

7 October 2009  
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**Minutes of the Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee Meeting held in the Committee Room, Greater Wellington Regional Council, 34 Chapel Street, Masterton, on Monday, 5 October 2009, at 3.30pm.**

**Present:**

Peter Gawith (Chairperson), Cr Ian Buchanan, Jamie Falloon, Jenny Boyne, David Holmes (representing Wairarapa district councils), Andy Pottinger, Emily Crofoot (from 3.40pm), and Bernard Card.

**Apology:**

Michael Blundell

**Officers present:**

David Cameron, Wayne O'Donnell, Ian Gunn, Jim Flack, Scott Ihaka (for item 3), and Murray Waititi (for item 4).

**1. Apology**

*Resolved*

*(Jenny Boyne/David Holmes)*

*That the apology from Michael Blundell be accepted.*

**2. Confirmation of minutes**

*Resolved*

*(Jenny Boyne/Peter Gawith)*

*That the minutes of the Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee meeting held on 6 August 2009 be confirmed.*

### **3. Landscape Evaluation Project – Communication Plan Development**

Scott Ihaka attended the meeting to bring the committee up to date regarding the forthcoming Landscape Evaluation Project. He asked members for their comments on the best way to proceed in terms of consultation with the hill country farmers. The framework for the policy document was to identify the outstanding features and landscape amenities under sections 6 and 7 of the RMA. Of importance is the policy direction for the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the values within the landscape. Scott made it clear that it was not intended to prevent change but to ensure any change is appropriate to the values identified in the process. Outstanding landscape is identified in the Combined District Plan. These would be reviewed and those landscapes with significant amenity values will be classified. These could include farm land while the outstanding landscapes often occurred within the DOC estate. Any identification of significant amenity landscapes will involve the landowners. The management of such landscapes could include both incentives and regulation.

Boffa Miskell has commenced the background work and is proposing to look at the initial engagement consultation phase with the community around November.

A communications plan for the project is being prepared and was expected to be available prior to Christmas. Scott was seeking ideas from the committee as to how and who may be engaged throughout the process.

An overall directive steering group was proposed comprising the three Wairarapa district councils, Federated Farmers (Anders Crofoot, Bridget Buckley), Boffa Miskell, and Iwi.

Critical points were raised covering implications of the project, timing and purpose.

Committee members considered that getting people to attend a meeting in November and December would be difficult with busy farming schedules, and January where many people are on holiday.

Peter Gawith believed that there needed to be preliminary information developed complete with definitions to describe the benefits of this approach and to make it clear who will be responsible for what. Another approach could be to providing information through the Rural Focus newsletter to assist landowners to better understand what is proposed prior to setting a meeting.

David Holmes would like to see the difference between QEII protection covenants and the landscape process clearly presented.

Bernard Card said it was essential to make sure that discussions with landowners occurs early on. From past involvement with the QEII Trust, when this did not occur there has been a disaster around the country and the last person who receives the information are the landowners who then become very negative to the process.

Emily Crofoot considered that it was important to have the key stakeholders on the core committee as their vested interest and input was valuable. It might be possible to include information in the newsletters distributed by Chris Garland.

Andy Pottinger said that interpretation of landscapes was very subjective. What was needed is an explanation of the purpose for the plan, what are the benefits, what landscape could be classified as a significant amenity, what does it mean for the landowner, for example. If land owners know this then they will participate in the process. Currently he had not heard anything to stimulate landowners to attend.

Scott indicated that one of the benefits of this approach is that, for example, that landowners would know what land could be used for windfarms rather than the current situation where every landowner interested in developing windfarms has to do their own landscape assessment. There would be more certainty around landscape issues.

Bernard Card thought the best approach is to talk to landowners face to face about the value of their land. There needed to be information in the press which made it clear to everyone what is happening. He noted that he is disappointed that important soil values often are left out of such classifications.

Jim Flack stated that the committee had provided him with good information for the development of a communications plan.

It was also noted that this process could cross over with the development of the Biodiversity strategy and is there an opportunity to combine these.

