

# Looking to the future of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui



A background paper which accompanies the Draft Amendment to the Parks Network Plan, to incorporate Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui



Produced March 2012

Greater Wellington Regional Council

PK/12/02/03



## Introduction

In 2010, the community celebrated the purchase of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui – which expanded East Harbour Regional Park by nearly 285 hectares and made a spectacular section of the region's south coast accessible to the public. This section of the park was officially opened at the beginning of 2011 and has since been gazetted as a scenic reserve. Now we are ready to decide how we manage Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui in the future.

This background paper provides the reader with more detail on the background to the policies outlined in the draft amendment to the Parks Network Plan. The draft policies are the result of considerable research, debate, public comment over the future management. At this early stage of park development it is essential that we set off in the right direction so that the values of this special place can be enjoyed by future generations.

### 1.1 Format of the Plan

The Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan is the comprehensive management plan for our regional parks and forest areas. The plan contains the vision for the parks and the guiding principles for how the parks are to be managed. It has general policies that apply across all parks as well as specific chapters devoted to each park. The Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui draft amendment will become a subsection of the East Harbour Regional Park chapter in the plan. Therefore, this amendment should be read in conjunction with other sections of the Parks Network Plan, particularly the general management framework (Part 3), and general management outcomes and policies (Part 4) which will also apply to this new amendment to the plan.

Aside from the park-specific policies, the draft amendment outlines the activities which will be allowed, managed, restricted or prohibited within Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui. This effectively amends Section 7 of the Parks Network Plan, which contains rules for use and development.

You will note that the Parks Network Plan (2010) already refers to Baring Head. However, this only includes the lighthouse compound and escarpment (recreation reserve) which has been managed by Greater Wellington for some time. This draft amendment applies to the whole of Greater Wellington managed land at Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui (i.e. the recreation reserve and scenic reserve).

Once the amendment is finalised, it will be published as an amendment to the Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan and incorporated into the written / online document accordingly.

Note that we also anticipate a review of the Parangarau Lakes/Pencarrow Head area in the near future. This is in light of the 2009 Treaty Settlement between the Crown and Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust, Taranaki Whanui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika. This year Greater Wellington will work with iwi to review the policies for the Lakes and their

catchment. This will not affect the decisions made about Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui but may alter the layout of the published Parks Network Plan document.

The draft amendment does not provide a comprehensive history or analysis of the values of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui. This has been done through separate research documents which have fed into the process of developing policy. These are available for further reading and are listed within the draft amendment. When the resource statement for East Harbour Regional Park is reviewed, this research will be valuable source material.

## **2. What the public have told us**

As part of the process for preparing a reserve management plan, (set out in Section 41 of the Reserves Act) the Council invited written suggestions on what should be in the plan from the public and interested organisations. During June and July 2011 people commented on the online forum *haveyoursay.gw.govt.nz* as well as through written submissions.

The online forum provided an interactive space where people could view documents, photos and updates as well as read and respond to comments made by other forum users. In addition to reviewing online comments, officers received around a dozen letters, including substantial responses from Friends of Baring Head, Historic Places Trust (NZHPT), Wellington Botanical Society, NIWA, Lower Hutt Forest and Bird Society and New Zealand Alpine Association. The following sections give a general overview of this feedback.

### **2.1 What attracts visitors to Baring Head?**

Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui presents a chance to experience a wild place which feels remote, yet is relatively close to a major city. Many commented on the outstanding scenery, both as a landscape and as the views towards Wellington and the Cook Strait which the headland affords.

*“...in my view it is the most photogenic headland on the south coast from the sea”*

Many people referenced the historical aspects of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui as being an attraction and something to be treasured. This included the area’s geological, maritime, wartime, colonial, Māori and scientific history.

*“The land in these areas is full of amazing stories of discovery and ship wreck disasters, settler development and earthquake destruction, Aotearoa Māori heritage and history and Pakeha NZ firsts. Giving visitors access to this extra piece of these stories is vital for the preservation of our stories. Without our stories we have nothing.”*

Visitors appreciate Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui for the wide range of outdoor recreational activities available in this natural setting. Rock climbing, angling, diving, walking, running, cycling, botanising and sightseeing are all activities currently undertaken. A number of comments were made about cycling from Eastbourne along the coast to Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui – described as the “lighthouse to lighthouse ride”. There were also some suggestions about what other activities might be suitable (mentioned in Section 2.3).

