

Survey shows support for regional approach

Three quarters of people across the Wellington region are willing to pay to support regionally-shared facilities and services, a survey has found.

Local mayors are mulling over the report by research company Colmar Brunton that shows public support for a regional fund that would share the costs of events, organisations and attractions around the Wellington region.

The Mayoral Forum's Chair, Upper Hutt Mayor Wayne Guppy, says the definition of regional amenities "includes many of the attractions, organisations and events that define our region – and the survey results suggest benefit us all".

"It is becoming increasingly difficult for the Wellington region to maintain talent and levels of service due to a reduction in local funding. Local councils can no longer afford to work by themselves – we need to work together.

"The results of the survey show that people in the region clearly see the benefits of keeping local events, attractions and key organisations in the Wellington region."

The report, based on a survey of 2000 people around the region earlier this year, gives a good indication of the 'amenities' that we collectively hold dear.

They can include any cultural, social, rescue, recreational, environmental or economic service, activity, event, attraction or facility of regional significance and benefit.

Numbers of residents surveyed from smaller districts of the Wellington region were boosted so we could make sure survey results reflected the views of residents across the region.

The survey shows that people see the importance of amenities whether they use them or not, that support for region-wide collaboration was consistent across different types of entities and that 76% of residents were willing to pay to support regional amenities through a regional fund.

A list of 22 regional amenities identified by residents across the region is provided in the report. These amenities were used to test resident use; perception of benefits provided by regionally significant entities, support for collaborative funding and resident willingness to pay. The list generated through the research is not a definitive list of regional amenities that should be funded by the region. Nor are the entities mentioned in the research guaranteed funding.

Mayor Guppy says that the amenities exercise is an area that has been identified as an opportunity for councils across the region to work together.

Last Friday (1 April) the Mayoral Forum agreed to further work on a proposed regional amenities fund and asked officers to present findings from the research and next steps for the project to all councils across the region.

Mayor Guppy says staff from councils in the region have also been asked to:

- confirm criteria to select entities eligible for regional funding support
- identify options for the governance and funding of a regional funding mechanism
- establish how funds might be distributed to benefit the Wellington region
- recommend a process to formalise a regional funding mechanism.

This work will be reported back to the Mayoral Forum in September 2011.

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