
Biodiversity Advisory Group Minutes – 4/11/24

Minutes of a meeting of the Biodiversity Advisory Group held on Monday 4 November 2024, in the Wakanui Room, 2 Baring Square East, Ashburton, commencing at 1.00pm.

Present

Mayor Neil Brown; Councillors Richard Wilson (Acting Chair) and Lynette Lovett; Alice Shanks, Adi Avnit, Edith Smith, Angela Cushnie, Willy Leferink, Kim Wall, Val Clemens, Andy Hirschberg, Tom Munro, Sarah Mason (Synlait), Barry Austin, Donna Field, Ian Neil McCann (GM Infrastructure & Open Spaces), Ian Soper (Open Spaces Manager) and Dr Christian Chukwuka (Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor).

In attendance

Mark Chamberlain (ADC Rooding Manager), Lucy Brown (Governance Support) and Linda Clarke (ADC Communications Advisor)

Mel Brooks (MHV Irrigation)

1 Apologies

For lateness: Mayor Neil Brown

For absence: Cr Leen Braam, Ian Fraser, Barry Maister, Gen de Spa, Robb Stevens, Sean Spencer, Janine Holland, Sally Stevens and Mary Ralston

2 Extraordinary Business

Item 7, implications of cats on native biodiversity, will be withdrawn from today's agenda and reported back to the Group at the next meeting in 2025.

3 Declarations of Interest

Cr Richard Wilson – Shareholder of MHV Water Ltd

4 Confirmation of Minutes

That the minutes of the Biodiversity Advisory Group meeting held on 5 August 2024 be taken as read and confirmed.

Lovett/Avnit

Carried

5 Planting on road reserves for environmental benefits

The Chair welcomed Mel Brooks from MHV who presented their proposal for roadside reserves with the vision to lead the programme in collaboration with Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective through their network of farmers across the district.

Discussion showed general support with further considerations required including conversations with landowners and Council, allowance for water seepage and roading infrastructure vulnerability/deterioration, access to services, accessibility for mowing, passing of stock and related damages, maintenance and upkeep, types of plantings and their benefit, maintenance of adjacent sheltering trees and hedges, future protection of such reserves.

Neil McCann and Mark Chamberlain contributed from a rural road safety perspective with the need for consideration by Council and further related reporting.

Recommendation to Council

That Council considers options for native planting on rural road reserves using appropriate native plants with maximum height <1.5 metres.

Cushnie/Leferink

Carried

6 Ashburton River Hakatere Shorebird Habitat Management Strategy 2023-2030

Donna Field presented the ECan strategy for the protection of shorebirds species and their habitats. Spoke of methods from trapping of predators to signage, fences, the influences of human activities and education, pests (plants and animals). The Strategy includes restrictions on access for vehicles and dogs, construction and maintenance of raised islands for breeding grounds, RDR engagement for managing water releases, investment and feasibility options towards gaining Ramsar Status for the Ashburton River SH1 downstream.

Andy spoke about DOC's bird monitoring projects overseen by their Twizel operations.

That the Biodiversity Advisory Group receives the report.

Clemens/Wilson

Carried

8 Updated threat classification of indigenous plants in the Ashburton District

Alice referred to the plant list of significance and impacts, with some species showing overall decline. Christian spoke of Matagouri which is no longer threatened or protected. Discussion followed on managing indigenous vegetation the resource consent process.

Andy confirmed that DOC are working to review what the presence of kettle holes would look like for the region, maintenance programmes, wildlife and monitoring going forward.

That the Biodiversity Advisory Group receives the report.

Wilson/Smith

Carried

9 Ecologist / Biodiversity Advisor's Report

- Meeting dates have been confirmed for 2025, with the first meeting of the Biodiversity Group to be Monday 3 February. This meeting will likely be a fieldtrip. Further information will be provided.
- DOC – have signalled they will be conducting a review of their Biodiversity Strategy implementation Plan which will go out for consultation.

That the Biodiversity Advisory Group receives the report from the Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor.

Wilson/Brown

Carried

10 Group activity updates

Department of Conservation

- DOC have received additional funding for the white-bellied skink project (trapping and monitoring) for the next 18 month period. The project is now working to acquire the rest of the infrastructure, trapping team personnel and technical advice for focus around Ōtuwharekai, namely Taylors Range and Harpers Range. Currently behind in monthly trapping schedule having not completed this in October.

Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective

- Implementation of ADC Biodiversity Strategy – Our Natural Place - discussed collaboration for best use of time and resources given shared specific goals. Funding allocations, presentations and educations and awareness.
- Carters Creek – pest control for Ashburton Forks, presence of Old Mans Beard in the Ashburton River with concerns around its management and elimination.

Synlait

- Sarah Mason (On-Farm Biodiversity Lead) was introduced as the new Synlait representative. Sarah spoke about her role and Synlait's "Grow Programme" making more of a supplier hub through education.

Kanuka Trust

- Update on programmes centred around working with schools. Specific programmes include species studies and a big focus on predator control and enquiry. Pleasing to see the programmes creating enthusiastic and passionate participation, bringing the opportunity to create that real depth within our community.

ADC Open Spaces

- Update including planting of the wildflower area of the domain and activity surrounding this project.
- To assist with the Biodiversity Advisory Group meeting reporting and planning, Ian asked Group members to email their reports / updates at least 10 days before the meeting date.

Fonterra

- National roadshows with farmers, centred around creating better efficiencies in farming. Positive and well supported response to engagements. Interest areas being environmental, nutrition focused and support with community funding.

Ashburton Water Zone Committee

- Ashburton Water Zone Committee recently disbursed up to \$50,000 across six biodiversity projects around the district. Seeing an increase in groups approaching the Committee for funding in relation to trapping programmes. Many groups are not aware of other streams for funding available and there is a need to create community awareness of this.

Mt Somers Walkway Society (Barry Austin)

- Trapping and relocation programmes are showing variations in the trapping numbers, especially possums. There's a need to reduce wasp activity in the area through their baiting programmes.

Environment Canterbury (Donna Field)

- ECan will be conducting bird surveys along the Upper and Lower Hakatere rivers mid to end of November 2024.

Forest & Bird, ACCT (Val Clemens & Edith Smith)

- Harris Reserve planting project - 50 clematis throughout the reserve with the aid of ADC biodiversity funding, and a further 800 kanuka plantings to infill site. Pleasing to see many treated trees recovering in the Pudding Hill stream area.

QEII Trust

- Meeting with a focus on weeding programmes in Te Pirita this Saturday 9 November. Alice welcomed assistance and referred the Group to the website for further information.
- South Rakaia Huts –the Chilean rhubarb needs to be removed.

Rakaia Reserve

- Cr Lovett reported that the Rakaia Reserve Board are looking to hold a working bee in the reserve area between the river and the domain and volunteer support would be welcomed.

Stockwater Transition Plan

- Council will receive a report and adopt the Plan in December. Cr Wilson will provide the Group updates as the Plan progresses.

11 Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Biodiversity Advisory Group is scheduled for Monday 3 February 2025, commencing at 1pm.

The meeting concluded at 2.53pm.