

Biodiversity Advisory Group

AGENDA

Notice of Meeting:

A meeting of the Biodiversity Advisory Group will be held on:

Date: Monday 1 December 2025

Time: 1.00pm

Venue: Wakanui Room, Te Whare Whakatere
Ashburton Library & Civic Centre, 2 Baring Square East, Ashburton

Membership:

Ashburton District Council

Cr Richard Wilson (Chair)
Cr Phill Everest
Cr Deb Gilkison
Mayor Liz McMillan (ex officio)
Toni Durham (GM Community & Open Spaces)
Ian Soper (Open Spaces Manager)
Dr Christian Chukwuka (Ecologist/Bio Advisor)

Ashburton Community Conservation Trust

Edith Smith, Val Clemens

Awa Awa Rata Reserve

Mary Ralston

Department of Conservation

Ian Fraser

Environment Canterbury

Donna Field

Federated Farmers

Mike Salvesen

Fish & Game

Nikki Dellaway

Fonterra

Robb Stevens, Tom Munro

Foothills Landcare Group

Vacant

Forest & Bird

Val Clemens, Edith Smith, Mary Ralston

Kanuka Trust

Kim Wall

Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective

Angela Cushnie, Willy Leferink

Mt Somers Walkway Society & Lake Heron

Conservation Society

Barry Austin

QEII Trust

Joe Butler

Synlait

Sarah Mason

Upper Rangitata Gorge Landcare Group

Sally Stevens

Biodiversity Advisory Group

Timetable	
Time	Item
1:00pm	Welcome and introductions
1.05pm	Presentations 1) Lake Heron Conservation Society 2) Duncan Ensor (CEO, Verity NZ)

1 Apologies

Cr Phill Everest

2 Extraordinary Business

3 Declarations of Interest

4 Pest Trapping at Lake Heron and progress to date

Lake Heron Conservation Society - Kai Tegels and John Evans

5 Biodiversity Credit System

Duncan Ensor, CEO Verity NZ

6 Biodiversity Advisory Group – review of Terms of Reference

3

7 Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor's Report

5

8 Group Updates

- Round-table update from a member of each organisation present

Biodiversity Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the advisory group is to:

- Facilitate the implementation of the Ashburton District Biodiversity Biodiversity Strategy.
- Maintain partnerships between local and regional organisations with an interest in the management of indigenous biodiversity
- Provide a forum for discussion and community-wide promotion of biodiversity
- Be a conduit for the Council relationship building with the landowners and general public, where appropriately
- Provide advice to Council on biodiversity related matters

Membership

Representatives on the working group were invited based on their organisation's participation in developing the Canterbury Regional Biodiversity Strategy, and/or their ability to contribute to the implementation of the Ashburton District Biodiversity Biodiversity Strategy . Each organisation is to have one representative on the advisory group.

Ashburton District Council

Mayor Liz McMillan (ex officio)

Cr Richard Wilson (Chair)

Cr Deb Gillison

Cr Phill Everest

Toni Durham (GM Community & Open Spaces)

Ian Soper (Open Spaces Manager)

Dr Christian Chukwuka (Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor)

Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective

QEII Trust

Environment Canterbury

Forest & Bird

Foothills Landcare Group

Ashburton Community Conservation Trust

Federated Farmers

Awa Awa Rata Reserve

Department of Conservation

Fish & Game

Fonterra

Synlait

Kanuka Trust

Lake Heron Conservation Society

Mt Somers Walkway Society

Upper Rangitata Gorge Landcare Group

Membership of the Group may be amended to include representatives from other organisations. This will be at the discretion of the Ashburton District Council.

To form a quorum, the attendance of representatives from at least 6 of the advisory group member organisations, in addition to at least two ADC local representatives, is required.

Representatives from other organisations may be invited to attend advisory group meetings as the need arises.

Members may send alternates in their place or nominate another person from their organisation if they are unable to attend a meeting.

Names and organisations above may change over time as requested by the members without going through formal terms of reference review.

Meeting Frequency

Meet four times a year, including one field trip if required.

Delegations

The representatives on the working group are expected to:

- Meet to facilitate the implementation of the Ashburton District Biodiversity Strategy
- Share information, both on organisational initiatives and collaborative initiatives, to support better decisions and knowledge of biodiversity
- Communicate and consult with one another in a flexible and open way
- Maintain confidentiality where appropriate
- Represent their organisations' policies
- Respect other organisations' governance and policy approaches and priorities in the district / region, and seek a consensus approach to work with these

Reporting

The Ashburton District Biodiversity Advisory Group will report to Council.

Costs & Expenses

It is acknowledged that being a member of the advisory group will involve a commitment of members' time and energy, and will involve travel to Ashburton District Council to attend meetings. These costs will be met by the organisation(s) or group(s) that members represent. Costs of meetings and associated catering will be met by Ashburton District Council.

