

Whakatane District Council
Sustainability Strategy 2010-2015

"Throwing the small fish back"



FOREWORD

Forward

The objective of this strategy is to integrate sustainable decision-making and actions into the way the Council does business.

Councils have a significant role in promoting the “social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing” of their communities. As such they must ensure that decisions being made on behalf of the community, provide a balance between all four wellbeings, today and for the Whakatane community of the future.

Sustainability is not just a statutory responsibility for local government but is an issue that the community should have a more proactive approach to. It's about making Whakatane a better place, now and in the future.

We have taken the first step; by developing this Sustainability Strategy for Whakatane District Council.

The strategy will guide our efforts over the foreseeable future. The strategy will specifically:

- Help us to integrate and coordinate activities within our Council.
- Raise the profile and priority of sustainability issues among Councillors and our staff.
- Raise awareness of social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts in the community.
- Show Council leadership on sustainability issues, which will hopefully become a catalyst for community action within our district.

The strategy identifies a range of principles that will be incorporated into the Council's business. It will also support the development of action plans that will set future parameters to guide the functions of our Council.

Vision

VISION

*"Securing our community's future wellbeing,
through committed leadership today."*



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Page 10: Drinking Fountain, Photo taken by Cashy Ball

Page 12: Boys Fishing, Photo taken by Carol George

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Page 20: Cyclist on Warren Cole, Photo taken by Cashy Ball



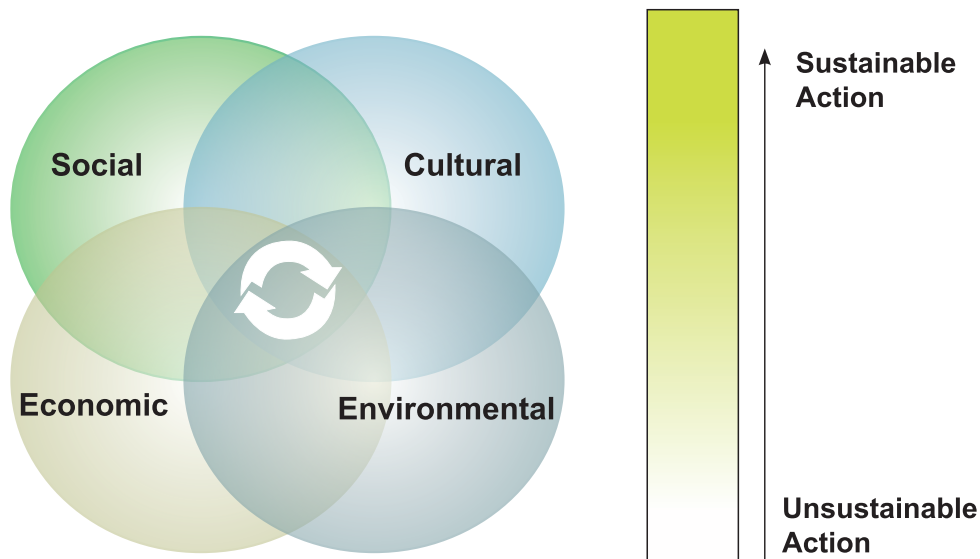
INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability has become a buzz word of the 21 century, with many different definitions and interpretations. The most widely quoted definition of sustainability and sustainable development is, that of the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations, 1987:

“sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

However sustainability is defined, it is about making decisions that consider the full impacts of any action or inaction, acting in a way that can be continued indefinitely.

To ensure that consequences are considered, there are four wellbeing areas that must be examined. These wellbeings are social, economic, environmental and cultural. To be sustainable, it is essential that any action achieves the maximum benefits in these wellbeing areas, while having no negative impacts in any area. A sustainable action is one that can be continued indefinitely over time, and if an action has a negative impact on any one of the wellbeings, then that action cannot be continued indefinitely.



The Council has developed a vision for what sustainability means for the Whakatane District Council. This strategy provides a response for the Council to sustainability.

Context for Whakatane

The Council operates within the environment of the Whakatane District. When considering the four wellbeings, there are a few key characteristics of this community that must be given particular consideration when making decisions for the future. These characteristics will be considered alongside other elements of the District to ensure sustainable decisions are made.

The Local Environment

The community and the economy in which it operates are all dependant on the environment in which we live. Without preserving the environment that sustains us, the community will suffer. This is particularly the case in Whakatane, where the clean green environment and associated lifestyle and climate attract people and business.



