

Who's
putting local
issues on
the national
agenda?

**We are.
LGNZ.**

Te Kāhui Kaunihera o Aotearoa.

2020 Annual General Meeting

Remits

1

Public transport support

Remit:	That LGNZ: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledges the Government for its recognition during COVID-19 of public transport as an essential service;• Acknowledges the strong financial support provided by the Government through Waka Kotahi NZTA during the COVID-19 Alert Levels, that enabled councils to continue to provide public transport for people providing essential services and transport for the public to receive essential services up to 30 June 2020;• Recognises that councils will continue to be under significant financial pressure to maintain the viability of public transport under current FAR rate settings for many months during the recovery phase from COVID-19; and• Calls on the Government to work with councils to maintain the financial viability of public transport during the recovery phase of COVID-19.
Proposed by:	Greater Wellington Regional Council
Supported by:	LGNZ Regional Sector

Background information and research

1. Nature of the issue

The Remit is important as an acknowledgement to the Government from the Local Government sector for the strong support for public transport during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, and to reinforce the need for ongoing support during recovery from COVID-19 to ensure the financial viability of public transport in councils across New Zealand.

The Remit meets the tests for acceptance of a proposed Remit to the LGNZ AGM in that it addresses a major strategic “issue of the moment”, and it has a national focus articulating a major interest and concern at the national political level.

2. Background to its being raised

This Remit gives deserved acknowledgement to the Government for its strong support of public transport during the response phase to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. We know from experience in China that recovery of patronage on public transport has been slow following the passing of the worst of COVID-19. The recovery phase from COVID-19 in New Zealand may take many months, and even years, based on current projections.

The Government through Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) required and funded the delivery of public transport (as an essential service) throughout the Alert Levels.

NZTA has also funded:

- The shortfall in revenue for bus, ferry and train operations;
- The additional costs that resulted from COVID-19 such as cleaning, stickers and advertising collateral; and
- The Total Mobility Service receiving a full subsidy for a taxi service up to \$80 /trip until the end of June.

As at 11 June, we do not know what financial support will be available from the Government through NZTA for public transport beyond financial year 2020/2021. This Remit is calling for the Government to continue to work in partnership with councils to ensure the ongoing viability of public transport in the regions, cities, towns and communities across New Zealand.

3. New or confirming existing policy

This issue is not currently covered by existing LGNZ policy.

It is new policy, in so far as it relates to COVID-19 and the associated ongoing financial viability of public transport. One possible tool could be an increase in the appropriate Financial Assistance Rate (FAR) during the Recovery Phase from COVID-19.

4. How the issue relates to objectives in the current Work Programme

The issue directly relates to Issue “1. Infrastructure and Funding” of LGNZ’s “The six big issues for New Zealand councils, Our work, Our policy priorities”:

<https://www.lgnz.co.nz/our-work/ourpolicy-priorities/the-six-big-issues/>

This also indirectly relates to LGNZ’s social priorities, as it is vital that public transport continues to be available to those in our communities who rely on it.

5. What work or action on the issue has been done and what was the outcome

Because of the speed by which the pandemic has become an issue, no work has been undertaken on this issue by either LGNZ or the proposer. Current government support has primarily been concerned with the need to sustain public transport through the immediate response or emergency phase. This Remit is concerned with the sustainability of public transport during the recovery and rebuild phase's post-COVID-19.

6. Any existing relevant legislation, policy or practice

- Land Transport Management Act 2003 , no 118 (as at 22 October 2019):
<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2003/0118/77.0/DLM226230.html>
- Draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport, 2021/22 – 30/31 including Outcome “Inclusive Access” (which includes “access to work, education and healthcare”), and Outcome “Resilience and security” (which includes “recovering effectively from disruptive events”):
<https://www.transport.govt.nz/multimodal/keystrategiesandplans/gpsonlandtransportfunding/gps-2021/>
- National Action Plan 3 “Unite Against COVID-19”, as of 23 April 2020, National Crisis Management Centre:
<https://uniteforrecovery.govt.nz/assets/resources/legislation-and-key-documents/COVID19-National-Action-Plan-3-as-of-22-April-extended.pdf>

7. Outcome of any prior discussion at a Zone or Sector meeting

Zone and Sector Meetings have not been held during COVID-19 Alert Levels.

8. Suggested course of action envisaged

That the President of LGNZ write to the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Local Government, to convey the Remit and seek a meeting with the Ministers to discuss a joint work programme between the Government and councils (through LGNZ) on policy to maintain the financial viability of public transport during the recovery phase of COVID-19.

2

Housing affordability

- Remit:** *That Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ):*
- *Calls on the Government to introduce legislation that would fully enable councils to address housing affordability in their communities through a range of value uplift and capture tools, one such tool being 'inclusionary zoning';*
 - *Seeks to establish a working group on affordable housing, comprising of relevant/affected councils, central government (MHUD, Kāinga Ora, MSD), iwi, and the community housing sector; and*
 - *Advocates to central government for an affordable housing National Policy Statement to be developed.*
- Proposed by:** Hamilton City Council and Christchurch City Council
- Supported by:** Tauranga City Council; Tasman District Council; Waipa District Council; South Waikato District Council; and Waitomo District Council

Background information and research

1. Nature of the issue

Many towns and cities in New Zealand are grappling with how to provide more affordable housing – dwellings that are affordable to buy or rent for households on low to median incomes with secure tenure.

A more joined-up response is necessary. This remit therefore calls for:

- A working group on affordable housing be established, comprising of relevant/affected councils, LGNZ, central government (MHUD, Kāinga Ora, MSD), iwi and the community housing sector; and
- LGNZ to advocate to central government for an affordable housing National Policy Statement to be developed.

The remit also covers one specific proposal: inclusionary zoning.

Councils need more tools to enable them to respond to housing needs in their communities. One such tool is inclusionary zoning that seeks land or financial contributions from developers being vested to nominated housing land trusts.

While this is not commonplace in New Zealand currently, it is widespread in other major housing hotspots around the world including in parts of the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States.

The term inclusionary zoning refers to district plan rules that require a portion of new land development to be retained as affordable housing for people on low-to-moderate incomes. The theory of inclusionary zoning is that when land is up-zoned (for example, from rural to residential), it creates a significant uplift in value, and the community should share in the benefit of that uplift. This value uplift is enabled through council planning processes, including but not limited to private plan changes, granting of resource consents or council-initiated district plan rezoning under the Resource Management Act (RMA) process.

As an example of inclusionary zoning, a council's district plan could require that land developers provide 5 per cent of titled sections from up-zoned land or on a specific unit threshold of consented residential development, or the equivalent monetary value, to a community housing trust. This land would then be retained on behalf of the community in perpetuity and used for affordable housing.

It is critical that government reinstate the ability to secure financial contributions as one of the options for local government funding for securing and providing a basis for a monetary contribution. This remit supports the Resource Legislation Amendment Act 2017 (RLAA) and its proposal to repeal the current provisions which stop the ability to secure contributions after April 2022.

An early form of inclusionary zoning was central to the early success of the Queenstown Lakes Community Housing Trust (QLCHT), enabling it to grow its housing stock significantly since it was established in 2007. Inclusionary zoning was a key tool for the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC), utilised primarily for the period from 2006 through to 2013, ensuring that the Council could negotiate the inclusion of affordable housing through the planning process.

Although QLDC's first inclusionary zoning plan change was settled in July 2013, Queenstown was subject to legal challenges in the Environment Court, High Court and Court of Appeal by some land developers during the period 2009-2013 on its plan change to add a set of objectives, policies and rules into its district plan. The settlement forced the Council to make its inclusionary zoning provisions a matter of assessment, rather than rule-based and mandatory, reducing the effectiveness of these provisions in addressing the District's severe housing affordability issues. Today these provisions represent an inclusionary zoning opportunity that was not completely realised, having achieved only piecemeal and limited further contributions, facilitated through non-mandatory schemes and with limited certainty going forward.

Because of continuing acute housing affordability issues, the QLDC intends notifying new inclusionary zoning provisions in the next stage of its district plan review and is anticipating the same legal challenges and likely lengthy and costly appeals process.

The housing affordability challenge is wide ranging and complex. Inclusionary zoning is not the sole answer. However, it is a vital tool in enabling councils to secure a longer-term supply of land or funds in partnership with registered housing trusts and that legislation is needed to ensure inclusionary zoning can be applied consistently across the regions and minimise the risk of legal challenge.