*“Being able to access Baring Head is going to mean so much to so many people like no other piece of land in the region. Climbers, anglers, walkers, runners, mountain bikers... Baring Head can provide something specific to all these groups and generally to them all.”*

## **2.2 Suggestions for improvements**

The online forum asked participants to comment on what they thought should be done first to improve the area. A range of responses were received, and are listed in no particular order:

- Install track markers and signage that can withstand stock/wind damage
- Provide interpretation at various points in the reserve
- Develop a visitors centre at the lighthouse to interpret the various stories relating to the area which might include both periodic and permanent displays
- Provide eco-friendly accommodation at the lighthouse. Some suggested basic huts while others thought mid- to high-range accommodation would be suitable
- Provide for disabled access both to the lighthouse and along the river flats
- Renew the vehicle bridge at northern end
- Install a foot bridge near the Wainuiomata River mouth
- Address carpark issues (thievery, vandalism)
- Discourage vehicle access to the beach through locked gates and fences (or other measures)
- Provide a toilet for rock climbers and an access track to the lighthouse compound
- Remove the section of coastal road used to access the Pacific Charger grounding site (mentioned specifically by Forest and Bird)
- Install stock proof boundary fences

- Make some tracks suitable for dual use (mountain bikers and walkers), others single purpose
- Remove gorse and weeds that are not yet widespread. Introduce pest animal control
- Facilitate a beach cleanup.

The online forum also invited perspectives on the reasons to continue grazing on the land. Opinions on this issue were divided. Some welcomed grazing while others said that it was no longer appropriate for the reserve. This is discussed further in Section 4: Biodiversity and Ecosystems.

Many also commented on how flora and fauna could be restored, with a preference for targeting the areas of high ecological value first. It was recognised that pest weed and animal control was an important part of protection and restoration. Some people favoured active planting and restoration whereas others suggested retirement and allowing nature to “do its own thing”.

*“Great to see the cattle go. Eventually only areas required for historical significance such as around the light house and pa site should be grazed (or mown). We do need to take care of the lizards and other natives that are exploiting the altered ecosystem caused by grazing, so may want to progress in stages. I presume that before grazing, slips and erosion of the escarpments created habitat for the lizards. Addition of coastal forest will provide homes for many more native species than the current windswept farmland.”*

Many submitters also commented on what activities they thought would be appropriate (or inappropriate) for the area. This is particularly important as the management plan will place restrictions on what activities may be carried out. The following table summarises the submitters views on activities and their appropriateness:

Activity	Comments on appropriateness
Walking, running, picnics	Appropriate activities
Cycling	Okay on dual tracks, recognising the need for some separation of use
Trout fishing / whitebaiting	Appropriate activities
Duckshooting	Some suggested not at all, others thought during duck shooting season was okay

Horse riding	Okay in specified areas, again recognising the need for some separation of use
Dog walking	Dogs should be controlled (e.g. on a lead) with closures, as appropriate during lambing or sea bird breeding etc.
Hanggliding	Appropriate, where vehicle access can be obtained to collect gliders
Camping	Okay, but must be outside the lighthouse reserve. No fires should be allowed. This includes BBQ stoves which as a potential fire risk and an emitting activity (interfering with NIWA work)
Motor vehicles	Most stated that it should be prohibited. Some considered it could be available for occasional trips, special events, disabled access (especially to the lighthouse) onto some parts of the reserve
Trail bikes	Some suggested that organised events might be okay, in areas away from other users. Others considered it should be prohibited

### 3. General management focus

The scenic reserve classification for Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui gives a foundation for how this land will be managed:

***Reserves Act 1977: Scenic Reserves, Section 19 (1)(a)***

For the purpose of protecting and preserving in perpetuity for their intrinsic worth and for the benefit, enjoyment, and use of the public, suitable areas possessing such qualities of scenic interest, beauty, or natural features or landscape that their protection and preservation are desirable in the public interest.

