



Feedback on Proposed Te Tai o Poutini Plan (TTPP)

From the West Coast Penguin Trust

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Introduction

1. The West Coast Penguin Trust (the Trust) exists to conserve penguins, other seabirds and the coastal environment.
2. The Trust has a role as advocate for penguins, other threatened seabirds and their habitat.

Comments and recommendations

3. ECO – introduction, 5th paragraph.

Recommend including reference to the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, which will fall under the RMA and is likely to be gazetted before TTPP is finalised and therefore required to be given effect to under this plan. The following wording could be included:

Under the RMA, the district and regional councils share responsibility for maintaining indigenous biodiversity. This responsibility will be extended by the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, once gazetted.

Recommend extending the paragraph to include a third point to make it clear that habitats of indigenous fauna may include non-native vegetation and are included in Significant Natural Areas, e.g.

Thirdly, it should be noted that habitats of indigenous fauna may comprise some or all non-native vegetation and still fall within Significant Natural Areas, according to criteria set out in the West Coast Regional Policy Statement.

4. ECO-04: *To maintain the range and diversity of ecosystems and indigenous species found on the West Coast/Te Tai o Poutini.*

Recommend replacing 'maintain' with 'protect, maintain and support the enhancement of'.

5. ECO-P3: *Encourage the protection, enhancement and restoration of significant indigenous biodiversity by:*

Before "...by:"; insert 'and the protection of indigenous fauna habitat', so that where non-indigenous vegetation provides habitat, for example for penguins or skinks, the policy applies.

6. ECO-P6(c): *Result in a reasonably measurable reduction in the local population of threatened taxa in the Department of Conservation Threat Categories 1 – 3a -nationally critical, nationally endangered and nationally vulnerable.*

Some of the most valued and recognised fauna species in the region fall just outside the top three Threat Categories and we believe those species should have the protection afforded by this policy.

The West Coast Regional Policy Statement, at Appendix 1: 'Ecological criteria for identifying significant terrestrial and freshwater indigenous biological diversity', includes at 2(b), "Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that supports an indigenous species that is threatened, at risk, or uncommon, nationally or within the relevant ecological district", i.e. extending protection beyond those classified as "Threatened" (including Nationally Critical, Nationally Endangered and Nationally Vulnerable) to those classified as 'At Risk' and including Declining, Recovering, Relict and Naturally Uncommon species.

We recommend that ECO-P6(c) be extended to include all Threatened and At Risk species as it would then include important West Coast species and will be consistent with the WCRPS. It would include and protect little or blue penguin/kororā, Fiordland crested penguin/tawaki and Westland petrel/taiko.

We would like to see the following revision or similar used:

Result in a reasonably measurable reduction in the local population of threatened taxa in the Department of Conservation Threat Classification System in the Threatened (Nationally Critical, Nationally Endangered, Nationally Vulnerable and Nationally Increasing) and At Risk (Declining, Recovering, Relict and Naturally Uncommon) classifications.

7. ECO-P8: *Maintain indigenous habitats and ecosystems across the West Coast/Te Tai o Poutini* by:

We welcome and support this policy and recommend strengthening it by replacing 'maintain' with 'protect, maintain and support the enhancement of'.

8. ECO-P10: *Protect indigenous biodiversity in the coastal environment from inappropriate subdivision, use and development by:*

We welcome and support this policy.

We recommend the inclusion of a reference to the Te Mana o te Taiao – Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 and ensure objectives, policies and rules support its implementation. The Implementation Plan of the ANZBS2020 assigns specific responsibilities to local authorities and these responsibilities need to be reflected in the TTPP.

9. CE – introduction, Indigenous Biodiversity: *The objectives, policies and rules in relation to clearance of indigenous vegetation in the coastal environment are located in the ECO - Ecosystems and Biodiversity Chapter.*

In order to protect indigenous species and to alert those seeking to clear vegetation to the fact that species may nest in non-indigenous vegetation, we recommend the expansion of this sentence as follows:

The objectives, policies and rules in relation to clearance of indigenous vegetation or other vegetation where it provides habitat for indigenous species in the coastal environment are located in the ECO - Ecosystems and Biodiversity Chapter.

10. CE – extent of Coastal Environment overlay

The mapping of the Coastal Environment appears inconsistent and illogical. It appears to leave out sections of coastal environment where similar areas are included or include a narrow strip where a wide one would be appropriate.

Examples include narrowing for no apparent reason between Granity and Birchfield and again close to Carters Beach, the exclusion of part of the Orowaiti, Porarari and Arahura River estuaries, lack of coverage of various sections of the coast around Charleston including Nile River/Beach Road, Joyce Bay and further missing sections to the south of Charleston, and the exclusion of Blaketown/Karoro/Paroa/Gladstone/Serpentine/Kapitea/Chesterfield/Waimea/Arahura beach, dunes and lagoon areas ... etc etc southwards.

Policy CE-01 requires the CE overlay map to identify areas where coastal processes, influences or qualities are significant. The current overlay fails to do this in many areas.

