



**Monitoring the
Grey District Plan**

Report on Findings

March 2010

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1 Executive Summary

The Resource Management Act requires the Council to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of policies, rules and other methods in its District Plan and at intervals of not more than five years make available its findings to the public.

The findings from the monitoring programme that has been undertaken inform staff, the community and decision-makers about:

- The consequences of implementing the current provisions of the District Plan
- Changes in the environment
- The need for possible changes and improvements to the Plan.

Overall the findings of the monitoring programme indicate that over the last five years the District Plan has been fairly successful in achieving the environmental results that were anticipated.

Five key recommendations have been made. These are:

1. That no further action needs to be taken in regard to a number of sections of the District Plan
2. That reviews of specific parts of the District Plan need to be initiated
3. That two plan changes are required
4. That additional resources are required for implementing some areas of the District Plan
5. That staff adjust some practices in order to better implement existing provisions of the District Plan.

The second recommendation is the most significant for the Council and the community in regards to the time, inputs and costs that will be involved. The recommendation is based on the fact that changing trends and preferences for development and environmental outcomes have emerged since the plan was introduced five years ago. As a result it is considered likely

that some of the assumptions and goals in the current District Plan are no longer suitable and relevant. A review will identify any issues that exist with the current provisions and possible solutions. Consequential plan changes are likely to be required. The specific parts of the District Plan recommended to be reviewed are:

- The Rural Environmental Area provisions
- The Residential Environmental Area provisions
- The Subdivision provisions
- The Transport provisions

The third recommendation is that two plan changes are initiated (without carrying out a formal review) because we already know the solutions required:

- Significant Natural Areas, to complete the process set out in the Plan
- Utilities, to recognise Government legislative changes.

Overall the recommendations in this report can be used to prioritise resources and spending over the next five years in regard to updating the District Plan.

The Monitoring Programme

2.1 The Grey District Plan

The Grey District Plan has been in place for five years (it was adopted in March 2005). The District Plan was drafted by planners and then re-shaped by the community and other agencies by way of a process of public consultation and involvement. The result is an integrated framework of environmental standards that set out how the Council and the community would like the natural and physical resources in the District to be used, developed and managed.

The environmental standards in the District Plan reflect the **values of the community** and the **growth and development aspirations for the District**.

The goal which underpins resource management in the Grey District is the enabling of people to carry out activities. The standards in the District Plan serve as safeguards to ensure that any likely adverse effects of these activities are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Appropriate implementation of the standards in the District Plan should result in environmental and economic benefits to the District.

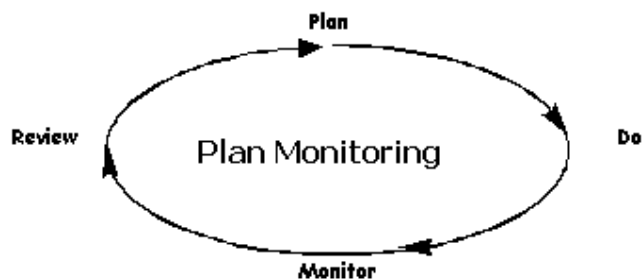
2.2 The monitoring exercise

The District Plan has been informally monitored and checked for effectiveness on an ongoing basis since its introduction however a targeted monitoring programme commenced in September 2009. The final output of the District Plan monitoring exercise is to inform decision-makers about:

- The consequences of implementing the current provisions of the District Plan
- Changes in the environment
- The need for possible changes and improvements to the District Plan.

To do this we needed to determine how well the District Plan is working in practice. That is; how efficient and effective are the policies, rules, or other methods in the District Plan in achieving what the Plan says it will do?

Testing and monitoring is an ongoing activity throughout the planning cycle. Referring to the diagram below: The District Plan is in place and is being implemented ("PLAN" and "DO"). This exercise is the "MONITOR" stage. The findings of this exercise will identify the parts of the District Plan that may need to be reviewed. The "REVIEW" stage can then be carried out.



In addition to the areas that are identified as needing review, a more focused review of the entire District Plan may still need to be undertaken by the Council. This is also stated in section 3.1 of this report. A "rolling review" approach was introduced in the 2009 Resource Management Amendment Act.

2.3 Anticipated Environmental Results

Anticipated Environmental Results (AERs) are included in the District Plan. These are a series of statements that serve as a reminder of what outcomes are expected from implementing the standards in the District Plan.

