



Report 10.259
Date 7 May 2010
File PK/03/10/04

Committee Council
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Draft Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan, approval for consultation

1. Purpose

To provide the Draft Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan for approval for public consultation.

2. Significance of the decision

The decision making process is explicitly prescribed for by Section 41 of the Reserves Act 1977 and is similar to the special consultative process of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

In October 2009 the Regional Sustainability Committee agreed to develop a comprehensive Parks Network Management Plan (refer **Report 09.626**). It was proposed that a single plan would replace the current management plans for each of the regional parks and also the forest lands. A comprehensive, integrated plan incorporating all of these lands ensures a consistent approach to planning for the parks network.

3.1 Pre-draft feedback

The process for developing any management plan which includes reserves gazetted under the Reserves Act 1977 involves an initial opportunity for the public to provide input prior to the development of the management plan. A public notice of the Council's intention to prepare the plan and seeking submissions was advertised in November last year (for comments to be received prior to 18 December 2009).

There were 57 submissions received on the intention to prepare the plan. The concept of an integrated plan for the parks was supported by the majority of respondents, with the proviso that the unique characteristics of each area, along with the differing types of activities and users, are recognised in the plan.

Key messages received about park management were:

- to ensure the parks are preserved for the future with particular regard to enhancing ecological values through restoration and ongoing care;
- that there is careful consideration about locating activities within the network in a way that balances competing uses;
- to limit commercial involvement / development; and
- to encourage learning opportunities and associated park infrastructure.

A number of suggestions for content in the Greater Wellington Parks Management Plan were made by respondents and have been considered in the development of the plan.

The summary of submissions from pre-draft feedback was made available to councillors and presented in the April workshop on the draft plan. This summary is available for reading in the councillors lounge.

3.2 Other pre-draft consultation

Officers met with a number of community groups actively involved in the parks and also offered to meet with some groups who had recently been involved in the development of Battle Hill Farm Forest Park Management Plan 2009.

Consultation with iwi was carried over the January and February period and included the Tenths Trust, Taranaki Whanui, Ngati Toa and Ngati Raukawa.

Officers have also meet with the relevant councils and the Department of Conservation (DOC) where the parks are included within their jurisdictions. This is particularly important for Hutt City Council and DOC as Greater Wellington has formal agreements for managing park land owned by these agencies.

Park rangers and other Greater Wellington staff have also been consulted in the development of the draft plan.

On the 14 April and 4 May Councillors had the opportunity to informally review earlier versions of the plan, allowing officers to refine the draft plan.

4. Content of the Draft Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan

A copy of the draft plan is in **Attachment 1** (provided separately). The draft plan layout is significantly different from previous parks plans. The major content changes are outlined below.

4.1 Planning framework

The plan sets out the overall vision for the parks network which is:

“To enrich lives by connecting people with healthy natural places.”

Principles for the management of the parks are stated, followed by network-wide objectives and policies. There are also a series of park-specific provisions, including key characteristics and management focus statements for each park. Two main maps for each park are included, one showing the current park features and activities and the other showing likely future changes.

4.2 Parks Network Strategy

The plan incorporates the Parks Network Strategy developed through extensive consultation and research in 2009. The strategy emphasised the need to consider the parks as a network which protects a diverse range of natural and cultural heritage as well as offers a variety of experiences and opportunities for the public to be involved with recreation and other activities.

4.3 General policy

In developing the policies for the draft plan, analysis carried out on the current network plan, regional parks plans and the forest lands plan showed that there is a high level of consistency of policy detail. Where policies are consistent across the parks, this has formed the basis of the ‘general policy’ section in the draft plan. There have been some additions to the policies which include design principles, renewable energy and climate change policies as well as a greater focus on education and promotion.

4.4 Retaining the nature and character of the park

In recognising the need to retain the unique nature of each park and what it provides, a succinct description of each park’s key characteristics is now included in the plan. These will guide consideration of the types of development appropriate within the park. This is complemented by the section on ‘management focus’ which shows the general direction for managing the parks over the life of the plan. This will assist Greater Wellington in making decisions on investing resources in the parks. It will also make it easier to identify activities or developments that are not appropriate for a particular park because they lie outside the ‘management focus’ or do not enhance the ‘key characteristics’ of the park.

Each park has a chapter devoted to detailing any policies or actions that are particular to the park (rather than general policies which apply across the park network). This chapter also outlines the legal status of the park which is important given that some parks have a specific legal purpose (namely, the water collection areas).

4.5 Rules

The draft plan deals with activities occurring within parks in Part 7 (Rules). Activities which are generally allowed are outlined first, followed by activities which are managed through a permit system. In the current parks plans these are shown in tabular form with some distinctions being made on what can be done within the park based on zones. There was no consistent basis across the

network on which the zones were created so these zones have not be carried through to the draft plan. This is a significant change from the previous plan in terms of layout.

