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Report to Landcare and Utility Services Committees
from Susan Edwards, Manager Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

Registration Proposal for an Historic Area - Rimutaka Incline Walkway

1. Purpose

To seek endorsement from the Landcare and Utility Services Committees of a submission prepared by officers to the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (HPT) on their proposal to register the Rimutaka Incline Walkway as an Historic Area under the Historic Places Act 1993.

2. Registration Proposal

In late October, the HPT wrote to the Council advising of the registration proposal (**Attachment 1**). The HPT proposal covers a section (from Kaitoke Station, via Summit, to Cross Creek) of the historic railway route from Wellington to the Wairarapa. The railway was constructed during the 1870s. While Kaitoke Station is on private land, the section from State Highway 2 to Summit Tunnel is part of the Regional Council's Pakuratahi Forest. It contains numerous rail heritage features (bridges, culverts, formation, cuttings, embankments and tunnels). The Department of Conservation manages the section from the southern end of Summit Tunnel to Cross Creek where the railway formation re-enters private land.

The proposal notes that the rail route is of regional, national and international significance and is an important part of the history of both Wellington and the Wairarapa.

The route was particularly steep between the Summit and Cross Creek with a gradient of up to 1 in 14. Special "Fell" locomotives were used on this section of the railway. These Fell engines utilised a third rail to aid traction up the Incline and to brake coming down. The Rimutaka Incline was the world's longest running Fell engine railway and the only place where the Fell engine system was used commercially.

Submissions on the proposal closed on 23 November 2001 and the Trust Board is considering the registration proposal on 6 December. In view of this timeframe, we lodged a submission (refer **Attachment 2**) and we now seek endorsement of our comments from the Committees.

3. **Implications of the Registration Proposal**

Staff from both the Parks and Forests Group and the Plantation Forestry Department have considered the proposal. We believe the proposal will have little practical impact on our activities and operations. As the rail formation pre-dates 1900, it is automatically protected as an archaeological site under the Historic Places Act 1993 and we are required to obtain consents from HPT prior to doing any work on the formation other than basic maintenance.

The rail features are also listed in the Upper Hutt District Plan as significant heritage items and require resource consents for work affecting them.

We have prepared a conservation plan for the Regional Council section of the formation and manage the area under the plan. The registration proposal will not unduly impact on our management of the area or further restrict the Council's operations. However, it will have a positive effect as it should enable the public to have better access to information on this heritage asset and afford better protection to the one feature listed constructed post-1900 (the ventilation shaft for the current rail tunnel under the Rimutaka Hill).

4. **Support for the Proposal**

When HPT began investigating the proposal, we provided their researcher with information on the heritage features from the conservation plan and our asset management plan. Dean Hearfield, Ranger Akatarawa/Pakuratahi, took the researcher on a site visit and showed her the various features present along the Walkway.

The proposal appears to be consistent with the provisions in the Council's Regional Policy Statement (refer **Attachment 2** for details). I consider that the proposal is also consistent with the *Signature Values* for the Pakuratahi Forest. As a result, our submission has supported the registration proposal.

5. **Other Areas Suitable for Registration**

The registration proposal does not include the section of the historic rail formation from Kaitoke Station to Maymorn tunnel. Parks and Forests officers would like to see this area registered in the future and Plantation Forestry officers are not opposed to the idea. We have recommended in our submission to HPT that we work with them towards having the registration extended to include this area at some time in the future.

6. **Communications**

There are no communication opportunities arising from this report.

7. Recommendation

*That the Committees recommend that Council **endorse** the officers submission dated 20 November 2001 to the Historic Places Trust on the proposal, to register the Rimutaka Incline Walkway as an historic area under the Historic Places Act 1993.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

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Attachment 1: Letter dated 25 October 2001 from Historic Places Trust to the Council - Registration proposal for an Historic Area, Rimutaka Incline

Attachment 2: Submission letter dated 20 November 2001 to Historic Places Trust from the Council.