



Report 08.526
Date 15 July 2008
File PK/14/06/05

Committee Parks, Forests and Utilities
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Kapiti Pony Club licence/lease for land in Queen Elizabeth Park

1. Purpose

To provide an overview of the submissions Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) has received from the public on the leasing of the “Transit land” in Queen Elizabeth Park to the Kapiti Pony Club.

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

GWRC was approached by Kapiti Pony Club Inc. regarding the licence/lease of 21 ha of the park, because they must move from their current location in the area where the Western Link Road is planned. Transit New Zealand is terminating their lease and the pony club requires land for the purposes of grazing horses and other activities associated with the running of a pony club. The Kapiti Pony Club requested the use of the land at the northern end of Queen Elizabeth Park, near Poplar Avenue, but earlier discussions were held about the use of land at MacKay’s Crossing.

The proposal concerns land, previously known as “Transit land”, which is currently being used for grazing horses (see Attachment 1). This land is owned by Transit New Zealand but is subject to transfer to the Crown. In the *Queen Elizabeth Park Management Plan* it was zoned as “future recreation”. While there is no legal requirement to consult with the public on this matter, it was felt that it was necessary to do so. The use of the Poplar Avenue area for the pony club was not envisaged at the time of the management plan review. It is a change to the future development of that area of the park and there was a need to check with the public how they wished that end of the park to be used.

If granted, the licence/lease will be for 10 years (five years, with a right of renewal for a further five year term). This would lock up the use of this area

for the next 10 years. The lessee will be permitted to erect structures necessary for the operation of the pony club on the lease area, subject to obtaining the prior written approval of GWRC. The pony club intends to use the area for grazing and pony club activities, such as running horse events and providing training facilities.

The public were asked if there were any objections to the granting of this licence/lease to Kapiti Pony Club Inc. through advertisements in the local newspapers and information provided on the GWRC web site.

The power to grant the licence/lease is held with the Minister of Conservation, as Queen Elizabeth Park is owned by the Department of Conservation. Recommendations will ultimately be made by this Committee to Council for its recommendation to the Minister.

4. Summary of submissions

Ten submissions were received. Two submitters have asked to be heard. All submissions supported the proposal but one submitter is concerned about the impact of the use of part of the licence/lease area on the Poplar Avenue wetland. This concern was regarding the spread of weeds into the wetland from the upper catchment. Two other submitters have requested access through the area, with one submitter asking that the current lessees of the area be accommodated by the pony club.

5. Assessment of Kapiti Pony Club proposal

5.1 General

New activities on the parks need to be assessed according to the criteria detailed in the *Regional Parks Network Management Plan*. These criteria consider environmental social, park management and economic factors.

5.2 Environmental

The area proposed for use by the Kapiti Pony Club is currently largely in grassland and gorse shrub land. One submitter has raised concerns about the effect of horse grazing around the Polar Avenue wetland, which is located to the west of the proposed licence/lease area. The concerns are that the biodiversity values of the wetland will be threatened by the presence of weed seeds from horse droppings in the wetland catchment. The Poplar Avenue wetland is important ecologically, as it is an intact manuka swamp, which currently has few weed infestations. It is being monitored as part of a national wetlands monitoring programme by Landcare Research. The area is listed as a significant environmental area in the *Queen Elizabeth Park Management Plan* and is a Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) ecological site under the District Plan. Fencing to the top of the ridge would prevent the weed invasion. This means that around 2 hectares would be taken from the proposed Kapiti Pony Club area.

5.3 Social

The proposed licence/lease area is currently used for grazing by local horse

owners. The Kapiti Pony Club has asked to move to the park because they must move from their current location. The Pony Club is a recreational use, while grazing is a private use, so the former activity does fit in with the purpose of the park. As a community club, there will be opportunities for anyone to join and participate in horse riding. The location of the pony club in the park will give the club more opportunities to use the park, through improved access for their riders.

The owners of horses currently grazing there have requested that they be allowed to stay but that decision will need to be made by the pony club if they are granted a licence/lease for the area. There is a greater demand for land to graze horses than is currently available on the park.

The request by one submitter for the development and use of a car park in the proposed pony club area would need further consideration, as there are safety risks associated with providing car parking across the road from the school.

5.4 Parks management

The area where the pony club wishes to place structures in the future is a proposed future entrance area for the park. One submitter has suggested that a draft concept plan for the future of the park at the Raumati South end be prepared.

The park management plan is due for review in 2009 and it may be appropriate to complete a concept plan of the area, and consult with the public about the Raumati South entrance at that time.

5.5 Economic

GWRC will be required to fence some of the boundary of the pony club licence/lease area to separate that land from the farmer's lease area. The costs associated with this and with providing water to the pony club are around \$25,000 to \$30,000 for fencing and \$12,000 for water reticulation. The money generated from leasing this land to the pony club for the 10 year term will fall short of this cost. We anticipate the rental to be around \$3,500 per annum.

Currently at least one-third of the land in the proposed pony club licence/lease area is not useful for grazing purposes, as it is covered by gorse. The pony club has agreed to clear the gorse over time, to increase the viable land within the block.

6. Options

6.1 Part 1

Consideration needs to be given to whether or not the licence/lease should be granted at all. If so, a decision needs to be made as to whether the rights given should be on a short or long-term basis.

Option 1: Do not grant the licence/lease.

Option 2: Recommend that a temporary licence/lease be granted until the

management plan is reviewed and allow the pony club to use re-locatable buildings. The horse events could take place at MacKay's Crossing where other horse events occur.

Option 3: Recommend that the Kapiti Pony Club be granted a long-term licence/lease and allow the pony club to erect permanent structures, provided prior approval is given by Council.

6.2 Part 2

If Options 2 or 3 above are chosen, the question of the area of land to be granted needs to be considered.

Option 1: Recommend to the Minister of Conservation that the licence/lease be granted to the Kapiti Pony Club, as per the original agreement. The problem with the wetland area remains.

Option 2: Reconfigure the area to give the same number of hectares agreed to. This will involve either:

- Pushing into viable farmland, which will affect the farming operation, which currently provides an income for the park.
- Widening the area and adding some of the less viable farmland to the pony club licence/lease area. This less viable farm land is a wetter area closer to State Highway 1. One consideration about using that land for the pony club is that it has the potential to be used as a wetland in the future.
- Providing some grazing land at MacKay's Crossing, as well as at Raumatī for the pony club. The land at MacKay's Crossing is currently being grazed by the farming operation in the park.

Option 3: Reduce the land area available for the licence/lease by 2 hectares. This is a small reduction in area but does mean that fewer horses will be able to graze the area, as there is less viable land available to the pony club.

7. Next steps

After the Committee has considered the submissions and then in turn has deliberated the options for licence/lease proposal, the decision on the recommendation to Council will be determined at the next Committee meeting on 11 September 2008.

8. Communications

Formal replies will be sent to all submitters soon after Council has made its recommendation.

9. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***

2. *Notes the content of the report.*
3. *Considers the written and oral submissions on the Kapiti Pony Club licence/lease proposal*

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Attachments

- 1 Map of the licence proposal
- 2 Summary of submissions