For the avoidance of doubt, this remit proposes that councils have the clear legal opportunity in legislation to pursue inclusionary zoning. It would not be mandatory.

2. Background to its being raised

The Queenstown Lakes Community Housing Trust

In 2007, QLDC recognised a serious lack of affordable housing in its district and acted by forming the QLCHT. The trust is an independent, not-for-profit, community-owned organisation that maintains a strong relationship with the Council, with a shared goal of creating decent, secure housing for the community. The consensus to establish the QLCHT and develop planning tools to deliver affordable housing were two of 34 action items set out in the 2005 'Housing Our People in our Environment' strategy, a significant milestone of council commitment to address its housing issues with local leadership, and central government participation and investment.

The Trust operates across the housing continuum. As at June 2019, it had assisted 130 households into their assisted ownership programmes, ten into rent-to-buy schemes and 34 into affordable rental properties. The Trust has over 600 households on its waiting list and has set the goal of providing 1,000 homes over the next ten years. This goal was reaffirmed through the October 2017 Mayoral Housing Affordability Task Force report.

QLDC negotiated its first inclusionary zoning agreement with a developer over 15 years ago. This resulted in a cash payment of over \$5 million, which enabled the trust to buy a large piece of land and build its first development in an affordable subdivision of Queenstown. Since then, subsequent agreements with developers have delivered residential land valued at over \$12 million to the Trust, with some further cash contributions.

This remit suggests that the approach taken by QLDC has been one of the few effective approaches in the country in capturing and retaining value uplift for delivery as affordable housing.

Proposed National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2019 (NPS-UD)

Although the proposed NPS-UD looks at providing for intensification and a range of housing typologies, density and variety to support housing capacity assessments, the policies are not generally focused on housing affordability, despite this being an essential part of providing for peoples wellbeing in the proposed Objective O2 of this NPS.

Establishment of the Waikato Community Lands Trust

A housing stocktake, carried out by the Waikato Regional Housing Initiative in 2018, found that Hamilton was the third least affordable house market in New Zealand, with a median house price of 6.8 times the average household income. Three times the median income is considered affordable.

In 2019, Hamilton City Council approved the establishment of the Waikato Community Lands Trust to help address housing affordability – a community owned trust with the purpose of holding land in perpetuity to provide access to affordable housing for the benefit of the community (like the QLCHT model). Hamilton City Council also committed an initial \$2 million to the Trust as a seed funding for purchasing land. However, for the trust to grow its capacity and build a sustainable, long-term model going forward, inclusionary zoning provisions will be needed.

Other councils

While we understand that other councils are interested in exploring the use of inclusionary zoning, few have the appetite for the risks of legal challenge through the Environment Court, High Court, and Court of Appeal that QLDC faced. However, if there were an acceptable pathway that councils could follow to enable their implementation of a local housing strategy, founded on a robust needs assessment, which allowed inclusionary zoning as one of their tools, many are likely to consider such a path. The lack of enablement to local government was raised as the primary barrier to wider uptake at the 25 February LGNZ Housing Symposium.

Challenges to implementing inclusionary zoning

At present, councils that introduce inclusionary zoning provisions into their district plan open themselves up to legal challenge. The risk of lengthy and expensive legal challenges is a key barrier to councils adopting inclusionary zoning as a housing affordability lever.

The risk of legal challenge can be seen from the Queenstown example. In 2010, the QLDC inclusionary zoning requirements were challenged in the Environment Court. The outcome of the initial legal challenge was favourable for the Council and housing trust. The Court decided that the inclusionary zoning provisions were allowed under the RMA because they were a way for the Council to 'mitigate' the impacts of its policy to protect the area's unique landscape by constraining land use (which is critical for tourism and economic development in the area but puts pressure on land prices).

Appeals to the High Court and Court of Appeal by a small set of developer appellants during the period 2009-2013 on its plan change to add a set of objectives, policies and rules into its district plan were focused only on whether affordable housing was an RMA matter. The successive rulings in council's favour affirmed that in the specific case of QLDC's tourism-based economy focused on protecting the outstanding natural landscapes of the district, housing affordability was in fact a matter within scope of resource management, and therefore, application of district plan provisions. However, the substantive case of whether the specific rules and implementation provisions were correct was never heard by any Court.

Therefore, a cloud remains as to whether the specific mandatory tools designed by QLDC for implementation through a local housing trust would comply with the RMA. The settlement forced the Council to make its inclusionary zoning provisions a matter of assessment, rather than rule-based and mandatory, reducing the effectiveness of these provisions in addressing the District's severe housing affordability issues.

QLDC is currently considering further provisions for delivery of affordable housing through its District Plan Review. Clear legal authority from central government to enable councils to address affordable housing would assist both QLDC, Hamilton City Council, and likely any Council around New Zealand which has the local mandate to develop and implement its local housing plan.

3. New or confirming existing policy

This is a new policy.

4. How the issue relates to objectives in the current Work Programme

Affordable and healthy housing are key ingredients to promoting wellbeing in local communities. LGNZ has recognised housing affordability as a key issue and its National Council agreed that housing should be a 2018 priority topic. As part of its Housing 2030 Project workstream, LGNZ currently has two separate working groups – the Supply Working Group and Social and Community Housing Working Group.

5. What work or action on the issue has been done and what was the outcome

Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) has outlined in its submissions to central government on the Urban Development Bill the need for councils to have clear enabling authority to implement tools locally such as inclusionary zoning. The reason CHA supports this approach is that it supports local strategies between councils and community housing providers across the country to combine local land value uplift with investment through philanthropic channels, blended with central government investment (such as the Income Related Rent Subsidy for social housing or Progressive Homeownership fund) to deliver locally-relevant housing solutions. CHA will continue to work with councils and Local Government New Zealand on the enabling approach to see this tool work for councils that choose to utilise it.

6. Any existing relevant legislation, policy or practice

The RMA enables district plans to explore inclusionary zoning policies to a limited degree but only if councils retain the ability to seek and secure financial contributions. However, without a legislated mandate for affordable housing and in the absence of legislation like the Housing Accord and Special Housing Areas Act (2013) (HASHAA) which is now rescinded, this still comes with uncertainty and relies on individual councils making a strong demonstrable evidence-based case for its own housing need and has a risk of legal challenge.

7. Outcome of any prior discussion at a Zone/Sector meeting

Not possible in the revised timeframes.

8. Suggested course of action envisaged

We assume that, by August's LGNZ AGM, it will be too late to alter the proposed NPS-UD, although it may be possible to make changes at the time of any subsequent amendment. Instead, the remit calls for LGNZ to advocate for there to be a National Policy Statement specifically focused on affordable housing.

This remit also encourages a working group be formed, comprising of relevant/affected Councils, central Government (MHUD, Kāinga Ora, MSD), iwi, and the community housing sector. The group would work on the inclusionary zoning proposals set out in this remit, and work in partnership on other means of addressing the affordable housing challenge, leading to the delivery of the proposed National Policy Statement.

3

Returning GST on rates for councils to spend on infrastructure

Remit:	That Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) request that the Government use the appropriate mechanisms to enable the 15 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) charged on rates be returned to councils to spend on local or regional infrastructure projects.
Proposed by:	Hamilton City Council and New Plymouth District Council
Supported by:	Auckland Council; Christchurch City Council; Tauranga City Council; Nelson City Council; Tasman District Council; Gisborne District Council; Waipa District Council; Waikato District Council; and South Waikato District Council

Background information and research

1. Nature of the issue

Whereas GST is not applied on the vast majority of other taxes, it is applied on rates. This causes hundreds of millions of dollars per year to leave the area in which they were generated and go to central government, whilst driving up rates.

One option, of course, would be not to levy this 'tax on a tax'. The option proposed in this remit is that LGNZ negotiate with central Government for this sum to be returned to councils for them to spend directly on local or regional infrastructure. This option has been proposed by – amongst others – respected economist Shamubeel Eaqub.

As well as, we believe, being a fairer and more rational system, this would provide much needed support to councils, whilst ensuring the money is ringfenced to be spent on infrastructure projects of local, regional and national benefit, thus helping to address New Zealand's longstanding infrastructure challenge.