The AERs form the basis for determining how efficiently and effectively the objectives and policies set out in the District Plan are being achieved.

For example:

As a result of implementing standards in the District Plan about -

Landscape areas



A stated Anticipated Environmental Result is:

Retention of those areas identified as areas of outstanding landscape.

2.4 Methodology used

Staff collected and analysed information from resource consent, building consent, complaint and property/subject files. The Oracle consent tracking system and GIS mapping provided further useful information. External agencies were consulted for feedback about specialist topics. All of the information that was collected or referred to during this exercise is available separately for inspection.

The process outlined below was followed to monitor the District Plan:

1. An **initial assessment** was undertaken to determine how much was already known about each of the AERs. This influenced the next steps.
2. **The District Plan was assessed by considering the 18 “Issue sections”.**

These are:

Signs

Utilities

Waterways and Margins

Financial Contributions

Hazardous Substances

Heritage

Tangata Whenua

Subdivision

Natural Hazards

Landscapes

Coastal Environment

Significant Indigenous Vegetation & Habitats of Indigenous Fauna

Residential Environmental Area

Township Environmental Area

Rural-Residential Environmental Area

Rural Environmental Area

Commercial & Industrial Environmental Area

The extent of the catchments of zoned land and the planning maps were also considered.

3. **A worksheet for each Issue section has been created.** This document records the type of information that was collected to test each AER. Appended to each worksheet is the information collected, correspondence in and out, and reports that were generated.

The range of methods for achieving the objectives and policies of each Issue section are listed in the worksheets. Evaluations and reasons for conclusions that have been made were recorded on the worksheets. These conclusions form the recommendations in this report.

4. People involved:

The Monitoring Programme involved significant reporting, mapping, provision of information and peer review from Council staff. External agencies were consulted and their staff and members took the time to consider a variety of environmental issues and to provide valuable feedback. The external agencies consulted include -

- Department of Conservation
- Historic Places Trust
- West Coast Regional Council
- New Zealand Transport Agency
- The Conservation Board
- The Coast Heritage and Community Trust
- TRONT & Te Runanga o Ngati Waewae

3 Findings

3.1 Changes in the environment since the District Plan became operative

The current environmental standards in the District Plan reflect the aspirations and values of the community at the time the Plan was produced.

The formulation of the District Plan began in the late 1990s. The first draft document was released in 1995 and the final document adopted in 2005. By 2010 it is to be expected that changes will have occurred in regard to the aspirations and values of the community - and this is evident in some of the responses provided by external agencies about how well the District Plan is doing.

Additionally new best practice resource management techniques are now available (e.g. urban design) and new Government legislation has been introduced (including a range of National Policy Statements since 2005 and an amended Resource Management Act in 2009).

The Monitoring Programme has tested the **existing goals** in the Plan, and a separate process will need to be undertaken in order to effectively capture what environmental **changes** have occurred since 2005, and **whether/how this needs to be recognised in the District Plan**. For this same reason some of the recommendations in this report rely heavily on new information being collected and/or research being undertaken and this will entail community consultation.

3.2 Summary of findings from the Monitoring Programme

Table 1 provides a snap shot assessment about how well the Anticipated Environmental Results in the District Plan are being achieved.

Table 1

Issue section in the District Plan	Are the Anticipated Environmental Results being achieved?*		
	Yes	Mostly	No
Residential Environmental Area			×
Rural Environmental Area			×
Signs			×
Tangata Whenua			×
Transport	√		
Hazardous Substances	√		
Natural Hazards	√		
Landscapes	√		
Township Environmental Area	√		
Rural-Residential Environmental Area	√		
Utilities	√		
Financial Contributions	√		
Commercial & Industrial Environmental Area	√		
Significant Indigenous Vegetation & Habitats of Indigenous Fauna	√		
Subdivision		√	
Heritage		√	
Waterways and Margins		√	
Coastal Environment		√	

* This method of indicating how we are doing does not transfer directly to the recommended actions in Section 4 of this report. For example, while the table shows that the Transport and Subdivision AERs are being achieved or mostly achieved it is still recommended that these entire sections be reviewed. In contrast the AERs for the Tangata Whenua and Sign sections of the Plan are not being achieved but alternative remedial action is recommended other than a review or plan change.

