



Report 10.395
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Committee Regional Sustainability Committee
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East Harbour Regional Park - Baring Head block

1. Purpose

To update the Committee about a number of issues surrounding the recently purchased additional land at Baring Head and to outline a way forward for the short and long-term. Also, to propose a strategy to integrate the land into East Harbour Regional Park.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2002*.

3. Background

On 30 June 2010 Wellington Regional Council became the owner of a 284 hectare property at Baring Head. This property is adjacent to the 11 hectare lighthouse block at Baring Head that is already part of the East Harbour Regional Park but was, prior to the purchase of the additional land, only accessible via a right-of-way that did not permit public access.

Since the purchase of the additional land, officers have had the opportunity to walk around the property and investigate preliminary options for its development.

To assimilate the new area into East Harbour Regional Park and the parks network, it is necessary to work through a number of issues. Some of these are outlined in the next section. However, identifying the potential uses of the property as a recreational asset, as well as the appropriate levels of preservation of landscape, ecology and heritage features, is still a way off. To be in a position to clearly identify these will mean a process will have to be run that includes the input of the contributing parties, interest groups, iwi and other agencies in order that a clear picture of the future of possibilities for the land can be presented to Council.

Therefore, this report:

- Highlights the immediate issues that need to be actioned in order that

access to the property by the public can be undertaken in a safe and enjoyable manner.

- Identifies a process that can be articulated to the public and all other interested parties about how Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) intends to form a clear picture for the long-term development of the land.

4. Short-term

There are a number of tasks to be completed before the area can be opened to the public.

4.1 Ensure the public can access the land safely

An inventory of all assets will need to be prepared for inclusion in the *Parks and Forests Asset Management Plan*. As part of this process, a safety inspection will need to be undertaken and any essential work carried out prior to opening the area to the public. For example, attachment 1 is a photo of an observation bunker with a partially collapsed concrete roof that needs to be made secure. Given the current state of the main access bridge, vehicle access would need to be prohibited for the general public until it can be clearly ascertained whether vehicular access to the property is desirable and the required funding is made available for the works to be carried out.

The public will also need to be able to access and find their way around the property easily. This may entail changing the main gate to allow easy foot access. Signs will also need to be produced that deter the public from straying onto neighbouring properties, especially the one that is now completely surrounded by park land. Providing information about the topography and what to expect at the site is also essential. After the car park and bridge the access road rises about 60 metres over a distance of about 600 metres. From the car park the distance to the lighthouse is approximately 2.6 kilometres.

In the interim it is appropriate that some management principles are established to guide the public in what activities can be carried out in Baring Head and to provide a basis for rangers to exercise control. As an interim measure, it is recommended that the management controls already established for the East Harbour Park (Parangarahu Lakes) be utilised to guide the management of activities in Baring Head. It is located in close proximity and shares similar characteristics. This would allow a range of casual activities by the public (i.e., walking, biking, picnicking) but provide a graduated management regime for other activities that may impact more significantly on the park values. The following management regime is therefore recommended from the time of the official opening:

4.1.1 Allowed activities

- Walking, hiking, running
- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Mountain biking

Restricted activities

- Commercial activities
- Aircraft landings
- Events (commercial or larger than 90 people)
- Filming (commercial)
- Leases or licences for grazing

Managed

- Horse riding

Prohibited

- Camping
- Dog walking
- Firearms/hunting (other than GWRC arranged pest control)
- Fires
- Fireworks
- Motorised recreation

The terms, *Allowed*, *Restricted*, *Managed* and *Prohibited* are as defined in the draft *Parks Network Management Plan 2010*.

4.2 Grazing

The land is currently grazed and this provides reasonably effective weed control. As an interim measure, it is proposed to issue a grazing licence to the existing grazier for up to 18 months, with GWRC having the right to terminate all or parts of it prior to expiry, subject to reasonable notice. The expiry of the licence will be timed to coincide with the Council's deliberations on the long-term future of the land (discussed in section 5).

