

Biodiversity Advisory Group

AGENDA

Notice of Meeting:

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

Date: Tuesday 17 February 2026
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 Deb Gilkison Cr Phill Everest 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	Matt Poole
Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective	Angela Cushnie
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

Time	Timetable Item
1:00pm	Welcome and introductions
1.05pm	Presentation 1) Nicky Snoyink, Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society

- 1 Apologies**
 - Sally Stevens
- 2 Extraordinary Business**
- 3 Declarations of Interest**
- 4 Confirmation of Minutes – 1/12/25** **3**
- 5 Presentation: Impact of wild ungulates (deer, goats, and pigs) on native biodiversity – Nicky Snoyink**
- 6 Establishment of Ashburton District Conservation Covenant** **6**
- 7 Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor’s Report** **21**
- 8 Group Updates**
Update from a member of each organisation present

4. Biodiversity Advisory Group Minutes – 1/12/25

Minutes of a meeting of the Biodiversity Advisory Group held on Monday 1 December 2025, in the Wakanui Room, 2 Baring Square East, Ashburton, commencing at 1.00pm.

Present

Councillors Richard Wilson (Chair) and Deb Gilkison.

Edith Smith, Val Clemens, Mary Ralston, Simon Waugh, Donna Field, Robb Stevens, Barry Austin, Joe Butler, Sally Stevens, Gen de Spa and Kim Wall.

Also present: Cr Julie Moffett

In attendance

Toni Durham (GM Community & Open Spaces), Ian Soper (Open Spaces Manager), Dr Christian Chukwuka (Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor), Linda Clarke (Communications Advisor) and Phillipa Clark (Governance Team Leader).

Christian introduced Bill Martin – the Canterbury Regional Coordinator for the NZ Landcare Trust. Based in Christchurch, Bill works with catchment and community groups across the region to support projects that protect and enhance biodiversity, soil and water quality. He is attending today's meeting to learn more about the Ashburton Biodiversity Group, local initiatives and to explore opportunities for collaboration.

Presentations

- 1) Lake Heron Conservation Society – Kai Tegels and John Evans
- 2) Biodiversity Credit System – Duncan Ensor

1 Apologies

Mayor Liz McMillan, Cr Phill Everest, Sarah Mason, Mike Salveson, Ian Fraser and Angela Cushnie.

2 Extraordinary Business

Nil

3 Declarations of Interest

Nil

Presentations

5 Pest Trapping at Lake Heron

Kai Tegels and John Evans presented information on the Lake Heron Conservation Society's trapping programme.

The Society has approximately 120 traps, concentrated mainly on the water shore. The presentation showed the types of animals being caught, notably the increased number of weasels, cats and possums since 2018.

The Society continues to rely on volunteers to run the trap lines.

5 Verity NZ – Biodiversity Credit System

[Verity NZ](#) is a subsidiary of Verity Nature led by Duncan and Fee Ensor, high country farmers from the Rakaia Gorge.

Duncan outlined the company’s role in supporting landowners and partnering with communities to develop and manage long-term carbon projects with the aim of achieving environmental, social and economic benefits. They also partner with local communities and landowners to restore nature and combat climate change.

The current focus is on green carbon – using the carbon credits system. Part of marketing Verity’s project involves putting information in front of people showing the quality of NZ product (projects must comply with all 10 of the core carbon principles to qualify).

A current case study (South Island Black Hill Station) has 19 field trial plots being monitored. Data is being collected on different regeneration methods under different conditions with the aim of identifying the optimal regeneration project design.

Another case study (Chatham Islands natural regeneration project) aims to remove barriers to native plant growth. This project has an independent A Rating that attracts attention and a premium.

The presentations concluded at 1.57pm.

6 Biodiversity Advisory Group Terms of Reference review

Minor changes have been made, including reference to the annual biodiversity grant being removed. It is no longer a requirement for grant applications to be referred to the Group before going to Council.

Recommendation to Council

That Council adopts the Biodiversity Advisory Group Terms of Reference for the 2025-28 term.

Gilkison/Austin

Carried

7 Ecologist / Biodiversity Advisor’s Report

• Biodiversity Strategy Actions Implementation update

The proposal to establish an Environmental Champions Award was supported. The intention is to recognise people, especially landowners, in the district who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to biodiversity conservation and restoration, and environmental initiatives.

The proposed criteria will be referred to Council for consideration.

