

By email

10 October 2025

Hon. Chris Bishop, MP for Hutt South
chrisbishopoffice@parliament.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Chris,

Belmont Regional Park – concerns raised by constituents

Thank you for your letter outlining community concerns regarding the future of grazing in Belmont Regional Park. I have hopefully addressed these concerns below. I appreciate the opportunity to provide further context around the decisions and approach we are taking.

Passive regeneration and weed management

We plan to retire around 100 hectares of grazing land every year, and plant 20% of that land with natives. We will place these natives so that their seeds will naturally encourage passive regeneration of the remaining 80% of the land. We will control gorse and other weeds that arise as needed, however this technique mitigates that risk significantly.

Fire risk management

We take seasonal fire risk very seriously. Greater Wellington has a fire threat management plan for each park to support our restoration work. In Belmont, this includes ‘green fire breaks’ of low flammability native vegetation in key areas across the park, ‘no fire lighting’ signs where there is a history of people lighting fires in or close to parks, and public access restrictions when fire risk reaches critical levels.

The best long-term approach to fire threat management is restoration of native bush, wetlands and the riparian areas of streams, as well as ongoing education to discourage people from lighting fires. This means the fire risk at Belmont will reduce in the long term with the native restoration we have planned.

Cultural, education, recreation and economic value

The current grazing licence at Belmont began in 2016 and covered approximately 1,238 hectares, supporting around 8,500 stock units and generating an annual fee of \$197,000. While this is a financial return for Greater Wellington, it is important to consider the opportunity cost of other land use alternatives. Restoration and recreation-focused land use, as outlined in our *Toitū Te Whenua - Parks Network Plan*, contributes to the local economy with employment opportunity and also adds significant values to ecosystem health, carbon sequestration and public wellbeing.

In terms of education, Greater Wellington has a dedicated farm park at Battle Hill Regional Park, near Belmont, which helps educate the public on farming. It provides a space where the public can interact with farm animals first hand. Greater Wellington does a lot of work around the region supporting farming good management practices, building awareness and celebrating good farming stories such as supporting the Ballance Farm Environment Awards. Farming in Belmont is not needed when you take this regional perspective of what we do to support farming.

Mana whenua of the region hold statutory acknowledgement of the park through the Treaty Claims Settlement Act. In partnership we continue to make collective decisions on uplifting biodiversity and for eco-system health which promotes regeneration of taonga including land, water, valued flora and fauna alongside other values of the wider community.

Community support

The decision to remove grazing and restore natural ecosystems in Belmont is part of the *Toitū Te Whenua - Parks Network Plan*, a statutory plan under the Reserves Act which was developed based on mana whenua, park stakeholder and public feedback. The consultation on the draft plan received 390 submissions which showed a high level of support for the key shifts outlined in the plan.

Infrastructure and heritage features

Greater Wellington has started a spatial planning project to plan for how people move through and use the park, while giving effect to the changes set out in *Toitū Te Whenua - Parks Network Plan*. Spatial planning will investigate adaptive reuses of farm infrastructure with a focus on community benefit - such as overnight accommodation, restoration hubs and education spaces.

As well as spatial planning, Greater Wellington is looking at restoration and how we replant the previously grazed areas of the park. Our Recloaking Papatūānuku restoration planning¹ suggests that the high ridge tops within the park, which includes the WWII munition bunkers, are maintained as open space. This means controlling pest plant and animal incursions as well.

I hope this additional context addresses your concerns, and I'm happy to provide further information if you need. We appreciate how much Belmont Regional Park is valued by the community, and we're committed to listening to what they want to see in this space. Thank you again for raising these concerns.

Ngā mihi nui,



Daran Ponter
Chair

¹ [Greater Wellington — Recloaking Papatūānuku \(Recloaking Mother Earth\)](#)