PUCM 2 SURVEY RESULTS
2001-2002

The ***Planning Under a Co-operative Mandate Programme*** is a research programme aimed at improving the quality of district plan making and implementation under the New Zealand *Resource Management Act*, 1991.

Full details about the research design and other results on plan quality and the quality of plan implementation (Phases 1 and 2) can be found through the PUCM Home page (www.waikato.ac.nz/igci/pucm).

In essence, Phase 2 of the programme focuses on the relationship between plan quality and implementation quality in order to answer the question ***Do Good Plans Matter?*** One component of answering this question was to study how plans are implemented through the resource consent process. Integral to this process is the role applicants, and their consultants, play in meeting planning requirements, such as providing accurate environmental information with applications, and the extent to which they comply with conditions set by councils.

A survey of ***resource management consultants*** and ***resource consent applicants*** was carried out during 2001-2002 to gain factual and attitudinal information about the plan implementation processes of respective councils. It drew on the experiences of 277 applicants and consultants representing a diversity of stakeholders, and provided a valuable check on the quality of processes and procedures of councils with respect to plan implementation and compliance.

A second component of Phase 2 was to assess the commitment, capacity and extent of issue knowledge in ***councils*** to implement their district plans. To this end, senior staff from the six district and city councils kindly involved in this project were also surveyed during mid 2001 to early 2002.

The following selection of preliminary results are helpful insofar as they show where divergence in opinion, practice and priorities for plan implementation is occurring.
While a full analysis of the data has yet to be completed, the preliminary results suggest that the gap between policy and implementation could be improved by, among other things:

- aligning the priorities of staff and councillors with priorities in the plan,
- having better communication with applicants, particularly regarding information requirements, and
- providing political ***and*** resource support for tangata whenua involvement.

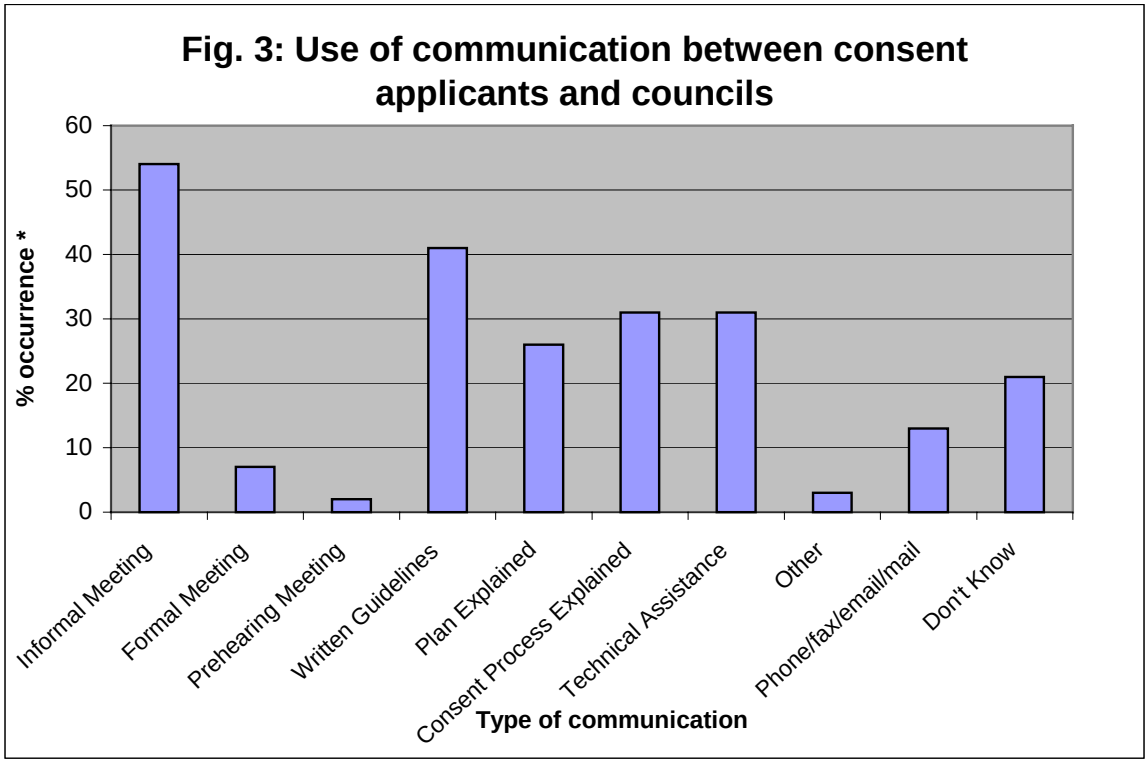
Please note that as these results are preliminary they are not intended for publication without permission from PUCM.

1.1 Applicant Survey

A sample of 220 resource consent applicants was taken from the information gathered through the consent sample. The majority of respondents were individual landowners who had no or very little experience in the resource consent process.

1.1.1 Communication with Council

Fig. 3 illustrates the range of communication between applicants and councils. Opinions ranged widely on the usefulness of the council's communication techniques. The most useful techniques were cited as informal meetings followed by written guidelines, and technical assistance. Of the applicants who attended pre-hearing meetings and formal meetings, only 1% of applicants responded that these were most useful.



