

19 June 2023

Craig Innes

s.7(2)(a)

Susan Sales
Senior Advisor Official Information and Privacy
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Our reference: LGOIMA

Dear Craig

Request for Information – Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA)

We refer to your official information requests dated 22 May 2023 and 1 June 2023, relating to the Indigenous Biodiversity Grant Scheme.

Request of 22 May 2023

On 18 May 2023 Deb Mair advised you that:

'Territorial Local Authorities have policies that they want to carry out, which must be transparent and accountable. We must spend rate payers' money wisely. Ratepayers' money is the way council is funding the Indigenous Biodiversity Grant Scheme. Any agreed funding must enhance/improve biodiversity for the whole community, providing species protection.'

In response, on 22 May 2023, you asked which policies Deb Mair was referring to in her statement. You have also asked to be provided with a copy of the policy for the biodiversity fund.

With regards to the first part of your query, any spending/funding/contribution from Hutt City Council requires transparency and accountability. Section 3.1 of the Financial Delegation Policy specifies that:

- 3.1 The financial delegations authorise an Officer to approve financial transactions for specified budgets up to a dollar amount. The financial delegations are based on the following principles:
 - (a) Must comply with all legal requirements.
 - (b) They should reflect the separate roles of governance and management. The role of the Council and Committees is to concentrate on setting the outcomes, approving the overall allocation of resources, and monitoring performance to ensure targets are met. Officers focus on the means to achieve the defined outcomes, implement the policy and carry out the day-to-day operations.
 - (c) Should give effect to the Long-Term Plan (LTP)/Annual Plan.
 - (d) To promote efficiency and effectiveness.

- (e) Must provide for clear accountability and lines of responsibility.
- (f) Officers held accountable for the manner in which they discharge their responsibilities.

You have also asked to be provided with Hutt City Council's policy for the Indigenous Biodiversity Grant. No such policy exists, so your request for this is refused under section 17(g) of the LGOIMA, on the grounds that this information is not held by Hutt City Council and we have no reason to believe that it is held by another agency. However an overview document for the grant is attached.

Request of 1 June 2023

You have asked to be provided with "...copies of all successful applications for funding from the Hutt City Council biodiversity fund since 2019."

We are withholding this material in full under section 7(2)(a) of the LGOIMA, to protect the privacy of the individuals concerned. Further, the number of successful applicants since the fund was established in 2019 makes compiling their applications substantial, and so we are also refusing this request under section 17(f) of the LGOIMA.

I remind you that on 26 June 2021, s 7(2)(a) earlier information request to Hutt City Council asking for information about administration of the Indigenous Biodiversity Grant and a summary of the applications, approvals and monies paid. I refer you to our response to this request, sent s 7(2)(a) on 23 July 2021. This included a summary of applications received and contextual information about the grants. A copy of this is available on the Hutt City Council website at the following link:

<https://hccpublicdocs.azurewebsites.net/api/download/0b5e9e1d5e124051a6a509030d9b7d03/CM9-WE/bc63f63c902ca534c0da0b8a2f226353a38>

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of our responses to these requests for information. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response to your information request may be published on Hutt City Council's website. Please refer to the following link: www.huttcity.govt.nz/council/contact-us/make-an-official-information-act-request/proactive-releases

Yours sincerely



Susan Sales

Senior Advisor Official Information and Privacy

OVERVIEW OF THE HUTT CITY BIODIVERSITY FUND

WHAT'S IN THIS DOCUMENT:

1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND?
2. FUND DETAILS
3. AM I ELIGIBLE?
4. HOW DO I APPLY FOR FUNDING?
5. HOW ARE APPLICATIONS ASSESSED?
6. WHAT CAN THE GRANT BE USED FOR?
7. HOW DO WE KNOW IT IS WORKING?
8. WHAT DO MANAGEMENT PLANS LOOK LIKE?

1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND?

Hutt City Council has a fund available to assist Lower Hutt landowners who want to protect, enhance, and manage indigenous biodiversity on their properties.

A broad range of activities, such as pest control, weed control, revegetation planting and more, can be supported by Hutt City Council supplying materials, expertise, or labour. Larger projects can be supported by Council contributing financially to an agreed project plan. Properties just need to meet some basic criteria to be eligible.

Hutt City Council recognises that landowners often have deep knowledge of their land and have thought hard about how to manage biodiversity problems. If you have an interest in developing a project plan or a property management plan to protect biodiversity on your land, Hutt City Council can help with that, too. Having project plans and property management plans will make it easier for you to make biodiversity gains and streamlines applications for financial support.

2. FUND DETAILS

Hutt City Council has set aside funds till the end of the 2021/22 financial year that will be made available as grants to landowners to assist them to protect, enhance and manage indigenous biodiversity on their land.

Grants will be made available to landowners in two tiers:

2.1 TIER ONE

Maximum council contribution is \$1,000, which may be provided as delivery of service or materials, or as a rebate for work done. This grant can also be used to develop project management or property management plans, which are required for Tier Two grants below.

2.2 TIER TWO

Maximum council contribution is \$20,000 for projects/properties with a suitable management plan. A plan includes a project overview with targets/aims, a project timeline, and measurable outcomes as progress indicators. For more details please refer to Section 8 of this document. Exceptions may be made for larger proposals that have exceptional biodiversity impacts. Once a project is completed, an agreed project completion report should be sent to Hutt City Council.