We recommend appropriate expertise is brought to bear to review up to date aerial imagery to ensure that the map layer is updated, that the definition used in the NZ Coastal Policy Statement is used (areas where coastal processes apply or influence the land, vegetation, species, character etc) and best fits the entire coast and its areas with High Coastal Natural Character, Outstanding Coastal Natural Character and Coastal Natural Hazard.

We note that blue penguins / kororā can nest in very degraded habitat, for example a narrow strip of gorse/blackberry between beach and paddocks. Such habitat should be included in the Coastal Environment and may be missing. The West Coast Penguin Trust will supply spatial data of all sites in the region where blue penguins / kororā are known to nest or have been recorded through track counts, the mortality database shared with the Department of Conservation and other surveys to assist in the review of the Coastal Environment layer and wherever relevant for the application of TTPP.

11. Strategic Directions

This section is critical for the future of the environment on the West Coast and the environment is critical for biodiversity as well as human needs through the provision of ecosystem services.

- a) Point 2: We suggest 'maintaining environmental quality' be replaced with 'maintaining and enhancing environmental quality'. Enhancement is critical with the added stresses of climate change on ecosystems and also due to the failure of previous district plans to maintain environmental quality; instead they have resulted in environmental degradation.

An example is the extensive loss of indigenous vegetation, including wetlands, of 10,029ha over the years 2001-18 (as per Lois Easton report dated Feb 2020).

- b) Point 5: We suggest replacing 'a prosperous economy' with 'a sustainable, inclusive and prosperous economy' in line with DVC's Strategy/Te Whanaketanga Our Mission: To create a sustainable, inclusive and prosperous future for Te Tai Poutini that our people can be proud of and our rangatahi (young people) can look forward to.

- c) The RMA purpose of controlling land use activities for the purposes of use, development and protection in an integrated way is inextricably linked to carbon emissions. We note also that The Resource Management Amendment Act 2020 (RMAA), aligning the RMA with the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon Act), commences on 30 November 2022. The RMAA require local authorities to consider greenhouse gas emissions in their plan-making and consenting decisions under the national direction of Emissions Reduction Plans and Emission Budgets promulgated under the Zero Carbon Act. In other words, along with consideration of climate change effects under the resource consent process, local authorities are required to consider national Emission Reduction Plans when making or amending regional policy statements, regional plans and district plans.
- For the sake of both current and future generations of Coasters and the biodiversity that was here first, it is critical that the reduction of carbon emissions is incorporated into the TPP.

We suggest the inclusion of a strategic objective on regional emission reduction/ decarbonisation is an imperative given such objectives set the strategic direction for the plan. For humans and the biodiversity that we share the region with to thrive, we need to avert a climate crisis. Everyone must play their part and the District Plan must ensure appropriate actions. An additional objective could be:

Facilitate the reduction of regional carbon emissions in line with national Emission Reduction Plans and Carbon Budgets.

12. Light

TPP is an opportunity for a step change and we encourage the consideration of greater protection for West Coast dark skies. The requirements of Dark Skies Park designation under International Dark Skies could be included in specific areas for new builds and replacement work. This, in combination with some behaviour change, could enable the future achievement of a Dark Sky Park designation. The Punakaiki/Barrytown Flats area with the presence of Westland petrel / taiko breeding colonies is an obvious candidate and a Dark Sky Park would offer a greater level of protection to this unique West Coast species as well as benefits to local tourism and community wellbeing.

13. MIN-06(b) Allow adverse effects to be addressed by alternative mitigation measures such as biodiversity offsetting and environmental compensation.

We have concerns over this strategic objective and how it may be reconciled with ECO-P10. Indigenous biodiversity is best protected through avoidance and remedy of adverse effects on habitats and species. Thus avoidance and remedy should be prioritised over offsetting and compensation which inherently entails losses or damage to habitats and species. Further,

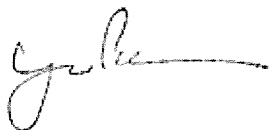
biodiversity offsetting, though offering great promise, is extremely complex and difficult to apply successfully.

14. GRUZ-R12, Mineral Extraction

We have concerns over the level of permitted activity of mineral extraction in the rural zone. In particular, it is not clear how cumulative adverse effects on seabirds from the potential situation of multiple concurrent mineral extraction sites will be managed. Without the need for resource consents, it is not clear how cumulative effects nor compliance to the permitted activity rules will be managed.

We believe TTPP will play a critical role in the protection of native species such as penguins, seabirds and shorebirds. We are not planners, but we have endeavoured to suggest ways that the TTPP could be amended to improve the protection of native wildlife. Should there be better ways or more appropriate places to include the higher level of protection that we recommend, we trust that the changes can be incorporated by the expert planning team so that the changes can be most effective and clearly understood and applied by end users.

We are grateful for and appreciate the various opportunities to contribute to the development of TTPP. We are available and keen to discuss further alterations and additions to TTPP to ensure that adverse effects to penguins and other Threatened and At Risk seabirds and their habitat are avoided.



Inger Perkins

Manager, West Coast Penguin Trust