“The whakatane lifestyle and environment attracts many visitors and new residents to the District“

Climate change – According to information from the Ministry for the Environment, the Bay of Plenty Region is likely to become warmer with less rainfall in eastern areas. Scientists estimate the region's temperature could be up to 3°C warmer over the next 70-100 years. This compares to a temperature increase in New Zealand during last century of about 0.7°C. Flooding could become up to four times as frequent and severe by 2070, with damages rising accordingly. The cost of dealing with stock losses, replacing or repairing damaged roads, bridges, houses and stormwater drains, and dealing with increased soil erosion and loss of nutrients may be substantial. It is important that this change is incorporated into decision making to prepare for the future.

There are likely to be benefits and opportunities from a change in climate too. Farmers could benefit from changing crop growing conditions and faster growth of pasture (although this may lead to other complications). However, if the rate and magnitude of climate change is not slowed down, beneficial effects are expected to diminish and the adverse long-term risks are expected to increase.

Council's Impact - The Council recognises that the actions it takes in its daily operations and in the delivery of services to the community can have adverse impacts on the environment. This includes the emission of harmful chemicals and the compromise of the natural environment due to its actions and decisions. Fossil fuels in particular are a significant source of Green House Gases for the Council and a significant source of emissions for the District.

However, the Council also undertakes actions to minimise its impact on the environment through reducing consumption and minimising waste. Services and facilities that the Council provides also help to reduce the impact that the community has on the environment. Ultimately, through this strategy, the Council hopes to minimise its adverse impact on the environment and also encourage and enable the community to reduce its impact on the environment.

Natural Resources – The Council, as with most of society today, is dependant on natural resources. Where these resources come from other countries or are sourced from a non-renewable resource that is depleting globally, this can lead to volatility of supply and cost of these resources.

The volatility of supply is also impacted by world events such as conflict and world demand. Where these resources are sourced from overseas, the supplies of such resources are also susceptible to fluctuations in price due to currency exchange rate variations.

Resources that the Council uses also have an environmental impact from the extraction and transportation of these products, and can have major environmental impacts such as major oil leaks.

Reducing dependence on resources that are finite and are controlled by other people reduces the Council's vulnerability to price and supply fluctuation. This strategy aims to address the Council's dependence on resources that it is unable to control and are harmful to the environment, and utilise the renewable resources that are available to the Council locally.



“The Whakatane District has a diverse and rich natural environment with valuable resources”

Māori Context

In Whakatane, approximately 42% of our community is Māori and the Māori perspectives and in particular those relating to Kaitiakitanga are a fundamental strand feeding the philosophy and practice of sustainability. Kaitiakitanga can be translated as guardianship or stewardship and also as intergenerational responsibilities. This provides a framework based on obligation and duty of care. Central to this framework are Māori values, a strong sense of cultural identity, and the retention and use of Māori knowledge. The Māori-world view is built around a cosmology that links all parts of the earth and nature. People exist in a relationship with the non-human world and are connected by whakapapa or genealogy. As all interactions with our environment invoke these relationships this view sees environmental, social, economic and spiritual values as being interconnected and inter-dependent.

Kaitiakitanga provides an alternative to the more effects based approach to sustainable development promoted widely within the Western world. Kaitiakitanga measures progress through a number of culturally defined indicators which include improved Māori wellbeing and standards of health, increased human and social capacity, strength of cultural identity, sustainable management of natural

resources, and culturally appropriate strategies for achieving economic self-sufficiency for communities. There is increasing recognition of the need to engage with Māori and their cultural worldviews and to understand that these beliefs and values represent important aspects of sustainable development in New Zealand. This is reinforced by legislative requirements in the Local Government Act (2002), the Resource Management Act (1991) and other legislation which informs and impacts upon local government roles. This legislation reflects the importance of including local iwi and tangata whenua views, as well as Māori perspectives from within communities, as an integral part of resource management processes. This is reflected in the creation of the broader, more long-term partnerships that are being developed across the range of local government activities.

Whakatane Population Growth Projections

Over the past 15 years the overall population of the Whakatane District has been stable, with a general migration towards coastal urban areas. The population of the Whakatane District was 34,400 as at June 2006. Just over 17,000 people lived in the Whakatane urban area at this time, which represented slightly over one half of the District's population. Census New Zealand predict that over the next 20 years the District will continue to see slow growth, with an increase in the shift towards the urban, coastal areas of Whakatane.

