

**Report 99.562**  
27 September 1999  
File: R/3/1/1

Report to the Landcare Committee  
from John Bissell, Ranger, Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

## **Educational Woodlot Plantings on Battle Hill Farm Forest Park**

### **1. Purpose**

To seek approval to the principle of educational woodlot plantings in partnership with educational institutions on Battle Hill Farm Forest Park.

### **2. Saint Bernard's College Proposal**

I have received a request from Saint Bernard's College, Lower Hutt, to undertake a joint venture with WRC to plant and manage a small exotic woodlot area on Battle Hill for their Sixth Form horticulture curriculum.

As part of the ongoing development of educational programmes on Battle Hill Farm Forest Park, participating school groups have been encouraged to take a more active "hands on" approach and carry out practical work. This results in a greater feeling of ownership by the students and a desire by some to stay in touch and see projects through to completion. To date this has focussed on conservation related work, however, it is apparent that an opportunity exists for student involvement with exotic woodlot plantings. Therefore, we support the intent of this proposal.

### **3. How Would It Work in Principle?**

A small area of land (i.e., 0.5 hectares) on Battle Hill suitable for a woodlot would be identified and a formal agreement drawn up with the school outlining that:

- the Regional Council would provide the land under a licence agreement with the school;
- the school would carry out all maintenance and silvaculture on the trees from planting up until just prior to harvesting;
- all other costs such as plants, fencing, drawing up of the contract and harvesting would be shared 50/50 between the two parties;

- the school would use the woodlot for successive years' classes as part of its curriculum and keep a full record of each year's growth and work for students following on;
- the net profit after harvesting would be shared 50/50 between the two parties.

Indicative costs identified at this stage for the Saint Bernard's College proposal are:

- \$800 – fencing
- \$500 – drawing up agreement
- \$500 – cost of trees
- \$200 – fertiliser & spray

\$2,000 Total

The Regional Council's share of the return could be put into further environmental education and community initiatives on Battle Hill.

Peter O'Brien, the Council's property consultant, has some concerns with the proposal. We consider these can be addressed through the licence agreement and negotiation with the school(s). If satisfactory resolution can be achieved, we will work through the specific details of an agreement and submit it to the Committee for approval.

Officers from Regional Parks and the Council Secretariate have reviewed the relevant provisions of and are confident that there is ample authority under the Local Government Act 1974 for such an initiative.

#### 4. **Why Do This?**

This initiative offers an opportunity to contribute to the Council's objectives of environmental education (*Learnwell* - a classroom in the field) and Community Connection. An additional benefit is that the Council is not required to fund the establishment and maintenance of woodlots for educational purposes on the Park.

This initiative could be extended to other schools. The specific schools taking part would not be the only ones to benefit as interpretation panels next to the woodlots communicate a tangible example to the wider public of how the Regional Council is "getting involved" and could educate other school groups and Park users.

In some ways an initiative such as this is breaking new ground for the Regional Council in the area of education, however, the benefits to all involved make it something well worth taking part in.

We want to emphasise that this is an educational exercise, not a commercial profit-making project. The benefits are broader than just monetary.

**5. Communication**

Opportunities will exist once the agreement is finalised to promote the Council's involvement in partnerships with educational institutions to enhance environmental education.

**6. Recommendations**

- (1) That the Committee approve the principle of entering partnerships with educational institutions for woodlot plantings on Battle Hill Farm Forest Park.*
- (2) That the Committee ask officers to work through details of the Saint Bernard's College proposal to finalise an agreement to be submitted to the Committee for approval.*

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