The types of activities that Greater Wellington allows at Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui need to be low impact so as not to cause harm to the site's unique natural features (i.e., the scenic beauty of the landform, native habitats and rare plants and the sense of remoteness valued by visitors). Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui is also an area rich in historic heritage. There are a number of important stories for the public to learn and experience through interpretation, tours and Greater Wellington's summer events programme.

There are physical limitations too, as to what the area can offer. The infrastructure (road and bridge) at Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui allows for some vehicle access but the road quality and gradient means that restrictions should remain in place. Likewise, vehicle

(and other) emissions must not compromise the internationally important atmospheric sampling at NIWA's Baring Head station.

As a very general statement, the management approach is likely to be akin with that currently taken at Parangarahu Lakes which is a similar environment with important scenic, historic and ecological values. It will be essential for Greater Wellington to partner with Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust, DOC, Hutt City Council (HCC), NZHPT and community groups to reach the full potential of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui.

This background paper now considers the different policy areas in the draft amendment.

#### **4. Biodiversity and ecosystems**

Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui has a number of unique landforms and ecosystems within its boundary. These are listed and described in the report on Ecological Values (Greater Wellington, 2010). The draft amendment focuses on minimising and, where possible, eradicating the threats to native flora and fauna. For many years the property has been grazed which has altered the way ecosystems function in this area. After Greater Wellington purchased the property in 2010 it was agreed that cattle should be removed to minimise the damage of grazing animals to native plants and the river. Fencing the boundary remains a number one priority to keep out neighbouring stock. The remaining question is the role that sheep could have in the future.

This issue was debated through focus groups which included a range of expertise from both the community, DOC and Greater Wellington. There is clear agreement that grazing stock should not have access to the beach or coastal escarpment (cliff areas). This area is home to sea birds, lizard species and some invertebrates (e.g. spiders, butterfly and cicada). Cushion plants, spinifex and sand tussock are also found here. Removing grazing and restricting vehicular access as well as undertaking predator control is essential to preserve these plants and animals.

There is more debate over the impact of sheep on the valley escarpment which slopes down towards the Wainuiomata River. The escarpment has substantial scree fans, created by erosion and earthquakes. Today, these rocky areas provide habitat for the common gecko as well as copper, spotted and common skinks. It is also the location of a rare set of native plants termed the grey scrub community.

It is difficult to determine the role that grazing and trampling by stock on the valley escarpment has played to help or hinder these values. On the one hand, stock browsing may keep vegetation lower thus providing warm sunny areas for the lizards and skinks. However, stock also graze the rare plants and disturb the rocky homes of these animals. The effect on the grey scrub community (a term describing a group of rare native plants) is also uncertain. Removal of stock could either cause regeneration of this rare plant community or trigger succession where other plants become dominant. Through focus group discussion it was agreed that removing stock is preferable, but that a key task will be monitoring the changes over time and responding if key indicators show a steady decline within these ecosystems.

The river flats are the most complex mix of habitats on the reserve. Beside the lower reaches of the river, the riparian margins have native scrub cover dominated by flax and toetoe. There is an ephemeral wetland on the true right of the river, which has formed in the old river course (the course of the river is likely to have been altered by earthquakes). The lower river forms a coastal lagoon with a wide river basin flanked by dunes. The river is an important native fish habitat and the lower reaches are a spawning habitat for inanga. The most common pest plant species is gorse, which grows along the banks of the river. The nationally endangered plant *tororaro* (*muehlenbeckia astonii*) is also found near the river.

An interesting heritage feature of the river flats is that sections alongside the river were cultivated as gardens by Māori (likely to have been associated with the Parangarahu Pa on the coast).

The area also presents some opportunities for ecological restoration, particularly in the ephemeral wetland area. Stock grazing on the river flats would help to minimise weed spread and maintain open space. While grazing may be used as an interim measure to allow conservation efforts to be focused first on the neediest areas, a significant amount of fencing would be required to keep stock restricted to these lowland sections. It may be more prudent to focus effort and finances on weed control and prioritising areas for conservation.