2. Background to its being raised

In 2017, a remit from Gisborne District Council proposing that a proportion of all GST be returned to the region in which it was generated, for councils to use on servicing visitor infrastructure was supported at LGNZ's Annual Conference, although subsequent discussions with the Government did not prove fruitful.

Three years on, with pressure on local government greater than ever following the COVID-19 outbreak, we think the time is right to raise a similar issue. This remit has also been developed noting that the need for investment in New Zealand's infrastructure, particularly in its three waters infrastructure, is ever clearer.

3. New or confirming existing policy

The proposed remit would be consistent with LGNZ's position, as voted through at Annual Conference in 2017, that some GST should be returned to the local or regional level. However, the exact focus of this remit is different.

The issue around GST was also raised by LGNZ in its February 2015 Funding Review discussion paper, as well as in their submission to the New Zealand Productivity Commission's Local Government Funding and Financing Inquiry that commenced in July 2018.

Hamilton City Council also raised the issue of investigating use of various financing tools that are linked to the growth and development in a council's administrative area in its submission to the Productivity Commission's Local Government Funding and Financing Inquiry. The submission noted that "this could involve councils receiving a set portion of the Government's GST 'take' from their administrative area, or alternatively, a set amount of the total 'spend' in a council's administrative area that is captured as an additional levy to the current GST component, potentially in the form of an increase to the GST rate. Such funding streams should be dedicated to core infrastructure maintenance and enhancement".

4. How the issue relates to objectives in the current Work Programme

The remit is broadly consistent with existing LGNZ policy, but with a slightly different focus.

5. What work or action on the issue has been done and what was the outcome

No formal work undertaken.

6. Outcome of any prior discussion at a Zone or Sector meeting

Not possible in the revised timeframes.

4

Natural hazards and climate change adaptation

- Remit:** That central government undertakes, in collaboration with all of local government, a comprehensive review of the current law relating to natural hazards and climate change adaptation along New Zealand's coastlines, and coordinates the development of a coastline strategy for the whole of New Zealand which would cover: the roles and responsibilities of territorial authorities, regional councils and central government; greater direction on an integrated approach; and development of principles for “who pays”.
- Proposed by:** Hauraki District Council
- Supported by:** Hawke’s Bay Regional Council, Thames-Coromandel District Council; Napier City Council; Hastings District Council; and Northland Regional Council.

Background information and research

1. Nature of the issue

Central government has provided guidance to local government on how to apply a risk-based adaptive approach to planning for climate change in coastal communities. Many councils are now following this guidance and working with their communities using adaptive planning approaches. As these councils look ahead to how adaptive approaches can be implemented, they are encountering limitations in existing legislation and a lack of guidance from central government on the legalities and practicalities of doing so.

Councils report difficulty in determining their respective roles (territorial and regional) and who should do what in the area of managing the risks of natural hazards arising from climate change. Furthermore, they note that there is a lack of direction over who pays for what and who owns/maintains/is liable for any assets that may be required.

Councils also have many unanswered questions around how a managed retreat option should be implemented. For example, where managed retreat is identified as a preferred adaptation option, how should this be undertaken, by who, where should costs fall, whether compensation is payable and if so by whom?

Furthermore, councils see difficulties in how adaptive approaches can be implemented through statutory documents such as District and Long Term Plans, especially as councils are being asked to plan at least 100 years into the future using adaptive approaches which may require rapid implementation (eg in response to a ‘trigger’ event). This combination of long timeframes, deep uncertainty, and potentially rapid action is not well provided for by these documents.

2. Background to its being raised

Beginning in 2014, Hawke's Bay councils (Napier City Council; Hastings District Council; and Hawke's Bay Regional Council) and tangata whenua partnered to develop a Coastal Hazards Strategy that was ultimately the first project of its type to follow the approaches set out in the Ministry for the Environment's coastal hazards guidance (the Guidance). The councils and tangata whenua are now working on the implementation phase of the strategy.

Hauraki District Council are working with Waikato Regional Council, Waikato District Council and Iwi to prepare a community plan (Wharekawa Coast 2120) for the western Firth of Thames area, using a similar approach to the Hawke's Bay Coastal Strategy, and following the Guidance. Hauraki District Council is aware of other work of this nature being undertaken in the Waikato region by Thames-Coromandel and Waikato District Councils, in the Wellington region, and scoping is underway for work in the Northland region.

All of these projects recognise the importance of regional and territorial authorities working collaboratively with their communities to respond to increasing natural hazard risks in coastal areas, due to climate change. These projects are at different stages of development, but eventually will all be facing the same implementation issues.

3. New or confirming existing policy

This remit is a new policy.

4. How the issue relates to objectives in the current Work Programme

This remit raises issues around how local government can practically implement approaches and responses to natural hazards risks in coastal areas developed under the Guidance. These issues are related to LGNZ's policy priorities: Climate Change and Environment (Natural Hazards). In particular, the topics of community resilience and climate future fit, as well as LGNZ's climate change project.

5. What work or action on the issue has been done and what was the outcome

The Ministry for the Environment recently published a case study on challenges with implementing the Hawke's Bay Coastal Strategy. This case study highlights many of the issues identified by this remit and provides more detailed analysis.

The Wharekawa Coast 2120 Joint Working Party (comprising elected members and iwi representatives) recently considered a paper on project implementation funding issues. Discussions regarding this information, and other papers reviewing Deep South Science Challenge research, prompted the preparation of this remit.

Also of relevance to the issues raised by this remit is the Productivity Commission's recent local government funding and financing inquiry.

6. Any existing relevant legislation, policy or practice

The following legislation is considered relevant to the remit: Resource Management Act 1991 and New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010, Local Government Act 2002, Public Works Act 1981, and Building Act 2004.

7. Outcome of any prior discussion at a Zone/Sector meeting

This has not been discussed at zone or sector meetings to date.

8. Suggested course of action envisaged

LGNZ works with central government to prepare a nationwide coastal strategy that provides further direction on an integrated approach to climate change adaptation issues including:

- a. The roles and responsibilities of territorial and regional councils;
- b. How managed retreat should be implemented including funding arrangements and whether compensation is payable and if so by whom;
- c. A protocol for considering how costs for adaptation actions should be allocated both between local government itself (territorial and regional councils), between local and central government, and between public and private beneficiaries;
- d. How adaptive planning approaches should be implemented, for example by providing better linkages between LGA and RMA processes or by potentially new natural hazard risk management and climate change adaptation-specific legislation; and
- e. How councils could be supported to implement appropriate restrictive zoning behind defensive measures to respond to 'moral hazard' issues.

5

Annual regional balance of transfers

- Remit:** That LGNZ work with Treasury, Statistics New Zealand and other government agencies to develop an annual regional balance of transfers to show how much each region contributes in taxes and how much each region receives in government funding.
- Proposed by:** New Plymouth District Council
- Supported by:** Thames-Coromandel District Council; South Taranaki District Council; Hastings District Council; Rangitikei District Council; and Rotorua Lakes Council.

Background information and research

1. Nature of the issue

Regional New Zealand often questions whether the government returns more or less to the region than it receives in tax and other revenue sources. This remit proposes that LGNZ work with relevant government agencies – particularly Treasury and Statistics New Zealand – to develop an annual publication of a regional balance of transfers outlining the inwards and outwards flow of money between the region and the government.

As with many regions, Taranaki has perceived that it has received low investment from government compared to the amount of tax paid by the region. Various attempts have been made to provide an estimate of the gap, however obtaining regional financial information from government agencies has proved difficult. Many agencies cannot provide breakdowns of expenditure and collection of revenue is difficult to obtain at a regional level.

A regional balance of transfers would provide transparency for all of New Zealand and promote more open democracy where inclusiveness and accountability is strengthened. It would enable better performance measurement and the assessment of outputs in a community against that of other regions and New Zealand.

2. Background to its being raised

Attempts to get a clear picture of a regional balance of transfers – identifying what is paid to and received from central government – have been unsuccessful. There is great inconsistency in reporting and data collection between government agencies and a general unwillingness to be open and transparent in what is spent in regions.

Official Information Act requests often generate responses such as “our information is not structured in such a way that would enable the questions to be answered”.

It is recognised that a full set of actual data may not be able to be provided and assumptions will need to be made in some situations, such as when making “overhead allocations” to the regions for national costs of government.

In recent years there has been a greater focus on measuring the performance of local authorities but not of the performance of central government. A regional balance of transfers would be one factor to help measure equity and the performance of government.

