

Nelson Biodiversity Forum

Charter and Operating Procedures

Purpose

The Biodiversity Forum's purpose is to align strategic, restorative action on biodiversity in te taiao o Whakatū (Nelson).

Commitment

Recognising that indigenous biodiversity in te taiao o Whakatū (Nelson):

- Is highly depleted where people live and use natural resources, and through the action of animal and plant pests;
- Still supports many natural ecosystems and native species populations;
- Continues to degrade due to our activity and biosecurity threats;
- Faces degradation and possible extinction from the human induced threats of the global climate crisis;
- Can be restored to long term resilience through concerted action;
- Is vital to our identity, health, and prosperity.

We, the signatories, partner organisations and allies commit to working towards the vision outlined below through:

- Inclusion and respect, particularly through acknowledging, respecting and working with ngā lwi tangata whenua;
- Acting promptly, purposefully and responsibly, together and individually; and
- Participating in good faith in the Biodiversity Forum.

Vision

We weave our communities together around strategic, restorative action on biodiversity and biosecurity to ensure that **kia ngotongoto, kia uekaha te mauri o te taiao ki Whakatū (the life force of nature is vibrant and vigorous throughout Nelson)** by:

1. **Protecting and restoring te taiao (the natural world).** This will mean:
 - i. Ecosystems and species are protected, restored, resilient and connected from mountain tops to ocean depths.
 - ii. Biological threats and pressures are reduced through management.
 - iii. Natural resources are managed sustainably.
2. **Getting the system right.** This will mean:
 - i. Treaty partners, whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori organisations are rangatira and kaitiaki.
 - ii. Aligning with national and inter-regional strategies and initiatives.

- iii. Governance, regulation, and funding enable delivery of biodiversity outcomes.
 - iv. Biodiversity protection is at the heart of economic activity.
3. **Empowering action.** This will mean:
- i. Collaboration, co-design and partnership are delivering better outcomes.
 - ii. Our people have the skills, knowledge and capability to be effective.
 - iii. Resourcing and support are enabling connected, active guardianship of nature.

Function and role of the Biodiversity Forum

The function of the Biodiversity Forum is to align and proactively lead or support responses to biodiversity restoration and management of biosecurity threats. It is a collective of organisations, groups and individuals. It is not a legal entity and has no delegated authority to make decisions that bind its members to any specific action, including funding. Members participate in accordance with legal requirements that apply to them. The Biodiversity Forum endeavours to work by consensus. The Biodiversity Forum will keep current a living document **Te Mana o Te Taiao ki Whakatū – the Nelson Biodiversity Strategy** and facilitate its implementation.

Operating Procedures

All signatories, partner organisations and allies agree to work within Operating Procedures adopted by the Biodiversity Forum.

Membership of the Biodiversity Forum

Membership is available to individual people, groups and organisations at three levels of commitment: signatories, partner organisations and allies, as defined below. These levels have been defined to allow the widest possible participation in the Biodiversity Forum, by allowing individual people, groups and organisations to determine their level of commitment.

Signatories

Signatories to the Charter hold themselves accountable for actively leading implementation of Te Mana o Te Taiao ki Whakatū – the Nelson Biodiversity Strategy. They collectively ensure that actions in Te Mana o Te Taiao ki Whakatū - Nelson Biodiversity Strategy are undertaken in good faith and to the best of their abilities. Signatories approve changes to Te Mana o Te Taiao ki Whakatū – the Nelson Biodiversity Strategy and also to the Operating Procedures of the Biodiversity Forum.

Partner organisations

Partner organisations endorse the Charter and commit to act in good faith within their functions and capabilities to support the Vision. Partner organisations undertake to respond supportively to Te Mana o Te Taiao ki Whakatū – the Nelson Biodiversity Strategy. Partner organisations can expect to be involved in forming revisions to Te Mana o Te Taiao ki Whakatū - the Nelson Biodiversity Strategy, but do not have decision-making authority.

