



Report 00.676

29 August 2000

File: E/7/10/7

Report to the Wellington Regional Council
From Councillor Chris Laidlaw

Wellington Conservation Board Meeting – 11 August 2000

I attended the Wellington Conservation Board meeting on 11 August. Points of interest to WRC are as follows:

1. At its last meeting the Board asked DOC to prepare a report on its statutory advocacy functions under the Resource Management Act. The report was circulated and a copy is attached (for Landcare staff). It was explained that the department's national strategy for RMA advocacy had been broadened to become a national heritage strategy within which conservancy heritage strategies would be included.

It was noted that the new Minister had expressed the wish that DOC become much more active as an advocate in the context of regional and district plans, and to more actively defend the National Coastal Policy Statement. The new approach was reflective of this wish.

2. The DOC representatives expressed satisfaction with the way that WRC had developed its Regional Policy Statement and they were very pleased with its contents and the open and inclusive approach taken to developing it. Not all local government institutions had been so thorough and the WRC process was considered by DOC to be something of a model. DOC noted that it was having difficulty dealing with one or two other local authorities, notably KCDC in the context of non-notifiable consents.

3. DOC expressed disappointment that WRC had decided to abandon its efforts to develop a Landscape plan for the region and to subsequently drop the guidelines approach. I explained the difficulties that had been encountered in this process and emphasised that it was not for want of commitment on the part of WRC. DOC is particularly anxious to keep the process alive, however, having invested a lot of time and effort in the earlier stages. It is determined to have a more workable mechanism for the protection of landscape values in district and regional planning processes to ensure that Council decisions on individual consents have adequate guidance.

It was resolved that the Board would write to WRC, in suitably flexible language, to encourage a resumption of this work. It would invite the WRC to “establish a process for policy guidance on the preservation of landscape values”. There is a reasonable, if not complete, understanding among the Board members of the difficulties that this presents and it might be useful to consider a workshop between DOC and WRC to design a strategy for the future that both can live with.

4. Several user groups had recently noted that WRC and DOC have slightly different approaches to concession policy and it was suggested that an effort might be made to harmonise the two approaches. This is largely due to the fact that DOC provides little or no back-up services and its charges are less as a result.

I pointed out the fact that WRC provides a variety of services and charges on the basis of cost recovery. It was concluded that the differences of approach were not really a problem if the circumstances were clearly explained to those seeking concessions.

5. A spate of recent incidents arising from film concessions prompted a discussion of this issue. DOC staff said that they had not encountered any problems but had heard of complaints from the public about restricted access to walkways or park areas and reports of some fairly heavy handed security by film company employees. I noted that WRC was aware of the controversy and would be careful to ensure that, in respect of concessions on regional park land, it did not escalate. It was agreed that concessionaires should be encouraged to stick to the principle that restrictions should be limited to the time of actual filming rather than closing down whole areas to the public on a blanket basis. Given the potential importance of filming rights to the future of the region it was agreed that a reasonable balance should be struck and if the situation worsened (which was considered unlikely) then it should be looked at again by the Board.

CHRIS LAIDLAW
Councillor