Recommendation to Council

That the Biodiversity Advisory Group supports the establishment of an Environmental Champions award and recommends that this award category be included in Council’s Community Honours Awards.

Gilkison/Wilson

Carried

• Biodiversity Grant applications 2026

Group members were reminded that the next round of applications will open in February. The biodiversity grant limit is \$7500 with the applicant contributing 50% of the project cost.

That the Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor’s report be received.

Gilkison/Smith

Carried

- **Ashburton Water Zone Committee disestablishment**

Toni Durham reported that disestablishment of the Ashburton Water Zone Committee means that funding for environmental and biodiversity projects is no longer available. The Water Zone Committee had been responsible for administering funding from the CWMS Action Plan budget.

The Biodiversity Advisory Group may want to consider lobbying ECan or making a submission on Council managing the defunct Water Zone Committee community funding.

8 Group updates

Brief verbal updates were provided from each of the organisations present.

Forest & Bird representatives thanked Christian for assistance that Council has provided at the Harris Scientific Reserve, including provision of labels and signs being used to identify special plants display at the Harris Scientific Reserve, including *Aciphylla subflabellata* with conservation status “At Risk – Declining”.

Next Meeting

Tuesday 17 February 2026, 1pm.

An invitation will be extended to Nicky Snoynk and Professor David Norton to speak about the impact of wild pigs and ungulates on the district’s biodiversity. Forest & Bird have observed the detrimental effect of animals grazing on native biodiversity in the foothills.

The meeting concluded at 2.50pm.

6. Establishment of Ashburton District Conservation Covenant under S77 of Reserve Act 1977

Author *Christian Chukwuka, Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor*
Activity Manager *Ian Soper, Open Spaces Manager*

Summary

- The Ashburton District has historically relied on QEII covenants to protect significant ecological values voluntarily, but recent changes in QEII criteria and limited funding have reduced the number of new covenants.
- Currently, QEII can only establish fewer covenants annually in Mid-Canterbury, leaving many recommended sites unprotected.
- To address this gap, Council is considering creating its own conservation covenant under Section 77 of the Reserves Act 1977, which allows a voluntary legal protection of private land without requiring ownership transfer.

Recommendation

1. That the Biodiversity Advisory Group endorses the ‘Establishment Of Conservation Covenant’ being presented to Council.

Attachment

Appendix 1 Draft Conservation Covenant Framework
Appendix 2 Draft Conservation Covenant Instrument

Background

The current situation

1. **Voluntary land covenants** around the district are protected through Queen Elizabeth Trust (QEII) covenant, ensuring long-term protection of significant ecological and biodiversity values.

2. In 2023, Council reviewed its biodiversity grant criteria with funding priority on private lands with existing legal protection such as QEII covenant. This was to ensure that biodiversity values are safeguarded in perpetuity, and that Council investment is secure and long-lasting, reducing the risk of biodiversity loss after change of property ownership.
3. However, since 2023, QEII covenant criteria has changed, and the number of covenants provisioned for the Ashburton District has reduced significantly due to allocated funding resources for new covenants (Plate 1).
4. Currently, QEII can only undertake fewer covenants within a year in Central Canterbury (covering the area between Waimakariri and Rangitata Rivers) and most of the areas recommended for covenanting in the past two years did not meet the standard they seek, as non-forested land as seen in Mid-Canterbury often scores low in QEII assessment ranking compared to forested areas with more ecological values seen around Bank Peninsula.
5. An alternative to the QEII covenanting process for areas in Mid-Canterbury that frequently fall outside QEII eligibility is to establish an Ashburton District Council conservation covenant under Section 77 of the Reserves Act 1977.
6. For Māori land, covenants can be created under the *Te Turi Whenua* Māori Act 1993.

Conservation Covenant

7. A conservation covenant is a legal instrument registered on the property's record of title, which sets out the landowners and Council's respective rights and obligations.
8. Section 77 of the Reserves Act 1977 provides that the Council is authorised to enter into conservation covenants over private land if:

".. any local authority if satisfied that any private land .. should be managed so as to preserve the natural environment or landscape amenity or wildlife or freshwater life or marine life habitat, or historical value, and that the particular purpose or purposes can be achieved without acquiring the ownership of the land .. for a reserve may treat and agree with the owner for a covenant to provide for the management of that land in the manner that will achieve the particular purpose or purposes of conservation..."
9. A conservation covenant may be **voluntarily** entered into in different ways, for example:
 - i. Landowners may willingly ask the Council for a covenant to protect ecological and biodiversity values within their property.