Allies

Allies are individual people or organisations that endorse the Charter and commit to personal action to support its goals. Allies can expect to be kept informed and offered opportunities to participate in the Forum’s activities including its meetings.

Regardless of the level of commitment (if any) chosen by tangata whenua under this Charter, the Forum will continue to engage with and work alongside tangata whenua as kaitiaki of the rohe and as partners under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Coordinating Group

The function of the Biodiversity Coordinating Group will be to bring together diverse views and interests to align and proactively lead community responses to biodiversity restoration and management of biosecurity threats.

The Biodiversity Coordinating Group will keep current a living document **Te Mana o Te Taiao ki Whakatū – the Nelson Biodiversity Strategy** and facilitate its implementation.

Membership of the Biodiversity Forum Coordinating Group, renewed every year at the last meeting of the year, shall be made up of:

- The Chair of the Forum;
- Representatives of tangāta whenua iwi (as guided by iwi);
- 1 councillor and one staff member of Nelson City Council;
- 1 DOC staff member;
- 4 Members elected by the Nelson Biodiversity Forum.

Operating Procedures

Purpose

1. The Nelson Biodiversity Forum (“**the Forum**”) is a collective of organisations and individuals who are committed to the Nelson Biodiversity Charter (“**the Charter**”).
2. The purpose of these Operating Procedures is to document the standard ways that the Forum will function, matching responsibility with requisite authority.

Membership

3. Membership is open to all and is available at three levels under the Charter:
 - a. “**Signatories**” who are groups or organisations that commit to lead and therefore hold authority to approve or decline proposed drafts or changes to: the Charter, the Nelson Biodiversity Strategy (“**the Strategy**”), and the Operating Procedures of the Forum. Signatories are represented at meetings by one representative, but other members are welcome to attend meetings in and speak if the Chair allows but not vote;
 - b. “**Partner Organisations**” who commit to supporting to implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy, and may attend Forum meetings but do not have voting rights; and
 - c. “**Allies**” who are individuals or organisation that commit to actions aligned with the Charter, who may also attend meetings of the Forum, but do not have voting rights.

4. A Forum member ("**Member**") is a person, group or organisation that has signed the Charter either as a Signatory, Partner Organisation or Ally, through the process as approved by the Coordinating Group.
5. Membership is operative from the time it is registered in the approved form.
6. A Member may resign from the Forum at any time by submitting a letter of resignation to the Chair of the Forum.
7. Membership may be rescinded by the Forum if a Member acts in a manner that is inconsistent with or undermines the Charter. Membership of any organisation, group or individual may be terminated only by a 75% vote of the Signatories present at the meeting, on a motion by the Chair.

Legal Status

8. The Forum is not a legal entity and has no delegated authority to commit its Members to undertake specific actions nor powers to incur debt, take court action, sign contracts or hire employees. The Forum does not have the power to make decisions on the behalf of Members and any decisions Members make shall be in accordance with relevant legislation and legally binding policies, plans and other instruments.

Functions

9. The Forum shall --
 - a) Develop and enable the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy.
 - b) Adopt Operating Procedures and form working groups as it considers appropriate.
 - c) Enable, support and encourage Nelson Communities to implement the Biodiversity Strategy.
 - d) Support the implementation of any other plans or strategies developed by the Forum.

Chair

10. At the first meeting of the Forum following endorsement of the Charter and thereafter at the last meeting of each calendar year, the Forum shall elect one of its members as Chair for the following year. This process shall be facilitated by an immediate past Chair, or someone chosen by the Forum if no immediate past Chair is available.
11. If the Chair becomes unavailable the Coordinating Group will appoint an Acting Chair until the Forum can resolve the issue.
12. The Chair shall:
 - a) Lead the Forum and be the primary public face of the Forum.
 - b) Facilitate consensus processes and keep accord among the Forum.
 - c) Prepare agendas and ensure these are distributed at least two working days in advance of Forum meetings.
 - d) Chair meetings according to the agreed agenda.
 - e) Remain neutral and focus on meeting management.
13. The Chair may:
 - a) Make rulings on procedure at meetings of the Forum where matters require interpretation of these procedures;

- b) Initiate removal of Member status from any Member for action incompatible with the Forum Charter or these operating procedures;
- c) Make public statements on behalf of the Forum.