The marine terraces are the most visible part of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui from Wellington city. There are fewer ecological values currently associated with the marine terraces because of historical vegetation clearance. Tauhinu is gradually re-establishing on the terraces, along with other native shrubs and herbs. There is very little gorse on the terraces as it has taken time to reach this area and it is likely that browsing by goats and sheep has reduced its spread. The original vegetation cover of the marine terrace would likely have been forest with a canopy principally being kohekohe-tawa with some hinau and northern rata. In exposed places the forest canopy would have been reduced in height where it would be shorn by the wind. Burrowing seabirds may well have bred here in the past.

When considering the marine terraces, the challenge is less about protecting environmental values present but more about how to manage the landscape values.

## **5. Landscape and geological features**

It is the unique natural features and outstanding scenic values that warrant Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui's classification as a Scenic Reserve under Section 19(1)(a) of the Reserves Act 1977. The dramatic sky and sea 'scapes' of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui make it a spectacular place to view from a distance and to visit. The landscape values were carefully described in Greater Wellington reports in the 1990s when a wind farm was proposed for the area. These papers note that:

*“Baring Head’s value as a landscape feature lies in its role as a component of Wellington’s setting, when seen from a distance, and in the unique sense of*

*place which people experience when they go there. Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui is part of Wellington's backdrop. As seen from many points around the city, it marks the point where the hills on the eastern side of the harbour meet the sea."*

There are a range of geological and landscape features. The coastal platform includes a raised shingle beach, sand tussock, coastal turf and rock stacks which are all classed as rare ecosystems. The river mouth displays all the characteristics of a tidal river-mouth estuary, but because of the height above the sea the river mouth is classed as a coastal lagoon.

The marine terraces are also geologically significant. These terraces were formed under the sea and have since been uplifted and tilted to the north by successive earthquakes on the Wairarapa Fault. The remnants of two marine-cut surfaces are clearly seen on the headland. The Hutt City Council District Plan lists the marine terraces as being a landscape of regional/national significance.

The key question is how to manage the values of this area for their scenic interest and to preserve the integrity of the geological landform. As to the future management of the marine terraces, two views have emerged:

- 1) Maintain grazing to continue a pastoral, visible landscape
- 2) Stop grazing allowing for a natural, slow reversion to a native vegetation cover

### **1. Maintain grazing to continue a pastoral, visible landscape**

The pastoral landscape tells the story of New Zealand's colonial heritage and the long history of farming in the area. By maintaining this landscape we are able to reflect on an important aspect of colonial heritage. This landscape is appreciated from a distance, has been painted, written about and photographed over the years. If the pasture is not actively retained through grazing, this pastoral setting is gradually lost.

Some submitters who support continued grazing also refer to the recreational experience for people at Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui. The upper terraces allow for the expansive views and provide an open space for horse riding, walking and sightseeing. The argument follows that to remove grazing means the area is likely to regenerate native vegetation (and potentially gorse) over time, resulting in a loss of views and the freedom to make use of the current open space. For those who advocate grazing, it was generally agreed that grazing would be at a low stocking rate, for sheep only and primarily for the purpose of retaining the current setting. Mowing was also suggested as an alternative to grazing to maintain the landscape.

Comments from the online forum that support this option:

*“The open areas on the top should be retained to allow the geological features to be easily visible, and facilitate recreational use.”*

*“But grazing is an important part of Baring Head and the stories of the settlers to the area. Some grazing should be retained to perpetuate this part of the land's heritage.”*

*“I favour grazing on the upper terrace and the hill behind; though it was once native bush, it would be a huge job to replant it, and some of its scenic value would be lost, not to mention its availability for horse riding, hang gliding, mushrooming, grass rolling, and enjoying the expansive views. I would prefer to see the effort go into protecting and enhancing the native vegetation on the cliffs and the lower beach terraces.”*

Some submitters did not advocate for grazing outright but suggested that it may be suitable for the following reasons:

- If it is self-financing, that is, the money to be made from grazing will pay for the fencing and maintenance costs to keep stock on the land; or
- For pragmatic reasons i.e., there needs to be prioritization of ecologically important sites. Given limited resources, there may need to be priorities on which areas are retired first whilst leaving stock on other areas as a way to manage the open space. In this situation there would be an argument for keeping stock on the marine terrace given the low ecological values and focusing on other areas first. As one submitter wrote in reference to restoration: *“don't bite off more than you can chew”*.