The Council has adopted the Whakatane Integrated Urban Growth Strategy which is based on the population of the Whakatane urban area being 25,000 in 2050. The strategy aims to provide a framework to ensure that this growth is managed. If the urban population is to double over the next 40 years, this will require a growth rate of 0.92 percent per annum, significantly greater than the growth rate experienced by the area over the last 20 years of 0.6 percent per annum. Through the development of the Integrated Urban Growth Strategy, alongside this Sustainability Strategy, the Council is working to ensure that this growth occurs in a sustainable manner.



“Drinking fountains throughout Whakatane are safe, convenient, litter-free and save the communtiy money”

PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGY

This strategy has two key drivers. Firstly, to respond to community demand for a Council commitment to sustainability. Secondly, to ensure the Council is meeting its requirements under the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) to promote transparency, good governance and quality decision making in sustainable development.

LGA Section 14(1)(h) in taking a sustainable development approach, a local authority should take into account-

- (i) the social, economic, and cultural wellbeing of people and Communities*
- (ii) the need to maintain and enhance the quality of the environment; and*
- (iii) the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations*

There is a clear requirement in terms of central government expectation, supported by the LGA, for councils to establish some sort of sustainability strategy which is expected to meaningfully influence policy and decision making process. While many activities of the Council contribute towards a more sustainable organisation, there is a need to provide a consistent and coordinated approach to sustainability.

This Sustainability Strategy will form part of a high level strategic platform. It will ultimately influence most aspects of Council's strategic planning. This will also increase the level of certainty and transparency for the community.

This strategy aims to:

- Provide a consistent and applicable definition of sustainability for Whakatane District Council.
- Guide the Council's Long-term Council Community Plan including reviewing the Council's Asset Management Plans.
- Enable consistent decision making across the organisation
- Provide a strategic framework upon which the Council may build on future actions.
- Identify the need for specific actions that will promote sustainability within the Council.
- Present coordinated and coherent action plans that clearly identify actions, outputs and responsibilities.

Working towards more sustainable outcomes requires changing behaviour as much as it involves developing new processes. Creating behavioural change starts with values, education and awareness. It is about the way the Council does business.

Background

Background

This Sustainability Strategy will ensure the Council meets its obligations to the community by fulfilling its role as a local government authority. Local Government New Zealand lays out the role of local government as being to:

- provide directly or on behalf of central government, adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities for the community
- ensure that the services provided are managed efficiently and effectively
- exercise community leadership
- manage, protect, develop, restore, enhance and conserve the environment
- account for and manage assets for which it is responsible
- facilitate involvement of councillors, members of the public, users of facilities and services and council staff in the development, improvement and co-ordination of local government
- exercise its functions in a manner that is consistent with and actively promotes the principle of cultural diversity
- raise funds for local purposes by way of rates, charges and fees and investments, loans and grants
- keep the local community informed about its activities
- ensure that in the exercise of its regulatory functions it acts without bias
- act as a responsible employer

These responsibilities of local government dictate a way of operating that ensures a sustainable development approach is taken at all times.

The Council understands the importance of working alongside other organisations and central government bodies to build a better community. While at this stage the Council is focusing on becoming a sustainable organisation, it acknowledges the work of others towards sustainability. Central government has signalled a commitment to sustainability through the following acknowledgement:



Managing and conserving our natural resources today means that our children can enjoy them tomorrow.

The New Zealand government launched its Sustainable Development Programme of Action in January 2003 to ensure that sustainable development concepts underpin all government activity, and that government decisions ensure the well-being of current and future generations. They established a set of operating principles for policy development to take account of decisions by;

- Considering the long term implications of decisions
- Seeking innovative solutions that are mutually reinforcing, rather than accepting that a gain in one area will necessarily be achieved at the expense of another
- Using the best information available to support decision making
- Addressing the risks and uncertainty when making choices and taking a precautionary approach when making decisions that may cause serious or irreversible damage
- Working in partnership with local government and other sectors and encouraging transparent and participatory processes
- Considering the implications of decisions from a global perspective as well as a New Zealand perspective
- Decoupling economic growth from pressures on the environment
- Respecting environmental limits, protecting ecosystems and promoting the integrated management of land, water and living resources
- Working in partnership with Māori authorities to empower Māori in development decisions that affect them
- Respecting human rights, the rule of law and cultural diversity

Ministry for the Environment

The Council is committed to adopting the commitment by the government and to operating in a manner that enhances and enables these results. This strategy is designed to complement the work being undertaken by central government as well as work being undertaken on a local level by small organisations, groups and individuals. We are all working towards a common objective of making our country and our community a better place now and for the future.

