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6 May 2021

Chris Ryan
Chief Executive
Waitomo District Council
PO Box 404
Te Kuiti 3941

Dear Chris

Waikato Regional Council Submission to Waitomo District Council's 2021-2031 draft Long Term Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on Waitomo District Council's 2021-2031 draft Long Term Plan. Please find attached Waikato Regional Council's submission regarding this plan. The submission was formally endorsed by the council's Strategy and Policy Committee on 4 May 2021.

Should you have any queries regarding the content of this submission please contact Anthea Sayer, Senior Corporate Planner, Corporate Planning team directly on (07) 859 0512 or by email anthea.sayer@waikatoregion.govt.nz.

Regards

Russ Rimmington
Chair

Chris McLay
Chief Executive

Submission from Waikato Regional Council on the Waitomo District Council's 2021-2031 draft Long Term Plan

Introduction

1. Waikato Regional Council (WRC) appreciates the opportunity to make a submission on Waitomo District Council's 2021-2031 draft Long Term Plan (LTP).
2. We do not want to speak in support of our submission.

Biodiversity

3. As part of WRC's draft LTP, WRC is proposing a significant increase in biodiversity investment based on the urgent need to tackle the issue of biodiversity decline and to respond to the imminent release of the National Policy Statement (NPS) Biodiversity.
4. We suggest that Waitomo District Council (WDC) also considers a sufficient level of funding to support the planning and delivery of local biodiversity programmes. Healthy biodiversity underpins the presence and success of nature-based industries such as tourism, providing income, employment and growth. Ecosystem (biodiversity) restoration can also simultaneously bring both mitigation and adaptation benefits, making it a powerful tool for mitigating or avoiding catastrophic climate change impacts.
5. The investment in biodiversity could take the form of:
 - Staff time and resourcing to respond to the NPS Biodiversity and to be actively involved in developing regional biodiversity strategies;
 - Sufficient budget to enable and respond to the specific requirements to identify and map significant natural areas (SNAs). We would see this as a co-investment with WRC and its proposed increase in investment to the regional biodiversity Inventory programme;
 - Expanding the funding available to private landowners who have SNAs on their property and who wish to undertake management of those sites;
 - An appropriate level of expenditure in council's own parks and reserves budgets where reserves include important biodiversity assets, to support the development of appropriate reserve management plans and delivery programmes (such as pest and weed control).

Climate change

6. WDC is to be congratulated for explicitly recognising the challenges that a changing climate will impart to their activities over the duration of the LTP and beyond. This is particularly important with the location, design, construction and operation of long life infrastructure. The summary of projected climate changes, implications and responses is presented in a way making it particularly easy to understand.
7. WDC rightly identified uncertainty with future climate projections and this may be an opportunity to advise that the WRC climate work programme will be updating regional climate projections with the latest IPCC (6th Assessment report) models and information. The current projections can be found on the WRC website.
8. As well as the physical challenges, WDC should also consider the implications of providing services and infrastructure to support communities operating in an increasingly carbon constrained economy.
9. WRC encourages WDC to develop a district and corporate emissions reduction plan to lower greenhouse gas emissions. As WRC has recently undertaken this work at both a regional and local scale, we are happy to offer assistance or advice on the preparation and implementation of this.

Three waters reform

10. WRC recognises the pressures local authorities have in relation to three waters and compliance with their water take, wastewater and stormwater consent obligations.
11. WRC acknowledges and supports the WDC's commitment to continue to resource three waters upgrades in the district to ensure the best outcomes for its communities and the environment.

Walking and cycling

12. WRC commends WDC on the planned development of a Walking and Cycling Strategy as noted in on page 19 of the consultation document.
13. We encourage WDC to begin work on this as a matter of urgency. As well as being a requirement under the Regional Land Transport Plan, there are benefits associated with enabling active modes of transport including increased health and social wellbeing and a reduction in carbon emissions. It is important to note that user safety and connectivity between neighbouring districts should be considered when developing the plan.

Waste minimisation

14. WRC congratulates WDC on the emphasis it has placed on the issue of waste minimisation (page 5).
15. We support WDC's provision of waste minimisation reduction programmes and the review of the waste minimisation plan in year two of the plan. WRC is happy to offer assistance with the education programmes or review of the waste minimisation plan.
16. WRC encourages WDC to investigate the introduction of a food waste collection. We note that a number of other Waikato territorial authorities are investigating or have recently started food scrap collections. WRC suggests that WDC could partner with these councils or learn from their experiences.

Submitter details

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