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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Bruce Andrell, Manager, Parks and Forests (Operations)

Whitireia Park : Five-Year Maintenance Work Programme

1. Purpose

To seek the Landcare Committee's endorsement to the Parks and Forests (Operations) proposed five-year maintenance work programme for Whitireia Park, before presenting it to the Whitireia Park Board for their consideration.

2. Background

On 1 December 1998, the Whitireia Park Board wrote to the Regional Council Chairman asking that the Council consider taking over the control and management of the Park. The letter states that since its establishment in 1978, the Board has struggled with limited funding to maintain the Park to the standard it deserves. The Park Board considered that the attributes of the Park are similar to those in the Regional Park network and because park users come from around the Region, the Regional Council would be an appropriate Park Manager. The Landcare Committee considered this request in Report 99.482. The relevant resolutions were:

- (3) *Agree that Whitireia Park has regional significance and at some point, in the future the Wellington Regional Council may be the appropriate level of government to manage the Park.*
- (4) *Agree that should the Wellington Regional Council take over Whitireia Park, then it would be appropriate to bring it up to the standards and service levels of the Regional Parks network and that sufficient funding will need to be allocated for this purpose.*
- (5) *Request Officers to model the cost for consideration through the Long-term Financial Strategy for the year commencing 2000/01.*

The Landcare Committee considered a financial model to take over the management of Whitireia Park as part of the Council's Long-term Financial Strategy. The Council made financial provision to take over the management and control of the Park in 2005/06, in *Towards a Greater Wellington - 10-Year Plan 2000/2010*; \$20,000 has also been budgeted annually, until the Council takes over the management and control, to address issues adversely affecting the environmental values of the park.

3. Programme Development

Matt Ballantine, Western Senior Ranger, has developed the proposed five-year maintenance work programme with Department of Conservation staff. The proposed work programme focuses on maintaining or enhancing the important environmental values of the Park. This in turn supports the Council's *Signature* values for the Park, as identified Report 99.482:

Table 1 : Signature Values

	Recreation Values	Environmental Values	Heritage Values
Whitireia Park	High: Used by picnickers, walkers, swimmers, cyclists, fishers, rock climbers, and golfers. Regionally important for rock climbing. Whitireia is estimated to have over 50,000 visitors per year.	Moderately high: Some nationally threatened plants on cliffs and estuarine areas. Te Onepoto inlet retains a fringe of saltmarsh and sedges and is an important habitat for wading birds. Native scrub is regenerating in gullies. Prominent headland and ridges at entrance to Porirua Harbour.	Exceptional: Many remains of Maori occupation around the coast - midden sites, pits, terraces and pa sites. Reputed that Kupe left an anchor stone at Onehunga Bay.

The following environmental issues have been identified as meriting the Regional Council's funding, by Parks and Forests and Department of Conservation staff.

Weed Control

Pest plants prevail throughout the Park threatening native plant communities, particularly within the coastal zone. The Council's Biosecurity department contributed to developing a five-year pest plant control programme. Pest plants of significance include boneseed, gorse, ragwort and Italian buckweed.

Pest Animal Control

An initial assessment by Council's Biosecurity staff suggests possum numbers are very high within regenerating scrub areas. Monitoring is required to determine the population density and distribution before an appropriate control strategy can be developed. Monitoring is due to be undertaken this month. An accurate costing for the operation will not be known until the monitoring is complete.

Stream Environments

Water quality and general stream ecosystems need protecting. Particularly the Onepoto Stream and catchment adjacent to the remnant bush. Fencing and wetland habitat restoration work is required.

Coastline

The coastal escarpment and associated foreshore plant and animal communities need to be protected from stock. Currently, stock roam the accessible escarpment areas damaging the ecosystem through grazing, trampling and generating erosion. Fencing is required to stop this damage occurring.

Remnant Bush Vegetation

There is one main forest remnant within Whitireia Park. This could be linked with other regenerating bush areas. Fencing these areas off from stock requires investigation. On-going fence maintenance within the remnant is required.

4. Work Programme Focus

The main priority within Whitireia is to bring pest animal and plant numbers down. Generally, with lower numbers of pest animals and plants, the Park can be left to regenerate into bush, wetland and coastal habitats. There is sufficient seed source within the remnant areas to spread into all Park areas, over time. The next priority is to stock proof sensitive habitats. The work plan allows for fencing of the Onepoto Stream, wetland gullies and some escarpment areas. Refer to Appendix 1 for the programme schedule and costing .

5. Programme Implementation

Parks and Forests Officers will present the five-year maintenance programme to the Whitireia Park Board. Subject to gaining the Park Board's endorsement, year one of the programme will be implemented by 30 June 2001. We will commission the Council's Biosecurity department to carry out pest animal monitoring and control work.

6. Communications

Parks and Forests staff will prepare a press release to publicise the Council's active role in conserving the environmental values of Whitireia Park.

7. Recommendations

That the Landcare Committee:

- (1) Receive the report.*
- (2) Endorse the five-year maintenance programme for Whitireia Park for consideration by the Whitireia Park Board.*
- (3) request Officers to report annually on the implementation of the Whitireia Park maintenance programme.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

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Attachment 1 : Parks and Forests (Operations) Five-Year Maintenance Programme