

28 July 2025

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██████████ (Convenor) – Preserve Belmont Farm Park Incorporated Society
By email: preservebelmontfarmpark@gmail.com

Tēnā koe ██████████

Request for information 2025-203

I refer to your request for information dated 1 July 2025, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 1 July 2025.

You have requested the following:

Greater Wellington received an email with a document attached, *Preserve Belmont Farm Park Incorporated Society*, that contained many statements relating to Greater Wellington's environment restoration intentions for Belmont Regional Park along with particular questions. The questions contained in that document were:

1. *How will you protect these public assets from vandalism? (page 7)*
2. *Without a farmer present, how will inappropriate behaviour like this be prevented or addressed in the park? (page 8)*
3. *There is no mention of the World War II munitions bunks. Are you planning to erase this part of our history? (page 11)*
4. *How will the public be able to access the bunkers when the farm becomes overgrown with rank grass, weeds and gorse? (page 11)*
5. *Could Belmont's future end up like the Port Hills, Twizel, or Tasman Pigeon Valley fires? If this happens at Belmont, who will be held accountable? Will the GWRC Councillors who voted to end farming be personally responsible for the consequences of exposing the public to these dangers? (page 13)*
6. *Once farming is removed from Belmont Regional Park, will the park be closed during the hot summer months due to increased fire risk? (page 14)*
7. *The country's main natural gas pipeline and fibre optic cables run through the farmed area of Belmont. How will they be protected, particularly in the event of a fire? (page 15)*
8. *What evidence does GWRC have that a windy high-country block will naturally regenerate? (page 16)*

Greater Wellington's response follows:

How will you protect these public assets from vandalism? (page 7)

Without a farmer present, how will inappropriate behaviour like this be prevented or addressed in the park? (page 8)

Greater Wellington has Park Rangers who patrol the park on a regular basis. Ranger patrols include checking on facilities. Our Rangers also rely on information from community groups and park visitors to manage unwanted behaviour.

There is no mention of the World War II munitions bunkers. Are you planning to erase this part of our history? (page 11)

Greater Wellington values this part of the park's history. The park management plan, <https://www.gw.govt.nz/your-region/plans-policies-and-bylaws/plans-and-reports/parks-plans/toitu-te-whenua-parks-network-plan-2020-30/>, outlines the intent to preserve the bunkers and make them more accessible to park users. The restoration strategy considered by Council does not change the intent to protect the historical value of the World War II bunkers.

For reference, specific actions contained in Toitū Te Whenua - Parks Network Plan, are below:

A192, develop a full conservation management plan for the WWII munition bunkers considering interpretation opportunities and adaptive reuse possibilities. Draw on heritage assessment, volumes 1 and 2 2006.

A189, improve trail connections through the park.

A 170, develop and enhance Hill Road heritage hub (heritage). Develop an easy access circuit trail (following existing routes) to the magazines from the top of Hill Road carpark suitable for families and others. Interpret the magazines and other munition bunkers enroute with storytelling and other creative approaches. Add signs, seats and remove redundant farm fences. Convert woolshed toilets to public use. Investigate adaptive reuse or removal of woolshed post grazing licence use.

Park user signage for interpretation at some of the bunkers has recently been installed.

How will the public be able to access the bunkers when the farm becomes overgrown with rank grass, weeds and gorse? (page 11)

Greater Wellington anticipates an increase in track maintenance as the phase out of grazing occurs. Tracks and roads will be maintained to provide access around the park. Future tracks and connections will be planned with community engagement influencing Greater Wellington's future management of the park.

Could Belmont's future end up like the Port Hills, Twizel, or Tasman Pigeon Valley fires? If this happens at Belmont, who will be held accountable? Will the GWRC

Councillors who voted to end farming be personally responsible for the consequences of exposing the public to these dangers? (page 13)

Section 41(3) of the Local Government Act (the Act) outlines responsibility of governing bodies. For reference, please see the link below:

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2002/0084/latest/DLM171858.html>

The governing body of a council (*the elected members, including the mayor or chairperson*) is ultimately responsible and democratically accountable for all council decision-making (s41(3)) of the Act.

Individual councillors are generally protected (indemnified) from personal liability if they act in good faith and within their powers (s43).

In this case, Greater Wellington Councillors have considered the risks and have made their decisions in good faith and within their powers.

Once farming is removed from Belmont Regional Park, will the park be closed during the hot summer months due to increased fire risk? (page 14)

In circumstances of high fire risk, closing the park to the public is a last resort. Greater Wellington has developed activity controls guidelines and recreation activity controls that regulate types of activities that can and cannot be undertaken at various fire threat levels.

Greater Wellington staff advise management when it is safe, or unsafe, for public to enter the park and when signs and closures should be in place. Trained staff undertake weekly assessments during the wildfire season to determine the fire threat conditions in the park.

As restoration works advance and mature over time, fire risk will reduce. However, this will take several years.

The country's main natural gas pipeline and fibre optic cables run through the farmed area of Belmont. How will they be protected, particularly in the event of a fire? (page 15)

Most of these assets are buried in the ground and are therefore protected from fire. Greater Wellington has no maintenance obligations for these assets as the assets are owned and managed by other entities.

Greater Wellington is working with utility providers to implement suitable fire controls around natural gas compounds at the top of Hill Road and Waitangirua.

What evidence does GWRC have that a windy high-country block will naturally regenerate? (page 16)

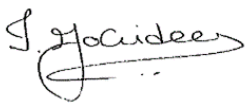
Aerial photographs of the Belmont area from the past 30-40 years indicate that there is a steady rate of natural vegetative regeneration. Over the last 5 years, Greater Wellington has planted large areas of the park's lower slopes, which will provide a natural seed source for future, adjacent restoration areas.

Greater Wellington intends to work with avid park users and experts to finalise restoration planning. “Windy high-country blocks” may be the last areas of forest restoration to occur as the lower valley and riparian gullies will likely be the near-term priorities for restoration and fire management purposes.

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where appropriate. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington’s website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Fathima Iftikar
Kaiwhakahaere Matua Rōpū Taiao | Group Manager Environment (acting)

Proactive Release