## **2. Grazing should stop, allowing for a natural, slow reversion to a native vegetation cover**

The alternative scenario is to remove stock from the area and allow for reversion, but not to actively re-plant the area. Given the extreme weather conditions, long history of farming and subsequent lack of a seed source means reversion to native scrub is likely to be very slow. Under this type of management, it is anticipated that the majority of the terrace would remain in rank grass with some small native plants and grasses over a 30-50 year period.

From what we know of the area, initially, there would be some tauhinu (also known as tawhini) and copromsa species as these are wind spread and a seed source is in the nearby escarpment. Over time these would grow, but are unlikely to exceed 1.5 metres in height. High winds inhibit growth and large shrubs become damaged and die. With no grazing, over time native tussock, rushes and grass species would re-establish.

Some gorse is present and this will spread slowly unless managed.<sup>1</sup> The disadvantage of allowing rank grass and tauhinu is the increased risk of fires. Further, rank grass and the flowering of herbs and shrubs attract mice. Mice may in turn attract mustelids, cats and hedge hogs. The increase of these predators could have a detrimental effect on birds and lizards present in other parts of the reserve.

To provide for recreation, walking trails may need to be maintained by mowing grass.

Under this scenario there would be a slow change in the landscape over time. Over the years those looking at Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui from a distance would note less definition of Para hill (the high point where the trig is located) and the marine terrace as being distinct from the hills behind. The setting would become less rural and more 'natural'. While the geological formation is preserved, it would be less obvious to the eye than under a pastoral regime.

### **Weighing the options for the marine terraces**

Both options have significant costs attached. Under the first scenario, the cost is in initial fencing (given that the other areas of the reserve are not stocked, the grazed area would need to be fenced off), which would cost between \$95,000 - \$125,000. Additionally, stock would need water within the fenced area. There would be a small income stream by granting a grazing licence but this would never recover the cost of fencing or the ongoing costs to maintain a fence in harsh coastal conditions. The presence of stock also limits dog walkers and the general public during lambing time.

Under the second scenario, there would be a cost for mowing tracks that might otherwise be naturally open under pasture (approximately \$5,400 per annum). Long grass in the summer would present a high fire risk. Rank grass can attract rats and mice (which do well where there is a seed supply) putting native birds, skinks and lizards at risk. Intensive trapping may decrease this risk, but again at a cost. The intangible cost is the gradual loss of pastoral landscape over time.

In weighing up these issues and the costs involved, the draft amendment suggests that a 'no grazing' approach is adopted. This still provides for recreational activities and is a similar approach to that already adopted at the Parangarahu Lakes. To decrease the risks identified above, greater investment will be needed for pest control as well as fire hazard management. A no fires/BBQ/camping stoves policy and managed vehicle access onto the property would also be necessary.

## **6. Cultural heritage**

There are a number of sites of significance to Māori at Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui and research has helped to illustrate their importance. Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust, Taranaki Whanui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika would like any developments to respect their connection to the land, and that, where appropriate, history relating to Māori

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<sup>1</sup> Gorse is spread by explosion from heat rather than wind dispersed. Managing the fire risk is an important part of inhibiting gorse spread.

occupation is interpreted. The property to the north of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui remains in Māori ownership to this day.

The lighthouse compound has also received a lot of attention from the public and there has been a strong push for conservation of the buildings and surrounds. Research undertaken in 2010 by NZHPT confirms the significance of the compound (as a whole) and shows how each built feature contributes to the site's history. This not only includes the lighthouse keepers' houses but the infrastructure which serviced it.