QEII Summer newsletter



QEII National Trust <info@qeii.org.nz>
To Christian Chukwuka

Reply Reply All Forward

Tue 23/12/2025 16:00

- This sender info@qeii.org.nz is from outside your organisation.
- Follow up. Start by Friday, 9 January 2026. Due by Friday, 9 January 2026.
If there are problems with how this message is displayed, click here to view it in a web browser.



Kia ora

On behalf of the team at QEII National Trust, I wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Thank you for your hard work and support during the year. Whether that was by registering a new open space covenant, doing great enhancement work in your covenant, or donating to support the work we do, you have helped protect native plants, animals and landscape values on private land in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Between July 2024 and June 2025, we approved 170 covenants and registered 132 new covenants, bringing the total amount of registered covenants to 5,382 and the total amount of hectares protected by a QEII covenant to 186,246.

Despite the strong number of special sites protected in the 2024/2025 financial year, this year we have had to make some tough decisions around what we can feasibly achieve within the bounds of our current baseline funding. Essentially, we have had to decrease the number of new areas we can protect with QEII open space covenants each year.

So, what has this meant on the ground? As we outlined on our website, we have been working on a process this year to prioritise the areas of highest need of protection. It's disappointing that we can't help everyone who comes to us to protect a site, but we now have a plan to protect what we can with what we have.

While we have come up with a plan for the situation as it stands currently, my hope is that this will be temporary. We are continuing to seek a more sustainable increase to our baseline funding from the government. But alongside this, support from our members and donors means the world to us at this time.

We recently had some very welcome news of a bequest to QEII. This meaningful gesture will have real impact on the ground over the coming years, and I am very grateful to this person and their family.

I also want to acknowledge all that our QEII covenant owners already do for the natural world every day. Making space on your land for biodiversity to increase is already such a great way to care for your special part of the world. But for some that's only the start. So many of you impress me with your trapping, weed control, planting and maintenance, all amongst your busy lives. Keep up the great work!

Thank you for all that you have done for nature this year. See you in 2026!

Ngā mihi

Dan Coup
Chief Executive
QEII National Trust



Plate 1: Recent QEII Newsletter advising on limited covenant process

- ii. A covenant could be offered to the landowner, for example, in exchange for biodiversity grant funding from ADC or,
 - iii. As an offset or compensation condition for a land use change or subdivision resource consent under section 108 Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA).
10. A conservation covenant allows the property to remain under private ownership while imposing legally binding restrictions that require the owner to comply with specified terms and conditions. Acquiring the relevant land from private owners to protect, preserve, and enhance waterways and wetlands is not always feasible.
 11. The placement of a conservation covenant on any private property, without transfer of ownership, offers a cost-effective mechanism for Council to facilitate biodiversity protection. This approach eliminates the need for capital expenditure associated with land acquisition while ensuring ecological values are protected.
 12. Such covenants may be established in perpetuity or for a defined period.
 13. The area within the property that is subject to the covenant is defined through a formal survey. Once the survey plan is approved by Land Information NZ, the conservation covenant is registered against the property's title. Covenants can only be surrendered from the property owner's title in the future with Council's approval.
 14. The cost of establishing a conservation covenant includes legal services and a legal survey, which will be covered either by the landowner who requests the covenant on their property, or by developers seeking to offset biodiversity impacts within a proposed development site.
 15. For landowners, these costs may be partially funded through the Council's biodiversity grant, provided all grant criteria are met, including a 50% cost contribution from the landowner.
 16. Officers have prepared draft conservation covenant frameworks in **Appendix 1**, highlighting different scenarios a site may qualify for the conservation covenant within the Ashburton District and criteria for assessing a site for conservation covenants.
 17. Note that this covenant proposal is based on Reserve Act 1977 and it's currently not affected by the proposed Resource Management Act (RMA) law changes.
 18. The new Planning Bill emphasizes property rights and streamlined consenting, so covenants such as the proposed conservation covenants, remain a **voluntary tool** rather than a regulatory requirement.