3.3 Explanation

3.3.1 Aspects of the District Plan that are working well

Anticipated Environmental Results are being achieved

The Monitoring Programme has established that the overall implementation of the District Plan is working well and the methods being applied are achieving the anticipated environmental results. This is illustrated by Table 1, where 14 out of 18 Issue Sections in the District Plan are achieving, or mostly achieving the Anticipated Environmental Results (AERs).

For eight Issue Sections no further action is recommended as it is considered that the policies, rules, or other methods in these sections are efficiently and effectively achieving what the District Plan says it will do.

As per the footnote under Table 1, there is a variance between the statement that fourteen Issue Sections are achieving the AERs and the final recommendation that only eight of these have been given a complete "Pass". This is because the Monitoring Programme also identified that whilst they still achieved the stated AERs, six of these Issue Sections required:

- Better staff practices to be put in place to further improve outcomes (**Landscapes, Coastal Environment**)
- A review of the Issue section to be undertaken because changes in the environment have occurred since the Plan was made operative, hence the AERs may not still be reliable measures or goals (**Transport, Subdivision**)
- That plan changes be undertaken (**Utilities** in order to align the Plan with new Government legislation and **Significant Indigenous Vegetation & Habitats of Indigenous Fauna** in order to complete a process set out in the Plan).

The District Plan is easy to understand and to apply

Feedback provided by users of the District Plan is that the layout of the Plan for the environmental areas (zones) is easy to understand and the explanation about each zone is helpful for plan users to interpret the intention of the provisions and rules. Some comments were received that the information contained in the Appendices is technical and could be better explained. An example given was the subdivision and utilities sections.

The District Plan is considered to be permissive rather than heavily regulatory. The goal which underpins resource management in the Grey District is the enabling of people to carry out activities.

An evaluation was made about the range and type of methods that are included in the District Plan to get the results we anticipate. For most sections the primary method is "rules". A variety of supporting methods are used and these include liaison and sharing of information with other agencies, education initiatives, reference to other statutory documents.

The recommendations identify where specific methods could be implemented better (**Tangata Whenua, Heritage, Landscapes, Coastal Environment, Waterways and Margins**).

The District Plan is accurate and the provisions in it are relevant

The District Plan is an evolving document.

Ongoing minor amendments have been made to provisions in the District Plan as small errors or improvements are identified.

The District Plan and planning maps are regularly updated when the Council is notified about official information changes, such as New

Zealand Standards being changed or other agencies such as the New Zealand Historic Places Trust amending a national record.

Three privately funded plan changes have been undertaken since the District Plan became operative. Others are underway.

Two Council initiated plan changes have been completed. One was to address an anomaly with the rural subdivision rules (a regime for addressing non-contiguous allotment applications) and the other was a minor rezoning of land.

Two plan changes have been identified as being necessary to improve implementation of the District Plan. These will be initiated over the next year.

The Resource Management Amendment Act 2009 introduced a provision that allows Councils to carry out 'rolling reviews' of District Plans, rather than the Plan having a set 10-year lifetime. This should ensure that plans are kept accurate and the provisions in them are relevant.

3.3.2 Aspects of the District Plan that are not working so well

In some instances improvements or further actions have been identified and these are set out as recommendations. Of note is the Issue Section **Tangata Whenua** where the AERs in the District Plan are not being met. However it is not considered that a review of this section and/or a plan change is necessary as the methods stated in the District Plan are robust; they are just not being implemented as well as they could be.

The **Signs** Issue Section is robust however the AERs are not being achieved because staff do not have the time to do the work required. This is a resourcing issue rather than a fault with the District Plan.

Four Issue Sections of the District Plan have been identified as requiring "review" (**Rural Environmental Area, Residential Environmental Area, Subdivision and Transport**).

This does not necessarily mean the District Plan is not producing the anticipated results that were set at the time it became operative, it more reflects that trends and peoples expectations change over time and that new environmental management methods have been introduced.

The four reviews will be undertaken as a separate exercise as it was not part of the scope of the Monitoring Programme to identify solutions or answers in regard to how to amend these sections.

The implications of undertaking a review of these sections of the District Plan include –

- Costs and time
- Potentially the engagement of outside planning consultants and experts
- Consultation with the public
- Future plan changes

The Issue Sections that have been identified as requiring a review are discussed more fully below.