*Applicants could give multiple answers

1.1.2 Consultation by Applicant

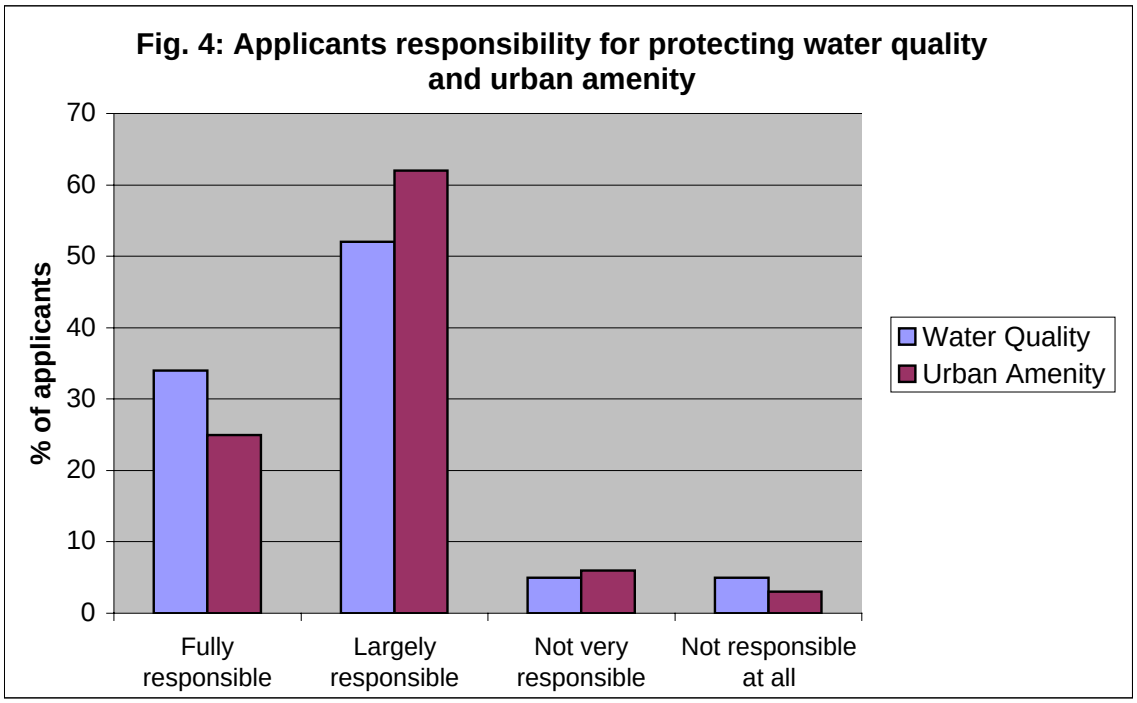
Where consultation occurred, 31% of applications were changed as a result of this consultation. The most frequent changes were to project design and consent conditions.

1.1.3 Applicants Knowledge of District Plan

Around one third of applicants responded that they were very unfamiliar with the district plan provisions for stormwater and urban amenity. Even though most applicants were unfamiliar with the district plan, approximately 35% agreed with the provisions for both topics. Less than a quarter disagreed with the provisions.

1.1.4 Role of the Applicant

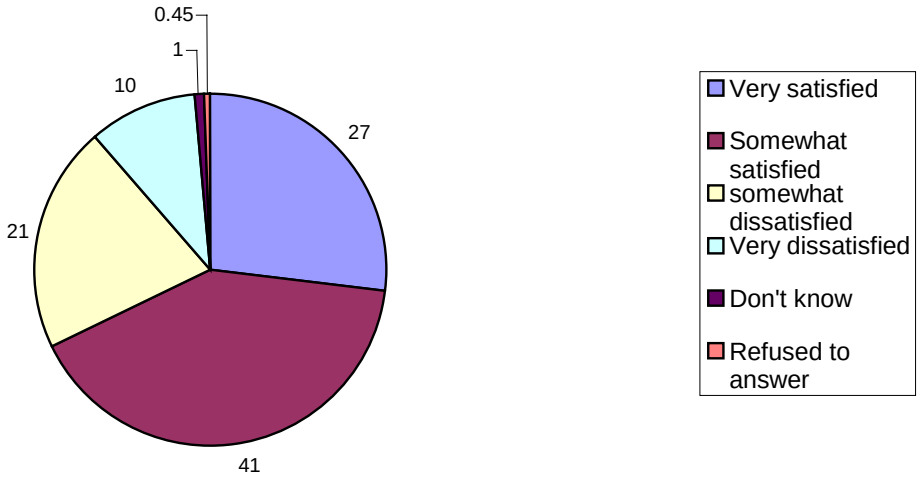
Fig. 4 demonstrates that the majority of applicants think they have at least some degree of responsibility for protecting urban amenities, and water quality. Very few applicants, however, think that they are not at all responsible for either.



1.1. 5 Evaluation of the Resource Consent Process

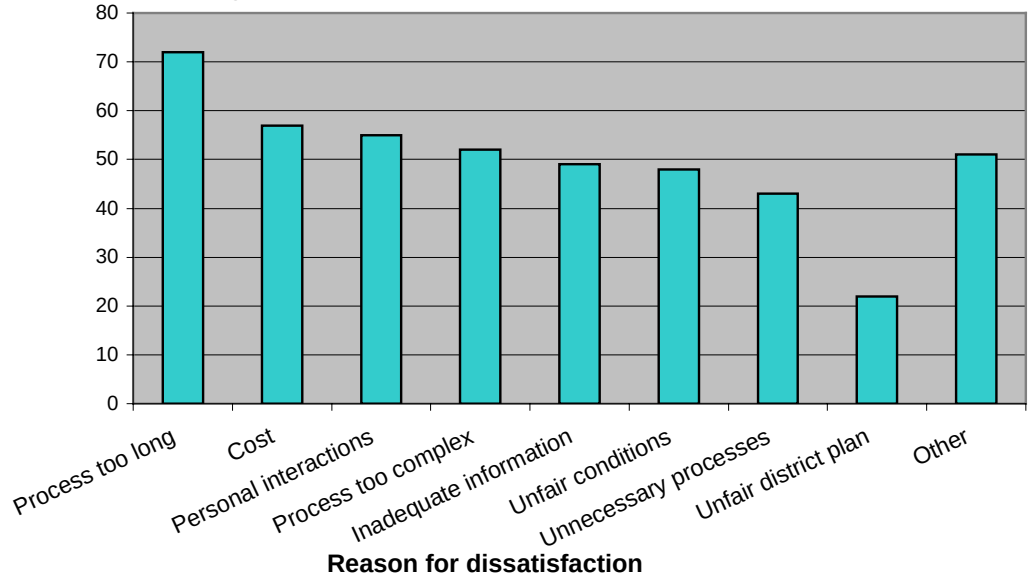
Fig. 5 indicates most applicants are either very or somewhat satisfied with the consent process. However there are also a significant proportion of applicants who are either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the process.