A balance of transfers would also go a long way to build trust in government through transparency and accountability of where public money is spent and where it has come from and in decision-making. This data would also be able to be used by government ministers to help monitor the performance and of their portfolios in an open and consistent manner.

According to Treasury, an objective of the Government “is to continually improve public confidence in the tax system and Inland Revenue. The system should help people meet their obligations, be fair, and inspire confidence. The Government is committed to raising revenue in ways that meet these objectives”. It is believed that the gathering and reporting of a regional balance of transfers would greatly assist government in this aim.

3. How the issue relates to objectives in the current Work Programme

This remit is related to the LGNZ and New Zealand Initiative work on localism whereby this data would help ensure that power and authority flows up from citizens and communities, not down from the government.

LGNZ has led the way in the assessment of council performance through the successful CouncilMARK™ programme that provides qualitative assessment of council performance across a wide range of facets. This remit would help LGNZ to do the same for our communities when considering central government performance and equity.

This remit would also contribute to LGNZs six big issues for New Zealand councils – particularly infrastructure and funding, social and economic.

4. What work or action on the issue has been done and what was the outcome

Attempts have been made to gather the required information from government agencies to create a regional balance of transfers. This has been unsuccessful as the data is apparently not gathered.

5. Any existing relevant legislation, policy or practice

The remit seeks LGNZ to work with Treasury, Statistics New Zealand and other government agencies to develop a regional balance of transfers to show how much each region contributes in taxes and how much each region receives in government funding. To be successful, this would require directives to all government agencies to gather data and give it to either Treasury or Statistics New Zealand to compile and report on.

6. Suggested course of action envisaged

This remit suggests that LGNZ work with Treasury, Statistics New Zealand and other government agencies to develop an annual regional balance of transfers that show how much each region contributes in taxes and how much each region receives in government funding. This is likely to require government Ministers to give such a directive.

6

Local Government electoral cycle

Remit:	That the local government electoral cycle be extended from three to four years.
Proposed by:	Northland Regional Council; Rotorua Lakes Council; Whanganui District Council; and Hamilton City Council.
Supported by:	Hastings District Council; Palmerston North City Council; Napier City Council; Manawatū District Council, South Taranaki District Council, Rangitikei District Council

Background information and research

1. Nature of the issue

The election cycle, or term of office, refers to the number of years an elected representative serves between local government elections. In New Zealand, the length of the term of office of a local government elected representative is three years. At a meeting of Northland Regional Council on 18 February 2020, it was agreed to seek formal support for this remit from Zone One as a pre-requisite for proposing at the LGNZ 2020 AGM.

2. Background to its being raised

Northland Regional Council's remit background

Advocates for extending the election cycle to four years would say that a longer electoral term:

- Promotes longer term thinking and decision-making by councillors. An example of this would be a longer electoral cycle would encourage councillors to lengthen their investment horizon when making financial investment decisions;
- Allows for more time to implement a local government vision by extending the productive working time of a council and reducing councillor turnover;
- Gives more time for new councillors to learn and conduct their duties thereby increasing councils' overall productivity as councillors spend more time governing and less time campaigning;
- Reduces voter fatigue and in turn may result in increased voter turnout;
- Reduces the administration costs of setting up and inducting a new council thereby increasing operational efficiency – particularly of governance staff;

- Provides more opportunity to direct energy and provide certainty for longer term planning and more significant activities such as large capital projects;
- More stable decision-making framework for council through greater opportunity for long term planning;
- Enables implementation of longer term council policies within a single term of office;
- Less pressure on new councillors to get up to speed;
- Longer terms have the potential to be more conducive to stable governance; and
- Provides cost savings by reducing the number of elections. The cost of the last election was approximately \$180,000 – a four year cycle would save this complete amount each third electoral cycle.

Opponents would say that:

- A longer electoral term is a barrier to participation as potential councillors must make a longer commitment to their term in office;
- There is additional expense to educate the public of the change as New Zealanders are very accustomed to three year electoral cycles for both local and national government;
- The shorter term enforces more accountability on elected representatives who face getting voted out if they don't perform as expected;
- Elected representatives must engage more frequently with constituents as they seek to stay top of mind for the next election;
- A longer term may be seen by some as reducing accountability as the community must wait a year longer to judge their council's performance through the voting process; and
- A longer time between elections gives voters less opportunity to express their opinions on the performance of their elected officials.

Extending the local government electoral cycle from three to four years would result in local government and central government elections being held in the same year once every three years. If this was considered to be an issue, then the central government electoral cycle could also be extended to four years. Similar advantages and disadvantages to the change would apply.

Rotorua Lakes Council remit background

By international standards, New Zealand's three- year electoral cycle is short. Far more jurisdictions have a four-year term for central government and in most cases, the length of term of office of local government will be the same as that of their central government.

Madden (2013, July 16) notes that "New Zealand is the only liberal democratic country with a unicameral system and a three-year term. Other unicameral democracies with proportional electoral systems – such as Israel, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland, have four year terms."

Boston et al. (2019) state “For decades, numerous politicians, civic leaders and academics have supported extending the term of Parliament to four years. It has been argued that a modest extension of this nature would enhance the capacity for governments to undertake thoroughgoing policy reforms in a more careful, considered, evidence-informed manner...”

The members of the Constitutional Advisory Panel (2013, November) found that while a reasonable proportion of people supported a longer term, others felt that “elections are the best means for voters to hold government to account and should not be made less frequent.”

Those in favour of a four-year term provided the following reasons for their support:

- The ability to take more time to develop and implement policy could result in the public having better information about the intention of policy, to weigh the pros and cons and see results.
- The three-year term was seen as reducing certainty as policies are perceived to change every three years.
- Conversations regularly highlighted that any extension to the term of Parliament would need to be counter-balanced by mechanisms to improve law-making and accountability.

An Australian report (Bennett, 2000) promoting four-year terms for the House of Representatives provided a list of benefits that supporters for a four-year term claim.

Those of relevance to New Zealand Central and Local government include:

- Longer terms would encourage governments to introduce policies that were long-term rather than merely politically expedient.
- Longer terms would enhance business confidence.
- Over time money would be saved by having fewer elections.
- Australians dislike the frequency they are required to vote.
- Longer periods between elections would raise the standard of political debate.

Boston et al. (2019) note that any reforms to the electoral cycle would require public endorsement via a referendum and that the main political challenge would be convincing the public of the desirability of change. They also point to the two referenda held in New Zealand in 1967 and 1990 on increasing the parliamentary term, which were both heavily defeated. The Constitutional Advisory Panel (2013, November).

While achieving public support for change would be a challenge, another commentator (Singh, S., 2019) notes that the composition of New Zealand has changed dramatically since the two referenda. He points out that New Zealand’s migrant population has significantly increased and that “to many...who have lived overseas and seen a five-year parliamentary term, the idea of a three-year cycle, is an intriguing deviation from an experience they have understood as normal.”

While the case for changing the electoral cycle for central government may be stronger, discussion by elected members in local government in New Zealand supports a change to a four-year term for local government also. Their comment is included below.

- The new norm is that there is an expectation that central and local government will work together in partnership. The current three-year electoral cycle is unbalanced. In addition, generally seven out of every ten years is an election year for either local or central government. This is disruptive and short-term political decision-making results.
- In local government, a longer electoral cycle would enable new councillors to be better educated and informed on long term, infrastructure and financial planning. Currently the importance of the Long Term Plan window (ten years) is not well understood in the sector.
- Short-term political decision-making by local government results in uncertainty and a lack of investor confidence. This is also detrimental to the new partnership approach that councils are seeking to develop with their local investors and stakeholders.

Dr Mike Reid notes that for a four-year term for local government to be acceptable to New Zealand citizens, there must be an adequate accountability framework to protect communities. He notes that if local government was to move to a four-year term, there must be a way for citizens to call a new election should the governing body become inoperable. An accountability framework could include a recall provision which would, on the basis of a petition signed by a sufficient number of residents, force a new election, as argued for in the LGNZ manifesto in 2017.