SCOPE

What this strategy includes:

As an organisation the Council is responsible for providing leadership and stewardship over the community's assets and resources. This means that the Council is charged with operating in a prudent and efficient manner, managing and delivering products and services that benefit the community today and tomorrow.

The scope of this strategy is about creating a sustainable organisation. That means operating in a way that considers the four wellbeings and has maximum benefit whilst minimising negative effects. This will impact on the internal operations of the Council (how we operate) and the projects of the Council (what we do).

As part of this strategy, goals and a set of sustainability principles have been developed. The goals and principles will be applied for all future decisions, where projects have come about according to standard Council process. The goals and principles are designed to ensure a sustainable approach is taken when all decisions are being made. This includes consideration for the services the Council provides, the infrastructure the Council builds and the way the Council operates. The principles are designed to ensure that broad and varied options are being considered and to create a common ground for analysis of these options. The principles will be applied when options are being considered.

The goals and principles will be used to make decisions about all of the Council's operations, including such things as:

How we operate

- What we can do with our organisational solid waste to minimise it or improve disposal of it, benefiting the cost to the Council and the environment.
- Analysing the use of electricity or water by the Council (e.g. Civic Centre, Water Treatment Plant, halls), to ensure optimum efficiency, reducing cost and environmental impact.
- Ensuring recruitment is carried out to maximise benefit over the long-term for both employees and the organisation.

What services we provide

- Consideration for various services that may impact on the four wellbeings such as; organic waste collection, pensioner housing, publishing documents on CD, Murupara Service Centre, Council's website.

Infrastructure building

Deciding on the best options for capital works projects such as the Arts and Culture Centre, storm water systems, solid waste disposal options.

Sitting underneath this strategy will be a number of action plans. These will specify exact actions including timeframes, responsibility and measurement.

The Action Plans are a direct result of the sustainability project and recommend action that may not otherwise be considered. For example improving the way the Council heats the civic centre. The principles from the strategy will also be applied to the Action Plans.

What this strategy does not include:

At this stage the strategy does not aim to create a sustainable district and look at how the Council can help achieve this alongside other organisations by working together. While that would be something to aim for in the future, it is not something that the Council currently has the resources to achieve. Hopefully, through creating a Sustainable Organisation, the Council can begin to influence the community and facilitate a more sustainable community, while developing internal learning and knowledge to be able to provide better leadership in the future.



“Waste water is processed by the councils treatment plants and pumped back to homes as fresh water, leaving a tap running is literally water and money down the drain.”

STRATEGIC GOALS

Strategic goals for the Whakatane District Council are designed to ensure that the projects, operations and actions of the Council are all focussed on a common objective that complements other actions and help to contribute towards a sustainable organisation and District. These goals are a direction by which to consider all decisions of the Council and their use will ensure that the actions of the Council could be continued on an ongoing basis without detrimental effects on any of the four wellbeings.

Goals:

Consider Whakatane District Council as an ecosystem and act accordingly:

"What comes in, how we use it, what we make and deliver, then discard."



We will:

- a. Consider the whole value of what we consume;
- b. Make best use of resources;
- c. Optimise productivity whilst minimising waste.

Through education and raising awareness to develop a social conscience (internal and external).

These goals work to ensure that the Council is operating sustainably and consistently. Therefore the goals help to fulfil the strategy objectives to provide a commitment to the community and fulfil requirements to act sustainably.

PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure that the sustainable goals of the Council are being met, the following principles have been developed. These principles are designed to provide specific, meaningful guidance for decision-making, while being broad enough to be considered across the full range of Council projects and operations.

These principles must be considered prior to all Council decisions. Evidence is required to show that the principles have been considered in reaching a decision. While the Principles will not determine a specific response, they will ensure that consideration has been given to the sustainability of any decision. For future Council Agenda Reports, a template will be developed to ensure that consideration for the principles is included within Council reports where decisions are required.

The use of these principles will provide consistency and assurance to the Council and the community that the full range of options are being considered and that the best decision for the Whakatane District is being made.