3.4 Reasons for the Recommended Reviews

Since the District Plan has been in place the Council has received and collected feedback from plan users, its own staff, and the public and external organisations about how the existing provisions of the District Plan are working. Over time a number of provisions in the District Plan have been identified as needing to be reviewed or amended, with reasons given. A list of potential plan changes already exists and this list will form a starting point for undertaking the reviews.

The rural environment

Overall, land use and subdivision development rates in rural areas of the Grey District are occurring at a low scale and a slow rate. The Council however needs to be able to continue to respond to applications for development in the future with a planning framework that adequately anticipates and addresses any associated effects of these proposals. The planning teams' own observation as resource management practitioners who are implementing the current provisions is that it is questionable whether the current Rural Environmental Area provisions will continue to provide a suitable and relevant framework for sustainably managing resource use and activities in these environments in the future.

This observation is supported by the Monitoring Programmes findings that the Anticipated Environmental Results in the District Plan are not always being achieved through application of the current rules. The Anticipated Environmental Results are:

"Maintenance and enhancement of the natural character and amenity of the rural environment"

"Use, development and protection of resources within the District, providing that the scale of each activity and its effects, both short and long-term, are appropriate to its environment and community needs."

External groups have recorded their concerns about the ability of the existing provisions in the District Plan to continue to manage subdivision and development impacts on the rural environment (in written correspondence, through attendance at meetings and workshops and via submissions on plan changes and consent applications at hearings). The Council has received specific requests that the 1-hectare rural subdivision framework be reviewed as it is not considered by some parties to be a suitable threshold to apply across the entire District.

The Wider Moana Development Strategy group (which includes representatives from the Grey District Council, Department of Conservation, West Coast Regional Council, Federated Farmers, Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, Ngati Waewae Runanga, Maritime NZ and Fish and Game) has identified a need to review the rural framework in the District Plan, particularly in relation to land development around Lake Brunner.

The District Plan was written at a time when there were low development trends across the entire District. In rural areas farming, associated residences and rural industry (including mining and forestry) were the primary activities occurring. It was anticipated that during the ten-year life of the District Plan that growth and development initiatives on the West Coast would need to be encouraged, this is evidenced by the enabling approach adopted in the District Plan:

"Given the area of the District, the abundance of resources (many of which are protected or sustainably managed) and a relatively low population, sustainable management can be approached in a manner differing from that in areas of the country where resources are severely depleted or under pressure. In particular, less restrictive measures may be adopted and non-regulatory methods implemented."

The rural areas of the Grey District have remained up to very recently to be a working environment that co-existed with the landscape amenities including: *"the openness and spaciousness, natural features and presence of indigenous vegetation"... "the coastline, water features, vegetation..."* A feature of the rural environment noted in the Plan is *"the absence of built up areas"*.

The increasing trend in New Zealand for lifestyle subdivisions in sometimes remote rural areas (areas not connected to existing settlements) has only in recent years reached the West Coast. The attractive sea and lake rural landscapes have been the key draw cards.

The District Plan currently has a permissive framework for rural subdivision with a 1-hectare standard that applies across all rural zoned land, and discretionary standards that can allow smaller residential allotments to be created. The rural subdivision and land use framework in the District Plan was expected to provide for flexibility of living options and good environmental management, and it appears that it primarily does do that in many rural areas of the District.

The discretionary subdivision standards in the District Plan for creating either a non-contiguous (a title made up of separated pieces of land) or a site smaller than 1-hectare require a resource consent process to be followed in order to address environmental effects and it appears that this approach is resulting in good environmental outcomes. However it is evident that some of the existing permitted and controlled land use and subdivision provisions have the potential to produce undesirable outcomes. For example, the District Plan provides for one residential unit per hectare as a permitted land use activity but does not require that houses have to be separated at a density of one house on each hectare. This means that on a six hectare title six residences can be built within only a portion of the land i.e. clustered together. It was expected that most rural land would be developed by subdividing first and then building at a density of one house on one hectare (with the additional associated rural activity that is permitted in the District Plan). Developers can however utilise the District Plan provisions to establish houses in a cluster first and then apply for a consequential subdivision (and have taken this approach). When this reverse development pattern is followed a baseline of built development is been legally established and even if the proposed individual new allotments will fall significantly under the 1-hectare subdivision standard the Council cannot turn the subdivision down. This manner of creating clustered residential areas in a rural environment has the potential to undermine the intended environmental results in the District Plan and could result in high density residential development occurring in sensitive (and attractive) rural environments.

