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**Submission in Support of the “Boulcott Alternative” to the Green Alignment –
 Hutt River Stopbank Reconstruction. (Hutt River Advisory Committee –
 Meeting of 13 March 2008)**

PART I

I am a resident whose property is immediately adjacent to the Boulcott Golf Club. I would like to use this opportunity to make a submission in support of either of the “Boulcott Alternatives” (20 m clubrooms move or Rentokill option) as opposed to the original “Green Alignment” which was considered at the 6 September 2007 HRAC meeting. I believe that the “Boulcott Alternatives” better represent the aspirations of both the golf clubs and residents alike. In raising these points, I would like to point out that I have no association with either the Hutt or Boulcott Golf Clubs and I do not play any golf elsewhere.

I do not favour the original green alignment because:

- i) Its crude and blunt design across the Boulcott Golf Course effectively butchers a 70-year old asset (currently enjoyed by some 400-500 members who are also ratepayers within the GWRC catchment) and rendering it unplayable. This in turn would most likely force the BGC to close.
- ii) Because of the risk of closure, the threat of infill housing then becomes very real as land inside a new alignment becomes extremely valuable and could easily be rezoned. The GWRC must therefore think very carefully about the location of a new stop-bank because once it is constructed, its final placement is essentially irreversible. GWRC has no jurisdiction on the land outside of the stopbank’s footprint and therefore any undesirable “downstream” events are beyond its control (e.g. it could not put any caveats on the land such as requiring that its zoning must remain recreational – that it the prerogative of the Hutt City Council). This outcome is counter to past aspirations of the GWRC – A *Hutt News* article in the 24-7-2001 edition, quotes (former) Cr. Werry as saying “the forced sell up and relocation of the golf clubs is not an outcome that the GWRC would be willing to support.” To add extra emphasis to the very real threat of infill housing the committee should also consider the fact that when this round of consultation meetings began in 2006, they were hosted at Frederic Wallis House. This land was privately owned, but was open for public use. When Frederic Wallis House became financially unviable and was forced to close, the owners did not take the option of generously gifting the land to the community – Rather they chose the harsh but pragmatic option of selling up. The house has been demolished and the land carved up into an eight-townhouse subdivision – need I say more!
- iii) The original green alignment gives preferential treatment to the Hutt Golf Course at the expense of Boulcott– some \$1.4M of the \$10.1M total cost is budgeted for landscaping and contouring. The stopbank is feathered into the greens and tees of the HGC while the BGC gets nothing. I would urge this committee to consider the following scenario: Suppose two of you had neighbouring properties, both of which backed onto some vacant land that was subject to a development. Suppose a requirement of the development was that the developer had to construct a fence to provide privacy to the

- adjoining properties. If that developer built one of you a nice tidy wooden fence finished with capping and then whacked up some rusty corrugated iron for the other, claiming as they did so, that it fulfilled the requirement to provide privacy, I should think that the recipient of the rusty iron fence would feel somewhat aggrieved. Now relate that to the current proposal and think of how the members of Boulcott GC feel.
- iv) Points i) - iii) go against the grains of natural justice and fairness – Issues that many who stood for and were elected to the GWRC professed to be strong supporters of. Encouraging an alignment that in turn would encourage infill housing is hardly endeavouring to promote “Quality of Life – by ensuring that the natural environment is protected while meeting the economic, cultural and social needs of the community” (The GWRC’s motto). Neither for that matter is destroying the recreational pursuits of some 400-500 of its ratepayers by forcing a legitimate entity that has existed for quite some time to close.
 - v) The threats posed by the original green alignment (closure, cessation of recreation for some, risk of infill housing) are also counter to four of the ten aspirations of the residents of Hutt City (See the HCC website – *Reporting on the Progress Towards the Achievements of Community Outcomes 2003-2006*) expressed in the 2007-2017 Ten Year Plan – Namely: Affordable access to community facilities that include arts, cultural and recreational options (Boulcott’s joining fees are some of the cheapest and it is centrally located); A diverse natural environment that is accessible, enjoyable and safe; A healthy balance between natural and built environments; and; A built environment that is attractive, safe and healthy.