4.3 Protect highly valued features of the land

Officers will need to ensure that areas of significant cultural, heritage and ecological value are identified quickly so that current land management practices and the public do not harm them. Interim protection can be put in place while a full assessment of those values is undertaken and detailed work programmes developed. This will involve at least liaising with iwi and the Department of Conservation.

All these short-term measures will need to be articulated to the public through GWRC's website and other media. This is desirable before the public access.

Given the amount of pre-investigation and remedial works that may need to be done, a target date for opening the area to the public would be January 2011. The area could be officially opened during one of GWRC's *Great Outdoors Summer Events* based on the Baring Head site.

4.4 Finance

In the 2010/11 year there will be costs (approximately \$40,000) relating to the debt servicing of GWRC's portion of the purchase price. This and other

expenditure will be managed within the constraints of the Parks' existing budget for the first six months. The situation can then be reconsidered at the half year review. There will be additional short-term costs for fencing, repairs and signage that will require funding.

5. Long-term issues

5.1 Planning process

A condition for receiving Government funding towards the land purchase was to classify the land as Scenic Reserve within 18 months of purchase. Another condition also stipulated that a management plan for the area needs to be developed within 3 years of purchase.

5.1.1 Amendment to Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan

The *Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan* (the Plan) is currently in its consultation phase. Submissions closed on 23 July and hearings are to be held on 24, 25 and 26 August. The timeline does not allow for the inclusion of Baring Head into the Plan, and this will have to be dealt with as an amendment through a later process. A preliminary analysis of the draft Plan's objectives and policies has found that there are likely to be no inconsistencies with the subsequent inclusion of Baring Head into the regional parks network.

An amendment to the Plan will also be required. This will have to provide a description of the park, outline the park specific management focus and policies, as well as specify the rules to be applied to activities in the park. To prepare a suitable amendment a number of preliminary phases of work will be necessary. This includes research into the biodiversity values of the land and the best options for management. It is proposed to start work on this research immediately.

Extensive consultation with the contributing parties, iwi and the wider community will clearly also be required as part of the process of developing an amendment to the Plan. The *Reserves Act 1977* requires a two stage consultation process and it is proposed to utilise the initial stage of this process to engage key stakeholders and the community on the potential options for use and management of the park. This first stage of the consultation process would include a number of meetings and workshops. Engagement with iwi will be an important part of this process, to establish their views on the future management of Baring Head and how this may link with adjacent land in which they have direct interests. It is also proposed a 'friends' group is established for Baring Head, to input to the planning process and contribute to the longer-term development of the park. Taking account of the local government elections and the Christmas period, it is expected that this first stage of consultation and exploration of options will be completed by early 2011.

The formal amendment to the Plan will be developed subsequently. The consultation process for this stage will be more formal and will include public meetings, submissions and hearings. The timing of this will need to take into account the desirability of taking forward a comprehensive amendment covering other land areas, including Wairarapa Moana and Whitireia Parks

other financial considerations. In the meantime, the park can be funded as outlined in section 4.4.

6. Communications

It is expected there will be a high level of public interest in Baring Head. A clear and consistent communication and consultation strategy will assist in dealing with public enquiries, outlining the GWRC's interim management regime and the process for deciding on longer term management. It is proposed that a communication strategy be developed in conjunction with the Communications Department. This will include such issues as:

- Signage and marketing
- Website information
- Key messages
- Contact points
- Consultation processes
- Key stakeholders and audiences

7. Recommendations

That the Committee recommends to Council that it:

1. ***Receives*** the report.
2. ***Notes*** the contents of the report.
3. ***Approves*** a target date of January 2010 for opening the new Baring Head block to the public.
4. ***Notes*** that there may be a need to review short-term project expenditure at the six month review.
5. ***Adopts*** the management regime detailed in section 4.1.1.
6. ***Notes*** that long-term funding decisions will be considered as part of the 2012-2022 Long-term Council Community Plan.
7. ***Agrees*** to commence initial consultation on the future use and management of Baring Head.

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Attachment 1: Photo