Meetings will generally be held in the Council meeting rooms, and may be held in other venues throughout the district as appropriate.

Adopted

17 December 2025

7. *Council Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor report*

Author: Christian Chukwuka, Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor

Manager: Ian Soper, Open Spaces Manager

Recommendation

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

Summary

- The purpose of this report is to provide the Biodiversity Advisory Group with an update on projects carried out by the Biodiversity Advisor since the last meeting held in August 2025.
- The report brings about the opportunity for members to ask questions and seek clarification on any items mentioned.

Report

1. **Biodiversity Strategy (BS) Implementation - Progress update on the implementation**

Council staff are continuing to meet with more stakeholders to discuss aspects of the strategy implementation for which they have input.

- i. BS Action 1.1c: Stage one of the coastal dongas ecological project along the Ashburton Coast completed. Following this stage, ground-truthing will be conducted in collaboration with local landowners to validate and refine the assessment data. While we are not expecting to protect all dongas with ecological values, threatened and rare plants found will be propagated and transferred to Wakanui and Ashton Beach reserves.
- ii. BS Action 1d: Stage one of the ecological assessments of some natural drains with outlet to the coast and fish passage requirement is underway this summer with University of Otago and University of Canterbury students. MHV Senior Hydrogeologist is leading conversation with the Universities and with Arowhenua.
- iii. BS Action 4.3C- Environmental Champions Award to celebrate landowners, volunteers, conservation groups, and individuals with great achievements in biodiversity space in Mid-Canterbury. Description of the award and the criteria is attached here in Appendix 1.

Recommended action: *That ADBAG supports the establishment of an Environmental Champions Award and recommends the award to Council.*

- iv. School Programme in Ashburton District - Strategy Action 4.4a. The Kanuka Trust continues to lead school programme in the Ashburton District, led by Kim, with occasional input from Val Clemens at Wakanui School, Mt Hutt College, and several preschools as needed. The Kanuka Trust currently engages with nearly half of the schools in the district and receives \$5,000 in support from the Council Biodiversity Fund. A recent event was the planting of the Mini-golf site with the Longbeach School.
- v. Council staff are working with Environment Canterbury to control yellow flag iris in the Ashburton Domain Pond and Coniston Park Pond. This activity requires Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) approval, which Environment Canterbury already holds for the entire Canterbury region. The current project will be undertaken under ECan's approval once the risk assessment is completed by the Council Ecologist.

2. Cat Management Policy/Bylaw investigation

As recommended by the Group to the Council, an investigation into the possibility of the Council having a cat management policy is underway. Council staff have developed a survey and sent to other councils around New Zealand to understand the effectiveness of the policy/bylaw. We expect to conclude the investigation by early 2026 and will advise the Council and ADBAG group on the outcome of the investigation.

The Conservation Minister has indicated his intention to include feral cats in the Predator Free 2050 strategy.

3. Council Biodiversity Grant Application Round for 2026

The next round of Council Biodiversity Grant applications will open in February 2026. Please get in touch if you need help putting ideas together for the grant. Note that the grant limit is \$7500, with the applicant contributing 50% of the project cost.

4. Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy

The [District's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy](#) has been adopted by Council. The strategy has biodiversity cross-over, including nature-based solutions and reducing emission using native plants and wetland restoration. Implementation of the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy will be done alongside the existing Biodiversity Strategy.

5. Canterbury Biodiversity Strategy Revitalisation

The [revitalised Regional Biodiversity Strategy](#) was adopted in August 2025. Council staff are currently reviewing the strategy to ensure alignment with the ADC Biodiversity Strategy. The outcome will be discussed at a future ADBAG meeting before it goes to Council.

6. Completed Projects (Planting and Pest Management)

- a) **Harris Scientific Reserve Planting:** Planting was completed in September 2025, with around 600 Kānuka and grasses planted to infill the existing planting sites and establish new planting areas. This was organised by the Ashburton Community Conservation Trust, and they had over 40 volunteers, including Council staff, members of Ashburton Forest & Bird, and community members in attendance.

- b) **Pest animal control completed at the Lake Camp/Clearwater** in October 2025. In preparation for the 2026 season, pest control was undertaken at this site outside camping season and within active leporid (rabbit and hares) breeding period.
- c) **Lake Clearwater settlement**– 26 beech trees planted at the campground shelterbelt, and irrigation installed to manage dry condition over summer. Also, 120 plants were supplied to LCHHA from the Council for planting at this site. The group completed the planting in October 2025.
- d) **Annual weed sprays** at the Lake Camp/Clearwater, Ashton Beach and Wakanui Beach Restoration sites all completed in November 2025.
- e) **Ashburton Business Estate site planting**– Infill planting of existing planted areas was completed in September 2025. Planting on this site will continue until all open areas are filled up.