19. Officers have prepared draft conservation covenant terms in **Appendix 2**. These terms will form the base of the covenant, with additional terms specific to the circumstances of the site drafted by Council.
20. Within these terms, the landowner remains responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the site in perpetuity or within the agreed covenanted period, including fencing, weed and pest control, and additional planting. Other than potentially through grant funding, no costs will be incurred by the Council.
21. As the primary purpose of conservation covenant is to safeguard and protect the biodiversity and environmental values, the covenant will not always allow public access compared to other Open Space Reserves. A private landowner would have to agree to public access across their land as one of the terms of the covenant.
22. Also, landowners may be able to apply for a 50% rates remission on any land in the district with a conservation covenant under the Reserves Act 1977, as stipulated in the Ashburton District Council [Rates Remission Policy 2024-27](#) (clauses 17-18). The purpose of this rates remission is to “*..facilitate the protection and preservation of sites significant for natural, historic, or cultural conservation purposes*”.
23. Officers would enter into conservation covenants on the terms contained in Appendix 1, with some modifications to these terms based on the specifics of the particular site.

What other Councils are doing

24. Several Councils around New Zealand are actively using conservation covenants to protect natural, cultural, or historical values. These include Selwyn District Council, Auckland Council, Christchurch City Council, Waimakariri District Council, Whangārei District Council, Far North District Council, and Wellington City Council.
25. Some of these covenants are encouraged for long-term protection measures for ecological, cultural, and landscape values under s77, for example through a Council’s biodiversity fund, rates relief or ecological advice during consenting process.

Legal/policy implications

Reserve Act 1977 Section 77

26. The proposed conservation covenant aligns with Section 77 of the Reserves Act 1977, which authorises local authorities to enter into conservation covenants over private land without acquiring ownership, provided the land is managed to preserve natural, landscape, wildlife, or historical values.

Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)

27. Under the RMA, the protection of biodiversity is recognised as a matter of national importance through Section 6(c), which requires all decision-makers to “*recognise and provide for the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna*”.
28. Establishing conservation covenants provide a practical mechanism to secure a **voluntary** long-term protection of high-value ecological sites on private land, complementing RMA consent conditions and ensuring alignment with national biodiversity objectives.

Ashburton District Plan

29. Ashburton District Plan objective 3.2 states to:

“Protect, maintain and/or enhance indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems by controlling and managing activities that have the potential to affect the life supporting capacity of soils, and water quality in the lakes, rivers and wetlands and significant nature conservation values.”

30. Conservation covenants will provide a practical mechanism to secure a voluntary long-term protection of high-value ecological sites on private land, in addition to the existing areas of significant conservation values (ASCV).

Ashburton District Council Rates Remission Policy 2024

31. The Ashburton District Council Rates Remission Policy 2024 (clauses 17–18) supports rates relief for land under conservation covenants, facilitating protection of sites with significant natural, historic, or cultural values.

Ashburton District Biodiversity Strategy 2024

32. The proposal is consistent with Council’s Biodiversity Strategy action 1.1b, which aims to “encourage covenants and other forms of land protection in private properties and Council reserves with ecological values”.

Strategic alignment

33. The recommended option relates to Council’s community outcome of “*A balanced & sustainable environment*” because our unique landscapes and indigenous biodiversity are valued and enhanced.

34. The proposal will lead to protection of our valued indigenous biodiversity remnants, habitats of indigenous biodiversity and unique landscapes around the district.

Financial implications

35. Establishing covenants will not have any financial implications. Landowners or developers are expected to cover the legal and survey costs.
36. However, site ecological assessment and monitoring will be done by Council Ecologist and Biodiversity Advisor every two years after the date of agreement, and then at five-year intervals thereafter. This will form part of the ongoing biodiversity monitoring around the district.

Action Sought

37. The group is requested to deliberate and support the report being presented to Council regarding the establishment of the Ashburton District Conservation Covenant under Section 77 of the Reserves Act.

APPENDIX 1- Draft Conservation Covenant Framework

Proposed Ashburton District Council Conservation Covenant Framework based on Section 77 of the Reserve Act 1977

Conservation covenants

A conservation covenant is a legally binding agreement between a landowner and an authorised agency under section 77 of the Reserves Act 1977. The landowner continues to own the site, while managing it in accordance with the agreement. It protects the natural, cultural, historical, and significant values of a site. The covenanted area is registered on the land title and is binding on future owners of the site.

Covenants are a good example of individuals working with Council to protect and enhance biodiversity values and habitat for threatened species within the district. Conservation covenants in Ashburton District can cover a range of landscapes and habitats. These include native bush, scrub, tussock vegetation land, coastal dune, and wetlands, including man-made swamps, drains, and river margins.