#### **4. Wairarapa Moana Project (Lake Wairarapa)**

Murray Waititi gave a presentation and explained that many people think the Wairarapa Moana project is associated only with Lake Wairarapa when in fact it takes in all the publically owned land, the environs and connecting water bodies and wetlands from the Lake Domain to the coast at Lake Onoke. It is a very large restoration project.

Murray gave a brief history of the project stating that it had been a decade in the making. Goals and missions were being developed relating to the restoration of the lake and its associated surrounding wetlands. The main purpose is to nurture and maintain the native plants and animals to ensure their survival, while ensuring that the whole of the moana is a place that is recognised as being an important part

of Wairarapa, Kahunungu ki Wairarapa and Rangitane's cultural and spiritual heritage. There was also the need to make sure the restoration and cultural significance adds value to the local community.

The main players involved are Greater Wellington, the two local iwi Ngati Kahungunu and Rangitane, a local hapu, DoC (currently the main landowner), and the South Wairarapa District Council (main TLA). GW is the primary funder. The intention of the project was to be self-sustaining. Because of the nature and scale of the project a good relationship with local community groups, local schools, statutory and non-statutory organisations will be important.

Murray indicated that although the project was still in its early days, it was a matter of getting the various parties working in the same direction to undertake planning, and gathering information about the moana and its current ecological state, along with setting the baseline for the project.

The aim is to ensure the wetlands function better and it is likely that the upper hill country in the Ruamahanga River catchment will become involved to improve the environment at Lake Wairarapa.

Bernard Card asked about the vision and what the status was that underlies the vision. He considered that the principles needed to be driven by clear visions. Bernard said that he was on the original NZ Wetlands Committee and one of the key issues that he found interesting was getting the fly way system sorted. There was more significance in being able to track godwits and said that this should be kept on the radar.

Pests and weeds needing to be eliminated included Canada geese, hornwort, crack willows, alders.

Cr Buchanan indicated that in terms of the scale of the task ahead, this was seen as a fully functional regional ecological park. It is already a nationally significant wetland area which qualifies for 4 out of the 5 criteria to achieve RAMSAR status.

Peter Gawith thanked Murray for his presentation and said an interesting challenge lay ahead.

## **5. Homebush Nursery update**

Dave Cameron reported that since the previous meeting there has been discussions with the both the Masterton District Council and the Homebush Irrigation Consortium re the nursery site opportunity. The Homebush Irrigation Consortium are interested in utilising treated wastewater at the Homebush site and it is their desire to not have the site border-dyked and for the water to be applied to land

through a different method of application. The Homebush Irrigation Consortium is keen for GW to establish the nursery on the site.

GW's application is to develop between 8-15 hectares at Homebush and would be looking towards planting in 2010. Although final agreement had yet to be received, Dave said that GW remains strongly in the frame and he expects official notification of the bid for the land prior to Christmas.

David Holmes, as a member of the consortium, advised that mediation around the resource consent conditions was scheduled for 6 October. There was a desire by the consortium to encourage the nursery proceeding rather than contemplate not seeing it work.

Jamie Falloon asked that in terms of the approved LTCCP process for Akura and whether funding had been approved for Homebush. Dave indicated that the \$100,000 loan was to be rate funded.

## **6. Natural Resource Management Plan**

Cr Buchanan outlined the proposed process for the review and development of the new regional plan for the Wellington region. GW is proposing to review their current five operative regional plans covering freshwater, soil, air, coastal and discharge to land. The regional community will have a significant input into the development of the regional plan with a focus on community engagement from day one.

Phase 1 of the process will be the preparation of a document scoping the review and outlining the principles to be used. This is likely to include the "supercatchment" information as background for participants. This document is scheduled to be ready by March 2010 as planning staff are currently focussed on completing the submission and hearing process for the Proposed Regional Policy Statement. The engagement phase will involve defining the issues and developing the responses to the issues. Significant discussions with stakeholders will occur around the region to identify what the regional plan should cover and possible tools to be used. The outcome from the discussions will lead into document two, looking at the findings from the engagement process. The next phase will develop the first cut of what the regional plan will look like.

