

Public Excluded

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Report to the Utility Services Committee
from Barry Leonard, Plantation Forest Manager

Harvest Access : Puketiro Forest

1. Purpose

To advise the Committee of the preferred option for access for logging trucks from the Puketiro Forest.

2. Exclusion of the Public

Grounds for exclusion of the public under section 48(1) of the *Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987* are:

That the public conduct of the whole or relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding would exist, i.e.; commercial negotiations.

3. Background

The Puketiro Forest, excluding Battle Hill, is approximately 1120 hectares and is expected to produce 560,000 tonnes of logs. This would equate to 20,000 truck and trailer loads.

The Plantation Forestry Log Harvest Plan envisages the harvesting of stands within the Puketiro Forest to commence in 2002 and continue intermittently as stands mature through to 2021.

The access to Puketiro Forest for management purposes is by way of Moonshine and Bulls Run Roads. Both of these roads include winding one lane sections which are either not able to be negotiated by trucks with trailers or where such vehicles would cause significant disruptions to traffic. Officers have been investigating options for

access that are sustainable over the period of the harvest.

Initial discussions with Porirua and Upper Hutt City Councils suggest that as a condition of harvest they would require a significant upgrade of the public roads and that they would expect this to be funded by Council.

4. Options

The most promising options are:

- Upgrade the roads as the councils suggest.
- Construct a new road through a neighbouring property (Dr G Tripe) to connect with Flighty's Road.
- Construct a new road through Battle Hill to access Paekakariki Hill Road.
- Negotiate access through Rallywoods to access Valley View Forest.

Other options considered and discarded include:

- Access via Hydro Road to the Whakatikei Block to State Highway 1 via Wainui Farm.
- Construct a new road to access Mulherns Road.
- Construct a new access through Craig's Flat to access State Highway 2.

The location of these various options are set out on the attached map (Attachment 1).

5. Discussion

5.1 Upgrade Present Public Access

This option would require the upgrade of both 1.8 km of Bulls Run Road (Upper Hutt City) and about 5 km of Moonshine Road (Upper Hutt and Porirua Cities).

Bulls Run Road has a stream on the western side and a bank ranging from nothing to over 15 m high on the east. Considerable earthworks would be required to achieve a two way road and there would be encroachment into three private sections as well as Council's Cook Block. It would also be necessary to reconstruct a culvert and provide a turnaround area as trucks would be unable to make the turn from Bulls Run Road into the forest.

Similarly about 1 km of Moonshine Road is extremely narrow and follows the alignment of the adjacent stream. While the balance of the route could be upgraded, this section is likely to cause significant problems both in terms of the construction work required and maintaining access for locals while work was in progress.

5.2 Construct New Road to Flighty's Road

This option would require the construction of approximately 4.8 km of new road from the southern boundary of the forest to Flighty's Road to give access to State Highway 58. The major landowner on the route has indicated that he would be prepared to consider this option but no financial discussions have taken place.

A major difficulty with this option is upgrading the main road through the forest from Bulls Run Road to the top of the ridge for use by loaded logging trucks. The current grades are suitable for empty trucks but a significant amount of work would be necessary to ease the grade sufficiently for loaded movements. The distance involved is approximately 3.4 km and 300 m in height. Over 180,000 tonnes would need to be carted over this portion of the route.

5.3 **Construct a New Access through Battle Hill to Paekakariki Hill Road**

It was always contemplated that an access onto Paekakariki Hill Road would be required for the harvest of the Battle Hill Block. This would occur around 2020.

There is an option to bring forward the construction of this road and to extend it into the Puketiro Forest proper to be used as the main harvest route.

The Battle Hill Block is quite steep ranging from 100 m altitude at the foot of the slope and over 350 m at the top. This altitude change occurs over a distance of 1.25 km. Constructing a suitable road on this grade would require the sacrifice of a considerable area of trees and would still result in the difficulties with the eastern blocks set out in the Flighty's Road option above. It would also cause ongoing disruptions to the recreational activities at Battle Hill.

5.4 **Negotiate Access through Rallywoods to Valley View Forest**

Council employees have for many years had access from Bulls Run Road to Valley View Forest through a block of land known as Rallywoods. This road, which forms the legal access to Rallywoods, is covered by an easement over Wellington Regional Council (WRC) land at its Bulls Run Road end. The road also provides access from Rallywoods into Valley View Forest and from there to Totara Park through the new Valley View Forest access. The use of this section of the road by Rallywoods has not been formalised.

