

A dark bird, possibly a New Zealand Kōwhiri, is perched on a branch of a tree with reddish-brown flowers. The bird is facing right, and its head is tilted down towards the flowers. The background is a clear, light blue sky. The text is overlaid on the lower left portion of the image.

Waikato District Councillor Workshop

Draft Taiao (Nature) in the Waikato Strategy

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13 March 2023

Recap and Setting the scene

Recap on the foundations of reviewing the Strategies

**What it means for the strategy and councils obligations,
NPS-Indigenous Biodiversity implications**

Key Stakeholder Engagement

Introducing the Vision, Goals

Go over the five Actions

Monitoring and Review

Implementation

Why (Conservation)

1. To translate the **Council's vision** for livable, connected, thriving communities into a **biodiversity strategy focusing on conservation and nature (Taiao)**
2. To ensure that WDC has a clear updated **strategy** when conserving its natural ecosystems with actions that engage our **community** (*make decisions that are aligned to a vision and strategy*)
3. Lead and partner with indigenous biodiversity initiatives, by incentivising good conservation outcomes
4. Support and broker Taiao in the Waikato with the community, landowners, iwi and businesses
5. This will be a minor strategy under the Strategic Planning Framework (potential to raise it up in the future)

Outcomes if change to existing strategy

Short term:

- Rationalising all conservation-related strategies, higher-level values for parks/reserves
- Supporting traditional land use while championing opportunities for conservation
- Incorporating actions from our Blueprints and developing greener and more resilient Taiao areas (private and public)
- The actions needed to protect what we have and help restore indigenous biodiversity in urban and rural areas. Focus on remnant opportunities.

Medium-long term:

- Highlighting the opportunities of conservation to the community and landowners
- Advocate on behalf of landowners both nationally and regionally for acknowledgement and relief (incentives) for conservation efforts (e.g., Protected bush provides carbon sequestration and biodiversity)
- Help community groups coordinate labour, funding and monitoring of their work
- Educate our communities and Mokopuna (youth)

International Legislation
United Nations Convention on Biodiversity 1992
Sustainable Development Goal – 15 (Life on Land)



National Legislation

- **Resource Management Act 1991**
- **Draft National Policy Statement Indigenous Biodiversity 2021**
- **National Environmental Standards – Freshwater**
- **Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020**
- **Biosecurity Act 1993**
- **Reserves Act 1977**
- **Environmental Protection Authority Act 2011**
- **RMA Reform**



Regional Legislation, Plans and Policies

- **Waikato Regional Policy Statement and Coastal Plan**
- **Waikato Regional Biodiversity Strategy**
- **Regional Pest Management Plan**



Taiao in the Waikato 2023
(Strategy)



Regulatory documents
• **Waikato District Plan (Operative and Proposed)**



Blueprints and priority areas for conservation



Other Council Policy/Strategies

- **Waikato 2070**
- **Open Space strategies**
- **Trails and walkways**
- **Reserves Management Plans**
- **District Tree Policy**



Conservation Funding Review

- **SNAs**
- **Conservation Covenants**
- **QEII covenants**
- **Regional Funding opportunities**



- **Environmental Defence Society**
- **Forest and Bird**
- **River Authority**
- **Iwi Management Plans**

Changes around indigenous biodiversity – Covering the Waikato District Blueprints and esplanades

To protect and strengthen the district's Indigenous Biodiversity, the following is proposed:

- Support the implementation of the Local Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy (LIBS) as guided by the Waikato Regional Council
- Continue to support existing habitat restoration initiatives related to riverbanks, lakes, gullies, ranges and wetlands
- Provide further support to restoration efforts led by community groups, e.g., the stream of gullies in Tamahere, Lake Kimihia, Te Kowhai
- Council-led best practice on parks and reserves, enhance connectivity as well
- Maintain, promote and possibly extend Council funding initiatives, e.g., will now be community-based, how do we empower and support them
- Look for additional funding opportunities through the LTP



How (operational):