Fig. 5: Overall Satisfaction with Consent Process (%)



The most common reasons given for dissatisfaction were the long time taken to process the consent, complaints about the cost of the process, personal interactions, complexity of the process and inadequacy of the information given by council. A number of applicants also cited unfair conditions and unnecessary processes as reasons for dissatisfaction.

Fig. 6: Dissatisfaction with Consent Process



*Applicants could give multiple answers for this question.

1.1. 6 Council Consent Fees:

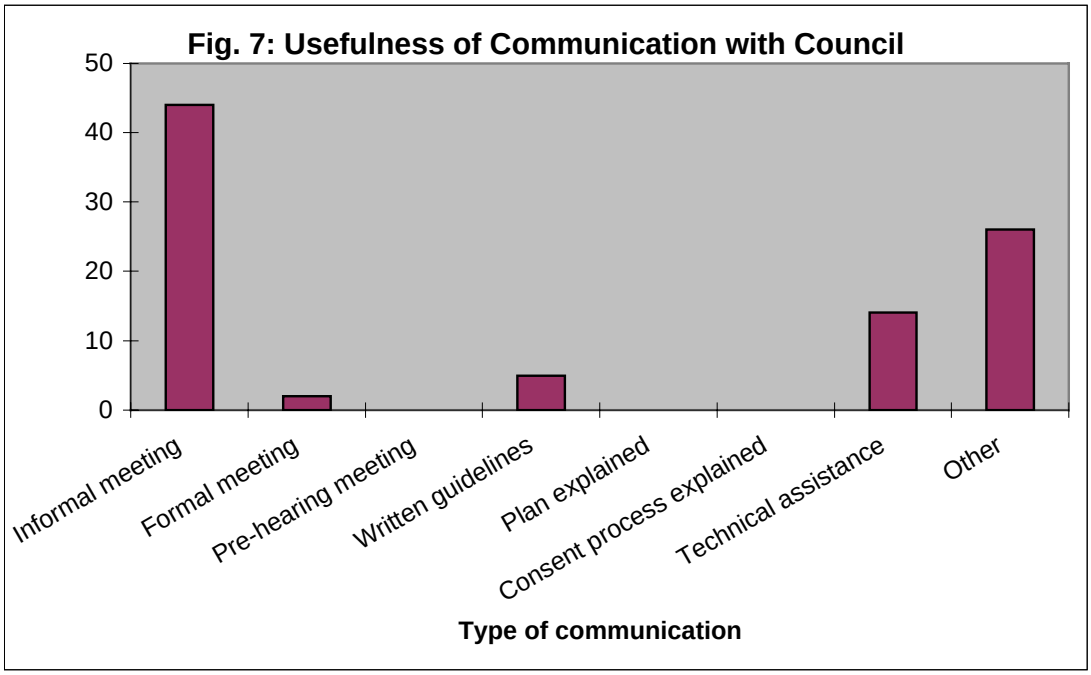
The cost of council fees was not known by almost half the respondents. The mean cost of council consent fees paid by the applicants who replied to this question was $5050. The mean cost of applications as a proportion of the total cost of consent was 22%.

1.2 Consultant Survey

The sample of 57 resource consent consultants comprised a mix of 72% surveyors, 18% consultant planners, with the remaining 10% mainly architects and engineers. Respondents processed a mean number of 61 consents per year.

1.2.1 Communication with Council

The usefulness of communications with councils as indicated by consultants is shown in Fig. 7. The most useful form of communication is considered to be through informal meetings. The graph also shows that no consultants think that pre-hearing meetings are most useful.



1.2.2 Consultation

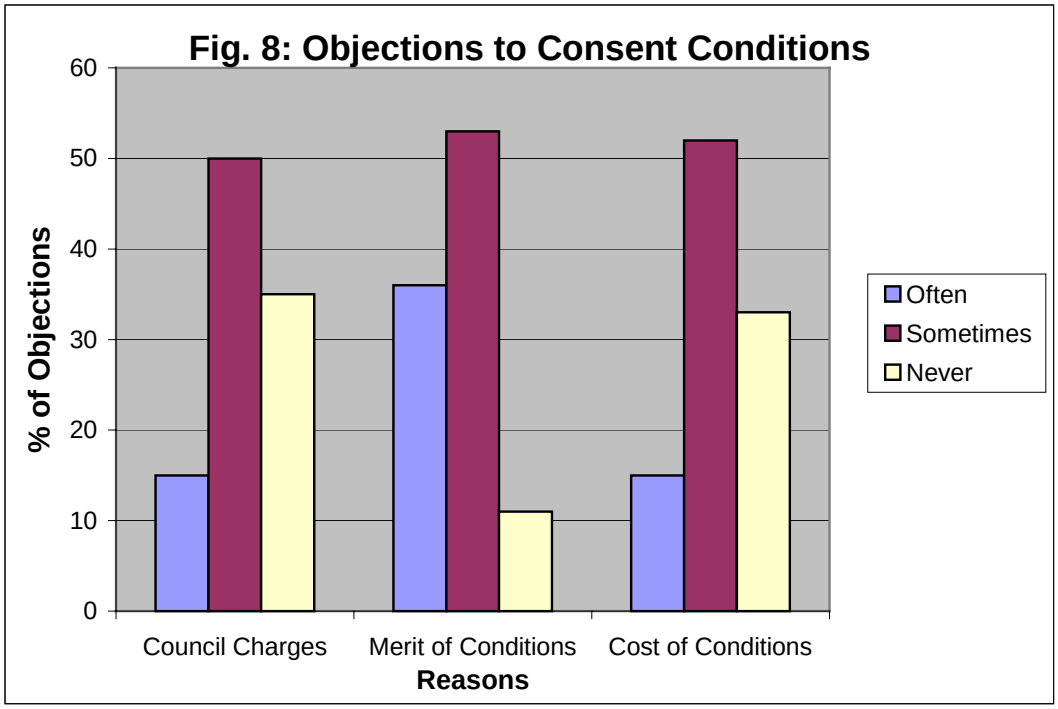
Like the applicant survey results, consultation by consultants led to changes in less than 30% of projects. Where changes do occur they are most likely in project design and conditions.

