



greater WELLINGTON
REGIONAL COUNCIL

7 April 2010
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Minutes of the Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee Meeting held in the Committee Room, Greater Wellington Regional Council, 34 Chapel Street, Masterton, on Tuesday, 6 April 2010, at 3.30pm.

Present:

Peter Gawith (Chairperson), GWRC Cr Ian Buchanan, Jamie Falloon, David Holmes (representing Wairarapa district councils), Emily Crofoot, Michael Blundell.

Apologies:

Resolved

(Cr Ian Buchanan/Jamie Falloon)

That the Committee accepts the apologies from Andy Pottinger, Jenny Boyne, Jim Flack and Ian Gunn.

Officers Present:

David Cameron, Wayne O'Donnell

The Chairman welcomed Alan Innes and Terry Hynes from the Animal Health Board to the meeting.

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved

(Peter Gawith/Michael Blundell)

That the minutes of the Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee meeting held on 1 February 2010 be confirmed.

2. Animal Health Board presentation

Alan Innes and Terry Hynes, Animal Health Board, gave a presentation on AHB's 2009/10 programme with plans for 2010/11, and the National Pest Management Strategy review.

Terry Hynes updated the Committee on the good news for the Wellington region with changes happening from 1 March 2010 to the Vector Control Areas and the Movement Control Areas.

A disease update indicated that one-third of infected cattle herds were in the North Island whilst two-thirds were in the South Island and the seven infected deer herds were in the South Island. On the national front there was Tb clearance from three chronological infected Waikato herds, Tb infected ferrets found in two separate vector risk areas, clusters of infected dairy herds, and two infected herds in Northland which is more likely to be movement related.

Terry reported that a new Bovine Tb Strategy was not likely to be in place before July 2011.

2.1 2009/10 Programme Update

Alan Innes (Programme Manager for the Southern North Island region) updated the Committee on progress with the 2009/10 Vector Control Programme and plans for the 2010/11 programme. Issues for the 2009/10 programme indicated:

- Approximately \$200K is unallocated of the \$4.2M programme
- Contractor capacity (10 control contractors are pre-qualified for the southern North Island with only two contractors based in the GW area)
- Post operation landowner services – Mangaroa/Kaitoke and Akatarawa
- Holdsworth to Woodside Crown aerial – proposed joint project between AHB, GW and DoC (Project Kaka) – setting up a steering group to be headed by Graeme Butcher (GWRC)

Risks and risk mitigation going into the future have been identified. Alan said that illegal pig releases were a real issue and the AHB were continually addressing infected feral pigs.

Peter Gawith raised the issue of monitoring undertaken on properties and stated that farmers would like to receive these monitoring results. He suggested that publication of the monitoring results was worth doing, even to the wider public. Increased awareness of the information the AHB is collecting and making it available to the public was considered to be very worthwhile.

2.2 National Strategy Update

Terry Hynes commented that one of the issues with the strategy is agreement to a funding model for the programme. Regional funding from regional councils is currently under the microscope. There is an issue with a number of regional councils, via their committees, regarding the restriction of funding. Some regional councils are looking at an AHB levy rate. AHB are very mindful of how they are going to be funded for the next strategy. The Crown is not going to fund any more than the \$30m for the vector programme.

Terry indicated that \$82m was being targeted for the new strategy. AHB's budget is \$83-\$87m and no allowance had been made for inflation, extra costs,

etc. Significant money was still being directed into the West Coast's programme.

Cr Buchanan reported that discussions have yet to be held with the AHB about the insurance component in recently declared Tb Free areas where regional councils were stepping in to maintain low possum numbers. The Council's work was effectively reducing the risk of Tb re-infection following illegal release of infected wildlife (e.g. feral pigs). Terry said that an important issue for the AHB to address was working closer with regional councils on the new strategy and programme. Closer working relationships needed to be re-established.

Committee members asked for an electronic copy of the Powerpoint presentation to be forwarded.

3. Poplar and Willow Breeding Programme

Dave Cameron introduced his report outlining the funding and governance of the poplar and willow breeding programme. The report had previously been considered by the Catchment Management Committee at its meeting on 11 March. The poplar and willow breeding programme had received a significant boost in funding following a joint regional council application to the MAF Hill Country Erosion Fund. The increased funding contributions from regional councils for the programme had increased from \$60K per annum in 2008 to a total of \$170K in 2009/10.

Dave said that it was important for the region to be involved and fully committed to the new poplar and willow breeding programme.

Jamie Falloon indicated that the benefits of the research towards rust infected leaves was visibly clear this year with the leaves on young poplars remaining green while the older species of poplars lost their leaves.

Emily Crofoot spoke highly of the poplar and willow breeding programme and said it was exciting to see the opportunity to develop robust willow and poplar genetic material suitable for protecting erosion prone soils. The personal sacrifice and commitment by Alan Wilkinson into the research had made a significant difference.