It is likely that a permissive subdivision and development framework will still be suitable for most rural areas of the Grey District but that **some sensitive environments may be better managed with additional controls in place**. One respondent summed this up by stating that *"we need to shut the gate before the horse has bolted"*.

The ongoing management of the **right to a working environment** and the protection of rural amenities and features is a further matter that has been identified as a 'concern'. The existing Rural Environmental Area objectives and policies are only focused on the effects of rural activities on the environment. Industrial or commercial activities have established in rural areas of the District and this has worked well in some instances while in others there has been a greater impact on nearby rural housing and on the open space character of the rural environment. The District Plan definition of "Rural Activity" is encompassing and the rules themselves also provide for some non-rural activities to occur as of right. However consideration may need to be added to the District Plan about the effect of non-rural activities on the rural environment.

Tourism has increased significantly over recent years, much of it based on the resources of the rural area such as the forests, rivers, lakes and scenic views of the coastline. Inappropriate development in the rural areas of the district, particularly along the coast and near to Lake Brunner could compromise the tourism industry. Development West Coast led a tourism focused project in 2008/09 which resulted in the production of the "Punakaiki Destination Management Plan. A recommended action in this plan is that the Grey District Council reviews the rural framework of the District Plan, particularly in relation to the coastal rural areas in order to address the impact that further development could have on the tourism industry.

The residential environment

Residential Environmental Areas accommodate the majority of the District's resident population. Residential stock is increasing in the District, despite a declining population and the recent beginning of an economic recession. The increasing housing stock reflects the limited impact the recession has so far had on this District and also the national trend for a decreasing average number of people per housing unit.

Since 2005 there has been **changing trends** for residential development and feedback received by the Council over time is that the current provisions in the District Plan do not provide for some types of development to be considered very effectively (Council workshops, correspondence and through resource consent and plan change applications).

An Anticipated Environmental Result stated in the District Plan is "*Provision for diversity in housing, built form and lifestyle types*", and this is not being met. The Council has for example experienced demand for residential apartment style living and/or smaller residential sections with a higher building coverage and these types of land use are difficult to approve when applying the current provisions. The current level of community acceptance about new forms of accommodation is likely to have changed and the District Plan should reflect this.

There is evidence of a growing acceptance about integrating a mixture of activities in some residential areas (mixed use office/living) and in contrast, an expectation for other residential areas to be kept free of non-residential activities. Currently there is only one Residential Environmental Area framework in the District Plan and this must be applied across all Residentially Zoned areas in the District. Different types of Residential zoning may need to be introduced.

There are also changing trends for different lifestyles, such as house buses, sheds and portacoms being used as housing.

There may be limited availability or attractiveness of existing zoned land and this needs to be reviewed.

An Anticipated Environmental Result in the District Plan is "*Adequate land for future residential development*"). Since 2005 privately initiated rezoning of land from rural to residential has taken place and this has provided new areas for residential development. Increasing applications are being received for residential development on rural zoned land. There are still distinctive changes in character between the residential, rural-residential and rural landscapes in the District and there is no direct indication that the trend in this District for new houses to be built on rural-residential or rural land is because suitable residentially zoned land isn't available, it is more likely that this is merely a 'lifestyle' choice. A review will determine how proactive the Council needs to be in carrying out further rezoning of areas in the District to cater for expected residential growth.

The District Plan provisions for residential areas are set up to manage the intrusion of non-compatible activities or developments that could result in a loss of 'residential amenity values' however this is not always being achieved. Resource consent has been granted to 29 non-residential activities to operate in a residential area since the District Plan became operative. Most of these activities are located in residential areas in Greymouth and, although managed by the District Plan controls, this can cause conflict between activities but also uses up land that could have been developed for residential use. This overall number over five years is not considered to be high although a review of the effects on specific areas in the District is recommended e.g. High Street, Greymouth as this area of town now has an increasing commercial character to it even though it has residential zoning. A review will consider whether cumulative effects are occurring from non-

residential activities clustering in certain areas and/or whether unintended consequential effects are occurring.

