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Report to the Landcare Committee  
from Rob Forlong, Divisional Manager, Landcare

## **Landcare Division : Draft Operating Plans, 2002-2010**

### **1. Purpose**

To provide an overview of the Landcare Division Draft Operating Plans 2002-2010, for consideration by the Landcare Committee.

### **2. Introduction**

The Landcare Operating Plans cover our two functional areas: *Parks and Forests* and *Flood Protection*.

The 2002-2010 Landcare Operating Plans are “refreshed” versions of what was provided to the previous Landcare Committee in 2001. The next financial year represents the third year of the current three-year review cycle. However, within those constraints we have made a number of adjustments as well as some programme changes as better information allows us to refine our plans. These matters are discussed under the Functional Area Overviews and will be expanded further at the Committee meeting.

The base position for the 2002/03 financial year is that both groups will live within the fiscal envelope that was set in 2001. There have been cost increases since 2001, but these have been offset by either corresponding decreases in costs or by cuts made to project budgets. There have also been a number of suggestions for additional projects, but we have not included any additional projects which would take us outside our projected budget.

### 3. Functional Area Overviews

#### Parks and Forests - 2002/03

Parks and Forests have absorbed some significant cost increases by reducing the scope of a number of projects. Essentially, we have made a large number of one-off reductions in order to come within the fiscal envelope. The effect of these reductions is likely to be a reduced service level in the affected areas, with some programmes, (e.g., the Battle Hill Spring Visits programme) pared back. Overall, we believe that provided we adhere strictly to the work programmes, we will be able to deliver the outputs detailed in the Operating Plans.

#### Parks and Forests - 2003 Onwards

The picture for 2003 onwards is more difficult and a number of significant issues arise. While you do not need to deal with these matters until the next Long-term Financial Strategy (LTFS), I thought it prudent to flag them now.

The reductions in expenditure that we have made have put pressure on the budgets from 2003 onwards. Some projects that have been deferred to remain within the original rate allocation will eventually have to be undertaken. In short, the figures are showing that if you want to continue with the programme set in the previous LTFS then the funding requirement will too increase. We have incorporated those costs into the refreshed Operating Plans for the out years. Nevertheless, the next LTFS process will require a careful reassessment of priorities should existing funding levels remain.

#### New Parks

The Parks and Forests Operating Plan proposes to develop East Harbour Regional Park and add two new parks in three years time. The plan from 2002/03 is broadly:

- ***East Harbour Regional Park:*** We are programmed to provide a ranger service from 2003/04 and develop environmental, education, recreation and heritage opportunities from that time. If Hutt City formally vests control and management of the Northern Block in the Regional Council and/or other land rationalisation takes place, then we will have further development opportunities.
- ***Whitireia Park and Lake Wairarapa Wetlands Park:*** At present we are programmed to take on these parks in 2005/06. Taking on two parks in one year represents a huge challenge for the Division and it will strain our resources considerably.

As part of the next LTFS, the Committee will be provided with up to date costings and resource needs for these programmes.

## **Flood Protection**

### ***Flood Protection - 2002/03***

The 2002/03 budget has been relatively straightforward for Flood Protection with cost increases being offset by reductions (mainly in debt servicing costs and increased property rentals). Hence the 2002/03 proposed Operating Plan is very close to what was predicted last year.

We have been very fortunate this year that the major rivers have not flooded (so far) and we have at last caught up on repairing previous flood damage.

2002/03 will see the start of construction of the Strand Park realignment as the large Ava to Ewen upgrade gets underway. This is the first construction project to be done under the newly completed Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan.

As with previous years we have recommended some adjustments to construction schedules through the Operating Plan update process. The total ten year LTFS capital works programme remains the same. These adjustments are in order to allow a rational and sequenced timing to the construction following the design phase. As with any major works programme some parts need to proceed more quickly than others and adjustments such as these are necessary to compensate.

### ***Melling Bridge Waterway Investigation***

The Melling Bridge Waterway Investigation was included in the current Operating Plan (2001/2002) to assist Hutt City Council, Transit NZ, and Tranz Rail to develop a long-term strategy for the management of road and rail crossings of the Hutt River at Melling. While such a strategy will need to be developed at some point, it appears to have lost its priority with the other organisations. Consequently, the Committee has two options to address this matter. You could either reschedule the investigations for a later date or remove the project from the Operating Plan altogether. In the draft Operating Plans we have rescheduled the investigations for 2008/09 but that date represents little more than an educated guess.

### ***Otaihanga Road Raising***

The Otaihanga Road raising job is a three phase project which was agreed with the local community as part of the Waikanae River Floodplain Management Plan. In short the project requires KCDC (with assistance from the WRC) to raise the road in three sections over three financial years.

Phase 1 of the project was completed in mid 2001. Following the completion of Phase 1, it became clear that the local community may have changed its mind on the desirability of raising the road. Late last year KCDC advised us that they would not be proceeding with Phase 2 this financial year but that they would consider proceeding with Phases 2 and 3 in the 2002/03 financial year provided that there was sufficient support from the residents and the Regional Council.

The Flood Protection Group is now confirming (or otherwise) the support of local residents for the project. Initial indications are that while there is support for Phase 3, Phase 2 may not be well received by the local community. In the event that the support is not strong the Council will need to make a decision to either:

- proceed with the project (subject to KCDC also proceeding with it) on the basis that it was agreed as part of the Waikanae Floodplain Management Plan process; or
- abandon the project and review that decision when the Waikanae River Floodplain Management Plan is reviewed in 2007/08.

We hope to confirm the community views before you make a final decision on the Proposed Operating Plans.

#### 4. **Recommendations**

*That the Landcare Committee:*

- (1) **receive** the report.
- (2) **note** the contents.
- (3) **approve** in principle the proposed Operating Plans:
  - Parks and Forests;
  - Flood Protection.
- (4) **recommend** to the Policy and Finance Committee that the proposed Operating Plans for the above activities be included in the Council's proposed Long-term Financial Strategy 2000-2010 2002 Update (incorporating the Council's 2002/03 Annual Plan).

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