



Report 05.555
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Committee Parks and Forests Hearing Committee
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Queen Elizabeth Park draft Management Plan - Hearing

1. Purpose

To provide an overview of the submissions Greater Wellington has received from the public on Queen Elizabeth Park Management Plan.

2. Significance

The matters in this report do not trigger the Council's significance policy or section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

The draft Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP) management plan was released for public consultation earlier this year (Report 05.176) and submissions were received on the draft until July 31 2005.

The draft management plan for QEP updates the existing management plan to align it with the management concepts in the Regional Parks network management plan, as well as reflecting the vision the community has for this park.

4. Summary of Submissions

A copy of all the submissions on the draft management plan were made available to Councillors through the Councillors Bulletin and were distributed in the Councillors pigeon holes in September. A summary of each submission is available in **attachment one** of this report.

401 submissions were received in total.

- 164 (41%) of those submissions were part of a signed petition reading:
“... we the undersigned support the following proposal “ a multi-use Motor sport complex, including area for motorcross, autocross, racing circuit and a driver training facility be constructed in Queen Elizabeth Park”
- a further 116 (28%) pro forma submissions supported motorised recreation at QEP

- another 9 (2%) individual submissions supported motorised recreation in QEP.
- 88 (21%) submissions supported the draft plan or opposed motorised recreation
- 24 (5%) submissions related to other issues to do with the Park.

5. Iwi

Contact with the Ngati Toa Rangatira, Te Atiawa ki Whakarongotai and Ngati Haumia was maintained throughout the plan process. No submissions were received from these Iwi, who verbally indicated that they had no concerns with the draft plan, except for minor editorial changes.

6. Key issues

Motorised recreation in QEP continues to dominate the debate about the future use of the Park, with this issue being the largest motivation for the extensive number of submissions received.

Whareroa Farm generated debate during this consultation period. Discussion centred around the purchase and future management of Whareroa Farm.

A brief outline of issues raised by submitters are summarised in Table 1 included in this report and a complete summary of submissions is attached.

6.1 Motorised Recreation

Motorised recreation was the most discussed recreational activity in the submissions received in this round. This topic has dominated the consultation process in the initial phase of QEP management plan review, this second phase and was also debated during the planning process for the Regional Parks Network Management Plan.

Greater Wellington's current policy position on motorised recreation is to allow motorised recreation in some parks and forest lands where the impact of the activity can be minimised. A range of motorised recreation currently takes place on Greater Wellington land in the Akatrawa Forest. 4WD access has been made available through a track network in the 15,000ha block and GW has leased land at Bull's Run Rd to Kapi Mana Motorcycle club. Trail bikes and quads also have access to tracks within the Akatatarawa Forest. Motorised go-kart racing occurs on leased land in Pakuratahi Forest. 4WD trips are also allowed in some of the parks.

The Regional Parks Network Management Plan has determined that across the Network motorised recreation is a "restricted activity"¹ but this will be assessed on a case by case basis taking into account the effects of the activity and values of the area for which it is proposed. The network plan sets a base standard for the management of this activity.

¹ Defined as "any activity that is not "allowed", "managed", or "prohibited" is a restricted activity and a consent or concession is required to undertake the activity. Restricted activities are assessed on a case by case basis.

For the purposes of the draft management plan, motorised recreation was deemed a “prohibited activity” in QEP.

“Pro motorised” comprised the largest submitter group with a total of 289 submissions, representing 72% of the submissions received. Both the petition and the pro forma submissions, 69% of the submissions received, asserted that “Prohibiting motorised recreation is contrary to the Network Plan which states it is a restricted activity” and the relief sought was that motorised recreation “should remain a restricted activity”, and that areas of the park should be set aside “for heavy (noisy) recreational activities as per the existing management plan.”

The remaining 9 submissions, 3%, from individual submitters discussed aspects of motorised recreation including the need for alternative areas for “boy racers”, the economic boost that ancillary services to a motor sport facility would offer, the large demographic group that motor sport enthusiasts represents and that QEP is set aside for “recreation” and isn’t currently being used for that purpose.

“Anti motorised”, or those people that support the current provisions of the draft management plan comprised the remaining submissions. 88 submissions, (28% of submitters), directly opposed motorised recreation in the park, detailing reasons such as the loss of important green space on the Kapiti Coast, the environmental damage, loss of current park values, the noise pollution, the safety aspect of more cars on SH 1 travelling to QEP, and the conflict between current user groups and GW interests in the Park and motorised recreation.

