

File R/5/1/3

Report: 96.211

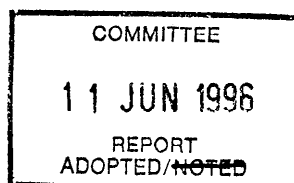
Landcare Committee

Minute extract from meetings held on 11 June 1996

Securing the Recreation and Landscape Values on the Takapu Road Block, Belmont Regional Park

Recommendations

- (1) *That the Committee agree with the assessment of the Takapu Road Block, and support Officers' initiatives to secure the block within the Belmont Regional Park.*
- (2) *That the Committee authorise Officers to request the Department of Conservation to seek the transfer of the land as a recreation reserve from Treasury, at nil consideration, as part of the land allocation process.*
- (3) *That the Committee note that if the Department of Conservation is successful in securing the land as a recreation reserve, DOC will gazette control and management of the block to the Regional Council to be administered as part of Belmont Regional Park.*
- (4) *That Officers of the Regional Council report back to the Landcare Committee on the progress of transfer.*



Darroch
D.J. DARROCH
COMMITTEE SERVICES

12/6/96



caring about you & your environment

Report 96.211

24 May 1996

File: R/5/1/3

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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Wendy Basire, Parks Planner, Recreation

Securing the Recreation and Landscape Values on the Takapu Road Block, Belmont Regional Park

1. Purpose

To confirm the park values of the Takapu Road Block, and to seek its protection as a recreation reserve within the Belmont Regional Park.

No recreational expenditure on the Takapu Road Block is envisaged in the short-term..

2. Introduction

In November 1995 the Landcare Committee received a progress report on securing the landscape and recreation values on the Takapu Road Block of Belmont Regional Park (refer Report 95.490 and its attached Report 95.160 discussing the pending disposal of the Takapu Road Block). Report 95.490 advised Landcare Committee members that Council officers needed to consider in detail the specific nature of the landscape and recreation values of the block within the context of the Belmont Regional Park Management Plan. The degree to which protection should be sought and the most suitable mechanism for achieving protection was also to be considered.

3. History of the Takapu Block's Tenure

The Takapu Road Block was acquired by the then New Zealand Electricity Department (NZED) in 1979/80. A small part of the block contains a substation to service the Porirua Basin. Since acquisition, the land has been farmed by the Department of Lands and Survey, and subsequently Landcorp and Landcorp Farming Limited as part of the Waitangirua Farm Settlement. As a Crown owned block, the Takapu Block has always been considered part of Belmont Regional Park.

On the corporatisation of NZED in 1988, the lands surplus to the substation requirement were not identified as core assets for purchase by Electricorp and consequently became surplus to government electricity requirements. At this stage, there was an obligation on the Crown to consider the Takapu Block as a recreation reserve, as per the land allocation process. This was overlooked. Treasury put the sale of the surplus lands into the hands of the Department of Survey and Land Information (DOSLI), who proceeded in 1995 to the first step of marketing the sale.

At that time both the Regional Council and Department of Conservation (DOC) brought to the attention of Treasury and DOSLI the importance of the block to Belmont Regional Park and the commitment by the Government towards fostering this concept. The Treasury and DOSLI agreed to withdraw the property from sale until the park values could be properly investigated and a case submitted by the Regional Council and DOC.

4. Assessment of the Recreation and Landscape Values of the Takapu Block

A report *Takapu Road Block, Belmont Regional Park : An Assessment of the Recreation and Landscape Values* was prepared for Council officers in May 1996 by Pharazyn Landscape Design (Attachment 1). The findings of this report state that in relation to the aims of the Belmont Regional Park Management Plan, the Takapu Road Block is valuable for the following reasons.

- It is an important link in the north-south park track system which provides a ridgetop walk from Belmont to Round Knob and on to Boulder Hill.
- It connects the park to Porirua and Takapu Road and provides potential for further links to Tawa and Linden. One of the two tracks into the park from the Porirua Valley at present lies across the Takapu Road Block.
- The open rolling hilltops and geological features of the main ridge are integral to the landscape experience provided by the park.
- It is a component of the park's main landscape feature - the high ridge that forms the skyline between Porirua and the Hutt Valley. This ridgeline is also part of the landscape of Wellington Harbour, listed as a regionally significant landscape in the Regional Council's draft Regional Landscape Plan.
- It is a component of the immediate setting of the central core of the park. The eastern slopes of the block drain into the upper Korokoro Valley and are part of the valley's setting.

- The management plan seeks to preserve the open character of the hills above the 250 metre contour. Three quarters of the land within the Takapu Road block lies above this contour.

5. **Options for Protecting the Values of the Takapu Road Block within the Park**

The recommendation of the report, *An Assessment of the Recreation and Landscape Values*, is:

In order to protect the recreation and landscape values of the Takapu Road Hock it is recommended that the whole block be kept in the park

Alternative approaches to this action, identified in the report, are:

- Allow the block to be sold on the open market after creating walkway easements over the existing park tracks and placing a landscape protection covenant over all the land above the 250 m contour.
- Subdivide the block to create a small rural property on the lower-lying land for the southern end of the block, whilst securing the northern portion and land above 250 m in the park as recreation reserve.

6. **Financial Implications**

An assessment of the property has been carried out by Mr Gerald Smith, Farm Valuer, who advises that the current state of the property is good for the purpose of sheep grazing and that there is no outstanding maintenance.

