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Committee Landcare  
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## Application to construct wind anemometer towers in Belmont Regional Park

### 1. Purpose

To seek the Committee's approval to an application from Greater Wellington – The Regional Council to construct temporary wind anemometer towers in Belmont Regional Park.

### 2. Background

At its meeting of 18 March the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee (Report 03.11):

*Approved [utility services] officers completing a feasibility study for a wind farm development at Belmont Regional Park.*

On 2 April 2003, the Divisional Manager, Landcare received an application from the Project Manager, Renewable Energy to construct temporary wind anemometer towers in Belmont Regional Park.

This report assesses the application against the current management plan for Belmont Regional Park.

### 3. The application

The application proposes the construction of:

- up to 3, 50m high slender anemometer masts, left in the same position for up to three years.
- up to 8, 10 or 20m high slender anemometer masts left in the same position at various locations for up to one year (although most masts are likely to be at a location for one to four months only).
- guy wires.

The application also proposes that:

- masts be located above the 300m contour line, and precise positions negotiated with the park ranger.
- on the completion of the work, the masts be removed and the land restored to its original state.

#### **4. Assessment of the application**

We consider that the activity is permissible under the existing management plan. This assessment relates only to the construction of temporary anemometers for investigative purposes. Any further steps in the process will need to be considered separately.

Our assessment of the application against the relevant policies of the current management plan is outlined below:

##### **Policy 1.6 – Research**

*Research which would be beneficial to the management and use of Belmont Regional Park will be encouraged by the Regional Council.*

This research relates to a potential use of the regional park and is likely to be beneficial to the Council's consideration of a potential use. We consider that the activity is permissible under this policy.

##### **Policy 1.7 – Consultation**

*The Regional Council will consult with:*

- *public authorities, adjacent landowners, and special interest groups to promote the co-ordinated planning and management of the Park and its surrounds*
- *tangata whenua on the future use and development of the Park taking into account their aspirations and cultural needs.*

Preliminary discussions on the renewable energy projects were held with representatives of the Wellington Tenth's Trust, Ngati Toa Rangitira and Te Runanganui o Taranaki Whanui ki te Upoko o te Ika a Maui in March 2003. In addition, those Tangata Whenua groups together with representatives of park users (e.g. Friends of Belmont Regional Park, Friends of Maara Roa) have been provided with copies of the Council report which approved the feasibility study (report 03.11).

We consider this activity to be relatively minor in its effect and not requiring a further process of consultation with Tangata Whenua or the public. This paper and the original paper proposing the study are open to public scrutiny.

Depending on the exact location of the anemometers, the approval of the landowner will be needed in addition to the approval of the Council.

### Policy 1.10 – Policy for approval of works

*Significant new works in the parks proposed by the Council or other agencies or organisations will be subject to the Council's Procedures for the Approval of Works.*

These procedures specify that if the activity (in this case, research) complies with the management plan, public consultation in addition to that related to obtaining resource consents is not needed.

### Policy 1.20 – Leases, licences and permits

*A lease, licence or permit will be required for recreation and property management activities on publicly owned lands in the park.*

We propose that the activity be provided for through a licence.

### Policy 2.11 – Network activities

*The construction of network utilities (e.g. electricity transmission lines, gas and water pipelines, communication facilities and roading developments) in the park will be considered in conjunction with recognised environmental effects assessment requirements and relevant district plans under the Resource Management Act 1991. Support for proposed works may be given, where there is not (sic) other alternative site or method, where the works are of direct benefit to the region or nation, and where their presence and location would not adversely affect the natural and cultural features of the park.*

The Plan also notes that *practical opportunities will be taken to construct utilities that are as unobtrusive as possible* and that *where appropriate, network utilities should be sited underground.*

We consider that the application is permissible under this clause for the following reasons.

In this context we are not considering the construction of a network utility itself. Rather we are considering research that relates to the potential construction of a network utility. As stated above this research is likely to be beneficial to the Council's consideration of this potential use.

As the information must relate to the park specifically there is no alternative site.

The Council has proposed the feasibility study on the basis that the investigation is in the regional and national interest.

We do not consider that the anemometers would adversely affect the natural or cultural features of the park. Given that the installation of anemometer towers is temporary and the masts are to be removed once the work is completed and the land restored to its original state, the effects are likely to be minimal.

It is clearly not practical for the structures to be located underground. The applicant proposes to mitigate any adverse visual effects by painting them in a light colour.

### Policy 3.1 – Landscape management

*The Regional Council in association with other relevant park landowners, will seek to recognise, manage and conserve landscapes and features which are significant to the landscape character and recreational experience of the park. These include:*

- *the grassed open hill tops (generally above the 250 metre contour).*
- *"fossil gullies" (filled with soil and associated materials from surrounding hills).*

*The Regional Council will promote the maintenance and enhancement of the amenity and intrinsic values of the landscape and landforms of the park.*

The location of the anemometers above the 300m contour is potentially an issue in terms of this policy. However, we consider the landscape impacts are acceptable and the application permissible under this policy for the following reasons:

- The anemometers will be temporary
- The land will be restored to its original state
- Installation of the anemometers should not involve significant earthworks (e.g. new tracks/roads)
- The visual effects will be relatively minor given the slender nature of the anemometers
- The anemometers will not require/occupy large areas of the Park.

Consequently, there will not be any major or permanent effects on the landscape values within the Park.

### Objectives (page 19)

There are a number of Park objectives relating to environmental, heritage and recreation values including:

- *The natural and cultural heritage of the Belmont hills within the Park will be protected and enhanced in recognition of its scenic and recreational value.*
- *The grassed open hill tops will be protected.*
- *The native plant and animal communities will be conserved and enhanced.*

Any specific geological, landscape, environmental, cultural heritage, recreational or other effects (e.g. farming) will need to be taken into account in determining the location of specific anemometers.

The application proposes that the exact positions will be subject to consultation with the Park Ranger. We propose this as a condition of the licence so as to mitigate any adverse effects.

## **5. Conditions**

We propose that approval of the application is subject to the following conditions:

- The development of a project plan by Utility Services and agreed to by the Manager, Parks and Forests including, but not limited to the following:
  - The exact location of the anemometer masts (on a map and/or with GPS co-ordinates).
  - Timeframes outlining when construction is to take place, how long the anemometers will remain in place, and when they are to be removed.
  - Construction requirements – access, materials, personnel, transportation required to construct the anemometers (including who and how often).
  - Maintenance requirements – access, materials, personnel, transportation required to maintain the anemometers (including who and how often).
  - Rehabilitation plan for restoring the site to its original state – access, materials, personnel, transportation required to remove the anemometers (including who and how often).
- The project plan will be developed in consultation with the Belmont Regional Park ranger.
- The project plan will be provided to the Belmont Regional Park ranger prior to construction.
- The Belmont Regional Park ranger is informed prior to and during construction and removal of the anemometer masts.
- The site is restored to its original state to the satisfaction of the park ranger.

## **6. Communication**

There are no communication opportunities arising from this paper. Communications initiatives arising from the renewable energy project will be addressed as they arise.

## 7. Recommendations

*That the Committee:*

1. **note** that on 18 March 2003 the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee:  
*Approved [utility services] officers completing a feasibility study for a wind farm development at Belmont Regional Park.*
2. **note** that the Divisional Manager, Landcare received an application from the Project Manager, Renewable Energy to construct temporary wind anemometer towers in Belmont Regional Park.
3. **note** that officers consider the activity to be permissible under the current Belmont Regional Park management plan.
4. **agree** that the application be approved and provided for through a licence subject to the conditions noted in the paper above.

Report prepared by:

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