



Report 10.522  
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Committee Regional Sustainability  
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## East Harbour Regional Park - Baring Head block

### 1. Purpose

To update the Council on progress with planning for the opening of the Baring Head block and preparation of a management plan.

### 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.

A report on matters related to interim management was considered by this Committee on 5 August 2010 (Report 10.395), and subsequently endorsed by Council.

This report:

- Outlines the progress being made towards the formal opening of the park in January 2011.
- Outlines the progress being made towards the longer-term preparation of a management plan and gazettal as a scenic reserve.

### 4. Short-term tasks

There are a number of tasks that are being progressed to enable the park to be opened to the public in January 2011.

#### **4.1 Providing for public access**

To ensure safe access for the public, signs will be installed at the main entrances to the block. These will include standard park name signs and temporary map boards. Visitors will be directed towards a marked loop walking track that takes them around the river flats, the lighthouse and the hilltops. This will allow walkers to access the main areas of the park, and to best appreciate the views out towards the coast. The walkway will be designed to avoid the public straying onto land owned by neighbouring landowners.

Using the same rules as for the East Harbour Park (Parangarahu Lakes) area, a range of passive recreational activities will be permitted, including walking, biking, and picnicking. Other activities that may impact more significantly on the park values will require a concession.

#### **4.2 Grazing**

The land is currently grazed by cattle, horses and sheep. Whilst this provides reasonably effective weed control, it does mean that animals have unrestricted access into existing wetland areas and areas with high biodiversity value. This use is already compromising these values, and is not in accordance with the Council's objectives and best practice management. It is therefore proposed as an interim measure, that the grazing licence be amended to restrict grazing to sheep only, and that the licence be issued for a period of 18 months (with rights to cancel or amend) on this basis. This will avoid the most significant damage to the wetland and biodiversity values, and provide a 'breathing space' within which the longer-term decisions on the management of the land can be progressed. With this measure it should be unnecessary for any significant new fencing to be constructed in the short term – and therefore any potentially unnecessary expenditure can be avoided.

#### **4.3 Protecting biodiversity and other important values**

Officers have undertaken initial assessments of biodiversity values, and have collated a large amount of existing data from various other sources. This has enabled areas of significant value to be identified, and visitor access will be managed to avoid these.

#### **4.4 Communications**

The Council website is being updated with all available information and details of the public opening. It is anticipated that the area will be officially opened in January 2011 during one of GWRC's *Great Outdoors Summer Events*.

A number of meetings and site visits have also been held or scheduled with key stakeholders. These include:

- A site visit with DoC, to discuss the values of the block and how these can be appropriately managed;

- Attendance at the first meeting of the group that intends to become “Friends of Baring Head”. This group is intending to form a trust comprising some 10+ trustees, and has a wide variety of interests ranging from tourism to ecology;
- Hutt City councillors have visited the site, accompanied by our ranger;
- The Nature Heritage Fund Committee is visiting the site and a meeting has been scheduled to discuss their views and aspirations for the block.

There have also been a number of requests for site visits to the block. Due to the time imposition on rangers these are being restricted to those from funding contributors at this stage. Other groups can be accommodated at a later date or once the block is formally opened.

To ensure consistent communications between the various groups and the Council, two key contact points have been agreed. Gareth Cooper (Park Ranger) for day-to day issues and Ross Jackson (Senior Advisor, Parks Community Projects) for all other issues. These staff will attend relevant meetings of the Friends group and other key stakeholders as required.

## **5. Long-term tasks**

There are a number of tasks that are being progressed to lead towards the development of a management plan (as an amendment to the Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan) and gazettal as a scenic reserve. It is hoped that these processes will be concluded within a period of 18-24 months, dependant on progress with other land assembly matters.

A draft project plan outlining the various stages of this work has been prepared, along with a Communications and Consultation Plan.

### **5.1 Research**

The areas of research being undertaken are outlined below, along with an update on current progress. It is anticipated that all the research will be completed by the end of this year.

