


5. CANTERBURY REGIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY ENDORSEMENT



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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's approval to and endorsement of the Canterbury Region Biodiversity Strategy and its objectives by signing the 'Canterbury Region Biodiversity Strategy Charter of Adoption', in partnership with other Canterbury Councils, landowner representatives and Government Departments.
2. This follows the Council seminar of 4 September where Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury staff presented the proposed Charter (Attachment 2). At that time Councillors requested that the Charter be formally put to the Council for adoption. Other local authorities and organisations will also be approving the Strategy for signing this month.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. Canterbury has sustained enormous loss of indigenous biodiversity over the last 200 years. Virtually all of the Canterbury Plains have less than 10% indigenous plant cover left.
4. As part of its Resource Management Act responsibilities Environment Canterbury has undertaken the production of a Canterbury Region Biodiversity Strategy. It has chosen to pursue a non statutory approach in consultation with key stakeholders (those who will be most affected by the strategy).
5. Representatives of a wide range of groups have been involved in its preparation including Christchurch City Council staff, Department of Conservation, Federated Farmers representatives, Canterbury University, Forest and Bird, Fonterra and representatives of all Canterbury Councils with the exception of the Mackenzie District Council.
6. A consensus has been reached between parties on the wording of the strategy vision, goals, targets and actions which have now been forwarded to all contributing parties for formal ratification.
7. The strategy is intended to complement the NRRP in the area of indigenous biodiversity protection and is reliant on all parties participating in a voluntary, cooperative manner. ECan considers that this approach is more likely to achieve positive results in an area which has been hampered by litigation and misunderstanding between landowners and councils.
8. The strategies guiding priority principle is to "*focus on protecting and maintaining what remains, and then on restoring what has been lost*". It has two primary objectives; to guide initiatives to those areas and environments at greatest risk, usually places where less than 20% indigenous plant cover remains, and to provide better protection in areas where more indigenous biodiversity remains but land use change is occurring which significantly increases risk of loss.
9. The strategy compliments the 'Garden City' image of Christchurch City. Garden City is a broad concept that includes and promotes the existing indigenous elements as well as the exotic planting for which the city is so well known.
10. The details of how the regional strategy should be implemented will be left up to the contributing councils and other organisations.
11. The final strategy document will be reformatted and illustrated to make it more easily understood by users. However, the content will be the same as that found in Attachment 1.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. The Council is not committed to any financial undertakings as a result of signing the charter. There will not be any financial implications in the immediate future beyond staff time required to liaise and coordinate activities with other parties signatory to the strategy. Staff time required to liaise with councils and other partners will be covered within existing budgets as this type of liaison is important to facilitate existing programme outcomes.

Do the Recommendations of this Report Align with 2006-16 LTCCP budgets?

13. Christchurch City biodiversity management largely falls within the budget mandate of the city's Regional Parks Service and is consistent with their activities.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

14. The strategy is non statutory and designed to sit alongside existing statutory and other instruments relating to biodiversity protection and enhancement. Adherence to any actions resulting from implementation of the strategy will be voluntary and subject to City Council approval should the need arise in the future.

Have you considered the legal implications of the issue under consideration?

15. Regional and district councils are required to maintain indigenous biodiversity through different mechanisms. The main emphasis for regional councils is the use of objectives and policies in regional plans whereas for district councils the area of jurisdiction is land management. Environment Canterbury has chosen to take a non statutory co operative approach to indigenous biodiversity maintenance as part of its NRRP objectives.

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

16. LTCCP Community Outcome: 'A city of people who value & protect the natural environment'. Standards for Success are: 'Everybody takes responsibility for their impact on the natural environment. Biodiversity is restored, protected and enhanced, we manage our city to minimise damage to the environment'.

Do the recommendations of this report support a level of service or project in the 2006-16 LTCCP?

17. The Regional Strategy supports and provides context for the Christchurch and Banks Peninsula Biodiversity Strategy which is currently close to completion and has been subject to considerable public and focus group input.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

18. The Canterbury Regional Biodiversity Strategy compliments the Council's Healthy Environment strategies that are currently being developed. It acts as an umbrella document for the Christchurch City and Banks Peninsula Biodiversity Strategy.

Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?

19. The recommendations and actions of the draft regional strategy contribute to the outcomes anticipated by the draft City Council Healthy Environment Strategies and Policies.

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

20. The Regional Strategy has undergone an extensive consultation process involving key parties with a direct interest in protection of biodiversity in Canterbury. Christchurch City Council staff have had an integral role in its formation in consultation with other Canterbury councils.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) Approve the document 'A Biodiversity Strategy for the Canterbury Region' and Canterbury Region Biodiversity Strategy Charter of Adoption.
- (b) Authorise the Mayor to sign the above Charter on behalf of Christchurch City Council.