

Submission | Wellington City's Draft 2010 Climate Change Action Plan

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Current Position

The Institute supports the creation of a Climate Change Action Plan to reduce the climate change footprint of Wellington. We support the initiatives that require extra funding and the other work that will be carried out using existing funding. However, we believe the plan fails to provide detailed pathways to achieve the desired 30% reduction in emissions by 2020. We therefore do not support the draft action plan in its current form.

About Sustainable Future Institute

Sustainable Future is a non-partisan, not-for-profit research organisation specialising in issues that affect New Zealand. Our purpose is to produce timely, complete and well-researched information relevant to New Zealand's long-term future. The Institute was founded in 2004.

Prepared by: Chris Aitken, Research Analyst

Contact Details:

Wendy McGuinness, Chief Executive
Sustainable Future Institute
l: Level 2, 5 Cable Street
p: PO Box 24222, Wellington
6142, New Zealand
t: +64 4 499 8888
f: +64 4 385 9884
e: wmcg@sustainablefuture.info
w: www.sustainablefuture.info

Positives

We welcome many of the initiatives developed by the council. We agree with the seven action areas highlighted on page 11 of the draft. These are core areas that need to be addressed in order to adequately tackle the problem of climate change. We also note the clear benchmarks that have been attached to each initiative. Furthermore we agree that the ten high-level objectives identified on page 12 are essential to reducing emissions.

Four Key Concerns

(i) Need for clear goals that are achievable and able to be measured for each sector

The draft is clear, concise and begins developing a roadmap for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reducing climate change. However, we feel that the draft lacks the specificity required to effectively contribute to the process of emissions reduction of 30% by 2020.

Land transport is a prime example. As Wellington's second largest source of emissions and an area that the council has much control over, land transport should be a key focus. Instead the new measures include only \$50,000 for electric cars and a series of non-quantified goals. Whilst we support all the initiatives, we feel that a \$50,000 investment is negligible when the failure to manage transport, has such a significant impact on the ability to achieve reductions in CO₂ emissions. Hence we would like to see a set of clear proactive measurable goals.

In our view, to increase the effectiveness of the council's Climate Change Action Plan, a detailed pathway for reducing emissions from each action area is needed. This ideally would include detailed steps towards the target, the resulting impact on emissions, clarity over the agents responsible and a comprehensive timeframe.

(ii) What emissions reductions are the current and proposed initiatives expected to achieve?

The council has set the ambitious goals of emissions reduction of 30% by 2020 and 3% by June 2013. These goals are welcome however it is unclear what the contribution of proposed and existing initiatives will be to these goals. Quantifying the expected benefits is needed to make sure that effective progress is made towards the emission reduction targets.

(iii) Missed opportunity to be a world leader

We believe that Wellington is well positioned to become a world leader on climate change action, however, the draft plan does not compare favourably with world leaders such as San Francisco¹ or Copenhagen². These cities, amongst others, have set ambitious targets for CO₂ emissions reductions with clear paths to reach those targets and identify agents responsible for each step. By modeling a Climate Change Action Plan after these leaders and then taking further initiatives Wellington could easily play upon its natural strengths and become a world leader on climate change action.

(iv) Greater opportunity for integrated solutions

We appreciate why the draft is divided as it is into seven action areas with separate objectives and initiatives, however, we feel that the development of this plan is an opportunity for greater integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. The proposed new initiatives and existing work do not exhibit evidence of having been designed as part of a cohesive whole to achieve the desired 30% emissions reduction by 2020.

Conclusion

Sustainable Future Institute supports the initiative of the Wellington City Council to develop a Climate Change Action Plan. This is necessary to guide development towards reducing Wellington's climate impact as well as providing a number of co-benefits for the people. Despite the positive nature of such a plan we feel that the current draft does not demonstrate how emission reduction targets will be achieved. Furthermore, we believe that as the plan appears to have been developed per action area, it suffers from not providing an overview that builds a comprehensive and integrated emissions reduction plan.

¹ See <http://www.sfenvironment.org/downloads/library/climateactionplan.pdf>

² See <http://www.c40cities.org/docs/ccap-copenhagen-030709.pdf>