

**Report 99.572**  
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Report to the Policy and Finance Committee  
from David Benham, Divisional Manager, Utility Services and  
Murray Kennedy, Strategy and Asset Manager

## **Temporary Use of the Gear Island Water Treatment Plant for Petone Water Supply**

### **1. Purpose**

To obtain approval to commission the Gear Island Water Treatment Plant (WTP) on a temporary basis to supply unfluoridated water to Petone (if required).

### **2. Background**

The Policy and Finance Committee approved the closure of Buick Street Pumping Station by 8 October (Report No 99.528 considered at the meeting on 21 September 1999). Since this meeting, discussions have continued with Hutt City Council (HCC) about the source of Petone water from early October.

With the closure of Buick Street Pumping Station, HCC's preferred source of water is from the aquifer. This requires the commissioning of the Rahui Reservoir in order to provide water from the Waterloo Water Treatment Plant. This source of water is fluoridated. The only other source of aquifer water is from Gear Island. This is available only in an emergency because of the resource consent.

At present HCC is surveying Petone households and has invited submissions from other interested parties as to whether Petone water should be fluoridated or unfluoridated in the longer term.

Initial survey results are expected to be available by about 20 October. HCC has indicated it expects to make its position known on 7 December at a full council meeting.

Notwithstanding the consultation process, HCC has requested contingency planning takes place to reduce the amount of time Petone is supplied with fluoridated water. This is in the event HCC indicates to the Wellington Regional Council (WRC) that it prefers unfluoridated water for Petone.

### 3. **Proposal**

It is possible to provide Petone, through the new Rahui Reservoir, with unfluoridated water sourced from the Gear Island WTP. However, there are some costs involved and a variation is required to the Gear Island resource consent. At present Gear Island is restricted to emergency use. This was one of the conditions sought and granted when the various aquifer resource consents were renewed over a year ago. Possible draw-off from the aquifer is maximised by concentrating abstraction at the Knights Road wellfield. In order to achieve resource consents for this, restraints were placed on the use of Gear Island. Effectively for each litre taken at Gear Island two litres less can be taken at Waterloo.

Wellington Regional Council's Environment Division has advised that providing an unfluoridated supply of water to Petone does not constitute an emergency. External legal advice supports this view.

A non-notified variation to the resource consent for a defined period is possible, provided the parties involved in the earlier consent hearing all agree. The expected timeframe to achieve a variation is a minimum of eight weeks from the time work starts on the consent application. Estimated costs for the consent process are \$10,000-\$20,000. A resource consent would be sought for a maximum of 12 months or until unfluoridated water can be sourced from the Waterloo WTP, whichever is the earlier.

Alterations to pipework at Gear Island will cost about \$5000. Operating costs, above those which would apply if the water was sourced from the Waterloo WTP, are estimated at \$3,500 a month.

If the temporary process ran for a full 12 months, the estimated cost is \$50,000-\$60,000. Regardless of who pays, HCC was asked if they support this level of public expenditure. They indicated they are supportive.

### 4. **Permanent Source of Supply to Rahui Reservoir**

HCC has previously been advised that it will take 12 months and cost \$550,000. to undertake changes to the wholesale water supply system so that Petone can be supplied with unfluoridated water from the Waterloo WTP. These figures were based on very preliminary information and probably can be considered as upper bound figures.

Further work has been undertaken within the WRC Water Group and it is expected that the timeframe can be reduced considerably below 12 months. A more definitive timeframe and costs should be available by early December when HCC is expected to make a decision on the Petone fluoridation issue. If the difference in time between applying for a resource consent variation and completing the permanent changes to the system is relatively small, then there is a preference for the latter option.

WRC's position is that it will not pay for the permanent changes to the wholesale water system that would enable an unfluoridated supply of water to Petone as this would be inequitable to the three other customer cities.

Likewise, HCC has indicated that it is not prepared to pay for the changes.

In the event HCC requests Petone is provided with unfluoridated water then a decision is required as to how the work is to be funded. We would anticipate that the resolution process will initially involve HCC outlining its position. The WRC would be obliged to discuss the HCC's position with its other customers before responding to the HCC. This process will need to be resolved before the implementation of both the temporary and permanent solutions for unfluoridated water otherwise there is a risk the process may not be resolved before the temporary resource consent to use Gear Island expired.

## 5. **Memorandum of Understanding**

The conditions under which a temporary supply from the Gear Island WTP would be arranged have been covered in a Memorandum of Understanding with HCC. An initial draft is attached as Attachment 1.

## 6. **Costs**

The Memorandum of Understanding provides for HCC to pay for half the costs of the resource consent and pipework changes at Gear Island. Also HCC and the WRC will share the estimated monthly ongoing costs while the temporary solution is operational. Although there is no WRC budget provision for these costs, they can be contained within existing budgets.

## 7. **Conclusions**

Although the Petone consultation process is not yet completed, HCC is keen to be able to offer the Petone residents an unfluoridated supply as quickly as possible if this is the final outcome. Fluoridated water will be supplied from 8 October, therefore no changes are necessary if the final outcome is for fluoridated water.

It is therefore proposed that the WRC supports HCC to enable an unfluoridated supply to be made available within a reasonable timeframe if HCC requests this. Ideally it would be a permanent solution rather than the temporary Gear Island WTP supply.

## 8. **Recommendations**

*That the Policy and Finance Committee recommend to Council that it;*

- (1) *Approves providing Petone with unfluoridated water from the Gear Island Water Treatment Plant as soon as practical if Hutt City Council requests unfluoridated water on a permanent basis, subject to:*

- (a) *Hutt City Council signing the Memorandum of Understanding.*
  - (b) *Resolving the funding issues for permanent changes to the wholesale water supply system.*
  - (c) *A funded permanent solution for unfluoridated water not being available within a similar timeframe as the temporary solution.*
- (2) *Notes that one of the conditions of the Memorandum of Understanding is that the Hutt City Council and Wellington Regional Council will share the additional costs of temporarily commissioning and operating Gear Island Pumping Station to enable Petone to receive unfluoridated water.*
- (3) *Notes that Wellington Regional Council's share of the unbudgeted commissioning and operational expenditure for the Gear Island work and ongoing operational costs can be contained within the overall budget allocation.*
- (4) *Notes the temporary use of the Gear Island Water Treatment Plant will cease no later than 31 December 2000.*

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