7

Water bottling

- Remit:** That LGNZ works with the Government to:
1. Place a moratorium on applications to take and/or use water for water bottling or bulk export;
 2. Require and enable regional councils to review inactive water bottling consents, with a view to withdrawal of the consent and discourage consent 'banking';
 3. Undertake an holistic assessment of the potential effects of the current industry, its future growth and the legislative settings that enable Councils to effectively manage those effects; and
 4. Initiate a comprehensive nationwide discussion on the issue of water bottling and implement any changes to legislation and policy settings as required.
- Proposed by:** Queenstown-Lakes District Council
- Supported by:** Greater Wellington Regional Council; Tauranga City Council; Thames-Coromandel District Council; Upper Hutt City Council; and Waitaki District Council.

Background information and research

1. Nature of the issue

The water-bottling industry in New Zealand is young and relatively unregulated. A comprehensive review of legislation and policy needs to be developed in order to fully understand and address its potential effects on community wellbeing and resilience.

The sustainability of water bottling and its associated implications for global plastic waste, local property rights and Māori freshwater rights need to be considered. The effects of climate change on groundwater systems are not yet well understood. Further research is required.

The implications of 'banking' water-bottling consents needs to be fully explored. The amount of water bottled reaches 157.8 million litres annually (as at January 2018), however there are consents available to extract 71.575 million litres of water per day for both bottled water and for mixed uses. The consequences of rapid uptake and growth in the industry are unknown, but could artificially raise land values and make access to water unaffordable.

Therefore, where water is unlikely to be bottled, consents should be available to be reviewed, or in the case of mixed-use consents, water bottling removed as a purpose of the water take.

It is timely to reconsider legislation and policy, given many catchments are nearing their allocation limits and the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management is under development.

It is important to note that the intent of this remit is not to impact existing water-bottling operations, nor to make judgements on the merits or otherwise of the industry. The focus of this remit is on obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the industry, its potential for growth, the range of externalities such growth may cause and the policy and legislative settings required to address this.

2. Background to its being raised

The Industry

Large-scale water bottling is a relatively new industry in New Zealand. As a result, there is no clear policy governing the use of water for bottling, and the industry is not specifically regulated. Managing the effects of the industry requires the alignment of a range of interdependent policies and legislative tools that determine who can access water, for what purpose and under what conditions. A review is required to understand how best to co-ordinate these tools.

The value proposition of water bottling has resulted in the 'banking' and sale of water bottling consents, raising the value of land and effectively creating an unregulated market for water. This can lead to confusion between these outcomes and s122(1) RMA which states that a resource consent is neither real nor personal property. This issue is exacerbated by increasing demand for water, the fact that many catchments are at or approaching full allocation, and the extent to which some regional plans enable existing water consents to be varied to enable water bottling. As the future utilisation of water will become increasingly competed for, understanding what our communities' priorities for this resource are must be fully debated and understood.

Any review needs to also consider the value and reliance placed on consents by owners and operators, and the impact on established property rights, which will need to be addressed.

Overseas Interests

Since 2013, New Zealand Trade & Enterprise (NZTE) has promoted investment in eight water bottling companies through its Focus 700 Group programme, to support the growth of water exports (although NZTE no longer encourages the sale of NZ's water). It is worth noting that certain provisions of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) make it unclear whether NZ drinking water suppliers can be prioritised to ensure NZ communities will always have access to affordable clean drinking water.

Under the OIA foreign investment in NZ's water cannot be managed effectively as water is not defined as a 'sensitive' asset. Treasury has confirmed that our existing free trade agreements do not allow the creation of new classes of sensitive assets.

Therefore, foreign investment in water bottling can only be limited where the water is to be extracted from sensitive land and only if the 'good character' or 'benefit to NZ' tests are not met.

In 2018 Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) Minister Eugenie Sage was unable to decline Cresswell NZ's application to purchase of sensitive land for a water bottling plant. She stated that the provisions of the Overseas Investment Act prevented her declining the application. Subsequently, the government has proposed amendments to the OIA6 that (if enacted) will allow applications involving the extraction of water for bottling to be declined if they are likely to result in a negative impact on water quality or sustainability.

Community Sentiment and Maori Cultural Values

New Zealand has demonstrated community concern in relation to water bottling in recent years, presenting petitions and participating in protests on a number of occasions.

On the matter of water export and Maori cultural values, Ngati Awa has appealed the Environment Court Decision arguing that the application is "for too much water to be sold too far away" (at [35]). Their position is that in these circumstances te mauri o te wai and their tangata whenua right to act as kaitiaki of the water are lost.

Waste and Plastic

On the matter of plastic production, it is unclear under which vehicle this can be managed. In the Minority Judgement of the Environment Court against Cresswell NZ (10 December 2019), Commissioner David Kernohan found (at [346]) that "the pollution created from the production and specifically end use disposal of plastic water bottles does not meet the objectives and policies of the RMA". However, the Majority of the Court found that the end uses of the water which involved putting the water in plastic bottles were found to be "ancillary activities which are not controlled under the Regional Plan" and that there had been "no suggestion that control of such activities comes within the ambit of the functions of the regional council under s30RMA" (at[64]).

Impact on Local Government

The effects of the water bottling industry on local councils, as water suppliers and as the owners of transport networks, may be significant and there are a number of examples of this being the case. However, their ability to submit and appeal may be limited by notification provisions.

There are currently three appeals before the High Court. These challenge applications for consent in Belfast and Otakiri and deal with questions related to the allocation of water for water bottling including the ability to consider the effects of plastic bottle production as an end-use of water, the effects of water export on te mauri o te wai and kaitiaki rights under Te Tiriti and the correct process for changing the purpose of a water take.

A levy on water bottling is a response to perceived issues of fairness but this policy could itself have unintended consequences if implemented in isolation and without an assessment of the kind proposed by this remit.

QLDC is therefore proposing comprehensive policy and legislation based on consultation with councils and the community.

3. New or confirming existing policy

This Remit represents a new policy position for LGNZ and for central government.

4. How the issue relates to objectives in the current Work Programme

This remit could accelerate the debate on water allocation and highlight any issues within the RMA and/or the NPS-FM. This could significantly influence the existing LGNZ programme of work in relation to strategic and policy advice to Central Government.

The results may feed into Stage 2 of the reform of the RMA as well as LGNZ's Water 2050 project which could lead to changes that ensure communities are resilient in the face of climatic changes that will impact productive land and water bodies, including sources of drinking water.

The following matters may be raised in delivery of the current work programme in relation to this remit:

Resource Management Act

- Adding consideration of the effects of plastic production to the RMA as a Part 2 matter of national importance.
- Adding effects on Climate Change to the RMA as a Part 2 matter of national importance.
- Greater use of regional councils' powers under s30 RMA to allocate water amongst competing activities with a view to:
 - Zoning water and controlling its use in the same way land use is controlled.
 - Using water allocation as a tool to incentivise resilience and sustainable outcomes.
 - Protecting our deep, clean aquifer water for domestic and community supply.
- Reviewing the provisions governing the variation and transferability of water permits and the effects of those on consent holders' rights as well as the possibility for unregulated water markets.

National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management Development

- Redefining 'efficient allocation' in the draft NPS-FM and regional plans so that when councils are deciding "how to improve and maximise the efficient allocation of water" and identifying in "methods to encourage the efficient use of water"¹² within regional plans, it is clear they are seeking to not only maximise jobs and minimise 'waste', but also to maximise the wider economic, social, cultural, environmental and health benefits of water allocation.
- Re-wording Policy 4 of the draft NPS-FM and the policies for implementing integrated management of land and freshwater (at 3.4 (1) to (4))¹³. The proposed approach is one directional, considering only the effects of land use on fresh water. Rewording these policies may lead to more efficient and sustainable allocation of water.

5. What work or action on the issue has been done and what was the outcome

QLDC wrote to Minister Parker in February requesting a moratorium on new and existing water bottling consents. This was written in support of an initial proposal by Upper Hutt City Council.

6. Any existing relevant legislation, policy or practice

Existing legislation, policy and practice reflects a complex landscape where far greater alignment is required if effective regulation and understanding is to be achieved.

There is some concern that a levy implemented in isolation may not address the issues that communities and local councils will be faced with if the industry grows. Concerns have also been raised that a levy may incentivise or prioritise the grant of water bottling consents as a result of the revenue stream that would be created.