Council frequently recommends consultation with Maori. Where consultation with Maori does occur, they are usually representatives of tangata whenua. However, 30% of consultants were unsure about who Maori were representing. Only a small percent consulted with urban Maori. The favoured approach for consultation with Maori was through phone, closely followed by mail, site meetings and then other personal visits. About half the consultants surveyed had experience consulting with Maori.

The use of iwi planning documents in the consultation process is not high as 80% of the consultants responded that the documents were not considered. However, only two districts have iwi management plans in place.

1.2.3 Consent Conditions

Objections to consent conditions occurred in 11% of consents undertaken by consultants. Fig. 8 indicates that objections are usually over the merits of conditions, and slightly less often over council charges and cost of conditions.



1.2.4 Commitment to Stormwater and Urban Amenity

Fig. 9 shows that erosion and flooding are considered very important effects to avoid in development. Water quality does not rate highly as something that ought to be addressed.

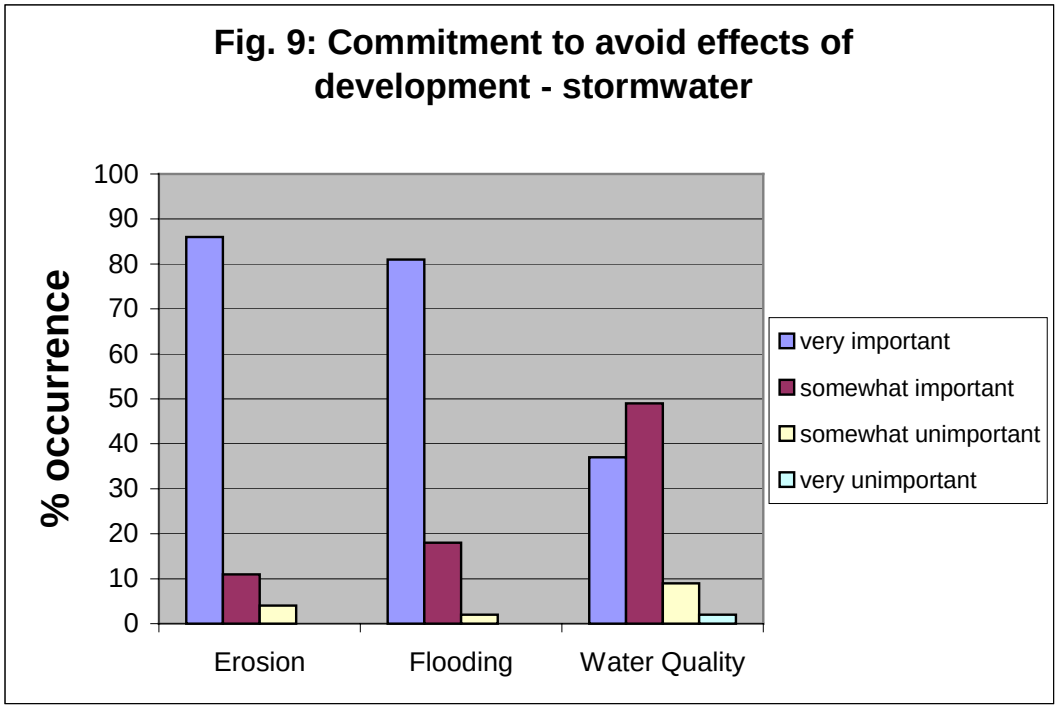
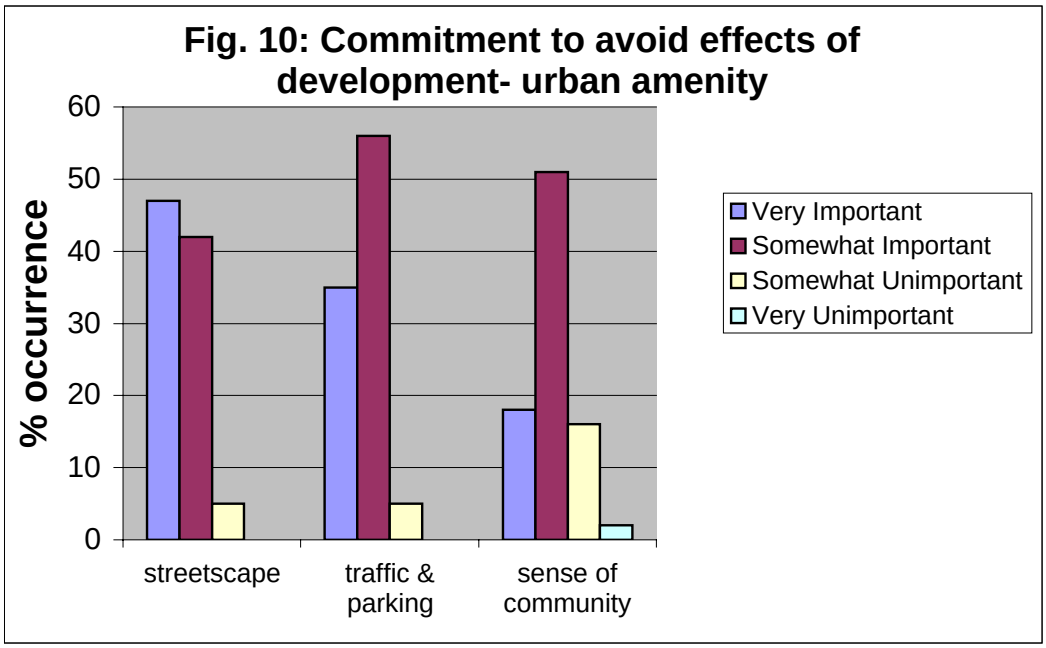
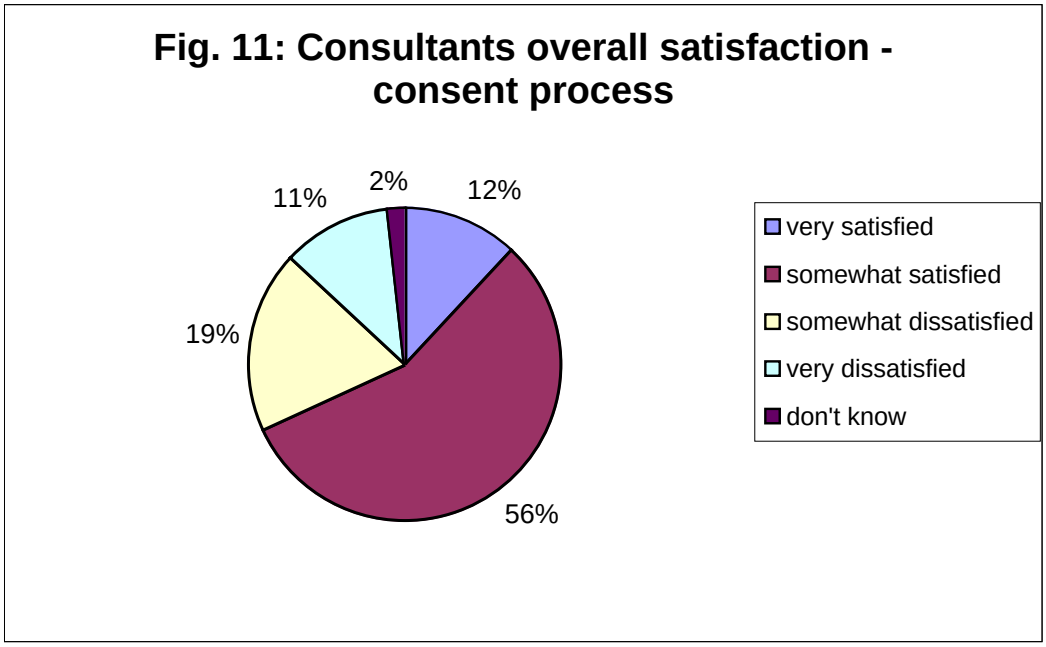


