

## Regional Emissions Reduction Forum

*Report back from workshops held on 24 July 2023, Lower Hutt Town Hall*

### Introduction

More than 100 people from across the Wellington-Wairarapa-Horowhenua region came together on Monday 24 July to discuss opportunities to impactfully reduce carbon emissions for the benefit of future generations.

Attendees included community leaders and political candidates, as well as representatives from iwi, sector specialists and community groups.

The Forum was hosted by the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee (WRLC) and provided the opportunity to gather information as the Committee sets out to develop its first Regional Emissions Reduction Plan (RERP).

The ambition is to foster a co-ordinated approach to reduce emissions quickly across the region and learn how communities' needs and aspirations can be met.

The agenda was packed and included a political panel where Rongotai candidate for Labour Fleur Fitzsimons, National MP Chris Bishop and Green MP Julie Anne Genter took to the stage, only months out from election day, to discuss their parties' plans to reduce carbon emissions.

As keynote speaker after lunch, Foresight practitioner Melissa Clark-Reynolds also spoke on solutions to carbon reduction being employed by cities and regions around the world.

The main purpose of the day was to gather information and listening to diverse views through workshops to provide important insight for developing an environmentally healthy region and identifying pathways towards a zero emissions profile.

This document summarises the outcomes of the big group workshops which will be useful input into the Plan's focus on key themes and sectors.

### Workshop - Table discussion 1: Regional approaches

In this session, attendees were asked to work within the groups at their tables of around eight to share thoughts about the benefit of taking a regional approach to the emissions reduction plan. The questions were:

- What are the benefits of having a regional plan?
- What do you think is best done at a regional level, as opposed to national or local level?
- What did the political panel perspectives bring to the table? What did that mean for our regional plan?

Groups shared key messages from their tables. Contributions can be organised into two overarching key points:

- **Amplify impact** by progressing action and deliver outcomes at meaningful scale.
- **Amplify voices and make connections** by enabling connection between community aspiration and national direction.

The points made are summarised in the sections below.

In terms of the reactions to the political panel discussion, the key points were that national direction, including funding for regional action is important. The absence of discussion relating to agricultural emissions was noted.

During the workshops some important points and questions were raised by participants. It was noted that Te Tiriti obligations need to be explicitly met and mana whenua and Iwi voices should be strengthened. The risk of losing rural voices through stronger engagement by urban communities was also raised as was the importance of looking at all actions through a lens of equity.

Participants asked how the Regional Emissions Reduction Plan would fit into the statutory plan setting. Especially in relation to District Plans, the resource management planning reform etc.

The nature of the commitment was also questioned. Particularly, as to whether the RERP would be binding for all councils to give certainty.

### **Amplify impact**

There was general support for a regional scale plan that could **bring diverse views and ideas together and share resources**. This region makes sense in terms of geographical boundaries and catchments. At this scale, common resources and relationships can **amplify impact**.

The plan could support councils in taking a longer view and move to **longer-term planning and share in a joint plan** rather than competing for resources. A shared vision, objectives and targets can support longer-term, coordinated action to help reduce emissions. By coordinating across district, deeper systems change may be progressed by **bundling resources and actions for greater impact**. For some councils, this may help **gain impetus, permission and increased mandate** for change in District and Long-Term Plans. A regional plan can outlast election cycles.

The role of central government was seen to provide the overall national direction, policy settings as well as targets and funding. Central government direction can be more risk adverse, as it accounts for all communities. A regional plan may be able to bring about **permission to do more** and go harder.

Regions are well positioned to **coordinate and work at meaningful scale** to bring about results and **fostering engagement of iwi and mana whenua**.

The regional scale was understood as useful in terms of coordination and considering **action across landscapes and catchments**. Resilience of planning is more likely achieved, particularly around infrastructure design and coordinated urban development, as well as agricultural initiatives and electricity generation.

There was general positivity about the opportunity for **harnessing the economic benefits and managing risks** in a cohesive regional approach. Efficiency gains could be made to achieve meaningful outcomes through a coordinated approach. Across the region, it might be possible to tackle challenges and attract opportunities beyond the small, low hanging fruit or short-term initiatives.

Areas of opportunity within districts or catchments can be **better leveraged to bring wider benefits** to the whole region. Economies of scale and **joined-up investment** may be achieved for actions in sectors important to help reduce emissions, like transport, and can also open up opportunities to make further **shared infrastructure investment**, like landfills.

The importance of collating data at regional scale was also mentioned.

### Amplify voices and make connections

Regional plans provide a scale that ensures community voices can be collated to understand impacts and opportunities and identify priorities. Working together at the regional scale was seen as a key opportunity to provide a **mechanism for connecting communities and communicating aspirations**. Connecting and **amplifying local voices** can build public support for faster action.