Section 30 RMA 14 provides regional councils with the power to add rules to their plans to allocate water amongst competing activities, in much the same way as district councils can zone land and prioritise, discourage, prohibit or otherwise control different land uses. This power has not been exercised to any great extent to date. Regional Councils have preferred to allocate water on a 'first complete application, first assessed' basis in line with case law, and to grant consent as long as the water 'take' is sustainable and the purpose reflects efficient use. However, in theory, regional councils could undertake a broader assessment of the effects of using water for bottling, and then either prioritise, discourage or prohibit water bottling (across whole catchments or for specified water bodies or depths).

Christchurch's ground water zones are by and large fully allocated and new applications to take water are prohibited. Consent holders have been applying to Environment Canterbury to vary existing industrial and irrigation consents to enable water bottling. There is no ability to use s127 due to the activity being outside the scope of the original applications.

The process being used to vary the consents involves the grant of a new 'use' consent. Whether this process is lawful under the RMA and the Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan, will be determined by the Court. This highlights the difficulty for planners implementing resource management provisions that are unclear and inadequate in terms of managing the allocation of water in fully allocated catchments. Three consents have been varied in this way and a fourth is being processed.

Plan changes of this nature would come at significant cost to the ratepayer and could not be implemented quickly. Signalling such a plan change might trigger a wave of applications. Therefore, and given that this is an issue that will affect all councils (albeit in different ways), the best way forward is likely to be a moratorium on new consents followed by a review or discussion covering the matters set out below. Any significant policy changes could be required to be implemented via Schedule 1 and an amendment to the NPS-FM, but only if a clear problem is identified and only after consultation with LGNZ and Councils.

The Overseas Investment Amendment Bill (No 3) also references water bottling and this is now with the Select Committee Finance and Expenditure (submissions closing 31 August 2020). Currently the Amendment Bill reads that if overseas investment in sensitive land involves the extraction of water for bottling or other extraction in bulk for human consumption, then an additional factor of the benefit to NZ test would be whether the overseas investment is likely to result in a negative impact on water quality or sustainability. If enacted this would not apply to all investments in water bottling plants by overseas interests.

7. Outcome of any prior discussion at a Zone/Sector meeting

Not considered by a Zone or sector meeting.

8. Suggested course of action envisaged

That LGNZ works with the Government to:

- Place a moratorium on applications to take and/or use water for water bottling or bulk export;
- Require and enable regional councils to review inactive water bottling consents, with a view to withdrawal of the consent and discourage consent 'banking';
- Undertake a holistic assessment of the potential effects of the current industry, its future growth and the legislative settings that enable Councils to effectively manage those effects.
- Initiate a comprehensive nationwide discussion on the issue of water bottling and implement any changes to legislation and policy settings as required.

8

Quorum when attending local authority meetings

Remit:	That LGNZ requests central government amend legislation to enable elected or appointed members, connecting remotely to a public council meeting, be included in the quorum. This would provide an option for local authority meetings to be held completely remotely, if required.
Proposed by:	Waikato District Council
Supported by:	Hamilton City Council; Hauraki District Council; Thames-Coromandel District Council; Taupō District Council; Ōtorohanga District Council; South Waikato District Council; Waipa District Council; and Waitomo District Council.

Background information and research

1. Nature of the issue

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, legislation required that members had to be physically present at a meeting to be included in the quorum. Under the LGNZ template Standing Orders, members attending by audio or audio-visual means can participate and vote on matters presented at meetings.

To enable public meetings to continue during COVID-19, the COVID-19 Response (Urgent Management Measures) Legislation Act 2020 (the COVID-19 Act) amended sections of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) and Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

These amendments included:

- Local authority or committee members who join a meeting by audio or audio-visual means were counted for the purpose of a quorum.
- Open public meetings to be livestreams, where reasonably practicable to do so.
- Provide either an audio or video recording, or written summary, of the open public meetings on the local authority's website as soon as practicable after the meeting.

For many councils, this has provided an opportunity to adopt an innovative approach to hold public meetings, resulting in benefits for local government democratic processes, financial and resource efficiencies and environmental improvements (detailed further below).

This remit requests that the legislative amendments introduced for COVID-19 are retained (beyond the term of the Epidemic Preparedness (COVID-19) Notice 2020) as an option for local authorities to adopt via their Standing Orders.

For clarity, the remit:

- Contemplates that:
 - Members attending meetings by audio or audio-visual link are still entitled to participate and vote on agenda items; and
 - Requests to attend a meeting by audio or audio visual link should still be made to the Chairperson, for his/her approval, prior to the meeting, as detailed in the LGNZ template Standing Orders;
- Does not propose that meetings where a quorum (or more) of members attends remotely become the only or dominant means to hold local authority meetings; simply that this is retained as an option for each council to consider using via its Standing Orders; and
- Supports the retention of the COVID-19 LGOIMA amendments to protect transparency and public access to local authority meetings.

2. Background to its being raised

The LGA was amended in 2014 to enable members to join a meeting by audio or audio-visual link, subject to certain procedural requirements being met and the local authority's Standing Orders permitting such remote attendance. However, only members physically present are to be counted toward the meeting's quorum. For council meetings, this requires:

- Half of the members to be physically present (if the number of members, including vacancies, is even); or
- A majority of members to be physically present if the number of members (including vacancies) is odd.

The COVID-19 Act was enacted in response to the restrictions imposed on the New Zealand population, including travel prohibition and social distancing. The COVID-19 Act's amendments to the LGA and LGOIMA (noted above) meant public meetings could be undertaken entirely by remote means (ie audio or audio-visual), subject to certain requirements to protect public access and transparency of local authority meetings. In particular, all members of a local authority or committee could attend remotely and be included in the quorum for a meeting (rather than having to be physically present at a specified meeting venue). These legislative amendments will be repealed on the expiry or revocation of the Epidemic Preparedness (COVID-19) Notice 20201.

The remit's proposal is made in a climate of uncertainty about the long-term impacts of the global pandemic, including financially for communities and councils alike, as well as the opportunities and flexibility that the legislative amendments have brought for local authorities and their respective communities in relation to public meetings.

3. New or confirming existing policy

This remit supports LGNZ's existing policy framework around local democracy and the environment, in particular. No new policy work is required.

4. How the issue relates to objectives in the current Work Programme

The remit supports some of LGNZ's key policy priorities:

Local democracy

- Remote meetings help with LGNZ's goals of reinvigorating local democracy and modernising local government legislation.
- Wider public access to local authority and committee meetings, with potential of a significant increase in members of the public able to view livestreamed coverage compared to travelling to attend a meeting. This is a particular benefit for local authorities with large geographic boundaries or that have a significant rural resident population.
- The wider reach of livestreamed meetings also enhances community engagement and understanding of local government, which may have a positive effect on voter participation at local authority elections.
- The public still being able to participate in open public meetings, if required, via audio-visual tools available.
- Supporting more diversity in representation as this would facilitate people who are unable to travel or be present in person because of workload, family commitments, disability or other factors.

Climate change

- Enabling members and communities to adapt towards a low carbon economy through reduction in travel.

5. What work or action on the issue has been done and what was the outcome

With the advance of COVID-19 Act changes, local authorities have been required to implement, and benefitted from, innovative ways to continue holding public meetings while maintaining the public's access to local government decision-making. This has been able to be achieved at minimal cost to local authorities, which may not otherwise be in a position to put in place more high-tech options for live-streaming of meetings from council offices. As a result, for some councils, returning to a requirement for a quorum to be physically present at all meetings will be a 'step backwards'.

In addition to the advantages already canvassed, providing an option for local authorities to have a quorum (or more) of members attending meetings remotely has resulted in:

- More efficient use of members' time (eg reduction in travel required) for their other roles and responsibilities; and
- Reduced operating costs associated with holding public meetings at council premises.

6. Any existing relevant legislation, policy or practice

The current, temporary legislative framework that has enabled greater utilisation of remote meetings has been noted above. The remit proposes that the legislative amendments to the LGA and LGOIMA are embedded permanently, with each council having the option of incorporating this framework in its Standing Orders (similar to that contemplated under clause 25A(1)(a), Schedule 7, LGA).

7. Outcome of any prior discussion at a Zone/Sector meeting

The issues in this remit have been discussed at the Waikato Mayoral Forum.

8. Suggested course of action envisaged

LGNZ is to:

- Work with central government and relevant stakeholders to advocate for legislative changes to the LGA and LGOIMA, enabling a quorum (or more) of members to attend a public local authority meeting remotely; and
- Update the Standing Orders template to reflect the proposed legislative changes, which each local authority can adopt as an alternative option to holding 'in person' meetings.