One incentive for businesses to relocate from a commercial to a residential area has been that the cost of Mawhera leases in the Greymouth CBD. This has forced some businesses to seek alternative premises. It has been identified during the Monitoring Programme that an additional AER could be added to the District Plan to monitor this issue e.g. *“Non-residential activities that are introduced into Residential Environmental Areas are compatible”*.

The suitability of the current performance standards in the District Plan will be reviewed. If there are a large number of consents granted for dispensation of particular standards, such as setback and recession provisions, then that particular standard may no longer be a suitable or relevant parameter. The number of complaints received about activities is also a good indicator about the effectiveness of how the District Plan is performing and information such as this will be referred to during a review process.

A comprehensive review of the Residential Environmental Area framework in the District Plan will include asking different communities and neighbourhoods what type of living environments they want. It is likely that a range of residential ‘zones’ will be introduced to cater for those who would prefer to live in an area with a higher density of housing, smaller sections and perhaps a mixture of uses such as office/living versus those areas where larger sections and differing amenity standards are still desired. A range of zones that have differing performance and amenity standards can provide certainty to residents about how their chosen neighbourhood will be managed over time.

Subdivision

The subdivision allotment sizes and standards in the Plan are an integral part of reviewing the resource management regime for both the Rural and Residential Environmental Areas.

Further, the subdivision provisions themselves need to be updated to bring them in line with new initiatives such as urban design techniques and the recently revised New Zealand Standard for Land Development and Subdivision (NZS 4404). A review of the rural subdivision allotment provisions in the Plan is also likely to impact on the Rural-Residential Environmental Area. A review of the Residential Environmental Area provisions may impact on the existing zoning of some areas e.g. parts of High Street in Greymouth. The overall zoned land catchments in the District should be considered.

Transport

The District Plan contains high level high level outcomes for the transport section, and do not specifically measure how specific rules and standards are working. This means that technically the Anticipated Environmental Results are being achieved.

However since the District Plan has been in place, staff and external parties have identified a number of ways that the existing rules could be improved (Council workshops, conversations and through resource consent and plan change processing). These suggested changes have been identified as a result of implementing the rules and standards over time. The suggested improvements have been recorded and will form the basis of a review. The list of suggested improvements, and/or areas of concern is not included in this report as it is unsubstantiated and includes only general suggestions about matters ranging from text or diagram amendments to adopting new standards or parameters in

Appendix 4. Solutions for addressing the matters on the list will be explored as a part of the recommended review of the Issue Section.

The Transport Section will also be made more effective if it is updated to reflect changing New Zealand practices and technical standards.

4 Recommendations

4.1 **Five key recommendations** have been made as a result of the Monitoring Programme.

A summary of recommended **actions** is set out in 4.2.

The full recommendations for each Issue section are in Appendix 1.

Recommendation 1

That **no further action needs to be taken** in regard to the efficient and effective functioning of these sections of the District Plan:

- ❖ Natural Hazards
- ❖ Waterways & Margins
- ❖ Financial contributions
- ❖ Hazardous substances
- ❖ Heritage
- ❖ Commercial Environmental Area
- ❖ Township Environmental Area
- ❖ Rural Residential Environmental Area

Recommendation 2

That the following sections of the District Plan need to be **reviewed**:

- ❖ Rural Environmental Area
- ❖ Residential Environmental Area
- ❖ Subdivision
- ❖ Transport

(The outcome of the reviews will determine the next action required i.e. do nothing, do minor amendments or initiate plan changes)

Recommendation 3

That **plan changes** are required for the following sections of the District Plan:

- ❖ Significant Indigenous Vegetation & Habitats of Indigenous Fauna
- ❖ Utilities

Recommendation 4

That **further resources need to be allocated** in order to achieve the anticipated environmental results:

- ❖ Signage

Recommendation 5

That **staff amend or improve practices** to better achieve the anticipated environmental results for the following sections of the plan:

- ❖ Tangata Whenua
- ❖ Landscapes
- ❖ Coastal Environment

4.2 Summary of recommended actions

Issue section in the District Plan	A full review of this section is required	A plan change is necessary	Further resources are required to implement the methods in the Plan	Staff amend or improve practices
Rural Environmental Area	●			
Residential Environmental Area	●			
Subdivision	●			
Transport	●			
Significant Indigenous Vegetation & Habitats of Indigenous Fauna (includes the SNA project)		●		
Utilities		●		
Signs			●	
Tangata Whenua				●
Coastal Environment				●
Landscapes				●