A **shared language** to talk about local and regional issues can drive culture and boost momentum. Education and enabling action is a big part of this to achieve the necessary behavioural change.

**One voice for the region** can help respond to and drive action to meet national direction. It strengthens the ability to engage in central government conversations to **share expertise and knowledge**.

A regional plan can also help communicate national direction and local responses to communities and **explain what is being done** and its importance. This might also help in applying for national funding.

The work at regional scale to help **link community aspirations and communicating need for national direction** was another key point. This is to encourage central government to enable regional scale action and pull the levers at scale and pace to assist and empower communities.

### Workshop – Table discussion 2: Pathways

In this second workshop session, attendees were again asked to work within the groups at their tables of around eight to look at a draft pathway. The purpose of the draft pathway was to act as a thought provoker to enable people to share their views on priority focus areas for the Plan. This followed a brief presentation on the region's emissions profile and the modelling work undertaken by the project team.

The questions for the group were:

- Do the ideas identified in the pathways make sense?
- What do you agree with?
- What don't you agree with? Is anything missing?
- Where does your table think the most powerful areas of focus are at a regional level?

### General, overarching points

Overall, feedback from this session was heavily focussed on the **importance of transport and urban form** (which underpins transport needs).

A key gap identified and discussed was stating how obligations under **Te Tiriti o Waitangi**<sup>1</sup> were being upheld, with the need to explicitly address Te Titiri, as well as incorporating mana whenua voices and and mātauranga māori<sup>2</sup>.

Ideas of **wider system responses**, including circular economy approaches, deliberate drive for economic degrowth, and shifts away from GDP-based measures of community wellbeing were noted as very important but absent.

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<sup>1</sup> Treaty of Waitangi 1840

<sup>2</sup> 'Māori knowledge'- a modern term that broadly includes traditions, values, concepts, philosophies, and world views

Generally, across all themes due consideration of **equity** and any impacts will be important to bring about a 'just transition'. The use of principles was suggested to include partnership with mana whenua, a just transition approach, and working within bio-physical limits.

**Education**, was identified as another area that deserved attention, in terms of building awareness and bringing the wider community along. Similarly, considerations of **waste** management (perhaps as part of circular economy or energy) requires strengthening.

It was also recognised that developing an evidence base and investment cases will be important to **ensure emissions reduction initiatives are comparatively impactful and efficient** – delivering value for money and sound investment in the public interest. More generally, the lack of **measures and targets** stimulated some discussion around data collection and the need to develop these to communicate ambitions and track progress.

The suggestion was made that initiatives delivering best results, quicker at the lowest cost should be prioritised, while also considering those actions that build social licence for rapid change. So was the potential power of **regional flagship projects that instil public and private sector confidence**, as well as paving a pathway for more significant change that is economically viable.

For each of the themes, comments are summarised below.

#### Comments in specific pathways

Various particular points were raised under the pathway headings:

##### **Land use, including urban form:**

- This category was recognised as an underlying driver for other groups of emissions or sectors. For instance, how we use land, determines much of our transport and energy needs.
- Human-centred design when developing urban areas can bring about improved wellbeing, as well as reduce energy demand and need for cars, if public transport is provided or distances short enough to walk and bike for most trips.

##### **Energy:**

- Opportunities to enable the energy transition regionally and locally was discussed, this included decentralised energy hubs (wind and solar – community and/or household level).
- The value and efficiency of public transport compared to increased EV use was noted.
- Phasing out existing domestic gas connections through spear-heading regulation and incentivising the switch to electricity was put forward.

##### **Transport:**

- Questions were raised around how public transport could be further incentivised through making it the easiest mode option, and pricing mechanisms including congestion charging.
- The link between transport and land use was reiterated, with the comment that providing local connections should be considered an important principle.
- Opportunities to better integrate pathways around different modes of transport were highlighted.
- To avoid more freight on rail and roads, coastal shipping should be investigated and introduced.

##### **Agriculture**

- It was discussed that barriers of – and drivers for – land use diversification should be identified and deployed.
- The opportunity to change the narrative from risks and costs to benefits of change for agriculture and rural parts of the region could be important and might help raise resilience and productivity in the long-run.
- Questions were raised as to what key parts of systems can enable a change in types of rural activity and to ensure the “the biggest bang for buck” was identified.
- Incentivising and otherwise supporting those land owners and managers that want to transition to climate-friendly land uses could be worthwhile to help to de-risk the investment associated with change.
- Increasing circularity in our bioeconomy could add value to produce.
- The key links between agriculture, land use and transport, as well as energy use were identified.

