

Report 00.186

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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Andrew Annakin, Divisional Manager, Landcare

Divisional Manager's Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Landcare Committee about activities and matters of interest within the Landcare Division since the last Landcare Committee meeting, 3 February 2000. Departmental activity reports are also attached.

2. Six Month Review

The Landcare Division Six Month Review with the General Manager and Chief Financial Officer was on 11 February. My full report has been circulated to Councillors and Greg Schollum summarised the position at the 17 February Policy and Finance Committee meeting (report 00.80).

Another Quarter has almost finished and the Division remains significantly in surplus for both operating and capital expenditure. This mainly relates to Flood Protection where completing the 1998 flood damage repairs continues to stretch staff, on top of the normal work programme. While the flood damage was well documented, and robust budgets developed (as reported 00.158), the timeframe for completion was always pressured, especially against other demands. Nevertheless, the achievements to date are substantial and a great credit to the commitment and professionalism of the two teams managed by Geoff Dick and Brendan Paul.

3. Long-term Financial Strategy

The Landcare Business Plans progressed through the committee processes and are part of the draft Long-term Financial Strategy (LTFS). This represents a major watershed for the Landcare Managers.

It seems a long time since we embarked on a series of exploratory workshops, (e.g., for Whitireia Park and East Harbour Regional Park), commenced the Asset Management Plan programme (including the *Signature* tools and various environmental plans and strategies), and committed to accelerating the Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan. The later two form the cornerstones of our Long-term Financial Strategy contribution. Several new projects are aligned with the “thermometer of affordability” model.

As an interesting aside, I recently took a call from a Whitireia Park user complaining about trailbike harassment, as he and his son attempted to enjoy a sunny-day walk. My caller assumed that the Regional Council managed the Park and was less than impressed when I suggested he phone the Waikanae office of the Department of Conservation. While an isolated case, it illustrates the issues and expectations the Regional Council will face in managing this Park.

4. **Marae Visit and Iwi Expectations**

Regional Parks staff and I were invited onto the Whakarongotai marae to introduce the new Queen Elizabeth Park Ranger, Nola Urquhart. Thank you to Tracy Whare for coaching us on the whaikorero and wiata. Tracey is a better singer than any of us, though the three men and three women harmonised rather well, a cappella.

I attended the 15 February Ara Tahī meeting that received the LTFS proposals. Iwi are obviously serious about partnering with the Regional Council, and Council lands are one vehicle to achieve this. We are anticipating such a relationship with the Regional Council’s proposed management of Whitireia Park. Queen Elizabeth Park also has this potential, which we will be addressing through the next management plan review - comments given to the Policy and Finance Committee (Report 00.153). To achieve this, the Council will need a policy position on Treaty partnerships.

5. **Regional Parks/Natural Forestry Integration**

Through the development of the Landcare LTFS proposals, I alluded to the integration of the Regional Parks and Natural Forestry Departments. The financial amalgamation occurred through the business planning process; the new *Parks and Forests* group.

Integration was foreshadowed in the 1997 Divisional Review but not implemented because of uncertainties about the role of Natural Forestry and Rural Fire. Developing a common asset management plan and interwoven policy platforms (evolving from the *Signatures* process), has now created a level of common purpose that simply did not exist before; a credit to all involved.

Alongside the financial and policy elements, the respective managers have reviewed the organisational structure and recommended changes. The core elements from 1997 (Strategy and Marketing and Operations) remain sound. However, demands from additional responsibilities acquired by Operations, the Asset/Hazard Management framework, plus the LTFS expectations, make the current structures unstable. The recommended changes are mostly about creating more effective spans of control and accommodating extra responsibilities from the integration. The proposed new structure anticipates, but is not depending on, the ten year LTFS proposals.

The Natural Forestry Department will cease to exist from 1 July 2000, though residual management issues are likely to continue through to the proposed disestablishment of the WRC Rural Fire District from 1 October 2000. I particularly want to note Geoff Cameron's contribution, both as the Department Manager and for his input to the integration exercise.

I expect to finalise the proposed organisational changes, with the General Manager, shortly. Formal management of change consultation with Landcare staff will commence after that. I will keep Councillors informed through the Bulletin.

6. **Forest Futures**

At the last Landcare Committee meeting, Councillor McQueen presented his paper on issues to do with the future management of the Council's forest lands, particularly following the Pakuratahi Catchment logging experience. The Utility Services Committee then considered this report. Additional supporting recommendations were put forward at the 23 February Special Landcare Committee meeting, ratified by the 9 March Policy and Finance Committee.

Dave Benham and I have met with Howard Stone to map out a way forward whereby the two Divisions can assist Councillors reach a view on the further management of the forests, and forestry, on Council lands. The issues raised are potentially large and far reaching, though containable within various policy models. We will develop these further, with the General Manager, and present ideas for discussion at a Councillors workshop, probably late April/early May.

Councillors may pursue this issue through the remaining LTFS processes. However, at this stage I foresee the workshop leading to a set of principles being considered by committees, which then become the basis for the re-worked Forest Lands Plan. I would also like to attempt to picture Councillor McQueen's challenge to describe what the Council's forests could look like in 2025.

7. **Recommendation**

That the Divisional and Departmental reports be received and the contents noted.

ANDREW ANNAKIN
Divisional Manager, Landcare