Fig. 10 shows that consultants addressing the effects of development on urban amenity consider the avoidance of effects on streetscape most important. It also illustrates that traffic and parking and sense of community are all considered reasonably important for protecting amenity. Comparing the results from Figs. 8 & 9, it seems consultants consider it less important to address the effects of development on urban amenity than stormwater.



1.2.5 Evaluation of the Resource Consent Process

Consultant's overall satisfaction of the consent process varied significantly, however the majority were at least somewhat satisfied.



The most frequent reason cited for dissatisfaction was the length of time taken by council to process consents. The least commonly occurring reason for dissatisfaction was unfair district planning provisions.

1.3 Council Survey

Senior staff from the six district and city councils were surveyed during mid 2001 to early 2002 to assess the commitment, capacity and issue knowledge of the councils to implement their district plans.

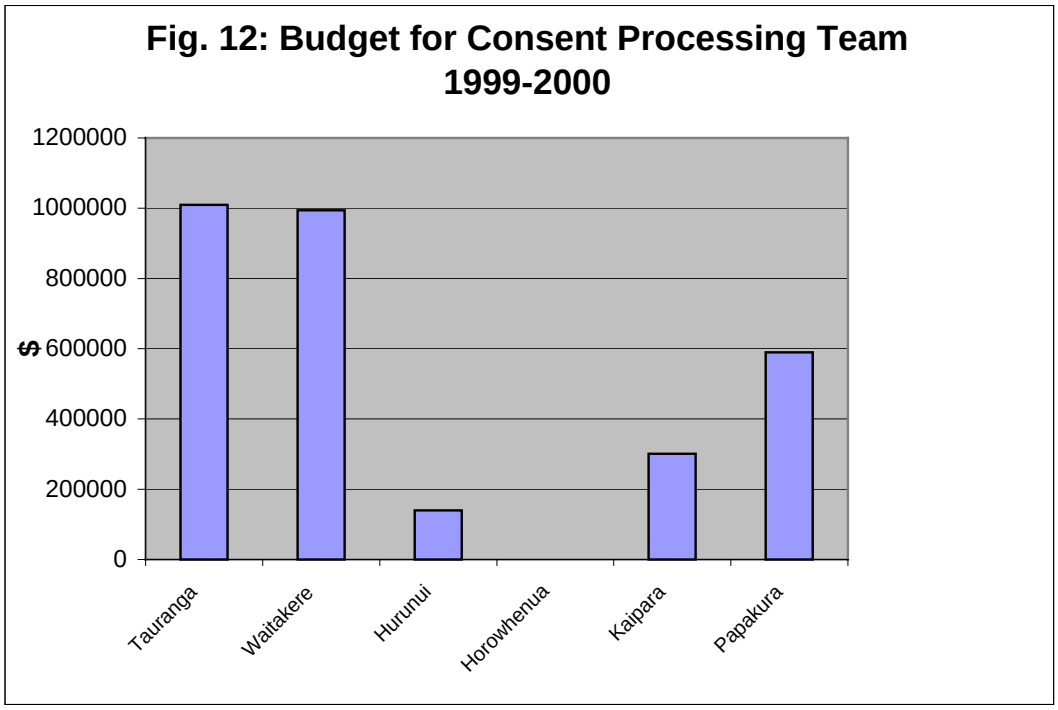
1.3.1 Capacity to Implement Plan

The number of consents processed to completion in 1999-2000 by each of the councils ranges from over 2000 to less than 225.