He advises that the market value of the block is approximately \$360 - \$370,000 but is likely to go for less given its limited uses and consequential reduced demand. It is likely to receive \$15,000 per annum for grazing fees.

The block is not really suitable for forestry given its elevation, steepness and accessibility while its grazing is only really viable as part of a larger unit. Contrary to this view however, DOC says the block may be suitable for forestry, but if the land was afforested it could pose a threat to the recreational and landscape values of the block.

It is envisaged that grazing of the Takapu Road Block by Landcorp Farming Limited will continue once the ownership of the block has been transferred to the Department of Conservation, and its management and control transferred to the Regional Council. A grazing licence could then be set up between the Regional Council and Landcorp Farming Limited under the Reserves Act 1977. Revenue gained from the licence would be reinvested into the development and management of Belmont Regional Park. A similar arrangement already exists on Queen Elizabeth Park.

No recreational expenditure on the Takapu Road Block is envisaged in the short-term. The block is already part of the Belmont Regional Park, and has an established, marked track network, good fencing and a park mapboard at the Takapu Road park entry area.

7. Preferred Option : Securing the Takapu Block as a Recreation Reserve within Belmont Regional Park

Council officers support retaining the whole of the Takapu Road Block in Belmont Regional Park.

The Draft Belmont Regional Park Management Plan sets the elevation above which the park's landscape should be managed to protect its open character at 250 metres. Seventy-five percent of the Takapu Road Block lies above this height. Keeping the whole block in the park would be the most reliable way of meeting the terms of the Management Plan.

The block could be kept in the park by transferring it to DOC as a recreation reserve, and incorporated this land into Belmont Regional Park for control and management by the Regional Council. A precedent for this already exists in the Dry Creek Recreation Reserve within the park.

Retaining the whole block in the park would be advantageous in terms of its use for pastoral farming, preserving existing stock movement patterns and the present extent of available grazing. It would enable the management of the block's recreational and landscape values to be integrated with land use management without limiting the productive capacity of the block.

Sharing a common boundary with the Regional Council's Stratton Street block, the Takapu Road block would also consolidate the public land in the middle of the park.

One of the two park tracks to Porirua crosses the block. Retaining the block in the park would preserve this access. It would also preserve the potential for the development of additional park access opportunities in the future (e.g., direct route to Belmont Trig up the strong south ridge to the south of Trans Power's Takapu Substation).

8. Process for Securing Takapu Road Block as a Recreation Reserve within Belmont Regional Park

The Takapu Road Block is currently held for a public work (electricity purposes) under the Public Works Act 1981. Section 40 of this Act provides that surplus public work land may be appropriated for another public work ahead of the rights of former owners, iwi waitangi claim interests, or for sale on the open market. In this case, DOC has identified a public work (recreation reserve) interest. (Note: A direct sale to the Regional Council could not be negotiated without the Crown first considering the rights of the former owners or iwi.)

If Treasury/DOSLI agrees with DOC's submission then it will issue a Gazette Notice under the Public Works Act declaring the land to be held for a public work (reserve) subject to the Reserves Act 1977. DOC would then take action to classify it as a recreation reserve and to appoint the Regional Council to administer the reserve on the Crown's behalf (e.g., similar to action taken for the Baring Head Lighthouse land in East Harbour Regional Park).

DOC requires an agreement from the Regional Council that it is prepared to accept the financial responsibility for managing the land before a final submission is made to Treasury/DOSLI. DOC is not in a position to manage the property itself. Normal transactions of this type between Government agencies are at current market value. However, it is DOC's submission to seek transfer of the land from DOSLI at nil consideration as a surplus land allocation issue within Government and in recognition of the Government's previous commitment to promoting and encouraging the establishment of the Belmont Regional Park. A letter of endorsement from DOC, indicating its support for the suggested approach towards securing Takapu Road Block in the park, is attached. (Attachment 2.)

This may have to be revisited if Treasury/DOSLI will not agree to the above request and insist on some monetary compensation. DOC would need the financial support of the Regional Council to proceed with acquisition under this scenario. Officers will review the situation and report to Council if the transfer of land is not accepted at nil consideration.

9. Recommendations

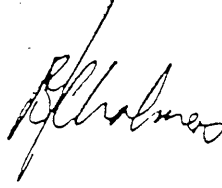
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Report prepared by:



WENDY BASIRE
Parks Planner, Recreation

Approved for Submission:



BARRY CHALMERS
Manager, Recreation



ANDREW ANNAKIN
Divisional Manager, Landcare

Attachment : 2





Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

30 May, 1996

Manager
Landcare Division
Wellington Regional Council
Box 11636
WELLINGTON

Dear Andrew

TAKAPU ROAD BLOCK

The Department has been consulted in the preparation of the paper before Landcare Committee. I can confirm the Department has registered an interest in the Takapu Road Block through the previous allocation process. The Department will pursue formalising this interest and if successful would gazette control and administration of the land in Council as a Recreation Reserve if the WRC agrees to administer the land as part of the Belmont Regional Park. Acknowledging Council is averse to capital risk, the Department will use its best endeavours to obtain the land without cost but note that it is not the decision maker. If the land is not available at nil consideration Council will be approached again to consider whether it supports a purchase at a cost.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Allan Ross'.

Allan Ross
Regional Conservator

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