#### **Te Taiao** (Environment and biodiversity)

- The importance of maintaining natural capital was raised, including protecting and enhancing native biodiversity.
- Natural systems provide support for adaptive resilience but also hold the potential to sequester more carbon, which should be considered.

### Targeted workshops on sectors - concurrent workshops

After lunch and the keynote address by Melissa Clark-Reynolds on global solutions to carbon reduction and neutrality, attendees broke into smaller, themed workshops:

- Enabling systems shifts
- Transport/urban form
- Agriculture/primary industries
- Building/construction
- Energy
- Te Taiao - Biodiversity

The discussions are summarised under the themed workshop headings below.

#### Enabling system shifts

This workshop was facilitated by Pip Wheaton, Principal Advisor of the Wellington City Council.

Key themes covered included:

- **Equity:** Ensuring decision-making and actions take into account the different circumstances and allocates resources and opportunities needed to reach the outcome.
- **Te Tiriti:** Meeting obligations and the need to do things well for mana whenua partners, including providing for the inclusion of mātauranga māori.
- **Economic growth and wellbeing:** This included a big discussion about measuring growth and wellbeing and covered concepts such as donut economics and deliberate degrowth. The

desire to include these concepts, including the “four wellbeings”<sup>3</sup> and make the inherent tensions explicit in the RERP was expressed.

- **Compelling overarching narratives:** The mental models that the public are bringing into this should be examined. There are tensions between fatalistic attitude that can lead to reject action and others who question the severity of anticipated impact or urgency of action around climate change. The mainstream sits in the middle. Galvanising public support for the type of initiatives anticipated for this strategy will be important, where an element of collective story-telling can help shift the public will.

## Transport/urban form

The facilitator for this workshop was David Jones, City Development and Wellington Business Lead at Stellar Consulting.

Key themes discussed included:

- The opportunity to **build on an existing public transport network** to increase its utilisation.
- The key link to **urban form** and development was discussed. For the network to service more people, communities will need to live in more compact settings (denser housing). Well designed, dense mixed-use neighbourhoods also **limit the need to travel**.
- The good **potential for localised active mode uptake** in Wellington was discussed. Wellington has a compact, walkable central business district with plenty of mode choice already.
- The need for continued and expanded measures to **further encourage public transport use**, such as ticketing (e.g. One Ticket) was expressed.

The group identified opportunity areas that could be explored as part of the Strategy:

- Deliberate efforts to **integrate long-term strategic land use and transport planning**.
- Reallocation of road space to **bus lanes** to improve speed and reliability, especially introduction of bus lanes in all city centres.
- Development of a **cross-valley rail link**.
- Introduction of **free, good quality public transport**, including public transport on demand.
- Ramping up **frequency of all bus and train services**.
- Focus on strategic **town centre upgrades** that include urban regeneration and residential intensification.
- Investing in building a **safe, active regional transport network**.
- Introduction of **congestion charging and pricing** to reduce private vehicle transport and incentivise use of public transport and active modes.
- **Avoid greenfield growth** and focus on intensification for more compact communities.
- Promote and provide for the **move of freight off-road** onto rail and coastal shipping.

## Agriculture & primary industries

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<sup>3</sup> The promotion of social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities is central to the statutory purpose of local government (Local Government Act, 2002).

This workshop was facilitated by Kelly Forster, Programme Director, He Waka Eke Noa, Ministry of Primary Industries.

*Key themes covered were:*

- Working to **increase the knowledge and understanding** of farmers and growers around options and ways to reduce emissions. This could include information portals.
- Taking a wider lens at **developing a more resilient food system**. This may include diversification of products and increased local or micro- processing.
- Work to **increase processing capacity for logs** in the region, rather than exporting them from Wellington.
- Ensure the policy settings **enable and drive change** as debt and investment in the existing way of doing things are barriers to change.
- The need to **distinguish between long- and short-lived gases**, especially for agriculture, with methane being a short-lived gas.

*Three key areas of opportunity areas were identified for further exploration:*

- **Efficiency gains:** What can be done better, based on existing systems?
- **Technology:** How can new technology be fostered and adopted to provide farmers with better tools to reduce and manage emissions? There may be opportunities for a pilot project to introduce promising, new technologies. This could include technologies to reduce emissions, electrification of on-farm vehicles and equipment, and replacement of equipment such as planes and helicopters with spray and fertilizer application by drones.
- **Diversification:** Overcome the information barrier by supporting research and promulgation of information that will help farmers and growers **identify what will grow on their property in a changing climate**. An important extension of this would be to **set up a processing plant** in the region for climate-friendly new products. There could be many co-benefits to this, including food security, economic development, climate adaptation, as well as increased economic resilience and environmental performance.