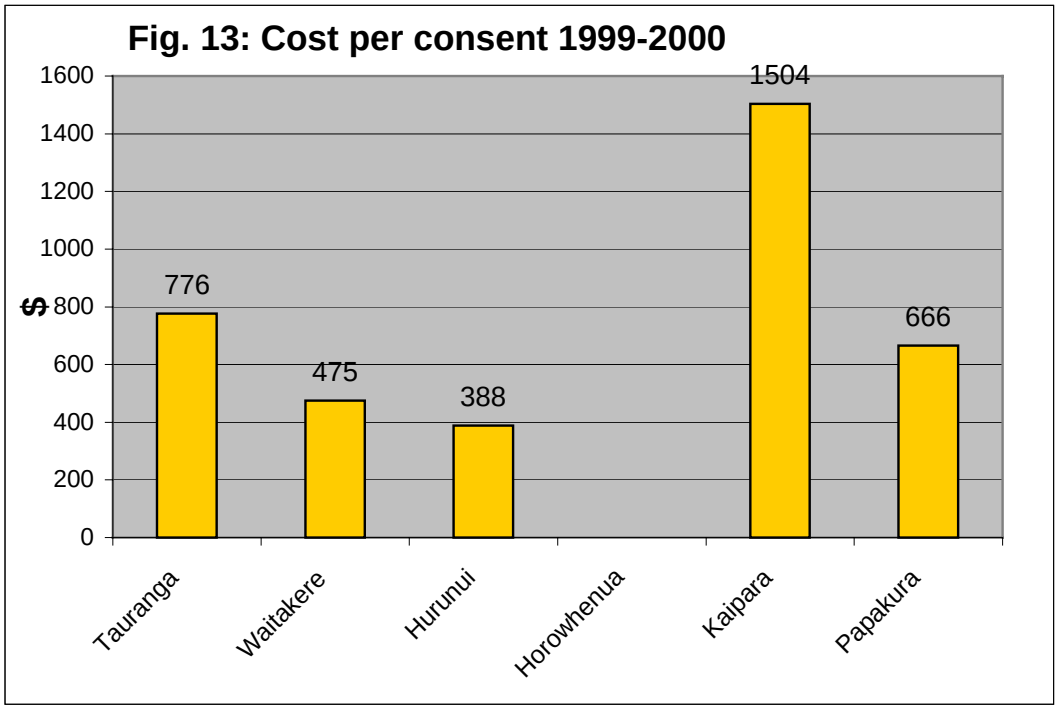
Table 1: Number of consents processed by Councils

Council	Number of Consents Processed (1999/2000)
Tauranga District Council	1301
Waitakere City Council	2092
Hurunui District Council	360
Horowhenua District Council	222
Kaipara District Council	Approx. 200
Papakura District Council	354

The budget for each council to process consents also varies considerably with Tauranga DC allocating the largest proportion of funds and Hurunui DC the least. Horowhenua does not separate its budget for consent processing so no figures were available.



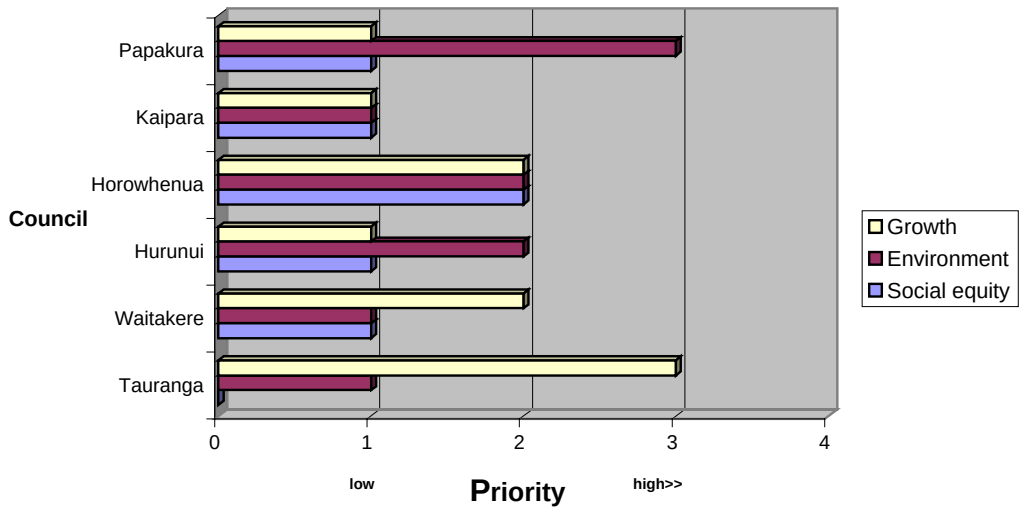
The data from Fig. 12 have been divided by the number of consents processed per year, giving a dollar value for the cost of each consent. The average costs per council, as shown in Fig. 13, range from $1504 to $388.



1.3.2 Commitment to Implement Plan

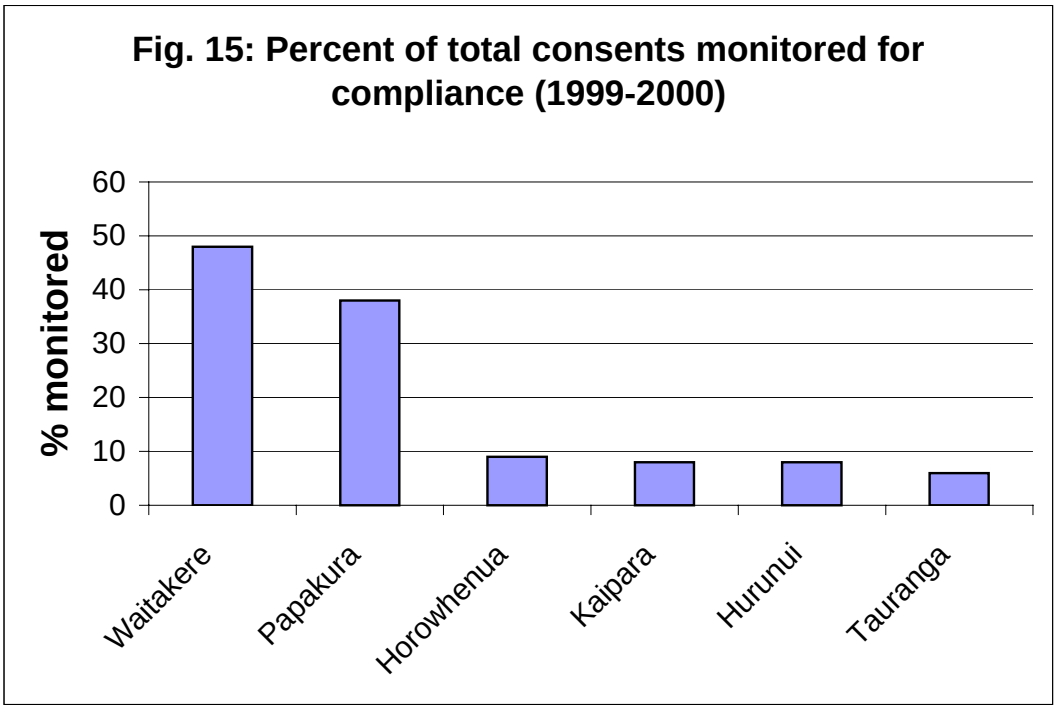
The responses of the staff on the political culture of the council revealed wide differences in the priorities given to issues such as social equity and fairness, the environment and market forces/growth. Fig. 14 illustrates Tauranga District Council places social equity and fairness as its lowest priority, while market forces and growth are given highest priority. All councils consistently rate social equity as low priority. The graph also shows that none of the councils scored growth, environment, or social equity at the highest possible priority rating of 4. Note these figures are based on council staffs' interpretation of political priorities