Fund applications are open from **Tuesday 27th April to Friday 4th June 2021**. Applications will be assessed by Hutt City Council's Ecology Advisor and Tier 2 applications grants will also be assessed by The Indigenous Biodiversity Fund Team.

3. AM I ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for funding, an applicant must be the owner of the property on which the activity is to be carried out. This may include organisations who are landowners, and schools (applying on behalf of Ministry of Education). Properties must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- a. the activity area contains or adjoins areas of indigenous vegetation greater than one hectare
- b. the activity area contains or adjoins wetlands, waterways or waterbodies
- c. the activity area contains or provides habitat for organisms that are Threatened, At Risk, or Data Deficient in the New Zealand Threat Classification System by Te Papa Atawhai, Department of Conservation (their documents can be searched here: <https://nztns.org.nz/>)
- d. Tier Two applications require a property management plan or a project plan. The details about what is required in a plan

The funding is not intended to support the following activities:

1. Projects that are created to comply with Resource Consent or other consent conditions
2. The planting of exotic or non-local vegetation, or nursery cultivars.
3. Major changes to the activities in the application may require a new funding application at the discretion of the Hutt City Council Ecology Advisor.

4. HOW DO I APPLY FOR FUNDING?

The fund is open for applications once a year. The next round of applications will be open from **Tuesday 27th April to Friday 4th June 2021**.

Application forms will be made available on the Hutt City Council website when applications are open.

Please contact the Indigenous Biodiversity Fund Administrator for an informal chat about your project and how the fund may be able to assist, or by emailing Biodiversity@huttcity.govt.nz.

5. HOW ARE APPLICATIONS ASSESSED?

All applications will be initially processed by the Hutt City Council's Ecology Advisor and Tier 2 applications grants will also be assessed by an Indigenous Biodiversity Fund Working Group. Hutt City Council may contact the applicant for further information if required. If applications for funding exceed the annual availability, applications that meet the eligibility criteria will be prioritised in the following ways:

1. For maximum **protection** of *Threatened, At Risk or Data Deficient* species
2. For maximum **protection** of ecosystems in wetlands, waterways or waterbodies with **high quality** biodiversity
3. For maximum **protection** by area or linkage, of **high quality**, existing indigenous biodiversity
4. For maximum **enhancement** of ecosystems in wetlands, waterways or waterbodies with **medium quality** biodiversity
5. For maximum **enhancement** by area or linkage, of **medium quality**, existing indigenous biodiversity
6. For maximum **enhancement** of ecosystems in wetlands, waterways or waterbodies with **low quality** biodiversity
7. For maximum **enhancement** by area or linkage, of **low quality** existing indigenous biodiversity.

6. WHAT CAN THE GRANT BE USED FOR?

Although the fund can be used for any activities that support indigenous biodiversity, below are some examples of the types of activities that Hutt City Council expects.

Pest Plant or Animal Control

- Traps, poisons (mechanical traps, bait stations, and consumables)
- Herbicide (systemic control, organic control, and sprayers and applicators)
- Tools such as loppers, grubbers, niwashi, scrub-cutters, etc
- Biodegradable mulch
- Animal exclusion fencing

Revegetation

- Locally indigenous plants (preferably [eco-sourced](#))
- Materials, consumables or supplies for [eco-sourced](#) native plant propagation

Biodiversity Plans

- Developing property management plans
- Developing project management plans
- Assistance in transitioning to conservation covenants (eg. QEII)

Physical Labour and Services

- Contractor costs (for weed control, tree control, pest animal control, trap line setting, etc)
- Contributions to labour or materials for projects that exceed an applicant's accepted allocation.
- Vehicle expenses are eligible as part of the applicant's contribution

Other activities may be considered for support at the discretion of Hutt City Council.

It is very important to keep proof of expenditure in the form of receipts and/or invoices matched to proof of payment for all costs that HCC need to reimburse.

7. HOW DO WE KNOW IT IS WORKING?

Every year, a review of the operation and performance of this fund will be carried out. This will include information requested by recipients of grants, to understand whether the grant system is achieving its aims.

Recipients of grants are invited to provide feedback on improvements to the programme and areas that are working well.

8. WHAT DO MANAGEMENT PLANS LOOK LIKE?

Project and property management plans make it easier to optimise activities for indigenous biodiversity and other outcomes. Both types of management plan have a lot of similarities but usually differ in the context of their application.

8.1 PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PLANS

A Property Management Plan is an over-arching document that describes the goals for the management an entire property. A Property Management Plan identifies the vision for an entire property and how to overcome the obstacles to achieve it. It will have a description of the background/history, maps, a list of challenges, a list of projects, and in some cases a timeline of achieving the projects. Property Management Plans may contain one or more projects that could each have a Project Management Plan.

8.2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLANS

A Project Management Plan identifies the vision for a part of property and outlines how to overcome the obstacles to achieve it. It will have a description of the background/history, maps, a list of challenges, a list of projects, and in some cases a timeline of achieving the projects.

8.3 MANAGEMENT PLAN CHECKLIST

Please make sure that your property or project management plan includes the following information:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Background of the property/project | <input type="checkbox"/> Measurable outcomes or progress indicators |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Existing land use (with approximate m ²) | <input type="checkbox"/> Estimated Timelines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outline of the biodiversity Issue(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Estimated Budgets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed activity promoting biodiversity | |