Conservation covenants provision under the Reserves Act 1977

Council is required to establish conservation covenants with landowners on private land by Section 77 of the Reserves Act 1977. For Māori land, covenants can be created under the Te Turi Whenua Māori Act 1993.

A covenant can be placed on a site at any time and the costs to set up a covenant are met by the landowner. These costs include:

- surveying
- legal costs and registering the covenant on the property title.
- expert reports (if applicable)

To establish a covenant with the Council, an applicant should contact the biodiversity@adc.govt.nz. Further information can be found [here](#).

Benefits of conservation covenants

A conservation covenant ensures long-term protection of a site, either permanently or for a specified duration (such as 50 years), safeguarding its ecological and cultural values. Such protection can increase property values along with natural, cultural, and historic values.

Landowners who enter into covenants may receive rate remission for the covenanted area, and ecological and technical advice for managing the site. There will also be a quinquennial (five-year period) monitoring of the covenanted area from the Council Ecologist.

Generally, covenants can improve a site in many ways:

- protecting remnant vegetation and sensitive landscapes in Mid-Canterbury
- creating habitat corridors to protect ecosystems for native plants and animals
- enhancing water quality and ecosystem values
- reducing erosion by retiring flood-prone or hilly slopes for conservation
- contributing to reducing climate change by storing carbon through planting.

Type of site that would qualify for a conservation covenant

Specifically, with the Ashburton District, sites that could qualify for conservation covenants include:

- i. Native forest remnants include beech forest and other forests with rare or threatened indigenous species.
- ii. Stream channels and riparian margin within a natural drain or stockwater race networks with a setback more than 10 meters from the stream edge.
- iii. Wetlands, including peat lakes, ephemeral tarns, swamps, bogs, and red tussock wetlands.
- iv. Coastal ecosystems such as dunes, coastal dongas with remnants of indigenous vegetation, estuaries, and drains.
- v. Tussock grasslands and rocky outcrops, particularly in the high countries and foothills.
- vi. Geological formations such as limestone outcrops with indigenous plants, rocky outcrops and gullies with indigenous fauna habitats.
- vii. Archaeological or cultural heritage sites, including wāhi tapu (sacred sites), tupuna (ancestral grounds) and urupā (burial grounds).
- viii. Scenic landscape areas with high visual or recreational value.

- ix. Recently restored landscapes, wetlands, riparian margins with indigenous biodiversity, with or without original remnants of indigenous biodiversity (as exchange for biodiversity grant).

Criteria for assessing sites for a conservation covenant

i. Ecological and Biodiversity

Conservation covenants are generally offered for the protection of remnant biodiversity sites, cultural sites that holds ecological values, and habitats of rare and threatened species. Sites considered for conservation covenants are generally assessed on their ecological significance and contribution to biodiversity protection.

1. Ecological significance
 - a. Presence of threatened or rare species.
 - b. Representativeness of rare and unprotected ecosystems.
 - c. High biodiversity value or ecological integrity.
2. Landscape and scenic values
 - a. Visually striking or culturally iconic landscapes.
 - b. Contribution to regional or national scenic character.
3. Habitat quality
 - a. Intactness and connectivity of habitat.
 - b. Potential for restoration or enhancement.
4. Cultural or historical values
 - a. Sites with archaeological features, wāhi tapu, or historical relevance.

ii. Through subdivision or land use change consenting process

A conservation covenant may also be established voluntarily if a landowner volunteers it as a condition, or if it is included in the application as an offset concession to ensure that ecologically, riparian margin or culturally significant areas be given permanent protection when development occurs. This approach ensures that adverse effects from the environmental impacts are mitigated and sensitive habitats, riparian margins, wetlands, or cultural sites are safeguarded from land use intensification.

Here, the management of a site protected through a conservation covenant imposed as part of a resource consent process remains the responsibility of the landowner, except where the site is designated as an esplanade reserve, in which case the Council assumes management.

iii. Exchange for Biodiversity Grant

A conservation covenant may be offered as a rebate for a biodiversity grant to a landowner undertaking restoration or revegetation planting on sites that do not meet any of the above criteria. The agreement will be finalised during the disbursement of the grant funding to the applicant.

Landowners' responsibilities

If a conservation covenant exists in a land that you own or have bought, you are responsible for its management and maintenance. Some assistance may be obtained from the Council Biodiversity grant for assistance with fencing and pest control, although this is not guaranteed.