- Consolidate Plans and support the District Plan
 - SNA's in the DP decisions version, how to maintain, protect and enhance these areas by passing on knowledge
 - Help showcase best practice in the protection and rehabilitation of conservation in reserves and parks where it is applicable
 - Opportunities to provide further guidance to non-council landowners on enhancing indigenous biodiversity

- Mapping high value SNA's/bush and forestry, Esplanade areas and wetland
 - Coordinate mapping of our biodiversity information, identify high-value areas and make it easy to monitor and support restoration measures. This will likely be a requirement of the NPS-IB

- To inform land development mitigation and enhancement
 - Development has significant **ecological** and **spatial** effects. It is important that the conservation strategy informs these processes otherwise the effect will happen. How will the NPS-IB interact with the NPS-Urban Development

- To inform Resource Consenting and DCs
 - Conservation in itself has **specific benefits**. The loss of conservation areas is not always **costed** appropriately. NPS-IB requires protection within SNA's and potentially outside them, adding to the confusion.

Key documents influencing the Strategy

Should be consistent with:

- New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (NZBS) - Kauri Dieback, Copper Skinks and Mudfish
- Exposure Draft National Policy Statement – Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) - Implementation
- NES & NPS Freshwater Management
- Waikato Tainui Environmental Plan
- Waikato Regional Council – Local Indigenous biodiversity Strategy (LIBS)
- Waikato District Council – Proposed District Plan (PDP), Decisions Version
- Future Proof – Blue Green Networks
- Partnership with Tangata Whenua (Waikato River Authority)
- Waikato Draft Bat Strategy
- QEII Covenants Land Maps

Streamlining other Strategies and higher-level requirements:

- Esplanade Strategy 2000, links to Connectivity Strategy (being drafted)
- Provides guidance to other council strategies and plans
 - Includes Parks and Reserve Management Plans, Open spaces, Connectivity Strategy
 - Operational aspects of urban and rural management (support our landowners)

What the Stakeholders told us about the review

- Waikato Tainui supports the review and update of the Conservation Strategy
 - Key areas to give weight and effect to Te Ture Whaimana and the Waikato Tainui Environmental Plan
 - Well-being of the Waikato River (from te Taaheke Hukahuka to te Puuaha) including all tributaries, lakes and wetlands as well as the metaphysical being of the river
- Walking Access - esplanade reserves may be required when land is subdivided, when land is reclaimed, when land is developed (through the use of conditions), or when a road is stopped under the LGA 1974. Esplanade reserves can also be created voluntarily.
 - Esplanade strips may be required by a rule in a plan, when land is subdivided, reclaimed, or developed; or when a road is stopped. They may also be required by a condition of consent for reclamation. Additionally, an esplanade strip may be created voluntarily at any time by agreement.
 - Both of the above can be a significant means of enhancing public access to and along the coastal marine area, rivers and lakes.
 - Access strips can be established anytime by agreement between the landowner and the Council.
- Across all stakeholders general support for education, allowing communities to recognise the value that is already in the district; Support for catchment groups.
 - Near completion of the project, more emphasis on education (empower young people) – primary school visits, bus trips and showcasing sustainability
 - Consistency across boundaries, including council reserves; opportunities for fencing/planting (product sourcing (council contracts); help coming catchment groups and individual landowners need support

What the Stakeholders said about the existing strategy

- QEII work with Landowners, crown funded; average cost new covenant costs are upwards of \$20K; plus fencing etc
 - Have found working with the willing gets the best gains
 - Coordinate their funding with Councils (regional and district), plus other groups
 - A recent study found that for every \$1 provided by the crown to QEII for covenanting, \$17 was spent by LO's in their protection efforts.
- Requirements for mapping (aerial) to set boundaries around SNA's, varying degrees of accuracy. Work with the willing and publicise the results of biodiversity protection. Rules based regime would be for the unwilling around protection.
- Farmers support grants, offsetting and mitigation through the consenting process (subdivision); Incentivising planting and retiring land which is being lost in the review of the PDP
 - Concern around trust due to the growing levels of restrictions on landuse; support for identification and mapping
 - There could be opportunities to sequester CO², the potential to agglomerate small pockets of farms into one large area spread over a geographic area or catchment.
- Consider endangered species long-tail bat, Copper Skink and Kauri (impacted by Kauri dieback)
- Variety of seeds harvested and propagated (specialised skill set), get good eco-sourced and we have the variety, not just planting a few species
- Provide for equity of access for all groups and disabilities. Highlighting what can be done on the land and encourage landowners to spend a bit and mitigate other issues.