In many respects, the flood protection features of any of the proposed alignments should not be the dominant factor under consideration, because the engineers working for and with GWRC have already demonstrated that all (red, green or blue alignments) can be built with a certain standard of protection in mind – In essence, the provision of adequate flood protection to a set standard was fixed the moment the decision to close the gap in the current structure was made. The issue is now therefore; How can this level of protection best be accomplished with the minimal destruction to the existing environment (including features such as golf courses) without incurring excessive costs or by putting the protective structure under excessive strain in a flood event?

The original green alignment, whilst providing protection, is a blunt instrument wielded at the expense of the BGC – It pays no regard to preserving the existing features of that part of the environment. For a modest \$2.45M extra, either of the Boulcott Variants, meet the requirements of the original green alignment and also allow the current features of the existing environment and the BGC to be preserved. The total estimated cost of \$12.85M is only \$1.05M more expensive than the original Red Alignment and is much cheaper than the alternative Blue Alignment (that would have accomplished many of the same outcomes as the variants now under consideration) at \$15.2M. The \$12.85M cost is also substantially cheaper than the upper bound budgeted for this section of flood control works at \$19M as disclosed in GW Report 07-568 (p5). Given that this section of works essentially requires a new section of stop-bank to be built from scratch (because none previously existed), whereas work along other sections of the river make use of strengthening existing structures, I feel that \$12.85M is not an unreasonable cost (compare, for example, the works between the Ava and Ewen Bridges which are priced in the range \$14.6 – 17.5M, see report 01.614).

Another feature that works in favour of the GWRC striving to preserve the existence of the Boulcott Golf Course, is the fact that this club leases some land from the GWRC to give it sufficient playing area. This land is well within the flood hazard zone and aside from recreational pursuits, there is little that the GWRC could do with it. In continuing to lease the land to BGC, GWRC saves costs because someone else maintains it, and it derives ongoing income from leasing it – Over time this

lease could contribute to off-setting some of the extra costs (\$2.45M) of retaining the BGC if one of the variant options is chosen.

PART II

Major construction projects near residential areas are often potentially emotionally charged affairs, and this one is no exception. Since taking part in all of the public consultation meetings initiated in 2006, I have heard a good deal of objections raised to many of the proposals put forward by the GWRC's engineers, many of which I feel are baseless, but have nevertheless, appeared to have gone unchallenged. In the second part of my submission, I would like to take the opportunity to address some of these.

Some Common Objections of Residents Rebutted:

Flood protection issues in the Boulcott-Hathaway area are nothing new. In 1969, the Hutt River Board (presumably a predecessor to the current GWRC) attempted to close the gap between land adjacent Stellin St and the southern terminus of the current stopbank at 32 Hathaway Ave. However, their attempts were thwarted because "local opposition to the loss of views... resulted in the omission of the section south of the Film Unit" (See project Report 20 in "*The Hutt River – A Modern History 1840-1990*," John Easter, Wellington Regional Council). Presumably, in later years, that loss of a view to some residents was not so critical given the degree of subdivision that has taken place in the vicinity of 18-32 Hathaway Ave – New residential housing dating from the 1970's - 1980's has gone in between the existing housing and the golf course boundaries. Since 1969, many residential properties have changed hands, some on quite a few occasions, and "corporate" knowledge of the 1969 proposal has been lost (or conveniently forgotten).

However, the preservation of a view, at the expense of bunding for flood protection, was essentially the purchase of a ticking time-bomb that eventually "detonated" during the flooding of the Hutt River in 1998. The inundation of properties then, and twice again in 2004, was deemed unacceptable and flood protection was, once again, back on the agenda. Unfortunately, the opportunity cost of flood protection is quite often the loss of a view – But once again the region finds itself engaged in the cyclic argument of "having one's cake and eating it too" insofar as views and flood protection are concerned. Quite often this has been at the expense of the golf courses, especially Boulcott, the members of which are often treated with contempt by some of the residents of adjoining properties. What is not recognised by the objectors (or is often conveniently overlooked) is that the golf club members are residents and ratepayers too, and as such they are also entitled to have the facilities that they have built up over time, preserved as best as is practicable under any flood protection scheme due to be considered. Collectively, the golf club members may represent a larger number than the small (but often vocal) proportion of residential objectors.

