

5. DRAFT BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

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The purpose of this report is to advise the Board that a draft Biodiversity Strategy has been prepared for Christchurch. The draft Strategy was released for public consultation on 14 July 2004, with submissions being accepted until 8 September 2004. The Board is invited to make submissions on the draft Strategy (copies of which have been previously distributed).

Please note that the draft Biodiversity Strategy focuses primarily on indigenous biodiversity and, in particular, on the plants, animals and ecosystems that occur naturally in Christchurch.

BACKGROUND

The draft Biodiversity Strategy has been prepared in response to recent policy changes and initiatives at a national level, and also to better co-ordinate the many aspects of Council work that benefit indigenous biodiversity. Recent changes to legislation include an amendment to the Resource Management Act 1991 (Section 31), which expands the functions of territorial authorities to specifically include:

*“the control of any actual or potential effects of the use, development, or protections of land, including for the purpose of -
(iii) the maintenance of indigenous biological diversity (Section 31).”*

The draft Strategy has been developed following five community workshops, several meetings with key stakeholders, consultation with Ngai Tahu and internal consultation within Council. Preparation of the Strategy has been carried out by a team of staff, in partnership with Councillors Anderton and Williams.

At its March 2004 meeting, the Parks, Gardens & Waterways Committee approved the first version of the draft Biodiversity Strategy, which has since been amended to include input from Ngai Tahu. The Committee also supported the associated budget for the 2005/06 funding round, and the inclusion of a reference to the Biodiversity Strategy and its funding implications in the LTCCP.

THE DRAFT STRATEGY

The draft Strategy provides a framework for the Council to work with local communities to protect, restore and celebrate the plants, animals and ecosystems that occur naturally in Christchurch. It explains what is meant by biodiversity, why biodiversity is important, and what can be done to enhance biodiversity in Christchurch. Community involvement is recognised as an important component in achieving the five goals of the Strategy, which are:

- Goal 1: Conservation of Christchurch’s Biodiversity
- Goal 2: Restoration of Christchurch’s Ecosystems
- Goal 3: Raised Awareness and Understanding of Christchurch’s Biodiversity
- Goal 4: Participation by People in Supporting Biodiversity
- Goal 5: On-going Research and Monitoring

The document provides an overview of the different ecosystems found in Christchurch, their various components, including plants, birds, fish and invertebrates, and the threats they face, particularly from weeds and animal pests. It also sets out a vision for the ecosystems of the coast, waterways and wetlands, Port Hills, dry plains and suburbs of Christchurch. Building on the existing matrix of natural areas around the city, the strategy recognises 25 priority sites for their enhancement potential and/or need for protection.

In addition to protecting and enhancing areas of high ecological value, the Strategy aims to raise awareness and improve ecological functioning across the entire fabric of the city. This means improving water quality in the city’s waterways, controlling weed species and preventing the establishment of new invaders, improving connections and corridors between ecological refuges, and reducing the distance from one patch of vegetation to the next; thus improving habitat quality across the city, not just for plants and animals, but also providing a healthier environment for people.

A list of actions required to achieve the goals of the draft Strategy are set out in an Action Plan which forms part of the document. By its nature, this Action Plan will be a working document and will provide an important tool in co-ordinating implementation of the Strategy.

TIMEFRAME

The timeframe for the Biodiversity Strategy is scheduled as follows:

- Draft Biodiversity Strategy presented to Council at its 1 July 2004 meeting
- Public consultation began mid-July (extends over two months and will include two public workshops)
- Submissions collated at the end of September 2004
- Facilitated forum held in October 2004 to receive feedback on the summary of submissions and recommended amendments
- Final Biodiversity Strategy document to Council in February 2005

CONCLUSION

The draft Biodiversity Strategy aims to provide biodiversity benefits to Christchurch through better co-ordination of Council activities and raised public awareness and participation. The Board is invited to submit on the draft Strategy and, in particular, on priority sites in the local area.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Board consider preparing a submission on the draft Biodiversity Strategy.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: For discussion and comments to prepare a Board submission.