The Process

Council notified the Draft Taiao (Nature) in the Waikato in August for 6 weeks, 21 submissions received

- The stakeholders were asked to further respond to the draft on Taiao in the Waikato on WDC website along with the general public:
<https://shape.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/draft-taiao-nature-waikato-strategy>
- The intent of the Draft Taiao (Nature) in the Waikato Strategy provides a long-term plan to achieve the Council's vision of creating and nurturing liveable, thriving, and connected communities whilst also helping maintain, protect and restore indigenous biodiversity throughout the district.
- It combines the Conservation (2004) and Esplanade Strategies (2000) with a focus on promoting conservation and Taiao in the Waikato.
- As part of the submission process five key questions were asked and general comments were also able to be made.

TAIAO 'NATURE' IN THE WAIKATO

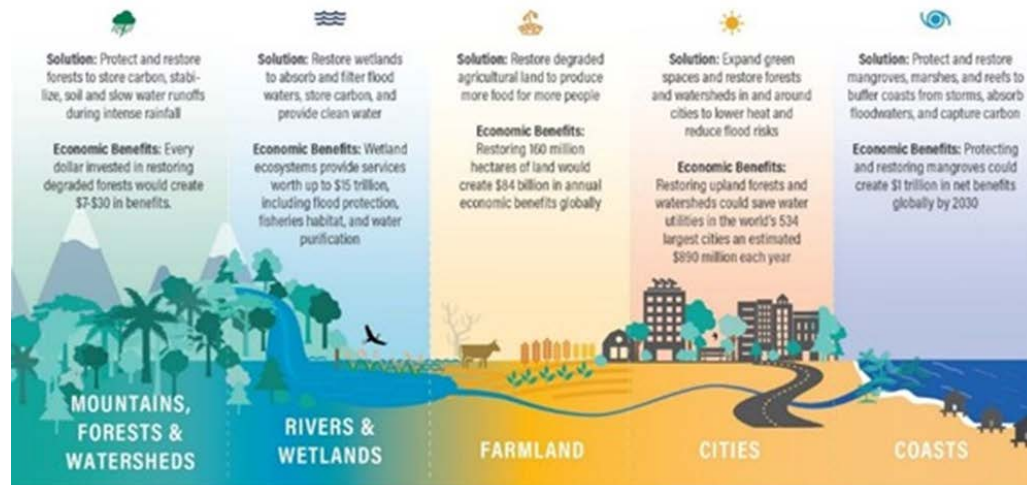
AUGUST 2022
DRAFT STRATEGY CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Waikato
District Council
Te Kaurihera aa Takiwā o Waikato

Hakarimata Summit Track [image credit Department of Conservation]