A second report commissioned by Greater Wellington looked into the recreation and tourism possibilities for Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui, including how the lighthouse keepers' houses could be used in the future. The report indicated that the houses could be suitable for re-use as visitor accommodation. Its accessibility to a major city, potential to link to various cycling and walking trails combined with the appeal of being able to experience a lighthouse keepers' lifestyle, could make this a successful recreation asset. This model could be comparable with accommodation on Maitu/Somes Island, where DOC facilitates accommodation to pay for the upkeep of the homes. Re-use is seen by the NZHPT as a positive way to retain heritage, particularly when guided by a conservation plan. It is likely that accommodation would not be managed by Greater Wellington but could be facilitated through a lease or licence. The draft amendment provides for this opportunity. In the interim Greater Wellington will focus on providing necessary maintenance only of the buildings to ensure weather tightness and preserve the options for the future.

The current recreation reserve classification for the lighthouse compound and cliffs pays little recognition to the historical significance of the site. The draft amendment suggests that changing the classification from 'recreation' to 'historic' will provide better recognition of the structures and associated stories with this section of land.<sup>2</sup>

The Reserves Act 1997, states that Historic Reserves are administered to:

- Protect in perpetuity places, objects and natural features with historic, archaeological, cultural or educational interest
- Provide public freedom of entry and access except where restrictions are necessary for the well-being of the reserve and the people using it
- Protect other features present (e.g. scenic, scientific, wildlife) where it is compatible with the primary purpose of the reserve
- Preserve indigenous flora and fauna and natural environment.

This section of land is very suitable for a historic reserve classification. It is a place that has played a key part in New Zealand historical events. It is of immediate interest to the visitor and can be managed as a complete unit within the land parcel. The surrounding scenic reserve land (on three sides) provides a buffer against any development that would impinge on the values of this site. Given that within this area is the reserve where

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<sup>2</sup> Under a historic reserve classification, the leasing powers (Section 58A, Reserves Act 1977) provide reasonable flexibility for how the lighthouse compound buildings are reused and managed in the future.

the NIWA air monitoring station stands, it would be appropriate to include, as one of the main objectives for management, the minimal interference on the air quality by activities on the reserve.

A historic reserve classification still has an emphasis on access while maintaining present values. There is a strong emphasis on Historic Reserves to preserve the values 'in perpetuity'. This denotes the administering body's obligation to retain the historic value of the site as it is forever - or as long as it remains a historic reserve. Once a historic reserve, it is unlikely to be revoked or reclassified and would effectively commit Greater Wellington to the long term preservation of the lighthouse compound.

## **7. Land management and visitor services**

One of the major issues is unauthorised vehicle access into the Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui reserve. The only official vehicle access is across the vehicle bridge over the Wainuiomata River at the northern end. From the bridge, the road zig zags uphill before coming out onto the marine terraces. Just before the lighthouse compound, the road goes through a section of private land. The easement through this private land only allows Greater Wellington, NIWA and Police vehicles for maintenance purposes to enter the lighthouse compound.

Vehicles regularly access the beach through an unlocked gate near the final bend in the Wainuiomata River before the river mouth. This area is currently used as a place to park, or drive along the coast to fish. Vehicles also sometimes cross the river at or close to the Wainuiomata river mouth to access the coast back towards Baring Head. There is a legal road consisting of a 20 metre moving strip along the Mean High Water Spring, but either private or Greater Wellington land must be crossed first in order to reach the legal road.<sup>3</sup>

There is no legal access from Eastbourne along the coast past Parangarahu Lakes/Pencarrow Head. The first section is maintained by HCC and vehicle movements are restricted. Beyond this point, a gravel road follows the coast from Parangarahu Lakes through two private properties before reaching Baring Head.

4WDs and quad bikes are commonly used either for recreation along the coast or to access fishing. These vehicles are damaging the beach environment, which is home to nesting dotterels and other seabirds. Over time vehicle paths have formed but these are not always kept to, further damaging the plants in the beach gravels and sands.

This vehicle use has been established over a long period of time and there is an assumed right of access. In the past, when gates were locked, the fences were cut and even boulders moved to retain vehicle access.

