

Meeting Notes – Landscapes Reference Group – 21st December (7.00 - 9.00pm)

Summary of discussion points:

1. Planning & Statutory Context

Discussion about what happens once provisions have been notified including that a panel of accredited hearing commissioners (certified through the Ministry for the Environment) will make recommendations on the provisions in relation to the submissions.

Confirmed that PC48 very much in a pre-consultation phase and that there is some ability to amend the draft chapter released in early 2021.

Discussion about why we have separate requirements for landscapes and biodiversity? Why not only biodiversity? Explanation of the separate requirements of the RMA and Wellington Regional Policy Statement to identify and protect landscapes.

Query about whether the focus of the group can go beyond protection and include restoration of landscapes? Members all agree the areas have value with a community feel and want this protected, but just want to clarify how this has been mapped

Discussion about making changes to district plan provisions once they have been included in the District Plan. For example, if one SAL rule needed to be changed. Explanation that any changes would require a plan change using the public process set out in the RMA, rules can't just be "slipped in".

2. Landscape Assessment

Discussion about the definition of landscape. There is no definition on landscape in the RMA and the definition and interpretation of outstanding landscapes has been decided by courts over time and evolving through caselaw. The dictionary definition is vague and outdated in this context.

Discussion about how the landscape assessment was done and how the areas were identified. There was a technical assessment undertaken which included identifying the following methodology:

1. Identify Landscape types
2. Identify Natural, heritage and management environments
3. Identify Landscape character areas
4. Undertake Landscape significance research
5. Undertake ONFL and SAL assessment

Discussion about how a special amenity landscape is identified, using the example of the "Akatarawa Pass" SAL (Akatarawa map). Explanation that the technical assessment based on the methodology (above) which includes the three factors, and is consistent with RPS requirements. Concern about the completeness of the assessment and assumptions made in it. Overall, it appears vague and subjective.

Concern that the assessment was made in 2018 and not shared with the landowners until 2020. The group would like to see more detail around the science and why and how for each area.

Concern about the names for SAL & ONFL used in the assessment and the extent of some landscapes. Further discussion about alternatives to be considered in a future meeting. Feedback on the extent or name is appropriate and can be considered as part of the process.

In relation to the Akatarawa Valley there is confusion about the multiple landscapes identified as SAL or ONFL as members consider the landscape is all the same throughout the whole valley

Discussion about areas that have a jurisdictional border with other councils (ie: Kapiti). Some Councils have already been through the process and possibly these areas have been amended due to feedback and submissions. Noted that each region differs in relation to ONFL's as each region has their own unique landscapes

Question was raised around discussions with Tangata Whenua, who was involved and what was the outcome of these discussions?

Discussed that any information the community has about the areas is helpful to define areas and achieve what the RMA requires.

3. The provisions

Proposed changes have been discussed within the group and by members with their communities or neighbours and there is some confusion around the draft plan change provisions and what it means for the landowners.

The group members have identified that intergenerational living needs to be provided for and is important to many. Some people want to have a second household but not necessarily subdivide.

Discussion about having the group focus on what the implications of the provisions are on these identified landscape areas. Members are concerned what restrictions the SALs might bring for development or subdivision. there was concern about restrictions that could be a burden for landowners and what changes could mean financially.

The group agreed to continuing this discussion at their next meeting.