APPENDIX 1:

Full recommendations as per the results specified in each working table

RECOMMENDATION

That a full review of these sections is required:

Rural Environmental Area

Further comment:

A full review will provide information about

- Whether one subdivision allotment parameter is still suitable for all rural land in the District
- If the current objectives and policies are still suitable, effective and relevant
- If the rule thresholds / parameters are still suitable, effective and relevant (this assessment will encompass the subdivision allotment rules)

The review should also consider whether the Landscape Area policy criteria provisions in the District Plan would be applied more effectively if the Rural Environmental Area rules section of the District Plan included assessment criteria about landscapes.

The review should also include matters that relate to the Coastal Environment section.

Consequently a plan change is likely to be required.

Residential Environmental Area

Further comment:

A full review of the residential framework of the District Plan needs to be undertaken in order to determine:

- Whether existing residentially zoned land still represents a suitable zone framework for the area (e.g. High Street, Greymouth)
- If more land should be rezoned to Residential Environmental Area
- If the current objectives and policies are still suitable, effective and relevant
- If the rule thresholds / parameters are still suitable, effective and relevant (this assessment will encompass the subdivision allotment rules)

Consequently a plan change is likely to be required.

Subdivision

Further comment:

An overall recommendation from the Monitoring Programme is that the Rural and the Residential Environmental Area sections of the District Plan be reviewed. A review of these sections must include the associated subdivision allotment size framework and the assumptions for development that are within the subdivision provisions.

The New Zealand Standard 4404 for Land Development and Subdivision has been revised and the District Plan should be updated to recognise the new approaches set out in this document (including urban design principles).

Since the District Plan became operative staff and external parties have gradually identified a number of ways in which the existing subdivision rules could be improved. This is as a result of implementing the rules and standards over time. These listed matters will form the starting point for the review.

Consequently a plan change is likely to be required.

Transport

Further comment:

The Anticipated Environmental Results are being met however they test very high level outcomes and do not specifically question how specific rules and standards are working. As a result of implementing the rules and standards over time, staff and external parties have gradually identified a number of ways in which the existing rules could be improved.

The matters to be reviewed are not listed here as they have not been explored further other than being identified as needing a review. They range from text or diagram amendments to adopting new standards or parameters in Appendix 4 e.g. parking spaces required for activities.

A comprehensive list of potential plan changes has already been compiled by staff and this will form the starting point for the review. A consequential plan change will be necessary.

RECOMMENDATION

That a Plan Change is required:

Significant Indigenous Vegetation & Habitats of Indigenous Fauna

Further comment:

A plan change needs to be initiated in 2010.

The Monitoring Programme has established that the Anticipated Environmental Results in the District Plan are being achieved by way of the Council led Significant Natural Areas Project. A plan change is the final step to complete the process that is set out in the plan.

Utilities

Further comment:

The Anticipated Environmental Results for this Issue Section are being achieved. The recommended plan change is not as the result of the monitoring exercise.

Legislative changes that have occurred since the District Plan was made operative require that the Electricity National Policy Statement that came into force in 2008 and the Electricity National Environmental Standard that came into effect in January 2010 must be recognised in District Plans. Local Authorities are required to give effect to these new provisions and this must be recognised in all District Plans by April 2012.

RECOMMENDATION

That staff amend or improve practices:

Tangata Whenua

Further comment:

The framework and Anticipated Environmental Results in this Issue Section are robust however the methods are not being fully utilised. Systems should be introduced to make sure the methods are implemented e.g. regular meetings or email/phone contact with the local Runanga. Other options could include establishing a formal feedback system to Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu and amending processes for communicating with both Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu

and Ngati Waewae Runanga about resource consent and plan change processes.

A process to initiate discussion about potential changes will be led by the Environmental Services Manager.

Coastal Environment

Further comment:

Council may need to get expert advice about potential effects on the coastal environment (just as it does for natural hazards) in order to make decisions when processing consents.

No specific changes are recommended for this Issue Section however the recommended review of the Rural Environmental Area framework should include matters that relate to the Coastal Environment section.

Consideration of protection measures for the scenic State Highway environment have been recommended by Development West Coast in the Punakaiki Destination Management Plan. The Council has received this report and noted that the recommendations pertaining to this District will be considered via any reviews of the District Plan.

