasts, Biodiversity and Pests Policy Manager	ENDORSED BY: John Talbot Director Policy and Planning

PURPOSE

To update Council on progress and the next steps for the Regional Policy Statement review.

PROCESS TO DATE

Consultation

Initial consultation meetings have taken place with Mayors, Chief Executives and senior planning staff of all District Councils within Canterbury with the exception Christchurch City Council. The meeting with CCC is expected to occur shortly.

The District Councils' meetings have traversed a range of possible issues for the RPS Review. There was also a general willingness to work with Environment Canterbury, although resources are limited and will depend on the nature and timing of the work required.

An initial meeting was also held with Nga Rūnanga at Rapaki. This is to be followed with individual Rūnanga meetings.

Technical Analysis

A detailed project scoping report for the review will be completed by 30 June 2006. Inputs to this report include:

- The stakeholder consultation
- A review of legislative changes and relevant case law (copies of this report will be available soon)
- A chapter by chapter analysis of the current RPS to determine whether the issues, objectives, policies and methods have been effective and remain relevant.

CONCLUSIONS TO DATE

A Series of Changes

It is likely that the review will need to consist of a series of changes rather than a single all encompassing change. The advantages of this are that it will:

- Be a better fit with existing work programmes such as the Urban Development Strategy (UDS) and Natural Resources Regional Plan (NRRP)
- Allow stakeholders to be more involved in the parts that interest or affect them most
- Provide for detailed investigations to be done, if needed, without delaying more urgent changes.

Issues emerging

Three levels of issues are emerging from discussions and analysis to date: technical, tactical and strategic.

Technical Issues

Examples of technical changes include: updating the wording to reflect minor changes in regional or local functions; providing greater clarity on anticipated environmental results, and; updating the indicators stated in the RPS. Improvements in this area are seen as important for monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of the strategy. They are not expected to be controversial and will require technical analysis rather than significant political decisions.

Tactical Issues

These consist mainly of areas where there has been further policy work undertaken since the initial RPS and the results of such work can now be re-incorporated back into the RPS. Possible examples include the more detailed policy work undertaken in the development of regional plans, such as the Regional Coastal Environment Plan and the NRRP. Including more specific policies within the RPS may be desirable to provide a holistic and comprehensive document but is not considered essential at this stage. Moreover, some policy areas, such as those being considered within the NRRP, are best left until later.

Strategic Issues

A number of potentially strategic issues are emerging in relation to the RPS. Further work is required to scope these issues before determining when or if they are considered in this review. Those identified to date are:

Urban Development Strategy

The outputs from this project will include recommended changes to the RPS. The timetable for this is prior to the October 2007 election. Such changes are likely to result in a separate chapter containing policies relating to the greater Christchurch area, with some subsequent changes to other chapters, such as transport and settlement.

Strategic Water Study

Water is of primary importance to sustainability in Canterbury. The Strategic Water Study is primarily concerned with water storage infrastructure and the related issues such as land use, water quality and ecological health. This, in conjunction with the recent Government announcements, will impact on the RPS.

Energy Infrastructure

Over recent months there have been suggestions that there could be additional transmission lines, new thermal generation, new hydro-generation, as well as other forms of energy supply within Canterbury. Changes to Resource Management Act to incorporate the integration of strategic infrastructure suggest that this issue should be considered within the review. Given the national importance of these decisions, the influence of decisions taken outside of Canterbury and the commercial interests involved, it would be a major undertaking to include such matters in the RPS.

Landscape

Increasing development pressures have already caused controversy in other regions and are now beginning to be felt in Canterbury. The current RPS objectives and policies regarding landscape are relatively weak.

Biodiversity

Since the current RPS became operative there have been a number of changes to give greater emphasis to biodiversity, including the National Biodiversity Strategy and an amendment to the RMA to make it an explicit function of both regional and district councils.

Response to Climate Change

The effects of climate change will be many and varied. Possible effects include changes in water flows, severe storm events and sea level change. Irrespective of the cause of climate change, consideration needs to be given to how we adapt to the effects of climate change. This may result in changes to the RPS in chapters such as Settlement and the Build Environment, to reduce risk.

Other issues

There are other issues that also need some clarification as to their nature, magnitude and priority. These include possible changes for: a chapter to cover the Waitaki District that would be common to both the Canterbury and Otago regional policy statements; hazardous substances; waste management, and; contaminated sites.

NEXT STEPS

Further consultation meetings are being planned. These will cover Christchurch City Council, individual Rūnanga, central government, neighbouring regions and others. It is proposed that the Runanga meetings be initiated in conjunction with Cr Cunningham's working party.

Work will continue towards completing the scoping report and project plan by 30 June 2006.

There will be opportunities to provide feedback and further consult on emerging issues as the scoping report is being developed. This includes discussing options for consultation with territorial authorities that is required to be part of the tri-annual agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council receives the report on progress with the Regional Policy Statement Review.