Greater Wellington has discussed this issue with other agencies (namely DOC, HCC and the Ministry of Fisheries). As the area is remote, it is difficult to monitor and enforce

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<sup>3</sup> An easement was established previously by the Department of Conservation (DOC) to allow foot access (but not vehicles) to the legal road at the site of the current car park.

access arrangements. Physical barriers are insufficient on their own: concrete blocks and bollards can be moved, wires cut and ditches filled in or boards placed across them. Preventing access in one area may only shift the problem along the coastline. It was agreed that a “no vehicles” policy was needed, but implementation should initially focus on providing cues through clearly designated car parking areas and signage to encourage compliance. Over time this should be followed by more intense patrolling and prosecution of trespassing vehicles.

It is not uncommon for walkers or mountain bikers to access Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui from Eastbourne via Pencarrow Head and Fitzroy Bay. While a coastal gravel road exists, it is not a legal road and requires permission from the private landowners. These landowners are wary of opening up access because of potential damage to land and possessions. To some extent, the remoteness of this coast provides security and this is put at risk as access is opened, especially if 4WDs and motorbikes are allowed. On the other hand, a greater presence of walkers and cyclists may discourage illegal activities. HCC has been in discussion with these landowners over formalising the opportunities for pedestrian/cycle access through the Fitzroy Bay area between Pencarrow Head and Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui.

### **Access within the reserve**

There are already a number of tracks within the block which are either marked tracks or internal roads. A walking track has been created around the edge of the escarpment that skirts around the private property boundary to provide public foot access to the lighthouse compound. Tracks and signage need to provide a consistent and well informed experience for users. It is expected that sections of the internal road would be shared (cycling/walking and vehicles) with some separation on the tracks. No horses would be permitted on the beaches.

### **Car parking**

The draft amendment outlines two entrances to the park. These are labelled secondary entrances, which refer to the type of facilities that will be developed. Secondary entrances generally have a car park and map board but no toilet facilities. The northern car park is a fenced entrance with a grassy car park. This could be upgraded for one of two reasons:

- To serve as the main entrance to the park (especially if no coastal bridge was provided) and/or
- Accommodation at the lighthouse compound is developed, resulting in a need to redesign the car park (at the vehicle bridge) to separate ‘through’ traffic going to the lighthouse and parking for day users.

The current coastal car park is a large gravelled area situated on the edge of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui. This provides for people accessing the coast and those trekking to Turakirae. DOC is working with the owners of Orongorongo Station to relocate the car

park to be adjacent to the Orongorongo River bridge, in which case the current car park would not be needed. If and when this eventuates, a car park situated closer to the Wainuiomata River would be more functional for recreational users of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui than the current location.

It is expected that a car park would formalise the space and discourage vehicles from entering the beach. DOC agrees with this approach. This is a high priority development as it will help address the issue of vehicles on the coast. If a pedestrian/cycle bridge was installed, this area would likely become the main entrance used by the public.

A third, modest car park may be developed at a later date on the marine terrace to service accommodation at the lighthouse compound. Since the legal vehicle access runs through private land (via an easement) for the last 500 metres, it would be appropriate to locate a car park on the terrace close to the compound. Overnight guests would still need to carry supplies a short distance from the car park into the compound. The location and size of the car park must be designed in sympathy with the landscape and the needs for atmospheric sampling. In consultation to date, NIWA has indicated that a limited number of vehicles using a small car park located at north-eastern corner beyond the compound would not unduly interfere with sampling.

### **Summary of access improvements**

Access improvements will be staged over time as the park is developed. Some of the improvements depend on policy decisions. There are four key improvements that should be prioritised:

- 1) Improve safety and signage on internal roading above the bridge. This road is used by walkers, cyclists and vehicles requires some safety improvements (e.g. signage)
- 2) Design tracks for walking, cycling and horse riding (with some multi-use and some separated use to minimise my conflicts of use). The majority of the tracks are currently marked routes on pasture land
- 3) Bridge replacement. The vehicle bridge with recent repair works has an expected life of five years and is due for replacement around 2016. The current position is considered to be the best location for a vehicle bridge, taking into account the span of the river, roading network, and flood zones
- 4) Wainuiomata River coastal car park. This car park should be developed when the current coastal car park becomes surplus to DOC requirements. The new car park will delineate limits to vehicles accessing the coast.

