

Report No.	19-173
Decision Required	

HORIZONS ONE PLAN - PLAN CHANGE PROGRESS UPDATE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To provide Council with an update on the progress of plan changes being advanced to iterate the Horizons One Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 19-173.

3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. There is no impact on existing budgets as a result of this report.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. The Council has carried out community engagement on plan changes in alignment with the requirements of **Schedule 1 of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)**. There has been engagement with iwi, stakeholder groups and the wider community around the difficulties in implementing the One Plan's nutrient management provisions and how we might resolve them.

5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. Freshwater management issues attract public interest, and there is a lack of consensus around solutions or approaches. A loss of public or ministerial confidence in Horizons' ability to make timely or appropriate decisions would have significant ramifications.
- 5.2. The Council has continued to advance this work to progress towards resolution for our immediate nutrient management implementation issues, while being cognisant of the Government's broader freshwater proposals, likely direction and potential impact.

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. The Council has begun the process of evolution of the One Plan to ensure that it maintains currency with Government policy, as well as accounting for progress in environmental management and policy. There were also some immediate issues that needed to be addressed in relation to the regulation of nutrient management for intensive farming operations arising from the declaration decisions of the Environment Court.
- 6.2. The Council has completed Plan Change 1, an administrative change that did not require a RMA schedule 1 process to be undertaken. This plan change incorporated a number of administrative adjustments and interim steps required by the **National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM)**.
- 6.3. Plan change 2, which focused on addressing nutrient management issues for existing intensive land uses was notified on 22 July 2019. This plan change was prepared with the awareness of Government's intention to propose changes to management of freshwater,

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while also recognising the Minister for the Environment's strong interest in the Council advancing work to resolve the nutrient management issues highlighted by the declaratory proceedings.

- 6.4. An outline of further proposed plan change work was provided to the previous Council. This is anticipated to require review once the final shape of the Essential Freshwater package proposed by Government is known.
- 6.5. The Council is also required to make changes to the One Plan to align with the National Planning Standards that were made operative earlier this year. The Council is also required to undertake a review of each section of the Plan at least once in a ten year period.

7. DISCUSSION

Plan Change 2

- 7.1. The Plan Change 2 work programme continues to advance. Submissions on the plan change closed on 21 October 2019. A total of 84 submissions were received, with good engagement across the community (individual farmers and growers, community and stakeholder groups, iwi, and non-government organisations).
- 7.2. The Council is preparing a summary of submissions for release in early November, with the submissions process to be complete by the end of the year. Further research is being commissioned to support the plan change evidence requirements, along with seeking expert opinions to respond to the issues raised in submissions. Work is also underway on drawing together information to develop the Council's report to the hearing panel on the submissions.
- 7.3. Work has been completed to consider Plan Change 2 in light of the Government's Essential Freshwater proposals. Given the timing of the proposals, and the further work required to refine these before they are able to be promulgated, it is expected that the Plan Change will be advanced to the decisions stage prior to the Essential Freshwater proposals being completed.

Plan Change 3

- 7.4. The Council has continued preparatory work to develop proposals to resolve the remaining nutrient management issues not captured in Plan Change 2 (primarily new intensification activities where these exceed the table limits, and intensive activities that are looking to move within or across catchments and support environmental improvement).
- 7.5. The Council has also looked to advance the science and technical work to further implement the NPSFM, and has begun work on establishing limits and targets for values and attributes common to both the One Plan and the current NPSFM.
- 7.6. Due to the uncertainty surrounding the final shape of the Essential Freshwater package, officers have delayed the presentation of proposals to Council that were due to be presented in November for early-stage discussion. The proposals contained in the Essential Freshwater package do not currently offer a solution to address the nutrient management implementation issues faced by Council, but would serve to further constrain options for land owners if they were to be promulgated as proposed.

Plan Change 4

- 7.7. The Council has undertaken an initial scoping exercise of the work required to implement the National Planning Standards, as well as address minor administrative fixes that have been identified through the implementation of the plan over the last five years.
- 7.8. Regional Councils are required to implement the National Planning Standards within three years, including the development of an e-plan. We anticipate that we will be able to meet the requirements for implementation to reformat the plan and adopt standard definitions

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within the timeframe, with the majority of this development work scheduled to be completed in 2020.

- 7.9. However, the development of an e-plan is unlikely to be achievable in this timeframe due to the technical development required, the coordination and integration with territorial local authorities within the region, and the technical infrastructure required to be in place to support the plan. The Ministry for the Environment signalled that support would be available for the e-plan work but this has not yet eventuated.

Sectional review of the One Plan

- 7.10. Review and evaluation work is scheduled to begin before the end of the year, with an initial focus on completing evaluation of both the regional policy statement and regional plan components relating to land, biodiversity, climate change, natural hazards, coast and water (except for water quality) issues. The results from these evaluations will form the basis for a future plan review, and ensure we meet our obligations for completing a review of each part of the plan at least once in a 10 year period.
- 7.11. A second and third tranche of evaluation work is planned to be completed in further years, with all review and evaluation issues completed prior to 2024. The ability to resource these areas of work will be dependent on the Government's policy changes in the intervening period.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1. Council officers will continue to follow the Schedule 1 process for plan change 2, with a view to the hearings process being conducted in February-March 2020. Given that submissions have closed, we will also prepare a further update from the Chair on progress of Plan Change 2 to the Minister for the Environment. We will continue to maintain a watching brief on the Essential Freshwater package, and proposed RMA changes, and update Council on these matters in due course.

9. SIGNIFICANCE

- 9.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance and Engagement.

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ANNEXES

There are no attachments for this report.