

30 April 2018

## GREATER WELLINGTON REGIONAL COUNCIL LONG TERM PLAN (GWRC LTP) 2018-2028

OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate and Health Council is submitting in response to Greater Wellington Regional Council's Long Term Plan 2018-2028 public consultation.

### Our 5 main messages are:

1. Apply WREMO's #1 resilience priority – **risk reduction**
2. Plan for **net zero regional transport emissions before 2028**
3. Ensure other emission sources are on track for net zero in 2030s
4. Adopt the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as GWRC's framework**<sup>1</sup> for long-term planning (including helping **close the growing wealth gap** in this region)
5. Urgently update GWRC's climate strategy:
  - set strong targets towards **2030s net zero** regional economy
  - monitor international aviation and shipping emissions risk
  - include realistic emissions costs in all GWRC analysis

### Climate context for Wellington's extraordinary "thriving, connected and resilient" region:

- As well as limiting global warming well below 2°C<sup>2</sup>, NZ has also committed to: "*pursue efforts to limit the (global average) temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change*".
- NZ has a special responsibility to the Pacific as citizens, family and neighbours, where warming beyond 1.5°C will render homelands uninhabitable.
- Limiting warming to 1.5°C currently requires global zero net emissions "*well before 2040*"<sup>3</sup> – and developed countries like NZ are expected to reduce emissions sooner.
- NZ has signed up to meeting the 17 interlinked UN Sustainable Development Goals (Fig. 1). The vision is sustainable development for better wellbeing and equity. Each goal has a set of targets; needing central and local government, institutional, community and business action.
- It's time for GWRC to identify actions this region can take (including in partnership with others) and make sustainable development the focus of this long term plan.

### What this means for GWRC's key priorities and programmes:

1. **Regional Resilience**
  - The greatest challenge this region faces is global climate change. As per WREMO's new risk approach, **risk reduction** is top priority. That means mitigation (rapid reduction of climate-

damaging emissions) is top priority for resilience. Rising climate adaptation costs (including infrastructure replacement and insurance) adds urgency to mitigation investment.

- Currently, the social cost of carbon is conservatively predicted to be NZ\$88 per tonne by 2020 rising to NZ\$176 by 2050<sup>4</sup>, so these costs must be included in all GWRC analysis.

## 2. Transport

Beyond better buses, hubs, shelters, information and integrated ticketing, here are the step-changes our region really requires now:

- complete a **comprehensive network of safe, attractive pedestrian and cycling routes for all ages and abilities** across our region by 2020 (separate from motorised traffic where possible, lower vehicle speed limits and traffic calming measures where it is not).
- **start work this year on all-electric light rail from trains to planes** along the people-dense route connecting the railway station, hospital, zoo, Kilbirnie, Miramar and airport.
- convert **all buses to electric** as soon as possible
- work with other councils on **travel demand measures** (with more equitable access) to discourage single-occupant car-driving, reduce congestion, unhealthy air pollution and climate-hostile GHG emissions.
- encourage measures to **reduce overall transport needs** by increasing urban densification and brown-field rather than green-field new housing developments.
- institute region-wide **electric car-share vehicles for hire as public good transport** for affordable hourly hire in 2018 (hundreds of car-share vehicles replace thousands of private cars – so our region’s scarce land houses more people, not cars), and encourage electric private motor vehicles for private trips
- complete the **electrification of all the heavy rail links to Wellington** including the North Island Main trunk line
- **facilitate coastal shipping** to move freight and **electrify the freight truck fleet**

We note that:

- Around half of NZ adults do not get the weekly physical exercise needed for good health<sup>5</sup>
- More public transport and car share use can also increase physical activity & health
- Active and public transport investment (including car share) actively decongests our roads
- E-bikes are revolutionary in our region, flattening hills and conquering the wind
- Transport design can minimise distances, encouraging urban development in resilient areas
- Equity of transport access for all ages, abilities and socioeconomic situations, is essential.

OraTaiao also recommends that GWRC:

- sets a bold target of 80% of the region’s residents by 2020 (spread across all ages, genders & abilities) can get their healthy physical activity from more active transport choices.
- prioritise safe, healthy active transport and public transport in areas with high Māori and Pacific populations, which are designed in partnership with these communities.
- use focus groups and structured individual interviews, to identify both barriers and incentives for greater active transport, public transport and car share uptake (covering diverse socioeconomic situations, culture, locations, household structure, age, stage, gender, responsibilities/activities, and physical abilities/disabilities).