Fig. 14: Political Priorities



1.3.3 Monitoring and Enforcement of Consent Conditions

The number of consents monitored, as a percentage of the total consents processed are shown in Fig. 15.



The budget allocation for consent compliance monitoring and enforcement is not indicative of the percent of consents monitored. Waitakere spends $55,000 on monitoring 48% of its total number of consents, whereas Hurunui only monitors 8% and spends $40,000. Similarly, Tauranga spends $33,017 to monitor only 6% of consents. The remaining councils do not separate their budgets and hence no figures are available.

1.3.4 Specific Iwi Issues

Iwi representation in each of the councils varies greatly. The only common element between the councils is a lack of Maori councillors. Horowhenua, Waitakere and Papakura each have a standing committee of Maori representatives.

Representation of iwi issues through Iwi Resource Management plans is not prevalent in the districts surveyed. Only Awaroa Ki Manuka in Papakura district was listed as having a fully operational plan.

Most of the councils agree that applicants in general were very unfamiliar with requirements for consultation with tangata whenua.

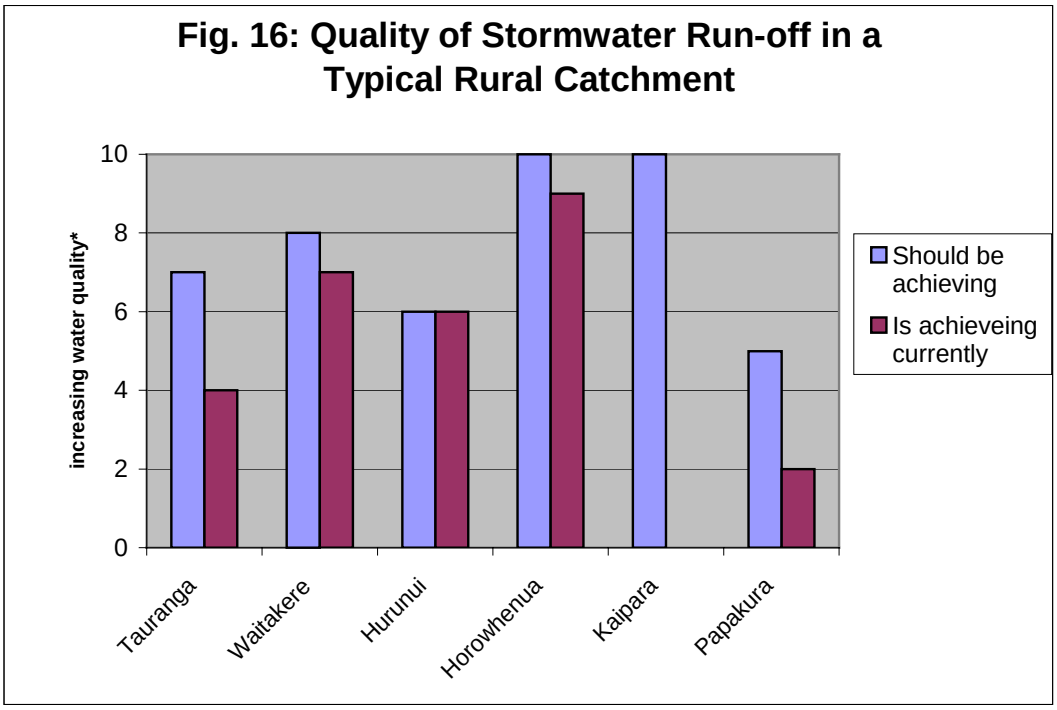
1.3.5 Stormwater Management Issues

In rural catchments most councils applied techniques that promoted the infiltration of stormwater rather than piping solutions. In urban catchments the range was more varied. Most of the councils thought that applying an even mix of both pipes and