Rallywoods is made up of five partners and between their houses and Bulls Run Road the road crosses the Whakatikei River. During the floods of October 1998 this bridge was washed out and in the interim the partners have either used Valley View Forest for access or in good weather forded the Whakatikei River.

During discussions related to Rallywoods acquiring two beams from WRC to use in the reconstruction of the bridge a suggestion that WRC may assist with the construction in return for access for logging vehicle received a favourable response.

Initial discussions have taken place and a draft agreement has been produced. In broad terms the draft agreement includes:

- Formalised access for the partners through Valley View Forest.
- Formalised access for WRC through Rallywoods

- The right for WRC to upgrade the road in Rallywoods to a standard suitable for logging trucks.
- WRC to construct a bridge over the Whakatikei River with Rallywoods contributing the sum of \$40,000.
- WRC to meet maintenance cost on the bridge for 10 years and 20 percent from thereon with the condition that the bridge will be inspected both before and after use by logging trucks and WRC will meet any maintenance costs relating to that use.
- No harvest royalty will be payable by WRC (but may be payable by any other forestry right holder).

This option will require a survey of the whole route in order to register reciprocal rights-of-way on the titles.

During investigations of this option it was discovered that part of the main access to Valley View Forest is constructed on a neighbour's land. The road alignment would also be formalised with an easement as part of this process.

6. Financial Implications

Detailed costings have not been prepared as to analyse each option in depth would be both very expensive and time consuming. Estimates have been prepared for all options.

(1) Upgrade Present Access

\$

Reconstruct 6.8 km of road, including curve easement and widening to two lane carriageway.

6.8 km @ \$215,200/km 1.46 M

(2) Construct New Road to Flighty's Road

\$

Construct new forestry road of 4.8 km and upgrade forestry track within Puketiro Forest to connect with present road 1.8 km.

4.8 km @ \$50,000/km =	240,000
1.8 km @ \$25,000/km =	45,000
Royalty payment @ \$0.50/tonne =	250,000
Upgrade route from Bulls Run Road : 3.4 km @ \$100,000/km	340,000

Legal costs	50,000
Total cost	925,000

(3) **Construct New Access through Battle Hill**

	\$
4 km @ \$100,000/km =	400,000
2 km @ \$50,000/km =	100,000
Upgrade route from Bulls Run Road : 3.4 km @ \$100,000/km	340,000
Loss of value of trees : 4 km @ 15 m = 6 hectares @ \$40	120,000
Total cost	960,000

(4) **Access Through Rallywoods**

	\$
Upgrade WRC roads : 4.2 km @ \$15,000/km	63,000
Upgrade Rallywoods roads : 1.2 km @ \$15,000/km	18,000
Reconstruct Rallywoods roads : 1 km @ \$25,000/km	25,000
Construct new Rallywoods road : 0.35m @ \$50,000/km	17,500
WRC share of new bridge	120,000
Legal costs	50,000
Total cost	293,500

All options exclude roading within each forestry block and ongoing road maintenance as these costs are common to all options.

7. **Budget Provision**

As this option has only become available in the past two months no budget provision has been made.

8. **Conclusion**

Of the options considered, the Rallywoods option is by far the most preferable. In addition to being less expensive, it provides long-term access for the Puketiro Forest and avoids the traffic management issues that would arise if public roads were used. It is clear from discussions with the territorial authorities that this option would find favour with them. The disadvantage with the Rallywoods option is the need to construct the bridge immediately, as a consequence this part of the cost will be expended 12 to 18 months earlier than would be the case with the other options.

9. **Recommendations**

That the Committee recommends to the Policy and Finance Committee that the Wellington Regional Council:

- (1) *Enters into an agreement with the partners of Rallywoods for reciprocal access between Valley View Forest and Bulls Run Road.*
- (2) *Agrees that the Wellington Regional Council will within this arrangement contribute approximately \$120,000 towards the cost of construction of a new bridge over the Whakatikei River.*
- (3) *Notes that the expenditure of \$170,000 is in addition to this year's budgeted expenditure for roads and will be debt funded. The remaining \$123,500 will be expended in future years.*
- (4) *Notes with this agreement all logs harvested from the Puketiro Forest (except the Battle Hill Block) will be able to use this route and thus avoid the use of Bulls Run and Moonshine Roads, neither of which are suitable for the anticipated level of use by heavy vehicles.*
- (5) *Notes the expenditure involved with this option is equivalent to a logging royalty of 59 cents per tonne for the current rotation, which compares favourably with the \$2.25 per tonne we are paying at Whakatikei.*
- (6) *That the Council's Common Seal be affixed to the formal agreement.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

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Attachment : 1