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Committee: Environment Committee
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Planning Institute Conference: 5-7 May 2004

Tami Woods and myself represented Greater Wellington at the annual Planning Institute Conference, held in the Invercargill, on 5-7 May 2004.

The conference brought together resource management planning practitioners and was an opportunity to interact with others in this field and learn first hand about different planning perspectives and experiences.

On the first day of the conference I attended an Elected Representative Interest Group. This session was facilitated by Judge Smith and the group discussed the impacts of the Resource Management Amendment Act 2003, new mechanisms such as limited notification and changes to the permitted baseline test.

The first day concluded with two keynote speeches. Dr Michael Tobias' address looked at New Zealand's focus on the nation's "clean green" profile and suggested that this is a mere myth compared with other nations commitment. He explored areas such as biodiversity, conservation, energy, sustainability, human quality of life, legal protection of the environment and animal rights.

The second keynote speech was from Rod Oram. He discussed New Zealander's contribution towards Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in real hour's works and showed that New Zealand featured alongside many second and third world countries. In addition, New Zealand sells second world exports to buy a first world standard of living. He noted that addressing this disparity will get harder as our population ages. He advocated that New Zealand can't just look to double the volume of our exports to meet economic demand but that we have to double our export value. He outlined a number of instances where organisations have used their kiwi ingenuity to do just that, and doubled export value. He concluded his address by discussing whose role it is to drive the change and that government could only create the policy framework. The New Zealand public are the ones that needed to deliver economic transformation.

On the second day of the conference I attended Southland Water's Mobile Workshop. The field trip explored issues surrounding management of water in Southland. We visited the Waituna Catchment and Lagoon, New River Estuary and Bluff Harbour/Awarua Bay. The discussion about water quality impacts on the Waituna

Lagoon and the change to landuse required to reverse trends (if possible), was interesting.

On the last day of the conference I attended three workshops. The “Community Initiatives” workshop looked at alternatives to achieving positive environmental outcomes through non-regulatory approaches. The Guardians of Fiordland's Fisheries and Marine Environment was used as an example of a dedicated group of volunteers that became aware of problems relating to fishing and the environment within the fiords. They set about over an eight year period to capture the wealth of local knowledge and combined that with scientific research to produce the Fiordland Marine Conservation Strategy. The workshop explained how they went about that project, benefits, lessons that were learnt, and revealed how a community had worked together to obtain an outcome which will be enduring.

The workshop on “Long Term Council Community Plans (LTCCP)” discussed different local authority approaches to LTCCPs. John Hutchings from Local Government New Zealand discussed how not only are there new challenges for Local Government in preparing LTCCP’s, but local authorities now have a particular onus to re-examine each planning and regulatory instrument available to them and decide how these can be used to achieve community outcomes. He discussed how many of the statues defining local governments regulatory and planning processes are under reform and a key question will be whether the reforms will be crafted in a way that will assist local authorities to achieve the outcomes identified by their communities.

Stephen Christensen of Anderson Loyd Caudwell facilitated the workshop on “Current Resource Management Issues”. He discussed water allocation and his organisation’s involvement in Project Aqua. The issue of managing risk through the resource consents process and the continuing dilemma of how to manage activities with low probability but high potential impact without a planning framework to support adaptive management. He also covered the issue of environmental compensation and how interest in this area was developing both nationally and internationally.

In summary, the conference was enjoyable but the weather wasn’t (rain, hail, sleet and very cold temperatures). Tami Woods has copies of most of the conference papers if Councillors are interested in receiving copies. She is also chasing up a copy of the address presented by Rod Oram, which I recommend to other Councillors.

Recommendations

*It is recommended that the Committee **receive** the report*

Report prepared by:

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