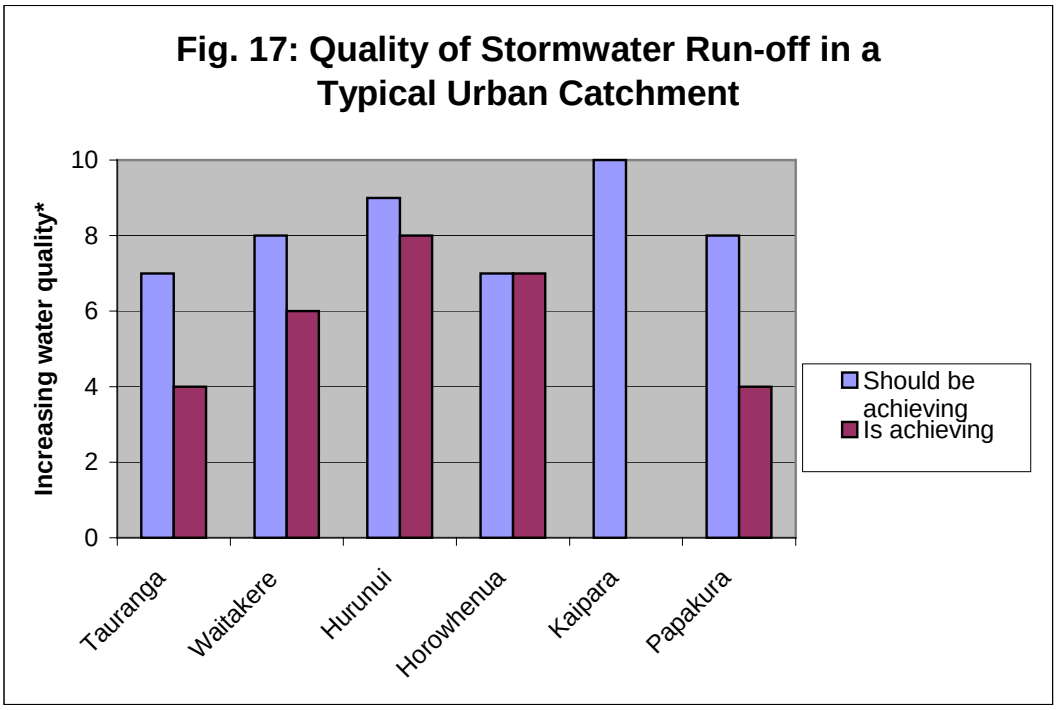
infiltration was preferable. Kaipara differed as it was thought that a high percent of urban stormwater should be managed through infiltration. In practice, however, Waitakere, Horowhenua and Kaipara tended to use pipes in urban areas more than infiltration. This was the opposite for Papakura and Tauranga, where infiltration was applied more often than pipes. These results are in contrast to what we found when we surveyed resource consents: refer: www.waikato.ac.nz/igci/pucm/NZPI2002.pdf

In terms of the quality of stormwater runoff, councils had differing views on what they ought to be achieving and what they thought council is currently achieving. Fig. 16 shows that while most councils aim for high water quality, few are achieving their goals in either rural or urban catchments. Kaipara while aiming for high quality water was unable to provide information on whether it is currently being achieved.

Fig. 16: Quality of Stormwater Run-off in a Typical Rural Catchment



* On a scale of 0-10 where 0 is all stormwater is contaminated and 10 is all stormwater runoff is clean

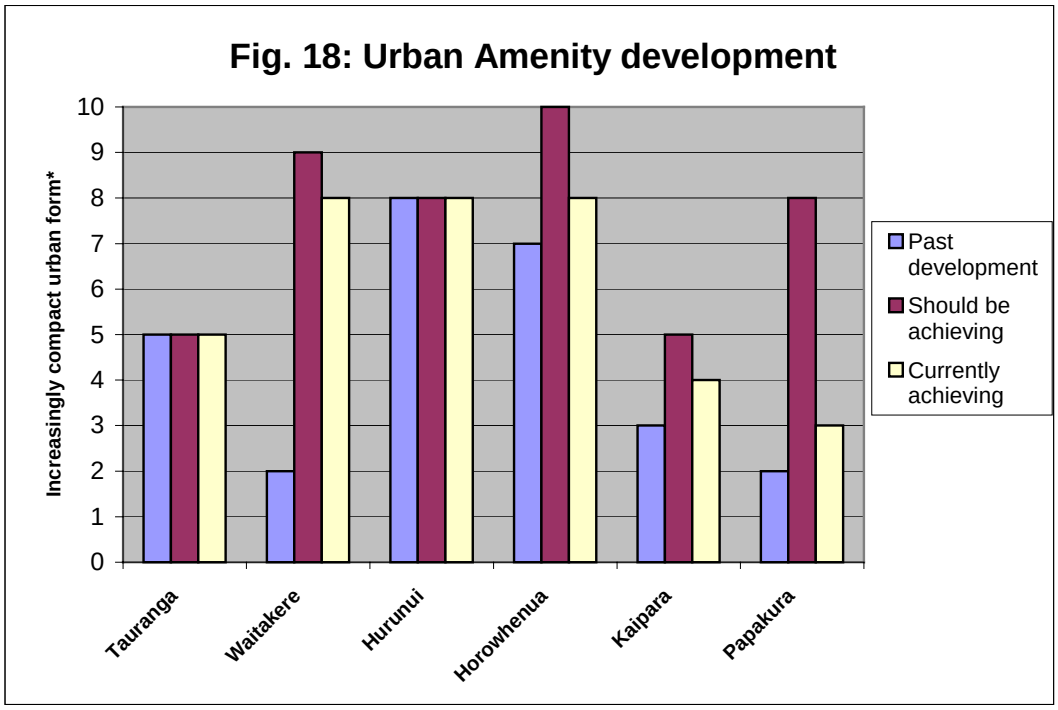


* On a scale of 0-10 where 0 is all stormwater is contaminated and 10 is all stormwater runoff is clean

1.3.6 Urban Amenity Issues

Fig. 18 shows that the use of urban amenity management techniques has evolved considerably in some districts. It illustrates what past developments *have* achieved for urban amenity in terms of cul-de-sac design and sprawl, or connected streets and compact urban form. They also illustrate what councils think they *should* be achieving and what they think they *are* achieving with current developments. Hurunui and Tauranga show even trends in past and predicted development and are the only councils whose staff think they are achieving the goals set out in their plans for urban development. The biggest variance comes from both Waitakere and Papakura, where past development tended towards urban sprawl, yet the district plans are now aiming to achieve much more compact urban development. The current practice in Papakura however still tends towards urban sprawl.

Overall, there is a general trend of decreasing use of urban sprawl and cul-de-sac design practices and an increasing tendency to apply design techniques that encourage connected streets and compact urban form.



* On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is all cul-de-sac design and sprawl and 10 is connected streets and compact urban form.