6.2 Whareroa Farm

The second significant issue to emerge from the submissions was the inclusion of Whareroa Farm in the draft QEP management plan, with requests for references to be given to the historical relationship between the two blocks of land. 80 of the 88 submitters that opposed motorised recreation made reference to Whareroa Farm.

At the time of writing the draft QEP management plan, the future of Whareroa Farm was uncertain. The potential acquisition of the Farm was being dealt with in processes outside the management plan context and was therefore not addressed directly within the draft. Since this time, the future management arrangements of Whareroa Farm, although secured in public ownership, have not been determined.

For your information at present the resource statement for QEP, which gives the physical context of the park, is being prepared. The relationship between Whareroa Farm and QEP (as per report PE 05.05) is being encapsulated in this document.

The draft QEP management plan has provisions to manage “any land which has been acquired for the inclusion in QEP will be managed in accordance with this plans objectives and policies” (pg 7, QEP draft management plan”). This position is also supported with Policy 1.13, pg 13 of the draft.

As such, when the future management arrangements for Whareroa Farm have been finalised, the aims, objectives and policies of the draft plan will extend to cover the management of Whareroa Farm for the life of the management plan or until such time as a separate management plan for Whareroa Farm is developed.

6.3 Heritage Management

Heritage Management is an important part of the draft management plan's objectives as those features are an integral part of the park's values. Two submitters made reference to the future management of the heritage aspects of the park.

There was general support for the management objectives for Heritage Management. Submitters suggested that the policies should be strengthened so that the context for heritage management was broadened to a landscape setting rather than site specific management. Specific changes have been listed in Table 1 overleaf.

6.4 Recreation and Environmental

There was general support for the environmental and recreational uses of the park, excluding the motorised recreation issue, for the park. Recreational orientated comments were targeted at the multiple use of tracks, maintenance, and the future development of tracks and signs.

Issues surrounding environmental management included weed eradication and control as well as enhancing existing environmental practices and future programmes.

6.5 Other

The issue of spreading burial ashes in QEP was raised.

The Network Management Plan has prohibited the spreading of ashes across the entire Park Network and the draft management plan for QEP is consistent with this. Any change to this stance would require change to the Network Management Plan. There is opportunity to review this issue during that plan's review in three years time.

(It should be noted that the Urupa at QEP is privately managed and is therefore excluded from the parks management and the above policies have no bearing.)

Finally there were several editorial changes or style improvements identified. These could be made with little or no substantive changes to the plans intent. Tables could be revised accordingly and maps labelled to provide greater clarity. Text boxes could be used to illustrate the plan and inform readers about the lands values and/or particular management issues.\

Table 1: Brief Outline of Issues Raised

Motorsport

- To reduce current motorsport categorisation from a “prohibited” activity to “restricted” supported by 71% of submitters
- Prohibition of motorsport supported by 21% of submitters

Land acquisition and management

- Expand management plan functions to include Whareroa Farm, giving reference to historical links.

Heritage Management

- Change policy 2.28 to “manage and protect all archaeological and other heritage features”
- Policy 2.30 is not comprehensive enough, omitting some sites
- Conservation plans should be mandatory for heritage in an area of high recreational values. (refers to policy 2.31)
- There should be monitoring of the retreat of the shoreline and recording of information from archaeological sites

Environment

- General support for the environmental works undertaken or proposed
- Support for the “Sustaining our Environment” section of the plan (DoC)
- Weed eradication, particularly blackberry,
- Mention of concern over Karo removal and introduction of exotic vegetation
- Protocols should be developed for works around waterways to avoid adverse impacts. (DoC)

Recreation

- Proposed and existing cycle tracks generally supported.
- Better use of signs to clarify cycle ways and widening of tracks for multiple uses.
- Support for development of wetland area in North Eastern part of the park.

Other

- Request for designated areas for the spreading of ashes
- Editorial changes

7. Next steps

After the committee has heard and considered all the submissions, officers will begin drafting the final plan in line with the direction given by the Committee after the day of deliberations. Officers recommendations along with the final plan will then be considered by Council later this year.

A letter will be sent to all submitters who were heard, outlining the results of the Committee's deliberations.

Once the Council is satisfied with the final plan, copies will be made available to stakeholders, submitters, Council offices and libraries. The management plan's adoption will be announced with a media release and will be included in the next Green Shoots community newsletter.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *receive the report and*
2. *note the contents of the report.*
3. *consider the written and oral submissions on the draft Queen Elizabeth Park Management Plan*
4. *instruct Officers to proceed with finalising the Queen Elizabeth Park Management Plan after the submissions have been heard and deliberations made.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachment one: Draft Queen Elizabeth Park Summary of Submissions – Phase 2