9

Use of macrons by local authorities

Remit:	That LGNZ work with central government to put in place a simplified process for the addition of macrons to council names if requested by that council or its community.
Proposed by:	Waipa District Council
Supported by:	Zone Two

Background information and research

1. Nature of the issue

Waipā is proposing that LGNZ work with central government to address the issue of the use of macrons by local authorities through legislative or other reform. Local authorities are corporate bodies created by statute under the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA), the legal names are listed in Schedule 2 of the LGA which can only be changed through rather complex legislative processes. Councils are not able to have trading names in the way that companies do, but some councils use a 'trading name' for the name or brand that the council prefers to operate under, which is different from the legal name in the LGA.

This is not uncommon, for instance, Kapiti Coast District Council trades as the Kāpiti Coast District Council, the Rotorua District Council trades as the Rotorua Lakes Council and the Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Council trades as the Horizons Regional Council.

There are some particular situations where Council needs to use its legal names (eg legal proceedings, contracts, invoices, etc) but other than that, it can use a trading name, for example for branding and signage.

2. Background to its being raised

To date, changes to local authority names to include macrons have resulted from applications to the New Zealand Geographic Board, which can alter the name of a district if the local authority consents to (third parties can apply), or requests the alteration. There is no fee for the request but a council will incur costs in preparing an application by undertaking research and preparing evidence to support the application (such as evidence of consultation with local Iwi).

Consideration of applications can take one to two years and involve the Geographic Board undertaking consultation on the matter. Any opposition is referred to the Minister for Land Information for decision. If the application is successful, then there will be a formal change in name for the district and the Government is obligated to instigate an Order in Council process to change the name in Schedule 2 of the LGA.

There are three councils which have gone through this process in the last two-three years. The Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Council applied to change its own name (to include the macron and adding an 'h' in to "Whanganui"). The two other changes for Ōpōtiki and Ōtorohanga District Councils resulted from applications by the Office of Treaty Settlements as part of settlement agreements with local iwi.

Other councils, including Waipā use macrons but for which there is no macron in the legal name, as follows:

- Kaikōura District Council;
- Kāpiti Coast District Council;
- Rangatīkei District Council;
- Taupō District Council; and
- Whakatāne District Council.

There are other councils which could include macrons but which do not currently use them and for which there is no macron in their legal name. For this reason, Waipā District Council considers that this matter has implications for the local government sector as a whole and that it would not be efficient or cost effective for councils to individually go through the legislative processes to change a name. Perhaps the use of a macron could be managed at a national level through a change for example to the LGA.

3. Suggested course of action envisaged

Based on legal advice from Simpson Grierson, there are five potential options for addressing this issue at a national level as follows:

- Option 1: New Zealand Geographic Board could proactively change the names of districts and regions.
- Option 2: The Minister of Local Government could recommend local authority name changes that involve the addition of the macron (no legislative reform required for either of these options).
- Option 3: Parliament could amend Schedule 2 of the LGA to change all local authority names that should include macrons.
- Option 4: Parliament could amend Schedule 2 of the LGA to change the names of self-elected local authorities who wish to include macrons in their names.
- Option 5: Parliament could insert a new section in the LGA to provide that use of a local authority name, or a district or region name, with the addition of a macron, is lawful and will not invalidate any action.

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages associated with each of these options. It is more appropriate that LGNZ assess the options and any other possible options and explore them further with central government. Waipā District Council passed the following resolution at its meeting on 31 March 2020 in relation to using a macron and in particular to a proposed LGNZ Remit:

That –

- a) The ‘Use of Macron in Local Authorities Names’ report (document number 10374311) of Jennie McFarlane, Legal Counsel be received;
- b) Council adopt a trading name of “Waipā District Council” incorporating the use of a macron to reflect correct pronunciation, which may be used in all circumstances other than when the legal name of Council under the Local Government Act 2002 and other local government legislation is required to be used;
- c) Council approve taking a remit to the next Annual General Meeting of Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ), whenever that is held, requesting that LGNZ work with central government to address the use of macrons and changes to the names of local authorities, through legislative or other reform, in the interests of the local government sector and the wider community, in accordance with the process required by LGNZ for remits;
- d) Council to approve seeking support at the next Zone Two meeting or directly, from other local authorities in New Zealand for the proposed remit as required by the LGNZ remit process; and
- e) Council undertake further consultation with Waikato Tainui.

10

Rates rebates for low income property owners

Remit: That the Government lift the level of rates rebates available for low and fixed income property owners – with yearly increases taking into account the cost for inputs into local government services.

Proposed by: Whanganui District Council

Supported by: Palmerston North City Council; Napier City Council; Manawatū District Council; South Taranaki District Council; and Rangitikei District Council.

Background information and research

1. Nature of the issue

The following issues have been identified:

- (a) The level of rates rebates for low and fixed income property owners as a proportion of rates has gradually reduced for those on low and fixed incomes.
- (b) This level of support has not kept pace with the cost of living and provides significant financial hardship for some members of the community.
- (c) This level of support has not kept pace with the benchmark for council costs and provides significant financial hardship for some members of the community.

2. Background to its being raised

The rates rebate scheme is a partial refund for people who pay rates to their council, providing financial relief for low income residents who own their own home. This is funded by central government through the Department of Internal Affairs. A person who directly pays local authority rates, and meets the household income criteria, is currently eligible for a rates rebate of up to \$640.

In 2006 the rates rebate was significantly increased and over the last decade there have been incremental yearly adjustments, however, these have lagged behind CPI increases. A further small boost to the scheme was introduced in 2019 – lifting the rate from \$630 to \$640 and the income abatement threshold from \$25,180 to \$25,660.

As local authority costs have increased above that of inflation, this has resulted in local authorities either needing to increase rates or reduce existing levels of service. The effect of this is that, over time, the level of rates rebates as a proportion of the total local authority rates has significantly decreased.

This issue is of particular concern for low and fixed income property owners who may be experiencing housing stress, notwithstanding the fact that they may own their own family home mortgage-free (eg superannuitants).

As at 2 March 2020 the Department of Internal Affairs had approved payments for 103,367 applications – a total of \$60,201,285 (GST inclusive).¹

Table 1: Increase in rates rebate, CPI and local authority costs from 2010 to 2020

Year	Max Rebate	% Change	CPI (Stats NZ)	Difference between CPI and Max Rebate increases	Benchmark for local authority costs (Berl)	Difference between local authority costs and Max Rebate increases
2010/11	\$ 570	3.64%	5.35%	-1.72%	2.28%	1.36%
2011/12	\$ 580	1.75%	9.51%	-7.76%	3.05%	-1.30%
2012/13	\$ 590	1.72%	7.23%	-5.51%	1.94%	-0.21%
2013/14	\$ 595	0.85%	1.64%	-0.79%	1.68%	-0.83%
2014/15	\$ 605	1.68%	3.80%	-2.12%	2.09%	-0.41%
2015/16	\$ 610	0.83%	4.28%	-3.45%	1.29%	-0.47%
2016/17	\$ 610	0.00%	1.74%	-1.74%	1.49%	-1.49%
2017/18	\$ 620	1.64%	1.48%	0.16%	1.88%	-0.25%
2018/19	\$ 630	1.61%	1.67%	-0.05%	2.77%	-1.16%
2019/20	\$ 640	1.58%				

3. New or confirming existing policy

This remit would build on existing policy and would require the level of rates rebate to increase, with yearly adjustments taking into account the cost increases for inputs into local government services.

¹ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/119883361/productivity-commission-recommends-scrapping-rates-rebate-scheme>
Retrieved 12 March 2020.

The Productivity Commission suggests that: “the rates rebate scheme is poorly targeted and unfair”. It recommends that it be replaced with a national rates postponement programme, or that the scheme at least shift to being online. Local Government Minister Nanaia Mahuta has indicated that the government is carefully considering the recommendations.

4. How the issue relates to objectives in the current Work Programme

‘Social’ is one of LGNZ’s five policy priorities. This focuses on disparity, housing issues and ageing communities:

“Social: Working alongside central government and iwi to address social issues and needs in our communities, including an aging population, disparity between social groups, housing (including social housing) supply and quality, and community safety.”