Landscape

Further comment:

The Landscape Area policy criteria provisions in the District Plan could be applied more effectively if the Rural Environmental Area rules section of the plan included assessment criteria about landscapes. This will be considered during the recommended review of the Rural Environmental Area provisions.

A map will be created to assist the consent planners with identifying the locations and extent of the eight Landscape Areas (noting that a map can only be indicative as the boundaries of each area are defined by ecological properties or as a physical landform, rather than as a drawn boundary).

Staff need to follow up on the methods stated in the District Plan other than the rule framework (e.g. liaising with landowners, etc). In particular liaison is required with the West Coast Regional Council about how effectively the District Plan is achieving the goals included in the Regional Policy Statement for protecting Landscape Areas.

GDC consent applications should be assessed against Policy 9.1 in the RPS.

RECOMMENDATION

That further resources are required to implement the methods in the District Plan:

Signs

Further comment:

A review should be undertaken about the current processes used by the Council to monitor and enforce the permitted District Plan standards for signs. Staff have indicated that very little is done because they do not have the time. Resources need to be considered and a combined approach with the State Highway controlling authority or its delegated contractor may need to be adopted where appropriate.

The design guideline that is referred to in the "Signs" issue section of the District Plan needs to be reviewed and updated. This should be in consultation with Tourism West Coast and the New Zealand Transport Authority.

RECOMMENDATION

That no change be made to these sections:

Heritage

Further comment:

The provisions in this Issue Section of the District Plan are acceptable at this time. Some of the methods available are however not being implemented and Council staff are already communicating with the New Zealand Historic Places Trust about possible ways to achieve this in the future. This will include encouraging the Council to establish a budget to implement the non-statutory methods that are already included in the District Plan.

Natural Hazards

Further comment:

The Anticipated Environmental Result that refers to hazard assessment being undertaken at the time of land use is misleading if not read in context with the supporting rules. As per the discussion in the worksheet, most hazard assessment is done either at the time of subdivision or at the time of building a structure (and then by the Building team).

Waterways and Margins

Further comment:

This Issue Section is working well.

There is little evidence of a District wide plan or map of preferential areas or desired linkages – this could be a useful method for consent planners and other decision-makers.

The Council could do more to promote the benefits of riparian management and wetlands protection, including in respect of streams less than three metres wide, through education by such means as pamphlets and education days in conjunction with the Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Fish and Game and the Royal Forest and Bird Society.

Financial Contributions

Further comment:

This Issue Section is working well. The Anticipated Environmental Result is being achieved.

As a separate but related matter, the Council is intending to review whether it needs to introduce a Development Contribution Policy in June 2011.

Hazardous Substances

Further comment:

This issue section is working well. The Anticipated Environmental Result is being achieved.

Commercial Industrial Environmental Area

Further comment:

A "Site Selection Study" (BECA June 2005) was undertaken about potential areas of the District that could be re-zoned to Industrial and Commercial in the future. This is a resource that can still be used when necessary. There is not the demand for this exercise to be undertaken at this time, given that areas such as Kaiata Park are still providing development opportunities for new industry.

A result of the Monitoring Programme is a recommendation that the Residential Environmental Area framework be reviewed and this would include an assessment of the High Street area currently zoned residential where commercial activity is gradually establishing.

Rural Residential Environmental Area

Further comment:

The Rural Residential framework itself is proving to be effective. The recommended review of the Rural Environmental Area framework is however likely to impact on the Rural Residential framework i.e. a regime of different rural allotment sizes may be introduced and if so it would need to be complementary to the Rural Residential zoned areas in the District. Alternatively the results of a review of the rural areas may find that the existing Rural Residential framework may be a suitable framework to apply to other areas in the District.

Township Environmental Area

Further comment:

An issue that the Council is already aware of is that outdoor storage and the propensity for some people to collect old cars and 'junk' has caused concern to other residents in small townships. The outdoor storage rules were initially identified as an area of the District Plan that needed to be reviewed however discussion has occurred amongst staff and it appears that compliance may continue to be best achieved by taking measures under the Resource Management Act than by changing the District Plan. Changing the current Township Environmental Area rule framework may impact more on the general public than the infrequent need to take compliance action against just a few people.