The guidelines for assessing, notifying and imposing conditions on activities which are deemed restricted activities have been enhanced from the current plans. This should provide more certainty to applicants interested in carrying out activities or developments within the park.

5. Topics of public interest

There are a few topics within the draft plan which are likely to be the focus of attention through the consultation process. These items will be specifically addressed in communications during the consultation phase. A short precise of these is provided below.

5.1 Transmission Gully Motorway (TGM)

The proposed TGM alignment traverses two of the parks: Battle Hill and Belmont. While this is not a new development, there continues to be ongoing discussion regarding access to the parts of the parks that will be dissected by the motorway. Access is expected to be provided under the motorway at Battle Hill for recreational users and for logging operations.

In Belmont Regional Park underpasses suitable for both recreational and farm use are expected to be provided within the current track network. There may also be additional access points provided. The plan highlights the need to re-evaluate the use and management of the western section of Belmont Park following the construction of TGM. This will happen during the life of the plan, in consultation with the NZ Transport Agency, Porirua City Council and leaseholders.

5.2 Kapiti Expressway

The NZ Transport Agency has announced the construction of an expressway through Kapiti. The southern end of the expressway may impact on Queen Elizabeth Park. The Agency has signalled two possible alignments for the southern part of the expressway where it joins existing SH1: one dissects the north-eastern corner of QE Park and the other would join the state highway north of the park.

The Queen Elizabeth park future projected changes map shows the two possible alignments and notes that Greater Wellington will work with DoC (the park's owner) and the NZ Transport Agency as the preferred alignment is identified.

5.3 Construction of Puketiro windfarm

RES New Zealand Ltd continues to work towards a windfarm development which includes land within the Akatarawa Forest (as shown on the future projected changes map for the Akatarawa Forest). In 2009 the proposed windfarm was the subject of the majority of submissions on the Battle Hill

Farm Forest Park Management Plan resulting in a decision to prohibit the development of wind turbines within the park.

The decision to prohibit wind turbines in Battle Hill Farm Forest Park has been carried through to the draft plan. Access to the proposed windfarm is still required near the ridgeline at the rear of Battle Hill within the park boundary. The access track within the park was agreed by the Council in 2009 on the basis that it would not adversely impact on the park's values. This access track is indicated on the projected changes maps contained within the appendices.

5.4 Parangarahu Lakes

Officers have met with a representative of the Tenth Trust and Taranaki Whanui regarding the inclusion of lands surrounding the Parangarahu Lakes (previously called Pencarrow Lakes) within the draft plan. It was agreed that the policies regarding the lakes stated in the current management plan (East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan 2007) should be included in the draft plan, pending further discussions and agreements. Any changes to in the management of the lakes area agreed by the Board overseeing the lakes would be included through a plan variation. To this end there is no projected future changes map for the lakes area.

5.5 Heritage Precinct

A heritage precinct in the area near the MacKay's entrance to Queen Elizabeth Park is proposed in the draft plan. This proposal is likely to require a change to the reserve status of the land, which is currently recreation reserve. If confirmed through the consultation process, the next stage will be to change the reserve status of this section of the park from recreation reserve to local purpose reserve.

6. Consultation

The consultation plan for the next phase of the development of the parks network plan is in **Attachment 2**.

Consultation on the draft plan broadly follows the statutory process set out in the Reserves Act 1977, Section 41. Under the Act a minimum period of two months is required for the public to provide written submissions on the draft. Anyone making a written submission has the option of presenting their submission in person.

A reasonably high number of submissions are expected in the draft plan. It is therefore likely that a sub-committee of the Sustainability Committee will need to be established to hear the submitters who wish to be heard and to consider all the written submissions. The hearings and deliberations are likely to be in the week beginning 9 August 2010. The Sustainability Committee will consider the options for hearing submissions and deliberating at its meeting in June.

The following table sets out the expected timeframe for consultation.

Timeframe	Action
18 May 2010	Draft Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan approved by Council for public consultation
May – 23 July 2010	Submissions period
10-13 August 2010	Public hearings and sub-committee deliberations
14 September 2010	Consideration of recommendation from Sub-committee
28 September 2010	Plan confirmed by Council
Early 2011	Minister of Conservation approval

The timeline will enable the Council to adopt the final Park Network Plan at its last meeting of the Triennium.

7. Recommendations

That the Council:

1. ***Receives*** the report;
2. ***Notes*** the content of the report;
3. ***Approves*** the Draft Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan for public consultation as set out in Attachment 1, subject to changes agreed that the meeting;
4. ***Approves*** the consultation plan as set out in Attachment 2; and
5. ***Delegates*** to the Chair of the Sustainability Committee authority to approve any final amendments to the Draft Plan resulting from the meeting.

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

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Attachment 1: Draft Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan
Attachment 2: Consultation Plan