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Proposed Change 1 to the Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington Region

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Yes I wish to be heard in support of my submission at a hearing.

Disclosures: I could gain an advantage in trade competition through this submission: Yes No

The following is the submission I wish to make on the proposed change to the Regional Policy Statement.

E-Signature:

In preparing this submission the relevant text from the proposed plan change is shown in **black**.

Observations are shown in **red**.

The decision that requested is shown in **green**.

Take adaptation action to increase the resilience of our communities, the natural and built environment to prepare for the changes that are already occurring and those that are coming down the line. Critical to this is the need to protect **and restore** natural ecosystems so they can continue to provide the important services that ensure clean water and air, support indigenous biodiversity and ultimately, people.

As a resident of Whitemans Valley, we are nervous of the inclusion of 'restore' within this text. Although we support the restoration of ecosystems and wetlands in principal, the recent GWRC vs Adams court case has highlighted

the risk that GW council officers will use this statement to support the restoration of ecosystems on an adhoc basis without proper engagement* with affected landowners and communities, significantly affecting landowners and their mental health and established property rights.

My interpretation of proper engagement is this: Any land considered worthy of restoration is clearly mapped and understood and all affected landowners are made aware that their land is considered ‘an ecosystem worthy of restoration’ so they can plan for the implications of this, and be aware of any subsequent restrictions and be compensated for loss of land and livelihood. In addition to mapping, GW should set out a clear pathway for restoration so that everyone is able to see what is meant by ‘restoration’ within the context of the mapped areas and can be supportive of it.

Decision requested – remove the words **and restore** from this clause until such time as thorough engagement has occurred with all affected communities and a pathway to restoration has been published by Greater Wellington.

Policy 18: Protecting and restoring aquatic ecological function health of water bodies – regional plans

(a) there is no further loss of extent of natural inland wetlands and coastal wetlands, their values are protected, **and their restoration is promoted.**

Again, as per above, the recent GWRC vs Adams case has highlighted the fact that GWRC can and has, mis-interpreted what is considered an ‘natural inland wetland’, and have not considered the geomorphological and geological history of the area. Thus, until all natural inland wetlands and coastal wetlands are robustly mapped and understood and affected landowners advised, we do not support any change to this policy as the implications of the change are unknown /unpredictable for potentially affected communities. Landowners would need compensation for losses of investment and livelihood.

Decision requested – delete the phrase “and their restoration is promoted”.

Policy 47: Managing effects on indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values

(b) providing **adequate buffering** around areas of significant indigenous ecosystems and habitats from other land uses

As per above, until 'indigenous ecosystems' and 'habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values' are mapped and understood and affected landowners advised, we can not support the inclusion of 'adequate buffering' as it is unclear who will be affected by this and what the implication of 'buffering' is. The term adequate is also qualitative and meaningless – actual distances need to be defined using appropriate data. Landowners would need compensation for losses of investment and livelihood on their land.

Decision requested – remove the phrase 'adequate buffering', until such time as areas requiring buffering are mapped and landowners affected by buffering are engaged with.

Insert a new definition of nature-based solutions as follows: **Nature-based solutions**

Examples include:

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions (climate change mitigation):

- planting forests to sequester carbon
- **protecting peatland to retain carbon stores**

As a resident who would be affected by this change we do not support this statement in absence of engagement to explain what is meant by 'protecting peatlands'. For example, is GW talking about limiting earthworks or protecting the peatlands with a designation? The options are unknown and for this reason we do not support this statement at this time. Internationally recognised science-based methods need to be considered. Landowners would need compensation for losses of investment and livelihood on their land.

Decision requested – remove ‘protecting peatlands to retain carbon stores’ until the peatlands in question are mapped and understood, landowners engaged with/advised and further explanation about what is meant by ‘protection’.

Restoration The active intervention and management of modified or degraded habitats, ecosystems, landforms and landscapes in order to reinstate indigenous natural character, ecological and physical processes, and cultural and visual qualities. The aim of restoration actions is to return the environment, either wholly or in part, to a desired former state, including reinstating the supporting ecological processes.

As stated above, although we are supportive of restoration in principal, it is difficult to trust GWRC to manage, implement or oversee a restoration project given the lack of adequate engagement affected communities are likely to experience from GW, and the previous blatant disregard for people’s mental health and basic human rights. For example, GW previously (incorrectly) considered some areas of Whitemans Valley to be considered an ‘inland wetland’ and prosecuted innocent landowners who where unaware of this determination because the area was not mapped (or otherwise discoverable) as an inland wetland. In addition, the Court found that actually GW’s determination was incorrect. This case has resulted in a large community / region who has lost trust in GW.

Decision requested – insert text to require GWRC to adequately map out areas requiring restoration and engage with the affected community.

End of submission