

13. ŌTAUTAHI/CHRISTCHURCH AND TE PĀTAKA O RĀKAIHAUTŪ/ BANKS PENINSULA
BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's approval to adopt the Christchurch Biodiversity Strategy Biodiversity Strategy, Ōtautahi/ Christchurch & Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū/ Banks Peninsula.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Biodiversity Strategy supports implementation of the Council's Resource Management and Local Government Act responsibilities and is a local response to the Government's 'New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy' and 2007 statement of national priorities for protecting rare and threatened biodiversity on private land.
3. It provides policy support for implementation of biodiversity outcomes resourced through the Long Term Council Community Plan, and guidance on biodiversity issues relating to Council policy, plans and bylaws.
- 4.. The strategy provides leadership for the Council and community and a framework upon which community partnerships and initiatives can be built. Participation in strategy outcomes by the community is voluntary. Staff consider that this approach is more likely to achieve positive results in an area which has been hampered by litigation and misunderstanding between landowners and the Council, especially on Banks Peninsula. This approach has also been taken by the regional biodiversity strategy to which the Council is a signatory.
5. The strategy to go before the Council for adoption is an updated version of the draft Christchurch Biodiversity Strategy completed in 2005. It now includes Banks Peninsula as a key part of the city's biodiversity network.



Female jewelled gecko, Banks Peninsula

6. Strategy preparation has involved considerable formal and informal consultation over the last five years with the most recent related to the inclusion of Banks Peninsula into the Strategy.
7. The strategy addresses the biodiversity situation in Christchurch and Banks Peninsula. Biodiversity loss within the district has been very high over the last 700 odd years. Virtually all of the Canterbury Plains now have less than 10% indigenous plant cover left and a large part of Banks Peninsula has less than 20%.
8. Black on Map 1 below indicates land types where an average of less than 20 per cent indigenous vegetation remains. The light colour indicates land types which have retained more than 20 per cent of their indigenous plant cover. Generally areas with less than 20 per cent indigenous vegetation have higher risk of accelerated species extinction.



Map 1; Land environments with an average of less than 20 per cent indigenous plant cover (black colour).

9. The Strategy outlines a number of critical biodiversity issues facing Council and the community across the district including:



Up to three quarters of the nationally endangered crested grebe population, winter at Wairewa/ Lake Forsyth.

- Fifteen bird species in the top four tiers of the Department of Conservation threatened species list (Categories 1 'nationally critical' - 4 'serious decline') either breed locally, occur annually or pass through Christchurch and Banks Peninsula district on migration.
- Thirty-eight plant species within Christchurch and Banks Peninsula are on the threatened species list (Categories 1 'nationally critical' - 5 'gradual decline').
- Protection of indigenous herbaceous plants in the city's highly modified environments is problematic.
- Some species such as the native cedar are very limited in number and vulnerable to pests or catastrophic events such as fire. Naturally occurring rimu is down to one remaining tree on the Peninsula.
- Some nationally important areas of land under Council control need better legal protection and management policy in place for their biodiversity and are potentially at risk from management or land use changes.
- Water quality in urban areas is poor and difficult to manage in a cost effective way to bring about improvement in biodiversity.
- Lack of formal targeted systematic Council biodiversity monitoring and management programmes.
- Pests continue to pose a high risk to biodiversity especially those species that can establish and dominate in core indigenous habitat areas.

- Biosecurity pests such as Argentine ants pose a continuing potential risk to indigenous biodiversity.
- Restoration efforts in areas with remnant biodiversity need to proceed with caution as high potential exists to destroy remaining biodiversity values.
- Rare systems such as fens and dryland ecosystems are still under threat.
- Fragmentation of habitat needs to be controlled to avoid creation of unsustainable islands of biodiversity. This is especially important for invertebrates and lizards.
- Biodiversity needs to be integral to Council planning and operational activities.

10. The strategy emphasises that Christchurch and Banks Peninsula contains some outstanding biodiversity sites and values including:



Kaitorete Spit (centre) and Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere (right) with Banks Peninsula short tussock grassland in the foreground.

- Kaitorete Spit - nationally important dune and dryland system and rare plants.
- Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere - internationally important for water birds.
- Lake Forsyth/Wairewa - endangered crested grebe wintering area.
- Avon Heathcote Estuary Ihutai, Linwood Paddocks and the Bromley Oxidation Ponds - nationally/internationally important for water birds
- Riccarton Bush & Banks Peninsula 'old growth' forest remnants. The last of the original ancient forest.
- McLeans Island grassland remnants - a nationally rare dry grassland ecosystem.
- Plains wetland systems (Travis Wetland, Styx Mill Basin, Styx River Mouth etc) - wetlands are now nationally uncommon.
- Lower Waimakariri River - important braided river habitat with endangered species.
- Flea Bay penguin nesting area - largest penguin colony in the city and second largest white-flippered penguin colony in New Zealand.
- Upwards of 100,000 wetland and coastal birds occur at peak times in the Christchurch-Lake Ellesmere-Banks Peninsula area, with many species occurring in nationally and internationally significant concentrations. The high proportion and importance of the wetland and coastal bird species makes the Greater Christchurch area the "wetland bird capital of New Zealand".
- A central city Avon River site contains the highest diversity of indigenous aquatic plants in Christchurch.
- Marine mammal numbers along the coastline of Banks Peninsula have recovered significantly since the 1980's with around 6000 seals now present.

11. In order to provide a sustainable future for biodiversity in Christchurch and Banks Peninsula the strategy's vision and goals are:

Vision

The unique biodiversity of Christchurch and Banks Peninsula is valued, promoted, protected and enhanced.

