

Memorandum

12 April 2018

To:	Environment and Community Committee	
Cc:	Jim Quinn, Chief of Strategy	
Subject:	SeaChange Tai Timu Tai Pari – Update on progressing outcomes for the Hauraki Gulf	
From:	Dave Allen	Manager Natural Environment Strategy

Purpose

1. To provide an update on progress towards implementation of objectives shared by SeaChange Tai Timu Tai Pari (SeaChange), Auckland Council and relevant Council Controlled Organisations through the approved forward work programme, overseen by the Auckland Council SeaChange Political Reference Group.
2. To provide an update on other initiatives underway, or completed, such as the 10-year Budget and the Hauraki Gulf Forum's State of Our Gulf Report, Auckland Plan 2050, Treaty settlements, and how they relate to and support SeaChange objectives.

Summary

- The approved work programme for SeaChange implementation is currently being advanced through the 10-year Budget, Auckland Plan 2050 and other work programmes.
- The Auckland Council SeaChange Political Reference Group met on 14 February 2018, and received staff presentations from Auckland Council, Auckland Transport, and Waikato Regional Council. These presentations provided an overview of how shared objectives with the SeaChange plan were being advanced in accordance with the approved forward work programme.
- Auckland Council's future work programme will also be influenced by central government initiatives with a bearing on the Hauraki Gulf, including proposed Treaty settlements. The Office for Treaty Settlements has recently held initial discussions with relevant iwi to determine how such negotiations should be approached.
- On 14 June 2018, the Auckland Council SeaChange Political Reference Group will convene to further consider how the various initiatives are further integrated, with advice from staff involved in these on-going discussions, whether related to the outcomes of recent consultative efforts undertaken by councils, or as a result of interactions with central government agencies.

Context/Background

3. The Auckland Council SeaChange Political Reference Group (the group) was formed in May 2017 (PLA/2017/50). The group met provisionally in August 2017 and then again on 14 February 2018 with confirmed membership, including further local board representation.
4. The group's purpose is to guide and shape Auckland Council's response to SeaChange, in accordance with the forward work programme, approved in September 2017 (ENV/2017/115) and ensure its objectives are embedded in Auckland Council activities.

Forward Work Programme – 10-year Budget proposals

5. Two new targeted rates are proposed in the 10-year Budget, which contribute to the forward work programme, for Natural Environment and Water. If these new targeted rates are introduced, they will provide significant additional funding to support better outcomes in the Hauraki Gulf.
 - The Environment targeted rate proposes additional funding for pest free harbours, restoring native seabird habitats and protecting Hauraki Gulf islands from pests. These new programmes are consistent with the SeaChange objectives.

- The Water targeted rate proposes accelerating investment in wastewater infrastructure, to deliver improvements to beach water quality in 10 years, rather than 30. The proposal aims to improve beach water quality for swimming, reduce contaminant runoff from roads, better manage on-site wastewater systems and improve compliance of domestic wastewater and stormwater connections.

Forward work programme - Auckland Plan 2050

6. The Auckland Plan 2050, which sets the strategic direction for Auckland, also supports improving the health of our environment, while balancing other priorities. It strengthens the focus on protecting and enhancing the environment. It recognises the decline in natural environments and aims to better integrate growth with protecting the environment.
7. The Auckland Plan 2050 also supports Auckland Council's approach to advancing SeaChange objectives, through both existing and future work programmes, where there is alignment. The Environment and Cultural Heritage outcome aims to encourage Aucklanders to act as stewards of the environment, and treat the environment as a Taonga to be passed on to future generations. It recognises that we need to make different choices to improve the quality of our environment.

Discussion

Auckland Council SeaChange Political Reference Group

8. The group received updates on how the approved forward work programme is being advanced, including:
 - The 10-year Budget and proposals of targeted rates for Water and Natural Environment.
 - Auckland Transport Sustainability framework, which supports SeaChange outcomes through improving run-off from the transport network, and reducing the amount of litter reaching the Hauraki Gulf via the installation of tetra-traps in stormwater systems.
 - Research, Investigations and Monitoring outlined how the research proposals in SeaChange could be implemented and managed, potentially through a research hub, as proposed by SeaChange.
 - Natural Environment Strategy Unit staff discussed the Hauraki Gulf Forum's State of our Gulf report, and how the report tracks the impacts on the Hauraki Gulf, and discussed a possible response from Auckland Council, to integrate SeaChange objectives, with State of our Gulf results and direction, as well as understanding existing and proposed council activity.

State of our Gulf report 2018

9. The State of our Gulf 2017 (the report) is the fifth state of environment report released by the Hauraki Gulf Forum, following its independent preparation. The Hauraki Gulf Forum is required to report every 3 years on the health of the Hauraki Gulf Tikapa Moana / Te Moana-nui-ā-Toi and progress being made towards integrated management. The report is relevant to Auckland Council's response as it tracks environmental issues and their impact in the Hauraki Gulf.
10. The report is useful as a tool for tracking progress towards improving the health of the Hauraki Gulf, and for assessing strategic priorities. The key message from the report is that management frameworks and responses are not keeping pace with growth and change in the Hauraki Gulf. The report considers SeaChange a significant step forward for moving beyond current state, but is not the silver bullet for improving everything. The report and other environmental monitoring programmes are nonetheless important tools for tracking progress.

Hauraki Gulf Forum

11. The Hauraki Gulf Forum will consider its strategic priorities at its 14 May 2018 meeting. Strategic priorities were developed by the Forum in 2012 and have not been updated. The Forum is charged with advancing integrated management of the Hauraki Gulf, and is expected to use the objectives and messages from several sources (eg, SeaChange and the report) to guide its strategic directions. Auckland Council staff are hoping that there will be an opportunity for their input, with the aim of objectively consolidating strategic priorities, including some reflection of what

agencies are doing in practice (eg, forward work programme), and with reference to the relevant legislative obligations.

Next steps

12. The Auckland Council SeaChange Political Reference Group will meet next on 14 June 2018. Operationally, and given the statutory responsibility to address it, the meeting will be themed around sediment objectives, and how Auckland Council is embedding these in work programmes.
13. These various initiatives, work programmes and research need to be brought together as an integrated package, to best assess how they support each other in improving Hauraki Gulf outcomes. This analysis is underway and will be reported to the group.
14. Several other initiatives are approaching, which will have an impact on how Auckland Council responds to the management of the Hauraki Gulf, such as Treaty settlements, or refinements to how the Hauraki Gulf Forum is run. These initiatives will need to be assessed for their impact on Auckland Council's approach to improving the health of the Hauraki Gulf.
15. Staff also expect that the Department of Conservation and Ministry for Primary Industries may soon be able to comment on their approach to considering SeaChange. Their response to SeaChange was delayed by the timing of the 2017 general election and release of the State of our Gulf report. The Minister of Conservation has met officials during March 2018, and is scheduled to attend the Hauraki Gulf Forum meeting on 14 May 2018.
16. Auckland Council staff are particularly mindful of the need to keep a collective lens on the approach to advancing shared SeaChange objectives over the short to medium term. Auckland Council and Waikato Regional Council staff continue to advocate for an integrated approach, with appropriate weightings on some actions by respective agencies given the relative importance of some issues within their geographic area. There is a risk that reliance on one report or plan will not reflect the significant value associated with a more integrated approach going forward.