

Report 13.4  
Date 18 January 2013  
File PK/10/09/01

Committee Social and Cultural Wellbeing Committee  
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## Review of the Concessions Policy and charges for Regional Parks and Forests

### 1. Purpose

To seek approval to consult on the policy changes to the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) Parks and Forests Concessions Guidelines (2013), the Statement of Proposal and the Summary of Information in accordance with the special consultative procedure under the Local Government Act 2002.

### 2. The decision-making process and significance

The subject matter of this report is part of a decision-making process that will lead to the Council making a decision of medium significance within the meaning of the Local Government Act 2002. The decision-making process is explicitly prescribed for by the special consultative procedure set out in Section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002.

### 3. Introduction

The GWRC Parks and Forests Concessions Guidelines (Concession Guidelines, **Attachment 3**) sets out policy regarding how concessions will be processed and what fees are apportioned for activities approved to occur in Greater Wellington Regional Council's Regional Parks and Forests. These were previously reviewed in 2001 and 2008.

The purpose of the concession system is to ensure that particular activities are carried out in a way that will not detract from the focus of the park and the values contained within. It also helps ensure that their activities do not impinge on other visitors and preferably enhance the experience of visitors to the parks.

Since 2008 there have been a significant number of 'long-term' concession (leases, licences and easements) applications for the Parks and Forests. Each application requires assessment according to the policies set out in 7.4 of the Parks Network Plan. Assessment can absorb a large amount of officer time and occasionally legal clarification. An application for leases, licences and

easements greater than 10 years require public notification and in some cases a hearing. To date, few of these costs (generally only public notice advertisement) have been recovered from the applicant. In one case, the assessment of the application to reinstate a railway along the Rimutaka Incline cost in excess of \$20,000.

In order to manage the demands of this work, it is considered that some cost recovery measures, similar to that of the resource management charging policy that GWRC already administers, are appropriate. There are also some minor changes required to the current Concession Guidelines to:

- Provide more flexibility in charges for low impact filming
- Update camping fees to be consistent with other agencies
- Update firewood permit charges.

#### **4. Fees for processing licences, leases and easements**

No individual owns our Regional Parks and Forests. Rather GWRC manages them as community resources. Obtaining a concession allows individuals to access these resources for their own private use and economic benefit. Some examples of approved concessions currently operating in the parks include Kapiti Fourx4 Adventures, Battle Hill Eventing (horse riding), Hutt Valley Gliding Club, Paekakariki Surf Club and Wellington Tramways Museum.

The current Concessions Guidelines only specify charges for processing approvals of events and activities on the parks such as festivals, tours and filming. The cost of assessing, and where necessary seeking public comment (submissions and hearings), on a lease, licence or easement has fallen entirely on GWRC and ratepayers. Given that there are private benefits to securing this type of concession it is considered appropriate that part of the cost of processing an application are apportioned to the applicant, rather than entirely borne by the ratepayer.

To this end, officers have reviewed similar charges by Auckland Council, the Department of Conservation (DOC) and GWRC's own resource management charging policy (administered under the Resource Management Act 1991) to provide a bench mark for setting the charging regime for leases, licences and easements.

DOC uses concessions to look after natural and historic heritage while improving people's ability to visit and enjoy these places. Concessions are approved where they offer benefits to conservation and recreation. The fees charged go towards the management of the natural and historic resources DOC manages. GWRC's resource management charging policy focuses on charges that are fair, lawful, reasonable, easy to understand, transparent, predictable and certain, and uniformly applied.

When setting the Parks and Forests Concession Guideline charges, GWRC must consider the benefits to the community of the concession. This is taken into account when setting the proportion of charges we wish to recover.

It is proposed then, that the processing fee for a lease, licence or easement is to be charged at an hourly rate of \$110 per hour of officer time actually spent. For the purposes of administration, an initial deposit fee will be collected. This has been calculated based on the average time taken to process particular application types. These initial deposit fees are as follows:

- \$1,400.00 plus GST, for a non-notified application
- \$4,400.00 plus GST, for a notified application. An additional \$2,000 plus GST per half day if a hearing is required

The deposit fee shown above represents the estimated cost to GWRC to process an 'average' concession. Where the processing costs of the application exceed this estimate, additional charges are made for actual and reasonable costs. Where the processing costs of the application are less than the initial deposit fee, a refund will be made.

A renewal of a previous lease, licence or an easement is charge at actual time spent by officers to a maximum of \$1,400 plus GST.

In some instances, there is no delegation under the Reserves Act 1977 for GWRC to make a decision and these applications for a lease, licence or easement will be referred to the Minister of Conservation. In these instances, all administration fees associated with a concession are charged by DOC.

## **5. Low impact filming**

GWRC has been working with Film Wellington to provide the best service to local and international film makers. One issue highlighted is that low impact filming could be better provided for in our parks and forests. For example, a shoot that takes less than half a day, with minimal equipment and crew.

In this situation it is proposed that a lower activity application fee of \$50 (equivalent of a non-commercial application fee) would apply. This recognises that although the filming may be commercial in nature, its impact is minimal and that activity will contribute to the expansion of filming in the region. It is also proposed that GWRC will waive the bond requirement where appropriate.

The review also considered the application fees for processing other restricted activities (that do not require a licence, lease or easement). This review showed that the fees remained appropriate and equivalent and no change from the current Concession Guidelines has been proposed.

## **6. Other minor changes to activity fees**

The following list of changes updates the fee schedule that exists in the current (2008) guidelines:

- Update the prices of camping fees. Currently, GWRC charges \$5 per adult/night and \$2 per child/night. It is proposed that both fees are increased by \$1.00. This is the same as DOC charges for a standard campsite.<sup>1</sup>
- Permits for the collection of firewood proposed to be \$50 per weekend (previously \$25). This reflects the administration time for issuing keys, organising deposits and associated paper work. There is no capacity to check that firewood collection is non-commercial. The higher fee may also deter those who appear to be on-selling the wood.

## 7. Communication

The special consultative procedure on this review of the GWRC Parks and Forests Concessions Guidelines will be run in conjunction with consultation on the Proposed Annual Plan 2013/14.

- The Proposed GWRC Parks and Forests Concessions Guidelines (2013) Statement of Proposal, (**Attachment 1**) will be available on our website and included with the Proposed Annual Plan 2013/14 information available at libraries and offices.
- The Summary of Information (**Attachment 2**) will be included in the summary of the Proposed Annual Plan 2013/14.

It is intended that all existing concession holders, concessionaires and interested agencies will be separately advised of the review at the commencement of the submissions period.

## 8. Recommendations

*That the Committee:*

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Approves the Proposed GWRC Parks and Forests Concessions Guidelines (2013) Statement of Proposal and the Summary of Information for public consultation.*
3. *Notes that the consultation will be through the Annual Plan process.*

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<sup>1</sup> A DOC standard campsite has a limited range of facilities and services. Toilets (usually composting or pit variety) water supply (tap, stream, or lake) and vehicle or boat access. Wood barbecues and fireplaces, showers (cold), picnic tables, a cooking shelter and rubbish bins may be provided.

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**Attachment 1:** Statement of Proposal

**Attachment 2:** Summary of Information – GWRC Parks and Forests Concessions Guidelines 2013 (2013)

**Attachment 3:** GWRC Parks and Forests Concessions Guidelines 2013, Proposal for consultation