- Biodiversity – a range of existing data has been found and is being collated. This includes data from DoC, the Nature Heritage Fund and Forest and Bird. Some additional research on lizard populations and a botanical survey is planned, along with mapping of pest plants;
- Tourism and Recreation – staff are working with a consultant to research the tourism and recreation potential of the block and the adjacent lighthouse complex. This will include looking at the business case for visitor accommodation and the creation of a 2/3 day walk or shorter cycle ride around the southern coast;

- Cultural Impact – a brief is being prepared for a consultant to research the Maori history of the area, associated stories and identify sites of significance;
- Archaeology and Heritage – a brief is being prepared for research on the European history of the block and the heritage value of the lighthouse complex. This will be undertaken in conjunction with the Historic Places Trust.

## 5.2 Next Steps

The following key project stages are anticipated:

Stage	Tasks	Timeframe
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare briefs</li> <li>• Commission/collate research</li> <li>• Receive reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sept 2010 to Jan 2011</li> </ul>
Analysis of use options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify activity options and spatial components</li> <li>• Analyse options with input from key stakeholders</li> <li>• Prepare report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feb 2011 to May 2011</li> </ul>
Gazettal to scenic reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council resolution</li> <li>• Public notification and submissions</li> <li>• Council resolution</li> <li>• Inform Minister of Conservation</li> <li>• Confirm gazettal notice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within 18 months</li> </ul>
Amendment to Parks Network plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council resolution</li> <li>• Public notification and submissions</li> <li>• Engagement with stakeholders</li> <li>• Development of draft amendment</li> <li>• Public notification and submissions</li> <li>• Hearing</li> <li>• Finalise and confirm adopt amendment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within 18-24 months</li> </ul>

The *Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan* is due to be considered by Council for adoption on 28 September 2010. An amendment to the Plan will be prepared to include the Baring Head block, and it is intended that it will form part of East Harbour Regional Park. The amendment will provide a description of the park, outline the park specific management focus, as well as specify the rules to be applied to activities in the park. Depending on timing and governance arrangements, there may be opportunities to combine this amendment to the Plan with amendments covering other future park areas, including Wairarapa Moana and Whitireia.

### **5.3 Consultation**

Contact is being made with all key stakeholders to inform them of the process and timeframes and how they can be involved. As well as the formal consultation required under the various processes under the *Reserves Act 1977*, it is also intended to run an open engagement process early on involving a wide range of groups and the wider community. This will ensure that the Council can build on the public interest in the area and pull valuable community input and ideas into the early stages of the development of a management plan for the park. Early consultation will also be required with the contributing parties, iwi and neighbouring landowners. The Port Nicolson Block Claim Group has indicated a strong interest in the development and management of the park.

### **5.4 Funding**

There will be unanticipated funding implications within the current financial year (2010/11), for the ongoing management of the land and preparation of long-term plans. Further work is needed to clarify some of these costs and this will be reported back to Council in January 2011. However it is anticipated that the likely additional funding requirements in 2010/11 will include funding for ongoing management and preparation for public opening. This is likely to involve: signage, track maintenance, fencing, (possibly) land management, legal and property advice, at an estimated cost of \$50,000. However there may also be additional costs associated with construction of vehicle access to the block and lighthouse complex.

To begin the management plan process, there will also be costs associated with the research outlined in section 5.1. This is estimated at around \$35,000 for 2010/11.

Beyond 2010/11, the funding requirements will be determined largely by the choices made in the management plan and the management and maintenance programme associated with this. Long-term funding will be considered as part of the 2011/12 Annual Plan and 2012/22 Long Term Council Community Plan.

## 6. Recommendations

*That the Committee:*

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the contents of the report.*
3. *Notes that there will be a need to review funding for 2010/11, and that this will be reported to Council in January 2011.*
4. *Notes that long-term funding decisions will be considered as part of the 2011/12 Annual Plan and 2012-2022 Long-Term Council Community Plan.*

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