Coordinating Group

- 14. The Forum shall, at the first meeting of the Forum following endorsement of the Charter and thereafter at the last meeting of each calendar year, elect members for the Coordinating Group as defined in the Charter to lead aligned action by Forum Members.
- 15. The functions of the Coordinating Group are to:
 - a) Support the Chair;
 - b) Lead and align action by Forum Members;
 - c) Facilitate resolution of breakdowns in the functioning of the Forum;
 - d) Facilitate development of an external operating environment in which the work of the Forum can prosper;
 - e) Ensure that core documents, systems and procedures are kept up to date and fit for purpose;
 - f) Facilitate, support or prepare funding requests to support the activities by the Forum;
 - g) Communicate key decisions and developments to Members of the Forum.
- 16. The Coordinating Group shall have authority to:
 - a) Regulate its own procedure;
 - b) Make recommendations on any matter to the Forum;
 - c) Co-opt Members to fill vacancies.
- 17. A Quorum of the Coordinating Group shall consist of five members.

Meeting Procedure

- 18. Meetings shall be managed as follows:
 - a) Meetings of the whole Forum will be held quarterly or more frequently as necessary.
 - b) Half the number of total Signatories being present shall constitute a quorum.
 - c) Meetings shall be called by the Chair with notification to Members at least one week, and preferably four weeks, prior to the meeting.
 - d) The Chair will be responsible for meeting agendas, meeting notes and minutes, and supporting papers and presentations.
 - e) Requests for items to include in the agenda must be sent to the Chair at least twelve working days before a meeting, although this requirement may be waived at the discretion of the Chair.
 - f) Meetings shall be chaired by the Chair or in their absence by a Member chosen by consensus of those present.
 - g) Wherever possible, decisions of the Forum will be made by consensus of those Signatories present. By seeking consensus, the Forum aims to empower and incorporate all perspectives whenever possible. Consensus means by the agreement of most participants, with dissenters and abstainers agreeing to recognise the majority opinion as being the decision (i.e. to not block consensus).

- h) If consensus is not achieved after reasonable attempts and the chair(s) of the meeting considers a decision is necessary to further the Goals of the Forum, the Chair may, as a last resort, call for a vote to resolve the matter. To pass, any motion decided by vote requires at least 75% of those Signatories present and voting (not abstaining) to be in favour of the motion.
- i) The Forum may constitute working groups or committees, which will operate as directed by the Forum and will be accountable to the Forum for their actions.
- j) Questions for decision may be put by the Chair to Signatories via digital means and, if no dissenting votes are received, shall be deemed to represent a consensus decision by the Forum, provided Signatories have been given at least 5 working days to respond to the question. The outcome of questions considered in this manner shall be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting.
- k) Minutes of Forum meetings shall be recorded and confirmed as correct at a subsequent meeting.

Observers

- 19. Forum meetings shall be open to the public unless the Forum decides to go into closed session, which only Members may attend. Discussions at closed meetings are confidential, subject to any applicable legal requirements relevant to Members, which shall be declared to the Forum prior to the closed session, and only the topic discussed and decisions made shall be recorded in the minutes.
- 20. Observers and who are not Members have speaking rights only if specifically recognised by the Chair.

Conflicts of Interest

- 21. Conflicts of interest must be declared at the start of all Forum meetings or any Forum group meeting and recorded in the minutes.

Review

- 22. The operation of the Forum and its Operating Procedures will be reviewed by the Forum at least once every three years.

Changes to these Operating Procedures

- 23. Any proposed changes to these Operating Procedures shall be notified to the Forum a minimum of two weeks ahead of any full-Forum meeting (including online meetings).
- 24. Any proposed changes must be approved by consensus among Signatories present at the meeting, or if consensus is not reached, by vote with at least 75% of those Signatories present and voting (not abstaining) in favour of the motion.