Longer term access improvements could include:

- 5) Developing a car park adjacent to the lighthouse compound. This would be necessary if lighthouse accommodation was created. It could also be utilized by

hang gliders, concessionaires and events that provide for those with limited mobility

- 6) Installing a foot/cycle bridge near the Wainuiomata river mouth. This would effectively create a second entrance to the park and easier access to the key points of interest in the park. This is likely to be more heavily utilised than the northern entrance. Its installation is supported by rock climbers.

A pedestrian/cycle bridge has been suggested by a number of individuals and groups as a way to improve 'dry-foot' access from the coast road to the Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui beach. This would provide alternative public access to the reserve which is likely to be utilized by those who want a shorter walk to the lighthouse and rock climbing area. A bridge that is located close to the coast will provide easy access to the lighthouse (a 30 minute walk) and the boulders for rock climbing (20 minutes) as well as the pump shed and view over the river flats (a 20-30 minute walk). This would also create a 'hub' of activity separate from the vehicle access to the north, building on the 'coastal experience' that Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui offers.

A number of locations along the length of the Wainuiomata River have been investigated. The width of the river and flood hazard area requires a bridge span of at least 75 metres. The coastal location will require stainless steel components to protect against corrosion. These factors will increase the cost to around \$300,000 at current costings. Further investigation is needed on the cost/benefit of installing a bridge. This is not budgeted for in the Council's Draft Long Term Plan.

## **8. Partnership in Parks**

Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui is of interest to a number of different organisations. Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust, Taranaki Whanui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika represent the iwi that previously lived in this area (the land to the north of the reserve remains in Māori ownership). Their understanding of the land and its history will be vital to developing interpretation and recording the stories that make this place special.

Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui is contained within HCC and is subject to the Hutt City Council District Plan. Greater Wellington will work with HCC to ensure that the provisions within the District Plan adequately protect the values of the park.

The DOC manages reserve land nearby, Turakirae Head (adjacent to Orongorongo Station) and Catchpool Valley (on the western side of Rimutaka State Forest Park). There are possibilities for working together to provide facilities and services without replicating what is already being done well. For instance, it is not intended that camping will be allowed at Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui as Catchpool Valley Conservation Campsite – a 10 minute drive away - is a well maintained camping facility complete with hot showers and toilets. Increasing awareness of the opportunities of these open spaces will help users to maximise their leisure time.

The archaeological sites, lighthouse compound and associated infrastructure are of particular interest to New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT). Greater Wellington will work with NZHPT on providing recognition of these as historic sites under the Historic Places Act. NZHPT has expertise in the conservation and restoration of historic places, and is a key partner in making the history found here accessible to the public.

As a result of the purchase of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui, a Trust was formed to support the development of this part of East Harbour Regional Park. Greater Wellington works with a number of 'Friends of the Park' groups and Friends of Baring Head Trust has already developed a working relationship with Greater Wellington. The Trust's charter stipulates it to work Greater Wellington on projects and advocate for Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui.

## **9. Rules for use and development: activities at Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui**

The appendix to the draft amendment outlines the activities that are allowed, managed, restricted and prohibited. These categories come from Section 7 *Rules for Use and Development* in the Parks Network Plan, which includes a list of activities for each park within Greater Wellington's parks network.

The types of activities allowed at Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui reflect a regime of low-impact use of the land. Larger events or tours would be regulated through the granting of concessions.

## **10. Projected changes**

The list of projected future changes provides specific directions for development over the 'life' of the plan (which is generally about a 10 year period). In the case of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui the list of actions is more specific because of the need to integrate this land into the parks network. There is some funding proposed in the draft Long Term Plan for the developments proposed in this draft amendment. Other initiatives (such as developing an interpretation centre and the restoring the historic pump shed) will need the commitment of other groups and agencies.

## **11. Concluding note**

We hope that this background paper has provided a useful background to the policies set out in the draft amendment. Where there are further questions, these can be asked at the 'drop in' sessions as advertised on the website or through the [parks@gw.govt.nz](mailto:parks@gw.govt.nz) email.