## Building and Construction

This workshop was facilitated by Matthew Cutler-Welsh, Business Development Manager, New Zealand Green Building Council.

Key themes covered included:

- Wellington as a growing region has quite a bit of **activity in the housing space**. The Wellington Regional Healthy Homes Group is an example.
- Our region is well placed in terms of size and demand to **show leadership**. We have the ideal scale to implement change.
- At this stage, retrofitting homes is likely to have a more positive impact on emissions reduction than building new homes. Health outcomes and energy efficiency should be focus areas for retrofits.
- **Waste** was recognised as a big issue as sustainable waste management isn't a built-in priority from the start of the building process. A points-based programme is already in place for landfill diversion. Preferably, wastage is designed out in the first place, however limited suppliers contributes to a culture of over-ordering making it hard to do this. **Embodied carbon reporting** is likely to be introduced nationally, in the future, which would

drive a reduction in waste. Further, net carbon footprint to transport a kitset house can be more efficient than building it locally.

Opportunity areas identified for exploration were:

- The potential of introducing **Energy Performance Certificates** for buildings, like a housing warrant of fitness. New York City provides a case study where the city council decided that every building needed to have a certificate.
- Additionally, a **Homestar rating** could be required that is above the building code. Resource consent applicants can request higher standards, but it was considered difficult for councils to require this. Incentivising this this could also help, like the **sustainability and accessibility grant** from WCC.
- MBIE's proposed work on **Energy Performance Certificates** could provide an opportunity to invite regional pilots.
- Explore **establishment of a materials inventory/hub for developers and builders** to access e.g., zero-waste hubs. Coordination opportunity between local and central government to provide incentives for the industry to improve waste reduction methods.

## Energy

This workshop was facilitated by Victoria Parker, Pricing Manager, and Matiu Park, Head of Sustainability of Transpower.

Key themes explored were:

- The **energy sector is complex** and many people are seeking **access to specialist advice** when they need something, such as installing new EV chargers. Concerns that technical capability and the local network is insufficient to support EV and electrical transformation.
- There are lots of projects around the country wanting to **get renewables onto the grid**. This presents a prioritisation challenge.
- There is limited understanding around how to access the **GIDI fund**<sup>4</sup>.
- Acknowledgement that Wellington is a transport hub and the need to **utilise existing infrastructure**.
- MBIE are producing a **national energy strategy** that is due next year. Suggestion to connect with MBIE strategy at a local level.

Opportunity areas that could be explored:

- Explore investment in **council-owned generation**.
- **Spear-heading the ban of new gas connections** (at least residential), becoming the first region to do so.
- **Use collective regional engagement to influence at a national level** by outlining the regional energy issues.
- Work with EECA to **communicate GIDI funding opportunities to the region**.

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<sup>4</sup> Government Investment in Decarbonising Industry Fund administered by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA)



- **Data sharing** between Councils, EECA and electricity distribution businesses to help understand where the big users of non-renewable energy are in the region, and work with them in a targeted way.
- Talk to Ara Ake about exploring opportunities to **pilot a micro-grid** in a suburb or targeted community.

### Biodiversity – Taiao

The facilitator for this workshop was Josh McLennan-Deans, Senior Advisor Strategy, at Greater Wellington.

The opportunities for initiatives to explore were:

- **Integrate nature into urban planning.** Urban planning to densify residential population helps reduce emissions and natural solution can bring co-benefits like urban cooling, carbon sequestration, improved air and water quality, recreation and wellbeing through connection with nature.
- Biodiversity could be **integrated into rural landscapes**, as agriculture looks for diversification away from large-scale monocultures this could support and enhance increased sequestration and resilience of our natural capital. (Links to Agriculture)
- Creation of **less carbon intensive, more diverse income streams from land use**. For example, production of high value seed for cropping.
- **Increase funding for pest control of possums** and ungulates within forests, as forests can sequester carbon better.
- Reframe our **regional forests as green infrastructure**. Forests provide a multitude of co-benefits, most of which are also related to climate change: sequestration, adaptation, flood protection, air and water quality, biodiversity, recreation production of zero-carbon products etc. Forests could be considered infrastructure and attract funding as such.
- Use council-owned **planting as local offsets for emissions** from waste (rubbish dumps). This investment could be achieved by pre-purchase credits ahead to help get these projects off the ground.
- Establish **forest corridors to restore native biodiversity**, like linking Pūkaha to Zealandia. This would bring many co-benefits, including emissions mitigation.