4. Homebush Nursery update

Dave Cameron updated the Committee on an email received from David Hopman (Manager, Assets and Operations, Masterton District Council) concerning progress with the Homebush Nursery. He indicated that the MDC will be meeting on 14 April to discuss the review of the treated wastewater at Homebush. The outcome of the discussion has a range of possible implications to GW's nursery. If the current border strip scheme is preferred, the land adjacent to the new ponds will be available for planting as early as July 2010. If a centre pivot irrigation option is preferred the land on the northern boundary adjacent to the Ruamahanga River will be available for planting in May 2010.

Should an alternative option be preferred the locations and timings would be affected.

5. WRECI presentation

Members were updated on the WRECI presentation at Tinui on 4 March.

Jamie Falloon had attended the meeting and indicated that there had been good positive discussion on WRECI issues.

6. Communications

There were no communication issues.

7. General business

(1) Riddells – Hinakura - stock in waterways

The Chairman updated the Committee on the situation with the Riddells where there is dissatisfaction with the policy decision regarding the incident of stock in the river.

One of the concerns of the community group which has now been set up was the approach taken by Environment staff which had not traditionally been the stance taken by GW in the past.

A final version of best practice and guidelines to manage stock in waterways has not yet been presented to the Committee.

The Chairman indicated he was prepared to take the unbound document back to the community group to give them the opportunity to view it prior to its final completion.

Cr Buchanan explained the process and said in the interim they were best practice guidelines at this stage and GW were not going to enforce management of stock in waterways under the current regulations. This did not make sense in the hill country environment. The possible inclusion of best practice rules will be part of the process for the development of the new Natural Resource Plan and will be put in place should it be accepted by the farming community.

Emily Crofoot said it was very hard to interpret what was required. Fencing off of waterways was not practical in many situations and queried where that left the landowner. There were a number of options rather than fencing off of waterways.

(2) Land Management / Environment Policy

Dave Cameron advised the Committee that a group of 15-20 staff from the Environment Policy, Environment Regulation and Land Management teams will be holding a field day on Friday, 9 April, to look at ways of better engaging and building working relationships with landowners. A visit to a dairy farm in Dalefield and Peter Gawith's Longbush property was proposed. It was

considered an appropriate approach for the policy writers when developing plans to assist them in understanding the motives and actions of landowners, and also to recognise the need for the transferring of knowledge and sharing of information amongst staff.

(3) Landscape Evaluation Process

Emily Crofoot asked for an update on the landscape evaluation process. Emily indicated that Federated Farmers were unhappy with the 70 page document and considered it needed to be readable, concise, with landscape and amenity values adhered to. There was considerable emphasis on cultural issues that did not belong as part of a landscape document.

Dave Cameron commented on the draft landscape document and said that once it was discussed further and checked for accuracy it would be brought back to the Committee at either the May or June meeting.

(4) 2010/11 Annual Plan

Emily Crofoot referred to the Land Management section in the 2010/11 Annual Plan and enquired as to any changes on what was in and what was out.

Dave Cameron updated the Committee on what was contained in the 2010/11 Annual Plan and how this differed from the 2009/10 Plan. Dave advised that the relevant WRECI figures and the relevant figures around the Regional Possum Control Programme were in the 2010/11 Annual Plan. Increased funding for the poplar and willow research is in the current budget.

(5) End of Triennium

Members were given an update on the approaching end of the current triennium and going forward into the new Council following the October local body elections. It is proposed to have an indication of the current WHCAC Committee members availability and to then agree on a process should there be a vacancy.

Emily and Peter both felt that the appointment of members on the Committee should be determined by others and if necessary other names put forward rather than a rollover of the current membership. This would then be seen to be a fair process.

Cr Buchanan explained that the WHCAC Committee is a non-statutory committee of the Council and differed from other appointments to Council's standing committees.

The Chairman said that the matter would be discussed at a future meeting when all Committee members were present to gauge their thoughts on the issue.

(6) Next meeting

The Chairman advised that Helen Marr, Senior Policy Analyst for Horizons Regional Council, will be attending the next meeting on 3 May to talk about their One Plan. Noted that this meeting will commence at 3.00p.m.

(7) Poles

Jamie Falloon asked for an update on the demand for poles for this winter.

Dave Cameron responded by saying that the demand looks to be similar to last year. WRECI was not showing the 50% increased GW had modelled, but otherwise the demand was good.

Emily considered that expectations were built on higher grant rates. Farmers were expected to spend the same amount of money but the higher grant rates would result in higher demand for poles.

The AGS has taken a hit as well in terms of available money. MAF have been asked to make cuts and have reduced expenditure in 2011/12, 2012/13 with 2013/14 having been cut completely. In total a further \$8m has been cut from the programme. Water use, water availability, and irrigation is being targeted. What was originally a \$50m project is now a \$30m project.

The meeting closed at 5.35pm.