

Report 05.176
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Committee Landcare Committee
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Queen Elizabeth Park Draft Management Plan

1. Purpose

To seek the Council's approval to release the *Draft Queen Elizabeth Regional Park Management Plan* for public consultation.

2. Significance of decision

The matters 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

The Queen Elizabeth Regional Park Management Plan review began in October 2004 by advertising the Council's intent to review the plan and inviting submissions. Submissions closed on 31 December 2004 and were considered by the Landcare Committee at the 8 February (Report 05.8). The issues raised were discussed at the 16 February Council workshop and have been considered throughout the preparation of the draft plan. Earlier this month, a draft management plan was distributed to Councillors, through the Councillor Bulletin, and written comments were requested. *The Draft Plan is attached as a separate document.*

4. Submissions

A total of 301 submissions were received. They covered a variety of topics for consideration, which are summarised as **Attachment 1**.

5. Draft management plan

The draft management plan was written by taking into account the submissions received, the current management plan's provisions, discussions at the 16 February Councillor workshop, internal working group discussions and the *Regional Parks Network Management Plan*.

6. Stakeholders

Officers have continued to liaise with the Iwi and the Department of Conservation throughout the drafting of the plan. Submissions are expected from these parties during the second phase of consultation.

7. Changes from existing plan

While the draft plan may “look” quite different to the existing management plan, there have been very few changes in the plan’s substance and how the park will be managed. Following is a summary of the major changes to the plan or the major issues that have been raised. **Attachment 2** provides a summary of all the changes to the plan.

7.1 Motorised recreation

The debate surrounding the provision for motorised recreation in QEP dominated the initial round of submissions.

Policy 3.30 “*the recreational use of off-road motorised vehicles (including trail bikes) is not permitted, except for management purposes*” has been included at this point to indicate that motorised recreation is not seen as an appropriate activity in the Park. This policy is likely to be hotly debated during the second round of public consultation.

Currently, the Kapiti Areomodellers club and the Wellington Tramway Museum both operate in QEP and it is not intended to preclude these users from the park. As it could be argued that these are both “motorised recreation”, a definition of the “*recreational use of off road motorised vehicles (including trail bikes)*” will be included as a footnote in the draft before it goes out for consultation.

7.2 Farm lease area

Another issue that emerged during the submission process is the perception that the park is “underutilised” because of the large area currently being farmed rather than being available for general recreational use. This stimulated discussion amongst Councillors at the workshop about the future use of parts of the park and in particular the north eastern block. It was concluded that developments which are compatible with the park’s natural character should be allowed in the north eastern block.

The management plan does not directly permit or restrict any specific future development however, proposals *will be assessed on their effects* using the Regional Parks Network Plan criteria (pages 52 – 55) on a case by case basis.

An issues and options paper briefly scoping possible “water based” developments in the park was prepared and presented to Councillors through the bulletin.

Given that GW has control and management of QEP, under the Reserves Act 1977, future developments should be “contemplated” within the plan. All developments and activities which are not contemplated in the plan will be referred to the Minister of Conservation for final signoff.

7.3 Cycling and mountain biking on the Coastal and Inland tracks

Whether to allow the use of the Coastal Track as a bicycle route is a management issue that needs to be clarified. At present through policy and management decisions no bicycles are allowed on the Coastal Track and all bicycle use is directed on the Inland Track.

However the reality is that there are people using the Coastal Track for cycling and that it is difficult to control this at a ground level. Since the previous policies were developed the track has been upgraded to a “hard” surface which is more robust and suitable to bicycle use.

In this draft, Policy 3.28 “*Cycling is permitted on the Inland and Coastal Track **only** within the Coastal Dune Zone and on designated tracks and formed roads elsewhere in the park*” clearly identifies that there is a change in management direction.

Whilst practically the change in policy to reflect what is being experienced on the ground is a logical step, there are implications of allowing bicycle use in this fragile environment, given the increase in cycling that will conceivably occur. Those implications will be increased maintenance of the track, and careful management to resolve conflicts between cyclists and other users. It is worth noting also at this point that DoC has requested that the Coastal Dune area be elevated to “scenic reserve” in recognition of its unique and rare values. Scenic Reserve status is less compatible with mountain biking.

Also, KCDC has approached GW to promote tracks within QEP, through the use of signage, as part of an initiative to develop “cycle ways” on the Kapiti Coast. GW will work with KCDC to develop the most appropriate tracks to be included in the “cycle ways” network, however given this initiative we can expect greater use of the Coastal Track than currently experienced.

As this has meant a considerable change to the cycling policies in the draft it is anticipated that these issues will generate debate within the community and they will be revisited during the second round of consultation.

8. Next steps

The next phase of the plan review process is to consult on the draft plan for a two-month period during the latter half of this year. Ongoing discussions will continue with the Kapiti Coast District Council, the Department of Conservation and Iwi.

Copies of the draft plan will be sent to interested stakeholders, placed at Council offices and will be available on Greater Wellington’s website. Letters will also be sent to the original submitters with a copy of the draft plan, for their information and further comment.

9. Communication

Notices will be placed in the region’s main newspapers asking for comment on the draft plan. A second newsletter will be sent to people interested in the management plan review outlining the issues that have been raised and introducing the draft plan.

10. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *receive the report.*
2. *note the contents of the report.*
3. *recommend to the Council that it approve the release of the draft Queen Elizabeth Park Management Plan for public consultation, subject to any minor technical amendments that may be authorised by the Landcare Committee Chairperson.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachment 1: Summary of feedback to date

Attachment 2 Table of changes to draft management plan