

27 April 2018

Chief Executive  
Greater Wellington Regional Council  
PO Box 11646  
Wellington 6142

**Regarding: Draft Long Term Plan**

Tēnā koe

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission on the Greater Wellington Regional Council Draft Long Term Plan 2018 -2028.

Council and Regional Public Health have a common agenda – working with communities where they live, work and play to protect and improve their quality of life. Regional Public Health (RPH) wants to support Council with public health knowledge and skills where appropriate. By working together we can be more efficient, reduce the burden of engagement on our communities and be more effective in achieving our common goal. A collaborative approach will also facilitate smarter use of each agencies finite resources.

This submission provides a public health perspective and information for Council to consider in their planning decisions. Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) policy and planning are an integral part to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

We are happy to provide further advice or clarification on any of the points raised in our written submission. We request to be heard in support of our written submission. The contact point for this submission is:

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Kind regards

Dr Stephen Palmer  
**Medical Officer of Health**

Peter Gush  
**Service Manager**

## **How this document is structured:**

- A. An overview of Regional Public Health
- B. General comments on the Long Term Plan (LTP)
- C. The three waters
- D. Responses to your specific questions

### **A. WHO WE ARE – Regional Public Health**

Regional Public Health (RPH) serves the greater Wellington region, through its three district health boards (DHBs): Capital & Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa and is based at the Hutt Valley District Health Board, and are located at three bases – Porirua, Hutt Valley DHB and Masterton.

Our business is public health action – working to improve the health and wellbeing of our population and to reduce health disparities. We work with others to promote and protect good health, prevent disease, and improve quality of life across the population, with a particular focus on children, Māori and working with primary care organisations. We are funded mainly by the Ministry of Health and we also have contracts with the District Health Boards and other agencies to deliver specific services. We have 130 staff with a diverse range of occupations, including medical officers, public health advisors, health protection officers, public health nurses, analysts and evaluators.

### **B. GENERAL COMMENTS ON YOUR LONG TERM PLAN**

RPH respects and acknowledges that GWRC decisions have a significant impact on health. We see this through appropriate management of infrastructure (e.g. water and sewage) and creating environments that support wellbeing through reducing the exposure to tobacco, facilitating access to healthy food and promoting urban design that encourages physical activity. This is the basis for making a submission on your Long Term Plan (LTP).

In light of the 2016 Kaikoura earthquake<sup>1</sup> and an increase in adverse weather events<sup>2</sup> RPH commends GWRC on their approach to assessing and investing in key infrastructure that will protect the health and wellbeing of our communities in an adverse event.

Council and RPH have important roles to play readying and responding to adverse events in our region. For RPH that means maintaining civil defence and public health emergency planning and response capacity, and ensuring there are appropriate numbers of staff trained in emergency management. For council that could mean readying similar response mechanisms as well as protecting core infrastructure such as water supply and public transport from the effects of emergency events, and making sure they are in a position to recover.

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<sup>1</sup> The risk for a significant earthquake affecting the Wellington region has increased following the 2016 Kaikoura earthquake. A significant earthquake would affect infrastructure and key transport routes

<sup>2</sup> Many of New Zealand's towns and cities are affected by flooding from rivers, lakes, overland flow, the sea and in some cases, a combination of all of these. Regular flooding has a toll on communities, it can move people out of their homes and make it difficult to move around and get to work. This impacts on the economy and an individual's social connectedness.

It is important that we continue to work together in building resilient infrastructure and communities. Through this collaborative emergency planning and response, the impact of emergency events on vulnerable communities (particularly Māori) will be minimised. We will also be able to grow each other's knowledge and skills.

Our organisations are already working together on issues around disease surveillance, drinking water, wastewater and stormwater. We look forward to continued and enhanced collaboration. We also have staff who work with other agencies in emergency preparedness and management and are willing to assist GWRC on request.

### **C. THE THREE WATERS**

The LTP process provides an opportunity to document the council's pathway to addressing the management of drinking water, wastewater and stormwater ('the three waters') infrastructure as a critical factor in building long-term resilience and emergency management. RPH acknowledges that there are significant challenges and drivers around actions to be taken in this area. These include:

- the development of infrastructure to keep pace and meet the need for new urban development;
- the challenge of increasing frequency of severe weather events (e.g. leading to flooding) and other natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes) which determine how well the infrastructure can perform;
- the impacts of the DIA three waters infrastructure review and government recommendations from the Havelock North Drinking Water Campylobacter Outbreak Inquiry Report;
- meeting the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management targets;
- your current review of the Greater Wellington Proposed Natural Resource Plan and associated new requirements for monitoring and management of stormwater and wastewater discharges; and
- progressive implementation of the catchment specific whitua committees to determine local water quality and quantity parameters.