Nature-Based Solutions Can Deliver Big Economic Benefits



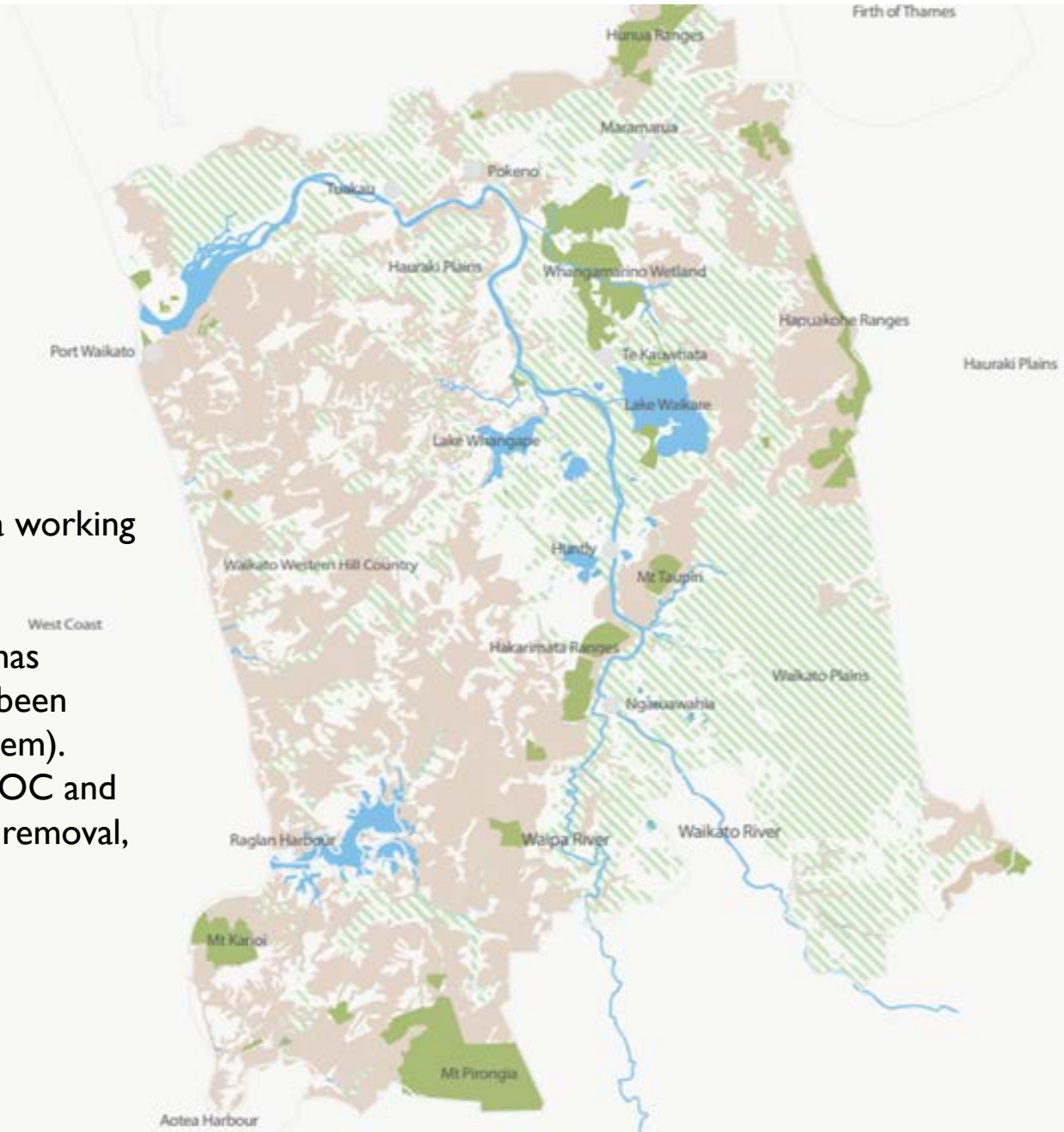
Source: Verdone and Seidl, *Roots of Prosperity*; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment; A. Wu, *How Can Restoring Degraded Landscapes Deliver Financial Returns?*; The Nature Conservancy, *Beyond the Source*; Global Commission on Adaptation, *Adapt Now*.

Protecting and enhancing Taiao

Waikato 2070 &
Proposed District Plan

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

● Rivers, lakes, wetlands ● Wetlands ● Riparian 20% - 25% ● Area 7 Goals



Protecting and enhancing Taiao in a working environment.

The decisions version of the PDP has excluded the SNA's that have not been ground-truthed (the majority of them). However, several appeals to this DOC and WRC. Protection is via vegetation removal, which is limited

Draft Taiao in the Waikato Strategy Vision and Goals

Vision:

To create a liveable, thriving and connected environment where our district values and understands the importance of natural systems and Kaitiakitanga.

We all work together to protect, sustain and improve our ecosystem, and enjoy and share its benefits for all, as the foundation for Taiao in the Waikato.

The full range of New Zealand's indigenous ecosystems and species thrive from the mountains to the sea.

Goals:

Maintain, create and improve a full range of natural habitats and ecosystems to a healthy functioning state across their natural range and genetic diversity.

