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**Committee** Environment Committee  
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## **Pauatahanui Inlet programme update**

### **1. Purpose**

To inform the Committee of progress with the Pauatahanui Inlet programme over the last twelve months and to suggest the next steps.

### **2. Significance of the decision**

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

### **3. Background**

The Pauatahanui Inlet programme is a collaboration between Porirua City Council and Greater Wellington in close association with the Pauatahanui Inlet Community Trust. The broad objective of the programme is to implement the *Pauatahanui Inlet Action Plan*.

The *Pauatahanui Inlet Action Plan* sets out a vision for the Pauatahanui Inlet and its catchment, and describes a range of actions to address the environmental issues relating to this important area. The Pauatahanui Inlet Community Trust (PICT) was formed in 2002 to represent the local community in the implementation of the Action Plan. The Trust, Greater Wellington, and the Porirua City Council work together to make the plan a reality, along with a number of other agencies with responsibilities in the catchment. Projects undertaken since that time have included:

- Commissioning of ecological restoration plans for the non-rural parts of the catchment;
- Convening of a two-day “Science workshop” to bring together experts in estuarine and catchment management from around New Zealand;

- Commissioning an investigation into sedimentation in the Inlet, along with a related project looking at land use history and change in the catchment over the last 150 years (see report 05.235);
- Assisting PICT with its “Planting with a Purpose” project aimed at landowners in the catchment.

The last twelve months have focussed on:

- The installation of interpretative signs describing the natural and human history at four locations around the Inlet. These signs also contain the relevant boating and fishing regulations. These signs are the first part of a project that will see interpretative signs around the Inlet. The second series of signs will be completed as part of the Motukaraka Point to Pauatahanui Village walkway currently under construction.
- Part funding, and providing input into, the “Vegetation Frameworks” project (see below).
- Ensuring integration with Porirua City Council’s proposed Porirua Harbour project. (Matt Trlin from Porirua City Council will provide an overview of this programme and its relationship to the Pauatahanui Project at the meeting).

#### **4. “Vegetation Frameworks” project**

The sedimentation study completed in 2005 highlighted that one of the most significant influences on the health of the Inlet is the condition of the catchment. Vegetation in key areas of the catchment is very important for the water quality of the streams flowing into the Inlet. It can protect soils that are vulnerable to erosion, shelter and bind the soil, stabilise stream banks, filter overland flow of water, keep in-stream water cool and help reduce peak flood flows. With the exception of Battle Hill Farm Forest Park and a small number of public reserves, the majority of the catchment is in private ownership and landowners are the key to improving the quality of the water entering the Inlet.

As part of developing an overall restoration plan for the rural part of the Pauatahanui Inlet catchment, Greater Wellington and Porirua City Council are jointly funding a one year project, along with the Ministry for the Environment’s Sustainable Land Management Fund.

The project has involved developing a vision and support for planting and vegetation management in the Waikanae and Pauatahanui Inlet catchments. It aims to provide ongoing benefits to individual landowners and the whole community.

#### **5. Project components**

Peter Handford and Associates are contracted to deliver the project, which will be completed in August 2006. By then, the following will have been completed in relation to both catchments:

- A review of existing information about the catchments including current vegetation, soil and water values, and management issues;
- Contact with a sample of landowners with significant landholdings to obtain their views on soil and water issues and to begin the identification of opportunities for enhancing vegetation management;
- Wider contact with all landowners, including a mail out of information, the holding of “drop-in” meetings and follow up mail outs;
- Completion of a broad-scale vegetation framework presented in graphical form based on issues and opportunities put forward by landowners. The framework also indicates where the community has identified the need for more vegetation;
- Scoping of what is needed to implement the framework, including the provision of a network of advice and support, sources of information and advice, co-ordinated pest control, access to plants and funding;
- Completion of three property plans (including one sub-catchment group as a means of co-ordinating the needs of lifestyle block owners) to serve as a demonstration of what can be achieved;
- Production of a series of information sheets to address issues not covered by other agency publications. An example is provided in Attachment One.
- Establishment of a website through which landowners can access information specific to their needs.

## **6. Continuity of the project**

The project has been guided by a steering group consisting of representatives of Greater Wellington (Environment Management, Catchment Management and Water Supply, Parks and Forests Divisions) Kapiti Coast District Council, Porirua City Council and the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust.

The steering group has recognised the importance of having a single point of contact for the transfer of skills and advice from the management agencies to landowners. Conversely, such an approach has allowed the management agencies to gain a better understanding of the catchment management issues of concern to landowners.

As the project offers exciting possibilities of working with private landowners on an on-going basis, the steering group has recommended that a permanent co-ordinator be appointed to ensure that the transition from the current externally supported initiative to a community driven project is a seamless one. The role of a permanent co-ordinator would be to ensure ongoing implementation of the action plan, particularly in relation to private landowners, and is likely to involve the following:

- Being the first point of contact for landowners seeking catchment management and biodiversity advice;
- Establishing further sub-catchment groups of landowners to work on issues of mutual concern;
- Coordinating property plans for large land holdings;
- Producing further information sheets on catchment management issues;
- Assisting landowners, or groups of landowners, to access external funding sources such as Sustainable Land Management Fund, Biodiversity Condition Fund etc;
- Organising special interest meetings or field days.

Discussions are underway with Porirua City Council, the NZ Landcare Trust and PICT to explore funding possibilities for a part-time permanent co-ordinator for the Pauatahanui catchment.

## 7. Communication

Opportunities are taken to highlight milestones in the Pauatahanui programme wherever possible. Once it is confirmed that the “Vegetation Frameworks” project will graduate from its present “pilot” status to a more permanent arrangement, there will be a communication plan developed to make the community aware of its existence.

## 8. Recommendations

*It is recommended that the Committee:*

1. **Receive the report; and**
2. **Note the contents.**

Report prepared by:

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**Attachment 1: Brochure for landowners explaining the “Vegetation Frameworks” project**  
**Attachment 2: Sample draft information sheet for landowners**