Action Plans

Principles:

Consider the whole of life impacts on the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeings;

Consider the whole value of what we consume:

- » What are the inputs and where do they come from?
- » What are the alternatives?
- » What is the residual value?

Make best use of resources:

- » Use resources to enable and encourage a sustainable community.
- » Operate in an efficient and effective manner.
- » Acknowledge and foster the value of our people and resources.

Optimise productivity whilst minimising waste:

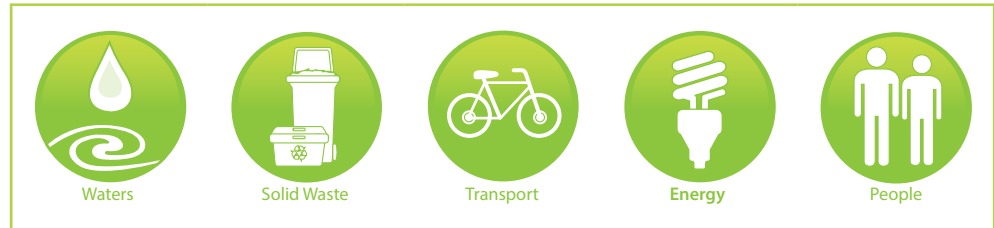
- » Fit for purpose.
- » Future proofing.
- » Reduce; reuse; recycle

Education and raising awareness

- » Consultation and communication

ACTION PLANS

While the principles will guide future decision making at the Council, it is also necessary to ensure that Council's current activities are operating in a manner that applies these principles. The Council has developed five action plan areas to help imbed sustainability into the organisation and ensure that the Council operates in a manner that shows leadership and best practise to the community. The following areas have been selected as covering a broad range of Council activities and operations:



This list may be amended over time to respond to the “living” nature of these action plans.

The action plans are designed to ensure that the Council is operating in a sustainable manner. The focus of the action plans start on internal operations and a staged approach is taken, with actions getting progressively more wide spread. The action plans are designed to cover areas that may not be considered through future decision making as they are addressing issues of current operations.

The action plans are “living” documents and will be constantly referenced and added to as actions evolve. The action plans will be reviewed every year to monitor progress towards the targets. Every three years a full review will take place to consider timeframes, responsibilities and prioritisation.

MEASURING SUCCESS

An annual review of the decision making process undertaken across the organisation will determine the success of this strategy. As the strategy is intended to be utilised across the organisation, internal promotion and ongoing communication will be utilised to ensure sustainability is imbedded into the way we do business.

The development of action plans will ensure the principles of this strategy are incorporated across the organisation. These action plans will include specific reporting requirements and measurement of success.

The key elements of governance will be achieved by:

- An annual progress report, for the five year duration of the strategy, to be made to the Council.
 - » The annual report will address progress made towards a sustainable organisation through decisions and actions taken by the Council.
 - » Improvements through implementing the measures in the action plans will also be reported through the Council to the community.
- A review of the strategy to be completed by 30 June 2015.

Because of the broad nature of this strategy and the impact it has across all of the Council's operations and decision making, it is appropriate that this strategy should be governed at the highest level. The following roles will be performed:

- Strategy Owner: The Whakatane District Council.
- Strategy Implementation: The Chief Executive of the Whakatane District Council.
- Specific initiatives and actions: Actions assigned to Director Roles within the Whakatane District Council.

Summary

SUMMARY

This Sustainability Strategy has been developed in response to the Council's recognition that its decisions should ensure the wellbeing of current and future generations. The Council has a responsibility to the community to ensure that it is operating in a manner that is most beneficial to the community, while having no detrimental impact on the social, economic, environmental or cultural wellbeings of the community today or tomorrow.

Working towards a sustainable organisation will require a change in behaviour and decision making at all levels of the organisation. This strategy is designed to provide a consistent and coordinated approach to decision making that will be used by officers, management and Councillors when considering options.

The application of the vision, goals and principles in this strategy will guide all future decisions at the Council, while the action plans that will be developed will lead to improvements in current Council operations.

This document represents to staff and to the community a commitment to operating in a sustainable manner.

The governance of this Sustainability Strategy and the action plans arising from it reach across all areas of Council. These cover the Council's internal resources of energy, waters, transport, solid waste and people. They span the array of Council responsibilities, including internal leadership, provision of services and infrastructure, regulation in the community and collaboration with other organisations.



"The Warren Cole Walk & Cycleway promotes sustainable transport, encourages social activities, incorporates cultural carvings and uses low energy LED lighting."