Support actions to conserve, maintain and improve healthy ecosystems ecological linkages and promote sustainable natural resource use and emissions reduction.

Seek collaboration opportunities to work with others, including mana whenua, to achieve the Conservation Strategy vision.

Unlock native bush and esplanade areas through access agreements and landowner support to provide for walking and cycling.



Focus Areas and Actions

1) Maintain, restore, and improve a range of natural habitats and ecosystems to a healthy functioning state in public spaces.

1.1 Illustrate best practice on council and crown reserves.

1.2 Linking Taiao areas to multiple indigenous biodiversity pockets (Ecological corridors).

1.3 - Identifying those areas of highest priority (remnant areas not well represented).

1.4 Catchment and Area Planning (ICMPs) adopt H2A principles e.g. LID for stormwater, road network incorporates ecological links and minimise corridors acting as barriers to ecology.

2) Support actions to conserve, maintain and improve healthy ecosystem's ecological linkages and promote sustainable natural resource use and greenhouse gas emissions (reduction).

2.1 Promote local community Nursery set up: Social benefits, Training skills (e.g. Kimihia Lakes Project)

2.2 Identify pockets of Significant Natural Areas (SNAs), Conservation Covenants and Esplanade opportunities.

2.3 Submit on relevant government legislation to promote sustainable natural resource use, reduce emissions and support our rural communities.

2.4 Support Walking Access to our native environments utilising Esplanade Reserves and Access strips, with community groups and willing landowners.

Focus Areas and Actions

3) Seek collaboration opportunities to work with others, including mana whenua, to achieve the Strategy's Vision.

3.1 Apps to track data TrapNZ, other ones under development – WRC and HCC.

3.2 Funding; Education links into WRC (Enviroschools); DoC and QEII.

3.3 Consider areas of farmland for retirement – Carbon Credits, Rates relief, funding.

4) Policy, rules and regulation

4.1 Implement the Regional Pest Management Plan.

4.2 Strengthen provisions to protect and enhance indigenous biodiversity in reviews of National, Regional and district strategies and plans.

5) Education and community engagement

5.1 Develop in consultation with WRC advice and management practices for Indigenous Biodiversity.

5.2 Support community groups working to enhance indigenous biodiversity by providing advice, connections and funding.

Monitoring and Review

Illustrate Best Practice

Narrative Context: How does this fit into the regional and broader Waikato District context

State: Increase native plantings (indigenous biodiversity) within Council Reserves. Log the number of trees planted, area and Survival per annum

Pressure: Funding for new plants, impacts on mortality of plants (climate, disease, pests, human)

Intermediate Outcome: Plantings occur in less frequently used reserve areas (esplanades)

Indicators: Increase in vegetation (natives) on Council Reserves, corresponding increases in native fauna (birds, reptiles and insects)

Intermediate Outcome: Community groups help contribute to council reserve plantings and incorporate their areas into council reserves (Tamahere Gully system??)

Indicator: More groups working and recreating in native areas

Analysis and recommendations



Implementation Levers

Taiao in the Waikato

Long Term Plan	Funding for conservation, reserve and esplanade protection
District Plan and Resource Consenting	Planning rules that allow covenanted conservation lots and protection of SNAs, targets for areas of protection
Development Contributions	Appropriate costing of new growth cells and distribution of costs for related projects within them, including conservation, SNA restoration and access
Offset mitigation and Carbon Sequestration Benefits	Investigate enabling offset mitigation or credits for conservation and the protection of native vegetation collectively within the district
Economic & Community Development	Facilitation of investment, projects and attraction of new businesses; green and resilient ecosystems add to the attractions
Takes into account the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy and NPS Indigenous Biodiversity	Consistent with higher level legislation, partners with the community, iwi and landowners. Restores native bush, predator free initiatives and maintains biosecurity (e.g., kauri dieback)
Communication & Marketing	Conservation Strategy can be used as a key marketing tool to promote WDC indigenous biodiversity and climate change initiatives in the district (e.g., similar Nature in the City – Hamilton City)

Key Themes from the submissions

General support for the revised Conservation Strategy and addition of the Esplanade Reserve