I would also point out that the golf courses were developed as facilities that are entirely appropriate to the floodplain land upon which they sit. They serve as useful ponding areas to help mitigate scouring by flooding in other areas where the protected river channel is much narrower. It is hardly their fault that at one end of their land there is currently no flood protection in place. They also contribute to the green and open spaces that enhance the Hutt River Plain and to the generally pleasant feel of the greater urban areas in which they are situated. They have been in residence for considerable time (longer than many of the adjoining property owners) and should not be forced to close or amalgamate. The sentiment expressed by some that "the Hutt has a glut of golf courses and that Boulcott is expendable (or should be forced to merge with HGC)" is not supported by the facts. Both serve different clienteles – Boulcott even has a waiting list for membership and because of its cheaper joining fees, it allows middle-lower income earning citizens a chance to partake in a pastime that they might not otherwise be able to afford. From the north-facing windows of my

dwelling, I often observe many teenagers, Maori and Pacific Islanders, as well as other ethnic groups and the elderly enjoying time on Boulcott golf course. Even if, under the scenario of a merger with HGC, they are able to retain some form of membership, would their fees go up and would cheaper golf be still available to their children? Titahi Bay golf course, a cheaper-fee course near Porirua, produced one of this country's greatest golfers, Michael Campbell – What if forcing Boulcott to close denied a similar opportunity to someone local?

Some objectors have expressed concerns that the presence of a stopbank in their back yard, and thereby destroying their views, would “wipe up to \$70,000 – 100,000 of the value of the property.” At no stage have we been made aware at just how this figure has been derived at – Indeed, because many of these properties currently get flooded, it could equally be valid to argue in light of this fact, that the current value of the property is essentially worthless and that a stopbank would enhance its value.

I also feel that objections over the loss of privacy arising from persons/golfers traversing on or near the new stopbanks are over exaggerated and that the perceived fear of privacy loss is greater than what will actually be borne out. I say this from eight years of experience and observation derived from having my upstairs lounge, kitchen and bedroom windows a mere 10 m from the crest of an existing stopbank. I also have the terminus of the number 2 tee and the start of the number 3 tee of the BGC a mere 20 m away. Needless to say, at certain periods of the day, there is some considerable activity and foot traffic quite close to my dwelling. In spite of this, at no stage, have I ever been made to feel that my privacy has been invaded – Indeed, most golfers are so engrossed in their games that they show no interest in the residential properties around them. At all times I have found the members of the BGC to be courteous and well behaved. The very occasional breakage of a window has always been met without question by the BGC's insurers/glaziers. It appears that some objectors often forget that moving next to a golf course will mean that recreational activities will occur close by – The green open spaces are not there to remain static and underutilised as if an extension to one's own garden. In many respects, the objections raised are often similar in nature to those raised by people that move to downtown apartments wanting all of the benefits of inner city living and nightlife, and then objecting when they find that things in the inner city are too noisy or that the nightlife disrupts sleep. I also feel that the engineers working on this project have done their very best to try and mitigate many of these potential problems with adjoining residents – some of whom appear to remain unhappy no matter how much effort is undertaken.

Finally, as I have already alluded to, numerous properties adjoining the golf courses have changed hands many times since 1969 – Indeed many have changed numerous times since the late 1990's when extensive consultation on flood control works along the Hutt River corridor was reinitiated. The publication of GWRC reports such as “*Living with the River*” from 1996, and more recently “*The Hutt River Floodplain Management Report*” in 2001, have given residents the opportunity to do due diligence before purchasing properties in this area. Indeed, the 2001 Floodplain Management Report in its introductory statements impresses on people insofar as who should use the report that, “*Anyone who is a resident of Upper and Lower Hutt Cities that are living in (and by inference, considering purchasing properties in) an area directly affected by flooding, or, who will be affected by any flood protection structures or possible planning and emergency management measures...*” should read this report. Although such information may not be as glaringly obvious as “a row of blinking lights giving guidance to the nearest exit,” it is, nevertheless, readily and freely available in the public domain. Given this, the inconvenience of living in a property that might be impacted upon by flood protection measures can be determined and weighed up before the final decision to purchase a property is made. I think it is perfectly valid function of this committee to ask the question of any objector, “when did you purchase your property and did you take time to either phone the GWRC, or consider the 2001 (or earlier) floodplain management reports and find

out how they might affect your property?" If the answer discloses a recent purchase and a "no" to the second part of the question, such objections should hold less weighting...

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dennis Page.