Your responsibilities may include:

- undertaking pest and weed management
- maintenance of access tracks and perimeter fences
- encouraging the regeneration of native vegetation
- enhancement planting

You are responsible for ensuring that the site is maintained and preserved. Any work restricted by the covenant agreement will require the Council's prior written approval.

Monitoring

The proposed conservation covenant will be monitored every **two years** after the date of agreement, and then at five-year intervals thereafter. The monitoring will assess and reports on the state of the covenant. Council will provide a copy of the report to the landowner.

APPENDIX 2- Draft Conservation Covenant Instrument

CONSERVATION COVENANT

Parties

ASHBURTON DISTRICT COUNCIL (the **Council**)

[] (the **Owner**)

Background

- A. The Owner is the registered owner of the Land described in Schedule 1 on **XX Road, Ashburton**.
- B. The Council is authorised by the Reserves Act 1977 (**the Act**) to obtain conservation covenants in respect of any private land for the purpose of managing that land so as to preserve the natural environment, or landscape amenity, or wildlife or freshwater-life or marine-life habitat, or historical value, where that particular purpose or purposes can be achieved without acquiring the ownership of the Land.
- C. The Owner has agreed to grant the Council a conservation covenant over part of the Land for the purposes of ongoing protection and management of the areas of **[insert the special characteristics of land]** identified in **[insert description, ie. Condition X of resource consent LUC25/XXX.]**

TERMS OF THE DEED OF COVENANT

1. DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 1.1. In this Deed, unless the context indicates otherwise:

“**Act**” means the Reserves Act 1977;

“**Council**” means Ashburton District Council and includes its successors as territorial authority where the Land is situated and, where appropriate, its officers and agents;

“**Covenant Area**” means the area marked **ABC** on Deposited Plan **XYZ** as described in Schedule 1 of this Deed;

“**Land**” means the land described in Schedule 1 of this Deed; and

“**Owner**” means the owner named in this Deed and includes the Owner’s successors, but only as long as they are the registered owner of the Land.

- 1.2. In this Deed:
 - 1.2.1. Where obligations bind more than one person, those obligations bind those persons jointly and severally; and
 - 1.2.2. The Schedule to this Deed has the same effect as if set out in the body of this Deed.

2. COVENANTS

- 2.1. As from the date of registration of this Deed, the Owner covenants under section 77 of the Act that it will at the Owner's cost and to the Council's reasonable satisfaction comply with the Owner's obligations and responsibilities contained in this covenant in relation to the Covenant Area.

3. OWNER'S OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the parties, the Owner covenants with the Council: **[Note – these are examples only – to be drafted on a case by case basis]**
 - 3.1.1. To not permit farm animals to graze within the Covenant Area.
 - 3.1.2. That indigenous vegetation, (except for invasive weeds and exotic trees), within the Covenant Area shall not be cut down or destroyed.
 - 3.1.3. To not build any buildings or structures on the Covenant Area.
 - 3.1.4. **Add anything else specific to the Covenant Area.**
- 3.2. The Owner must: **[Note – these are examples only – to be drafted on a case by case basis]**
 - 3.2.1. Manage the Covenant Area, including the addition and removal of plants and fauna, consistent with the objectives of the covenant.
 - 3.2.2. Fence the boundaries of the Covenant Area, with such fences to be constructed and maintained for the life of the covenant to a stock proof standard.
 - 3.2.3. Keep the Covenant Area free of rubbish, and other unsightly or offensive material.
 - 3.2.4. Keep the Covenant Area clear of invasive weeds and pests and exotic tree species.
 - 3.2.5. **Add anything else specific to the Covenant Area.**

4. COUNCIL'S ACCEPTANCE

- 4.1. The Council accepts the terms of this covenant, but without limiting any other rights or powers which the Council may have under any statute, bylaw or regulation, except as expressly provided in this Deed.
- 4.2. The Owner's liability under this Deed will not be affected by any delay, extension of time or waiver by the Council, or by the Council failing to enforce any of the covenants.

SCHEDULE 1 – LAND SUBJECT TO COVENANT

Record of Title	Legal Description	Covenant Area
CBA/1234	Lot 1 DP 12345	'A'

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 December 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 is continuing to meet with more stakeholders to discuss aspects of the strategy implementation for which they have input.