- Protection and restoration are key topics submitters spoke to and they want to see results on the ground. This means appropriate resourcing from the council through staff and funding e.g., reinstating the conservation fund or an equivalent.
- Te Ture Whaimana needs to be at the heart of the districts conservation efforts, where a healthy Waikato River sustains abundant life and prosperous communities.
- Helping tamariki learn and participate with restoring our Taiao in the Waikato.
- Empowering our communities with the tools and support they need to restore the Taiao in Waikato, from new and existing restoration groups, predator free groups, individual landowners etc.
- Providing safe and easy access to the Taiao where we can through esplanade reserves and access strips.
- Creating ecological corridors by linking SNA's together with Council and private landowners supporting each other.



Key Points - What the Submitters have said

- Forest and Bird would like more accurate information on the state of natural areas in the Waikato, there needs to be active pest control not just fencing of native areas, use evidence and data, encourage collaboration and corridors and no further loss of biodiversity
- Sport Waikato unlock native bush and esplanade areas for walking, cycling and bridle paths Waikato Ecological Restoration Trust would like a goal for education, better implementation and monitoring.
- Waikato Environment Centre Trust, equitable involvement of mana whenua, transparent processes, better knowledge and collaboration.
- Wayne Bennett more specific and realistic vision, goals and focus. Staff resource and empowered to implement it.
- WRC set a clear purpose statement, make it more readable and concise, no net loss, recognizing community groups within coastal reserves, threats to Taiao, large map and remove the reference to *Pinus radiata*.
 - Consider endangered species long-tail bats, Copper Skink and Kauri (impacted by Kauri dieback)
- WDC legal mechanisms like covenants need monitoring and enforcement; more expertise in restoration and conservation, fauna pest control
- Walking Access, consider wider view of recreational activities on esplanades (are public lands), highlight easements.
 - Provide equity of access for all groups and disabilities. Highlighting what can be done on the land and encourage landowners to spend a bit and mitigate other issues.
- Matthew Vare (HCC) – reference Nature in the City Strategy, collaboration, engagement, linkage with Tamahere Gully
- Near completion of the project, more emphasis on education (empower young people) – primary school visits, bus trips and showcasing sustainability

Key Points - What the Submitters have said

- Waikato-Tainui supports the review and update of the Conservation Strategy.
 - Key areas to give weight and effect to Te Ture Whaimana (TTW), the Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan (the Environmental Plan), and the Conservation Accord
 - Well-being of the Waikato River (from te Taaheke Hukahuka to te Puuaha) including all tributaries, lakes and wetlands as well as the metaphysical being of the river
 - Guidance from the 2008 Conservation Accord between TW and Director General of Conservation. Section 8 of the Auckland Conservation Management Strategy
 - Conservation Strategy should continuously work with and support marae in conservation work (resourcing and capacity/capability building)
- Federated Farmers – consider existing uses in rural environment, security issues for private landowners re-access along .
- QEII National Trust – investigate a reduction in covenant costings, opportunities to share financial load
- Clare Jackson – protection of native plants and animals, controlling pests including possums, pigs, deer and goats; better information on natural areas, up-to-date on best practice; collaboration with Waikato Uni, Manaaki Whenua, Forest and Bird, WRC and DOC to improve monitoring of the local ecology. Prioritize ecosystems close to extinction. Evidence-based, high-quality restoration work with fencing and connected corridors.
- L Koppens – detail on plans to manage and protect conservation covenanted areas, funding for community groups through to restoration groups.
- Variety of seeds harvested and propagated (specialised skill set), get good eco-sourced and we have the variety, not just planting a few species

Where to Next

- **Previous council agreed to not hold an in-person hearing, confirm approach.**
- **Report to Sustainability and Welbeing Committee to accept or decline late submissions and appoint deliberations panel under delegation, April.**
- **Deliberations panel work through submissions under delegation and making decisions, April.**
- **Produce a final draft document that incorporates recommendations from the decisions, May.**
- **Final draft goes to the designer, May.**
- **Circulate final draft for review, May.**
- **Final Strategy adopted by Council and previous strategies revoked. June.**