Broad target dates include:

- Phase 1 - first document by March 2010
- Phase 2 - engagement phase commences 2010 – 2011

- Phase 3 - bringing the first phase together into the one document for stakeholders feedback, 6 months process – June/July 2011
- Phase 4 – development of the regional plan document for its statutory process – 2012

Cr Buchanan indicated that through the WHCAC Committee, members will have a key influence within the communities. The project will be a joint divisional project between the environment and catchment management divisions. An important task will be to identify the regulatory and non-regulatory pathways early in the discussions.

8-10 key stakeholder groups in the Wairarapa are proposed to work over the next 2-3 years including urban, business and environmental groups. It is likely that the process will develop a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation property plan building on the current sustainability plans. A similar philosophy can be applied to urban areas.

Bernard Card, as Director of the QEII Trust, declared an interest, took no part, and did not vote.

Andy Pottinger and David Holmes left the meeting at 4.55pm.

## **7. National Bovine Tb Pest Management Strategy**

Wayne O'Donnell verbally reported that the Minister for Agriculture has announced that he has accepted a proposal for a National Pest Management Strategy for Bovine Tb. The formal notice of the review was notified in the Gazette on 1 October 2009. There is a submission period extending through to 30 November 2009.

The proposed strategy has three significant changes to the objectives.

- By mid 2025, eradication of Tb from wild animal populations in at least 2.5 million hectares of Tb vector risk area with consequent reclassification of this land as Tb vector free area. The AHB has been asked to provide proof that the concept of Tb being eradicated from the full range of Tb wildlife habitats is achievable.
- Prevent the establishment of Bovine Tb in possum populations in vector free areas during the term of the strategy.

- Maintain the national annual Tb infected herd period at the lowest rate possible while achieving the objectives, and at no greater than an average of 0.4% in NZ throughout the term of the strategy.

Implications for GW are that there is only regional share funding for this year and 2010/11. GW will need to decide whether it wishes to remain a funding partner and, if so, what type of partnership arrangement would be suitable. The Wellington regional share for the first 5 year term of the proposed strategy is estimated to be approximately \$500,000 per annum. Expenditure for this region for the next 3 years is around \$3-4m for vector control.

Bernard Card said it was looking positive because the Minister is maintaining the contribution from the Crown. The Crown has indicated \$30m per year.

It was noted that the AHB needed to rebuild its relationships with regional councils. AHB staff over the next six months will visit all the regional councils to reset relationships. Wayne indicated this is important as councils have valuable information which will assist the proposed strategy. He believed it is vital that trend monitoring continue as it results in an effective works programme.

It was agreed that a draft submission be prepared and forwarded to Committee members for their comments.

Jamie asked about publicity on landowner assistance programmes. This will be highlighted in a future rural newsletter with Andy fronting the publicity.

## **8. WRECI**

Dave Cameron said he was pleased to announce that he had made two appointments:

1. Andrew Stewart, as the WRECI coordinator. Andrew comes from the Gladstone area where has farmed most recently. Previously he has worked as a facilitator for the NZ Landcare Trust and as a Land Management Officer for Otago Regional Council. Dave expects Andrew to be working on a strategy of implementation for WRECI up to Christmas.
2. Scott Andrew will commence duties on 2<sup>nd</sup> November filling Andrew Patrick's position. Scott is off a Wairarapa farm and has a forestry degree.

GW have not signed off their AGS contract with the MAF. MAF consider to be eligible for the WRECI funding woodlots need to be less than 5 hectares. MAF consider that anything larger should be funded through the AGS and this would preclude any chance of double dipping. Dave would like to see WRECI woodlots

eligible for funding above the 5 hectare threshold as he sees this fits the Wairarapa situation better. MAF have agreed to consider three issues;

- An increase to 10 hectares
- The economics of 20 hectare lots under the Emission Trading Scheme
- The impact of such a change on GW and other partners to the AGS

Note: any changes needs the Minister's approval.

To date there has been no publicity on the WRECI project. It was agreed that now was the time to go public and that it would be good for Andy Pottinger to front the publicity.

## **9. Communications**

Jim stated that the most recent publication of Our Region had a feature on land management. The feature highlighted the benefits of GW's land management programme.

## **10. General Business**

Jamie asked where the stock access and waterways guidelines were at. Staff indicated that a further version had been developed but they did not know if the guideline was finalised. Dave undertook to research this further.

The meeting closed at 5.30pm.