7. Planned Plantings and Pest Control Projects for 2026

- i. **Hinds septic soakage field planting**– Project brief already sent to contractors and project to be awarded in 2026. We expect the planting to be completed by April 2026.
- ii. **Stage 2 Taylors Stream Reserve planting**– Bridge side slope and infill planting – still in planning phase.
- iii. **Stage 2 Bowyers Stream planting** – Wet areas beside the plantation that are difficult to mow and infill if needed – still in planning phase.
- iv. **EA Network Centre drainage channel and slopes**– progressive planting until 2028.
- v. **Ashburton dog park** adjoining the riverbank– community event. Weed spray completed and planting with suitable natives. Planting will be undertaken in April/May 2026.

8. Planned Community Volunteering Events for 2026

- i. **World Biodiversity Day Planting 2026**– Wakanui Beach Reserve Restoration – Sunday May 22, 2026.
- ii. **Planting at the EA Network Centre drainage channel** – scheduled for early April 2026 and to be undertaken by a community group, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- iii. **Lake Camp/Clearwater wilding pine removal** – April/May 2026– exact date to be confirmed.
- iv. **Annual Harris Scientific Reserve Planting** – 2nd weekend in September (annually-collaborative event with Ashburton Community Conservation Trust).
- v. **Community volunteer pest control workshops** (Methven, Foothills, High Country, and Rakaia) to be held in Staveley and Rakaia.

9. 2026 meeting dates

In 2026, Biodiversity Advisory Group meetings are scheduled for Tuesday 4 February, Tuesday May, Tuesday 4 August and Tuesday 3 November. Meetings will continue to start at 1pm and it is proposed that one date will be used for a field trip.

APPENDIX 1

Proposed Ashburton District Council Environmental Champion Award (Biodiversity Strategy, “Our Natural Place” Action 4.3c)

Recommendation sought:

That ADBAG supports the establishment of an Environmental Champions Award and recommends Council to include this award category in the next Council Community Honours Awards round.

Background

This report proposes the establishment of an Environmental Champions Award in Mid-Canterbury to celebrate and recognise landowners and community members who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to conservation, restoration, and environmental initiatives. The proposal directly supports the Ashburton District Council Biodiversity Strategy, “Our Natural Place” Action 4.3c, which aims to introduce the Environment Champions Award to celebrate local biodiversity achievements. Recipients of the award can include landowners, farmers, community groups, businesses, non-profit organisations, and individuals who have contributed to conserving and improving our natural environment.

Mid-Canterbury is home to diverse ecosystems, including braided rivers, wetlands and drains, native bush remnants, and productive agricultural landscapes. Over recent decades, landowners and community groups have played a critical role in restoring habitats, improving water quality, and enhancing biodiversity through voluntary initiatives such as riparian planting, wetland creation, and pest control. These efforts have been driven by the recognition that local biodiversity is under increasing pressure from land-use changes, agricultural intensification, and invasive species. Many biodiversity hotspots, such as riparian margins and small wetlands, fall outside formal protection, making voluntary action essential. Landowners and community groups have stepped up to fill this gap, motivated by a sense of stewardship and pride in preserving Mid-Canterbury’s natural heritage..

While the Ashburton District Council Community Honours Awards recognise outstanding voluntary service and contributions to the district, they are broad in scope and do not specifically focus on environmental stewardship or biodiversity outcomes. Establishing an Environmental Champions Award would provide a formal platform to celebrate these local achievements, and this aligns with regional and national biodiversity priorities.

Criteria

For any group or individual to be awarded the Ashburton District Council Environmental Champion Award, the following criteria have to be met fully. The award aims at recognising:

- A significant contribution to the improvement of environmental and biodiversity quality through the protection, conservation, restoration, communication and/or stewardship of natural resources (air, water, soils, and plant and wildlife communities), including site restoration, revegetation, plant and animal pest control, etc.
- Demonstration of high achievement in biodiversity spaces.
- Evidence of long-term commitment to environmental stewardship.
- Innovative approaches to sustainable land management.
- Evidence of sustainable or reproducible results that are measurable and can be quantified in space and time.

Nomination Guidelines

In addition to the Council community honours award, the following is proposed for Environmental Champions Award. Thus:

- There will be no self-nominations for this award.
- Each potential awardee must be nominated by two individuals who reside in the district.
- Only environmental or biodiversity achievements within the district will be recognised in this proposed award.
- Nominations shall be accompanied by full details of the achievement (project/activities) and other additional material in support of the nomination, such as letters of support, news articles, photographs, videos, etc.
- Employees, officers, directors, agents, representatives and independent contractors of Ashburton District Council, as well as their immediate family and household members, are not eligible for an award.