The response to such large challenges requires a strong focus on collaboration between multiple agencies with a willingness to share expertise and resource across traditional council boundaries, it also requires consideration of models of shared resources and asset management to achieve economies of scale and equitable access to the limited technical expertise at the regional and national levels.

One such collaborative approach that has resulted from the Havelock North Inquiry is the regional drinking water joint working group. That is in the process of being established for the greater Wellington region but requires the mandate and support from all councils to achieve the agreed aim of "safeguarding the Wellington region's drinking water".

A significant challenge is the management of water demand while maintaining water quality. Water demand is an issue for the whole region and not only in areas that have had to implement or explore a more urgent response.

Due to the complexity and inter-relatedness of managing all three waters infrastructure and the impact that this infrastructure has on the built environment (e.g. location of urban growth; how we use the environment for recreation and activity) we recommend a spatial planning approach. Such an approach would see the use of citizen panels, and other forms of face-to-face community consultation, that captures the interactions and supports coordinated decision making for the built environment.

The LTP consultation process also provides another opportunity to engage the community in awareness of the challenges around the three waters management and being part of finding the best way forward. Often this infrastructure is hidden and not well understood compared with other infrastructure such as roads.

Raising the profile of this critical part of a safe and healthy urban environment will facilitate community “buy-in” for the hard decisions that need to be made around how to distribute funding for maintenance, improvement and capacity building.

Additionally there are actions the community can take to support additional planning, performance and resourcing. It is important to have ongoing initiatives that increase the community’s understanding and engagement with the hidden infrastructure and the values they attach to the impact on their environment.

A collaborative and coordinated regional approach would strengthen this awareness raising, including linking to current actions that are associated with specific programmes (e.g. enviroschools) or legislative requirements (e.g. resource consent requirements including public engagement for managing specific discharges).

#### **D. IN RESPONSE TO YOUR SPECIFIC QUESTIONS**

##### **WAIRARAPA RAIL**

**Do you support the approach outlined in our preferred option and the initial allocation of funding to improve the Wairarapa and Capital Connections commuter services?**

Yes  No

We congratulate GWRC for considering a long-term solution for the Wairarapa train service. We support option 1A. A dependable rail service benefits not only commuters and but also local businesses as it could bring more tourists to the region.

We support investment in affordable and accessible public transport services including a ‘fast, frequent and reliable rail service’, and an integrated transport and ticketing system. Providing an efficient and reliable public transport system can greatly influence the uptake of physical activity as most trips start and end with some form of physical activity. We also encourage integrated transport options such as bikes on trains and bikes on buses policy.

##### **WREMO CAPABILITY**

**Do you support an increased funding contribution by Greater Wellington for emergency management? \* required**

Yes  No

We support a focus on emergency management and preparedness – Option 2A. Refer to sections B and C of this submission.

#### **WATER WAIRARAPA**

**Should Greater Wellington continue our proposed support for the management and investigation of the Wairarapa Water Project?**

Yes  No

We support ongoing investigations as a means of reinforcing resilience in the regional economy and public infrastructure including water supplies.

RPH is involved in the stakeholder advisory group for this project. We support continuation of the project with a robust health impact assessment to support how funding could be used to support sustainable access to water and a resilient economy. This continuation should occur while mitigating for any unintended consequences around how stored water would be utilised, and ensuring the benefits are enjoyed by all of the community thus avoiding negative impacts on already disadvantaged communities.

RPH is currently providing input into the Social Impact Assessment to ensure the health impact assessment is strengthened. We also recommend that funding towards the water project should be supported by increased funding allocation for water demand management. Both demand reduction and options such as storage should be undertaken together to achieve the best outcome. This requires a collaborative approach between District and Regional Councils. We note in the consultation document that water demand management is mentioned as a “likely increased focus in the coming years”. We recommend that the focus on this approach is required now.

#### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND DECISIONS**

**Do you have any comments of the future decisions we have highlighted?**

Yes  No

We support the future focus on a resilient water supply and RPH are involved in supporting the current work led by Wellington Water Ltd for their client councils.

Also we support “Let’s Get Wellington Moving” as this will shift the balance toward active modes and public transport.

#### **RATES**

**Have we got the balance right between the level of rates and charges and the services you want? (NB: you may want to make a submission on the Revenue and Finance Policy please see the separate survey)**

No comment

#### **OTHER COMMENTS**

**Are there any other comments you wish to make about our proposals and policies for the next 10 years?**

We congratulate GWRC on the Lifelines project. Collaboration with the regions utilities services should yield a more resilient regional network.

RPH offers its support, skills and knowledge in the areas of housing quality, public and active transport, community development and empowerment, and healthy food environments to ensure the people in the greater Wellington region are thriving.

We note that in your consultation document a lot of a ground work was undertaken to shape the direction of the Long Term Plan. RPH is always keen to participate in these early direction setting discussions. We understand that this is a significant time of influence. Please add us to your database of community and agency consultation stakeholders.