## 3. Water Supply

Safe drinking water is essential for human health. Given the high electricity demands from pumping water, could GWRC explore diversified supplies?

## 4. Freshwater Quality and Biodiversity

We support GWRC's work, but note that our changing climate is a huge threat to biodiversity. Until our region's emissions are net zero, arguably humans are our region's most dangerous predator.

## **5. Economic Development**

All development must be within the context of a net zero regional economy in 2030s. Given global pressure to reduce emissions from all sources, it would be prudent to include monitoring emissions from international aviation and shipping, plus consumption, in GWRC's Greenhouse Gas Inventory.

### **What this means for GWRC's 3 choices:**

#### **1. Long-term solution for Wairarapa rail line and Capital Connection**

We recommend that GRWC:

- pushes for total electrification of the regional rail lines
- ensures if new trains must be dual electro-diesel short-term, they can be 100% electric later
- invests in excellent train services for our net zero future.

#### **2. Improving capability of Wellington's Regional Emergency Management Office**

- WREMO's role will grow in importance as our climate continues to change over the next few decades (even if global emissions plunged to zero tomorrow, changes are in the pipeline)
- As well as improving WREMO capability, GWRC must ensure WREMO focuses on increasing climate impacts (such as more extreme storms more often, flooding, heat waves, rising seas, changing disease patterns, economic and international instability) as well as earthquake risk.
- OraTaiao has found that in NZ, as well as overseas, people who are already vulnerable, are hit first and worst by climate changes. Community strengthening must be a regional priority – as WREMO states, strong connected communities are the best emergency response.
- WREMO can learn from other regions (such as North Taranaki) to develop shared emergency management plans – especially as marae are often used as community hubs during natural disasters, and iwi sometimes have their own emergency management plans. As well as Tiriti partnership, WREMO can also partner with other community groups to work with our region's increasingly diverse population.

#### **3. Continuing to lead Wairarapa water storage options investigation**

We recommend that GWRC:

- prioritises water for human consumption
- avoids subsidising continuation or expansion of commercial activities that may be less viable with our changing climate, or worse, are destabilising our climate at considerable cost to our region. Dairy intensification in NZ (including in the Wairarapa) has both damaged our climate – and damaged the taonga of our freshwater rivers to crisis point.

Thank you for the opportunity for OraTaiao to make this written submission on GWRC's 2018-2028 Long Term Plan. We also wish to present our ideas and speak with the Council in support of this submission.

Yours sincerely

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Figure 1 UN Sustainable Development Goals

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#### About OraTaiao:

- [OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate and Health Council](#) calls for urgent and fair climate action – for real health gains right now, and to safeguard a fair healthy future for NZers.
- OraTaiao is a not-for-profit, non-partisan, incorporated health professional society, with a growing 600-strong membership and support base of doctors, nurses, midwives, students and academics (including all NZ's leading international climate health experts).
- We are well supported by the wider NZ health sector (see NZ health professionals' [Call for Action on Climate Change and Health](#)), and by the global climate health movement (including founding organisational member of the [Global Climate and Health Alliance](#)).

## References

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Adoption of the Paris agreement (Conference of Parties 21), 2015. <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Walsh B, Ciais P, Janssens IA, Peñuelas J, et al. Pathways for balancing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and sinks. Nat Commun. 2017;8:14856. <https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms14856>. See also <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/13042017/paris-climate-agreement-greenhouse-gas-emissions-global-warming>

<sup>4</sup> Mid-range social costs of carbon in 2017 dollars. Source: Chapman R, Preval N, Howden-Chapman P. How economic analysis can contribute to understanding the links between housing and health. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2017;14(9).pii:E996. <http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/14/9/996/htm> 2. Methods.

<sup>5</sup> New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine. NZCPHM Policy Statement on Physical Activity. Wellington: NZCPHM, 2014. [https://www.nzcp hm.org.nz/media/81766/2014\\_11\\_28\\_physical\\_activity\\_and\\_health\\_policy\\_statement.pdf](https://www.nzcp hm.org.nz/media/81766/2014_11_28_physical_activity_and_health_policy_statement.pdf)