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Committee **Rural Services and Wairarapa**
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Scheme Rate Reviews

1. Purpose

To update the Committee on the status of rating classification reviews for five river and catchment schemes.

2. Significance of the decision

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

3. Background

Staff are currently working through the following scheme reviews –

- (1) Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme (LWVDS)
- (2) Awhea – Opouawe Catchment Scheme
- (3) Mataikona – Whakataki Catchment Scheme
- (4) Kaiwhata Catchment Scheme – no change required
- (5) Kopuaranga River Enhancement Project – a new rating classification is being developed.

3.1 Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme

A proposed rating classification was prepared late in 2005. The proposal was considered by the Advisory Committee in January and was amended.

The amended rating classification was presented to four area meetings in late January. These meetings were well attended.

At these meetings the following matters were considered:

- The flaws in the current rating classification, primarily because it was developed prior to the construction of the Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme in the 1960's. Parts of what was originally proposed had not been constructed, there had been a change from capital value to area rating in the 1980's, and anomalies in the classification where government land was rated Class A rather than on benefit.
- The expenditure history.
- The way the river looked in 1943 compared to 2005.
- The logic of the proposed changes.
- The likely rates per property.

The effect of the proposed changes is that there are significant increases and decreases. The largest decrease was \$12,000 and the largest increase was \$6,500. There was robust debate at the meetings, which included:

- A desire to see the rating base broadened, especially in the vicinity of the Tauherenikau River, e.g. to include hill country and those communities who gain an access benefit such as Ngawi.
- Questions on reduced charges for private stopbanks.
- A belief that the duration of a flood event could be included in the logic.
- The need to take into account the impact of flood waters on the (privately owned) floodways.
- Those areas which are totally protected (flood free) need to contribute their fair share of rates to the scheme.
- Increased river levels resulting from the scheme had increased erosion rates.
- That the current rating classification was a contract and could not be altered.

Following the January meetings the LWVDS Review Committee considered the points raised. The classification has been further refined. A further amendment to the proposed rating will be prepared shortly.

David Bulman, the Scheme's Classifier, has reviewed the various weightings he has used. Concerned ratepayers have been encouraged to contact him. There will be a series of meetings during the first week of March with those parties who have contacted Greater Wellington.

On the completion of these meetings an amended rating classification will go to the Advisory Committee for their consideration. This will be followed by a second round of ratepayer meetings.

3.2 Kopuaranga River Enhancement Project

Field work is under way including meeting with landowners and mapping the extent of small and large floods. A cost benefit ratio for the project is currently being calculated. Ideally a small flood would assist with the understanding of the benefits of the scheme. It is expected that a meeting will be held with the local community in late March or early April to approve the project.

A schedule of works for this year's isolated works programme has been prepared.

3.3 Mataikona – Whakataki Catchment Scheme

This scheme has an area of 25,000 hectares and includes the Mataikona and Whakataki catchments situated north of Castlepoint. Total annual expenditure is normally on the order of \$10,000. The landform within this area has a high incidence of erosion. The area is also subjected to occasional heavy rainstorm events.

Access to the area follows the main river courses and coastline. Inland in the headwaters of the Mataikona River there is no community of interest, rather isolated farms on roads which radiate out of the headwaters.

Expenditure in the catchment scheme has focused on two areas; retirement of erosion prone land, and maintaining access typically in the coastal area. In recent years there has been minimal expenditure in the headwaters of both catchments. There are, however, considerable areas planted in *Pinus radiata*.

Three options to review the scheme have been prepared. These are being considered by the advisory committee prior to a full scheme meeting. It is proposed to recover part of the rates using the category "separately used or inhabited parts of a rating unit".

3.4 Awhea – Opouawe River Catchment Scheme

Following the last meeting, consideration was given to other alternatives to what was originally proposed, e.g. basing the classification on capital value. Stephen Franks has also made a further submission reinforcing his concerns.

Further analysis of scheme has now occurred. This agrees with the thrust of Stephen Frank's submission that the proposed classification is not valid. This is because the scheme has in recent years focussed more on maintaining access, i.e. works at the Whakapuni Hill, Tukurumuri, Usshers Hill, and the Gluepot on the coast. Works have included the construction of rock weirs, planting, draining and planting, and the removal of gravel and construction of stopbanks.

Staff are now researching the following options –

- (a) a combination of “separately used or inhabited parts of a rating unit” (curtilage – the old terminology) and land area change.
- (b) a combination of “separately used or inhabited parts of a rating unit” and land value.
- (c) capital value.

The land area approach is the least sophisticated but the easiest to administer. Using either land or capital value is likely to incur ongoing annual charges. Each approach will be considered and a recommendation made to the Scheme Advisory Committee. The focus is to develop the simplest methodology.

4. Conclusion

Work continues on each of the scheme reviews. It is expected that final proposals will be put to the various Scheme Advisory Committees in March or April so that they can be adopted by Council as part of finalising the 2006-2016 LTCCP.

5. Communication

Regular contact is being maintained with scheme advisory committees and ratepayers.

6. Recommendation

That the Committee:

- (1) **Receive** the report.
- (2) **Note** the contents.

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