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Committee Landcare
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Belmont Regional Park management plan review update

1. Purpose

To update the Committee on the review of the Belmont Regional Park management plan and set the direction for drafting the plan.

2. Background

In July the Committee approved a timetable and process for the review of the Belmont Regional Park management plan (Report 03.450). This provided for a report to the Committee on 18 November 2003.

3. Progress to date

Phase 1 of the review – ‘pre-consultation’ – is complete. The purpose of this stage was to identify the key issues involved and the viewpoints of various stakeholders. This has involved:

- undertaking initial discussions with relevant statutory agencies and Iwi
- notifying our intention to review and calling for public submissions (38 received)
- holding two preliminary workshops with the ‘Friends of Belmont’ working group
- developing a newsletter to inform the community about the review
- holding a public meeting.

4. Key issues

Key issues arising from feedback to date include:

- security of tenure/future of the Park
- clarification of management roles and responsibilities of different agencies (including Greater Wellington's legal rights in terms of management planning)
- possible use of Belmont Regional Park as a windfarm site (both support and concern)
- sustainable management of land, water and ecosystems and protection of natural values
- additional tracks or improved access into the Park/improving linkages to other areas
- conflict between walkers and mountain bikers in particular areas of the Park
- heritage management
- limitations imposed through farm management
- potential impact of roading on the Park
- increasing public awareness, use and involvement in the Park.

A summary of the feedback to date is attached to this paper (**Attachment 1**).

For many years Belmont Regional Park has been administered and developed through co-operation rather than relying on statutory authorisation. However, as the Park becomes more developed and funds are put in to new facilities, it is important that we maintain a strong statutory basis for the plans. Feedback from other agencies indicates that elements of the current plan only have full legal effect on part of the Park. The argument is that the management plan can only have full legal effect in relation to land that we own or have been formally granted management and control.

We can not implement policies for areas over which we do not have formal management and control. For these areas policies can only be phrased in terms of providing guidance or advocacy. For example, the objective of the current plan's that "*the grassed open hill tops will be protected*" cannot be implemented by Greater Wellington with respect to Waitangirua farm as management and control is with Landcorp Farming Limited. Some of the current objectives and policies may need to be revised in light of this issue and further legal advice.

5. Review of the current plan

We have carried out an initial review of the aim, objectives and policies of the current plan in light of the recently approved Regional Parks Network Management Plan, feedback, submissions and proposals for the Park (see **Attachment 2**).

Our conclusion is that the existing plan is quite robust and much of it remains pertinent today. Hence, at this stage we do not anticipate significant changes from the direction set out in the existing management plan. The majority of policies will need only minor amendment and no change in the plan will be required.

However, the new plan will probably look different as editorial revision will be required to ensure consistency with the Network Plan framework and we will need to be very clear about the legal status of land and policies.

We will begin drafting the plan with sections that do not require a significant change of intent (examples include Policies on Staff, Volunteers, Health and Safety). Issues requiring a significant change in intent will be the subject of a Councillor workshop (such as windfarm proposals).

Possible wind farm development

A key issue to be considered in the plan is how the possibility of a windfarm development will be addressed.

We think that the best option for dealing with the wind farm issue is as follows.

New policies would be drafted for the plan to reflect those Council's Take Ten objectives which are not currently addressed, including energy. The specific objectives, policies, and methods relating to renewable energy could then be weighed up alongside other policies about landscape etc. This option allows for a range of objectives to be considered in any assessment.

We would also include the wind farm proposal in the draft plan as a 'specific development proposal' in addition to any renewable energy objectives within the plan.

This option allows for the proposal to be explicitly stated, does not compromise other policies within the plan and also provides renewable energy objectives to be weighed up alongside other objectives and policies.

6. Proposed structure of the plan

The Regional Parks Network Management Plan sets the framework for all park specific management plans. The Belmont Regional Park management plan therefore will be based upon the structure, objectives and policies of the Network Plan.

In addition to vision, objectives and policies as included in the Network Plan, we propose that park specific plans include more detailed maps, management actions (methods) and expected results. This will assist in ensuring that the objectives, policies and methods are aligned and that management actions contribute to park objectives. It will also enable the plans to be effectively monitored.

Many sections of the current plan correspond directly to the Network Plan. However, it may be necessary to include additional sections. This will become clearer once we have begun the drafting process.

7. Where to from here?

Officers will begin drafting a plan starting with the policies that do not appear to require significant changes. Officers propose that a workshop be held at a later date for Councillors to consider the issues requiring substantive change. We will also undertake a detailed assessment of submissions during drafting to identify issues which can be resolved in drafting and those which require a decision by Council.

8. Communication

Communication with stakeholders is ongoing. Once we have received guidance from the Committee, we will incorporate that information into our consultation with stakeholders.

9. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *receive the report.*
2. *note the contents of the report.*
3. *note that the pre-consultation phase of the review is complete.*
4. *note the key issues arising to date.*
5. *agree that Officers will draft the plan based on the review of the current plan (Attachment 2) beginning with sections that do not require a change of intent.*
6. *agree that the draft plan will include renewable energy objectives and include the windfarm proposal as a specific development proposal for consultation.*
7. *agree to hold a workshop for Councillors to consider the issues that may require significant changes to the existing plan.*

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Attachment 1: Summary of feedback to date

Attachment 2: Review of current plan – aim, objectives and policies