Local communities, iwi and the Council work together to sustain the full range of species and habitats which are special to the hills, valleys, coast, lakes, waterways and plains of Banks Peninsula and Christchurch.

Goal 1: Conserve and restore Christchurch's and Banks Peninsula's indigenous biodiversity.

Goal 2: Raise awareness and understanding of indigenous biodiversity.

Goal 3: Encourage widespread participation in support of indigenous biodiversity conservation.

Goal 4: Improve and facilitate research and monitoring of indigenous biodiversity.

12. The strategy complements the 'Garden City' image of Christchurch City and the farmed and rural residential elements of the Banks Peninsula landscape as well as supporting the aims of the Visitor Strategy approved by the Council last year. 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.
13. The biodiversity strategy incorporates two "concept plans" for the urban and Banks Peninsula part of the city. These concept plans are conceptual and non regulatory. They are intended to provide a framework for positive biodiversity action and provide residents and the Council with a vision for overall direction. They identify the key elements, and corridors that make up the biodiversity picture of Christchurch, and establish a biodiversity framework to assist the Council and the community in targeting and prioritising actions, interventions and collaboration. The concept plans are supported by an implementation framework, that identifies a range of objectives, targets and actions in support of the strategic goals.
14. The implementation framework is not a task list, but rather identifies a set of priority actions, and those agencies that can contribute towards their achievement. The actual achievement of these targets will be dependent on the funding, cooperation, and individual priorities of many agencies.
15. For Christchurch city many of these targets are addressed through current operational and capital projects and programmes. Where new or additional funding is sought this will be done through the triennial LTCCP process. Progress against these targets will be regularly monitored on, and reported against and it may be that depending on progress, that more or less interventionist approaches are targeted in the future.
16. The final strategy document will be reformatted and illustrated to make it more easily understood by users. However, the policy content will be the same as that found in the strategy's policy section (separately circulated).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. The strategy provides the platform to integrate and rationalise a range of existing programmes and initiatives, provided by both the Council and a number of community partners.
18. Implementation of strategy policy and tasks are in part already addressed by the Council's present programmes and future amendments to existing programmes and services can be made in order that biodiversity outcomes are better integrated within Council processes, and by better co-operation with other agencies and the community.
19. It is anticipated that some additional funding will be required to protect and support biodiversity within Christchurch and Banks Peninsula. A preliminary assessment of possible budget increases was presented to the Council and Community Board workshop of 15 May 2008. The amounts presented will be subject to further analysis by Council policy and asset units and details presented to the Council as part of the 2009-2019 LTCCP process. The scope of any additional funding will ultimately affect the speed or pace at which the Strategy's goals are achieved. This applies equally to a range of the agencies and groups whose own funding priorities will impact on the strategy's success.

20. The four main areas likely to need new Council budget support are; greater support for biodiversity protection initiatives on private land; biodiversity research and monitoring to assist with prioritisation, pest control and some land purchase.
21. An essential aspect of implementation of strategy initiatives will involve building and maintaining partnerships, especially with central government, Canterbury Regional Council, Ngai Tahu, business, community trusts, agencies and landowners, as these will play a significant role in advancing the strategy through their own actions and interventions.

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

22. Preparation of the strategy falls within the Strategy and Planning Group: Strategy Support Unit budget 2007-2008 and forms part of the Healthy Environment suite of strategies.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

23. The strategy provides overall policy guidance for Council on biodiversity matters pursuant to the Local Government Act and when implemented provides non regulatory (other methods) support for the objectives of the District and City Plan relating to biodiversity protection and enhancement. Community contribution and support for any actions will be voluntary.
24. In order to clarify the relationship of the strategy with other Council policy documents, plans and bylaws a new objective and two targets have as been inserted under Goal 1. New Objective 1.5 states "New Council policy will take account of and be aligned with the goals and objectives of the biodiversity strategy."
25. Target 1.4.1 which covers pest management has also been modified to include potential for Council policy on domestic animals on Council managed land, to allow for greater controls where required.

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

26. Regional and district councils are required to maintain indigenous biodiversity through different mechanisms. The main emphasis for district councils is land management whereas for regional councils it is the use of objectives and policies in regional plans. A critical aspect of the City Council's ability to protect and enhance biodiversity is through the capital and operational works programme determined by the LTCCP.

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

27. 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?

28. The Christchurch and Banks Peninsula Strategy supports and provides context for a wide range of biodiversity related policy and capital and operational programmes managed by the Christchurch City Council.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

29. The Christchurch and Banks Peninsula biodiversity strategy aligns with the Canterbury Regional Biodiversity Strategy to which the Council is a signatory and the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2000.

Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?

30. The Biodiversity Strategy in one of a suite of City Council Healthy Environment strategies that are currently being developed. These are the Open Space, Surface Water, Water Supply, Energy, and Climate Change Strategies as well as the Sustainability Policy.

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

31. Representatives of a wide range of groups and the public have been involved in strategy preparation including City Council staff, Department of Conservation, Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust, Environment Canterbury, Forest and Bird, and Ngāi Tahu, conservation groups and trusts and technical experts from universities and crown research institutions.
32. Previous drafts of the strategy vision, goals, and objectives have been through a thorough public consultation process as part of the Christchurch Biodiversity Strategy consultation process. The goals and objectives in the current version have evolved to meet the requirements of managing Banks Peninsula in addition to Christchurch. Overall the document intent and policy essence has not fundamentally changed since the initial consultation was undertaken.
33. A more selective formal consultation process has been undertaken with the Banks Peninsula community including technical, organisational, and Community board consultation on the updated Christchurch and Banks Peninsula Strategy.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council adopt the Christchurch Biodiversity Strategy, Ōtautahi/Christchurch and Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū/Banks Peninsula.