



THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE – 14 August 2018

Council to put forward local bill on windblown timber

The West Coast Regional Council today endorsed a Proposed Local Bill to see similar legislation put in place following Cyclone Ita become permanent.

Most of the West Coast's forests are indigenous and within the conservation estate. In 2014 the West Coast Windblown Timber Act was enacted, which allowed for the recovery of a proportion of the trees blown down on conservation land during Cyclone Ita in April 2014. This has been a short-term opportunity as the Act applies only to timber blown down during Cyclone Ita and will finish on 2 July 2019. The quality and quantity of available timber has now declined, as has the amount of timber being extracted and the number of active operators.

Chairman of the West Coast Regional Council, Andrew Robb, said that diversifying the economy was key to the region's success in the future.

"The Ita legislation sparked a revival in the indigenous timber processing industry on the West Coast creating a number of jobs across the forestry, sawmilling and transport sectors," said Mr Robb. "If we are successful with this local bill, we can ensure that we can keep these jobs, and keep this sector of the economy going."

Mr Robb acknowledged MP Maureen Pugh for her assistance in developing the local bill.

"We have been fortunate to have Maureen's support in developing the bill, which allows for this activity to occur in the future following an adverse weather event."

"Now this has been supported by our Council we can work with our local MP's, Damien O'Connor and Maureen Pugh to introduce the bill into parliament."

Opposition to the proposed bill was anticipated.

"It's unlikely that the proposed bill would go through unopposed, or have support from all kiwis," said Mr Robb. "However, the work that has been undertaken to date under the Ita legislation has shown that wind-blown timber can be safely recovered without significant harm to the conservation value of harvest areas."

"It has also provided significant revenue for the Department of Conservation to protect conservation land from plant and animal pests."

A review of the Ita legislation was highlighted as an initiative in the West Coast Economic Development Action Plan released in July 2017. Work on the project, as per the deliverables described in the Action Plan ceased following the general election in October 2017.

"Since Cyclone Ita the West Coast has experienced other severe weather events which have resulted in further windblown timber opportunities," said Mr Robb. "Under the current legislation these have not been able to be realised."

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