5. What work or action on the issue has been done and what was the outcome

This remit was originally prepared in 2018 and submitted for consideration. The LGNZ Remits Committee reviewed this and referred it instead to officials to raise with the Productivity Commission as part of the review of local government funding.

The Productivity Commission has since recommended that the government remove the rates rebate system and replace it with a national scheme for postponing rates. The Commission considered that central government is in the best position to tackle pressures on low-income households facing high housing pressures and the current scheme is inequitable, as well as administratively ‘cumbersome’ and modest in its approach (amounting to little over \$12 a week).

This has not found favour with many groups – particularly those who advocate for older New Zealanders. For example, the national president of Grey Power has stated that the organisation “absolutely disagreed” with abolishing the scheme. In addition, a local association (Tauranga and Western Bay of Plenty) submission to the Commission recommended a resetting of the maximum rebate to restore it to previous levels and to align this with cost of living increases. This suggested a maximum rebate of \$1,000 – indexed each year by the average rate increase across the country.

6. Any existing relevant legislation, policy or practice

Rates Rebate Act 1973

- Provides for a rates rebate on local council rates by a specified amount each year, dependant on income.
- Since 2008 the specified amount has been adjusted each year through Orders in Council.
- 2019/20 – Maximum rebate - \$640.

Accommodation Supplement

- Available for very low incomes.

7. Outcome of any prior discussion at a Zone/Sector meeting

With the relevant Zone meeting postponed, support was sought from councils directly. The following councils endorse this remit:

- Palmerston North City Council;
- Napier City Council;
- Manawatū District Council;
- South Taranaki District Council; and
- Rangitikei District Council.

8. Suggested course of action envisaged

That LGNZ pursue an increase in the rates rebate for low income property owners and that this should match ongoing cost increases for local government.

9. Discussion and conclusion

The affordability of rates is not just a question of the quantum of rates and charges but also the ratio of rates and charges relative to income. The rates rebate scheme was introduced in 1974 and was designed to provide assistance to low income residential ratepayers. Over the longer term the quantum of the rates rebate has generally matched CPI, however, this ignores the fact that local authority core inputs are rising well above those of core inflation. Furthermore, over time the Act has not kept pace with the changing nature of tenure or technology. It is requested that the Government lift the level of rates rebates available for low and fixed income property owners.

11

Local Government's CO2 emissions

Remit:	That the Government implement an independent scheme, based on the United Kingdom model operated by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, to measure and report on carbon emissions at a district level.
Proposed by:	Whanganui District Council
Supported by:	Palmerston North City Council; Napier City Council; South Taranaki District Council; Hastings City Council; and Horizons Regional Council.

Background information and research

1. Nature of the issue

The following issues with the current system have been identified:

- There is no national standard for reporting on carbon emissions at a district or regional level.
- The system lacks incentives, structures and information sharing mechanisms that would enable and encourage local government authorities, regional economic development agencies and individual businesses to:
 - Identify best practice in similar regions; and
 - Undertake targeted work that prioritises the reduction of their CO2 emissions.
- The proposal that large energy users publish Corporate Energy Transition plans as outlined in MBIE's Discussion Document: *Accelerating Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency*, will only address these concerns to a limited degree.

2. Background to its being raised

New Zealand is committed to both domestic and international climate change progress. As a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, progress towards meeting our commitments is documented in New Zealand's National Communication and Biennial Reports.

These summarise New Zealand's domestic greenhouse gas emissions profile, climate change policies and measures, our support for developing countries, and progress on implementing our obligations under the UNFCCC. At present, New Zealand is not meeting its international targets and further actions need to be taken.

A feature of our national psyche is the pride New Zealanders place on performing above our weight in the sporting arena. There is significant, untapped potential for the nation's competitive streak to be harnessed in pursuit of fulfilling our climate change mitigation ambitions. Developing and reporting on an externally administered measure of each district's progress in reducing its climate impact in terms of CO2 outputs is one such way of doing this.

3. New or confirming existing policy

The remit may require minor amendment to the Local Government Act to ensure that information that is needed for calculations to be made is required to be produced at specified intervals.

4. How the issue relates to objectives in the current Work Programme

This remit directly aligns with LGNZ's 'Environment' policy priority. In particular, it supports the Climate Change Project and is related to Outcome three: "A local government view on emission reduction targets for New Zealand, and how to achieve these."

It assists with the following project deliverable: "Support councils to take action to mitigate the impacts of climate change, and encourage greater action by their communities on contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions."

5. What work or action on the issue has been done and what was the outcome

No work has been undertaken specifically on this. However, the proposed model recommends use of the United Kingdom's approach, which is administered by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2017>

The United Kingdom Greenhouse Gas inventory (GHGI) is compiled annually and reported on an end-user basis using international best practice guidance, drawing on a variety of National Statistics and sector specific data sources.

This is a technically complex statistical analysis which individual local authorities would be unable to replicate, but provides consistent inventories and emissions projections of greenhouse gases and air quality pollutants.

The credibility of the report allows the results to be reported each year to the UNFCCC and the European Monitoring Mechanism Regulation (MMR). It is also used to assess compliance with the United Kingdom's domestic and international emissions.

The model has been used since 2005 and provides: "an important body of information [for] local authorities (LAs) and other relevant organisations to help identify high emitting sources of CO2 and energy intensive sectors, monitor changes in CO2 emissions over time and to help design carbon reduction strategies." (Local and Regional Carbon Dioxide Emissions Estimates for 2005–2017 for the UK Technical Report:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812146/Local_authority_CO2_technical_report_2017.pdf)

Over the period for which this model has been used, and where figures are currently available (2005-17), emissions have decreased in all regions of, and for all 391 local authorities, in the United Kingdom. A scan of local authorities suggests that performing well on these measures is a key ambition that drives decision-making for many of these bodies.

6. Any existing relevant legislation, policy or practice

- Local Government Act 2002.
- Climate Change Response Act 2002.
- Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019.

7. Outcome of any prior discussion at a Zone/Sector meeting

With the relevant Zone meeting postponed, support was sought from councils directly. The following councils endorse this remit:

- Palmerston North City Council;
- Napier City Council;
- South Taranaki District Council;
- Hastings District Council; and
- Horizons Regional Council.

8. Suggested course of action envisaged

That a suitable government department be tasked with:

- (a) Analysing and publishing each district's carbon emissions, in order to provide the most reliable and consistent possible breakdown of CO2 emissions across the country; and
- (b) Publishing interactive local authority level emissions maps that allow users to zoom in to any district and see the emissions for the area, as well as identify the significant point sources. Such maps should be possible to filter by different sectors, to view how emissions have changed across the time series so that areas of best practice can be identified.

This system would provide incentives, structures and low cost information sharing mechanisms that would enable and encourage local government authorities, regional economic development agencies and individual businesses to identify best practice in similar regions or businesses. It would also encourage them to undertake targeted work to reduce their CO2 emissions.

9. Discussion and conclusion

This proposal aligns with New Zealand's international commitments, our national direction and LGNZ's work programme in terms of the mitigation of climate change. It is a system that has been shown to have positive benefits in the United Kingdom and leverages existing characteristics of New Zealanders to achieve these collective goals.

Remits not going to AGM

The Remit Screening Committee's role is to ensure that remits referred to the AGM are relevant, significant in nature and require agreement from the membership. In general, proposed remits that are already LGNZ policy, are already on the LGNZ work programme or technical in nature will be referred directly to the National Council for their action. Remits that fail to meet criteria will be declined.

1. Chief Executive remuneration

Remit: That LGNZ works with central government to investigate the potential of a centralised and independent organisation (such as the State Services Commission or the Remuneration Authority) to establish recommended remuneration levels/packages of local government chief executives.

Proposed by: Hamilton City Council

Supported by: Tauranga City Council; Waipa District Council; Tasman District Council; and Napier City Council.

Recommendation: That the remit is referred to the National Council for consideration.

2. Loans for low cost housing

Remit: That the Government provide interest-free loans to support the delivery of new low cost housing by relevant agencies, including councils, and that central government consider any additional mechanisms that would support councils and other relevant community agencies to respond to the housing crisis.

Proposed by: Whanganui District Council

Supported by: Palmerston North City Council; Napier City Council; Manawatū District Council; South Taranaki District Council; and Hastings District Council.

Recommendation: That the remit is declined on the basis that it is largely the same as the social housing remit adopted in 2019.