- i. **BS Action 3.1A:** *“Compile general biodiversity information on the Ashburton District and its characteristic features and make it available to the public”.*

Collation of information and photographs of rare and threatened biodiversity (both plant and animal species) found in Mid-Canterbury is ongoing. If you or your group hold any relevant information, please get in touch with me to discuss further. The gathered information will be developed into a booklet and published online on the Council website.

- ii. **BS Action 4.3C-** *“Environmental Champions Award to celebrate landowners, volunteers, conservation groups, and individuals with great achievements in biodiversity space in Mid-Canterbury”.*

Council has adopted ADBAG recommendation to establish an Environmental Champions Award in 2026 round of Community Award.

- iii. **BS Action 1.1b:** *“Encourage covenants and other forms of land protection in private properties and Council reserves with ecological values.”*

Conservation covenant is being considered today to manage sites that do not meet QEII criteria and in meeting with the mentioned BS action.

- iv. **BS Action 3.1E and 2.1E**- *“Initiate and support biodiversity research within Ashburton District to foster relationships and increase the knowledge base and available information” and “Investigate the ecologically suitable riparian buffer and promote it to the community.”*

We are developing a PhD- or research-level MSc project brief titled *“Characterizing biodiversity values and threats within New Zealand agricultural landscapes”*, with a particular focus on the Mid-Canterbury region. Once finalised, the project brief will be sent to both the University of Canterbury and Lincoln University to seek a suitable student to undertake the research. Funding for the project is expected to come through the respective university scholarship schemes.

- v. **BS Action 3.3G**: *“Organise seminars and workshops for landowners, stakeholders and primary sectors on environmental issues and outcomes.”*

Workshop was held at the Rakaia recreation center on pest control and managing biodiversity values in town center on February 11, 2026. This was co-organized with the Rakaia Lions and up to 30 community members attended the event.

- vi. **BS Action 3.4B**- *“Celebrate International Biodiversity (22 May) and Conservation Days (28 July) with the schools and community.”*

World Biodiversity Day Planting 2026 is proposed to be held at the Wakanui Beach Reserve restoration site on Sunday, 22 May 2026. This event will involve Council staff, **ADBAG members**, and the wider community.

2. Council Biodiversity Grant Application Round for 2026

The next round of Council Biodiversity Grant applications will open on 1st March and will close by end of March. 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.

3. Harris Scientific Reserve

- i. **Special plants labels**: These labels for special plants have been produced with funding from the Council biodiversity operational fund and pending installation by the ACCT team. Next phase will be an interpretative panel to highlight the biodiversity values within the Scientific Reserve.
- ii. **Conservation restoration plan**- Plan is underway to develop a conservation and restoration plan to support the ongoing project at the Harris Scientific Reserve. The aim is to capture the intent of the founders and ensure that future work programs align with the original purpose of the reserve. The writing may be done by an external consultant or by the Council Ecologist in collaboration with the Ashburton Community Conservation Trust.
- iii. **Lizard habitat project**- This project is continuing to mitigate some adverse impacts from an ongoing project. Planned actions include creating new lizard habitats using rock piles, animal pest trapping and repair of the predator proofed fences.

- iv. **Investigation on edge effect to dry land habitat:** Edge effect, defined as changes in physical and biological conditions that occur at the boundary of two or more habitats have been flagged as a concern in the reserve. In this case, the interface between the Harris Scientific Reserve dryland habitat and the adjoining irrigated farmland presents potential ecological pressures. An investigation into these edge effects is being developed concurrently with the research project referenced in section 1(iv).
- 4. Ō Tū Wharekai Integrated Management Plan-** The management plan is close to being finalised by the working group, but currently on hold following a request from the catchment group due to limits on available capacity for the project. The purpose of the plan is to manage and address the declining water quality and biodiversity values within the basin and will be circulated to ADBAG and other stakeholders (F&B, LCCHA etc) when completed. The group is also developing digital dashboard to display water quality results.
- 5. Completed Projects (Weed management)-** Due to the wet summer season we experienced, more weed control projects were completed early this year, along with some pre-plant spraying for the upcoming autumn plantings. Weed spraying on existing planting sites included the Rakaia Gorge planting area, Ashton Beach significant vegetation slope, Smallbone Drive Reserve planting, Taylors Stream Reserve planting, and the Wakanui Beach restoration planting sites.
- 6. Planned Plantings and Pest Control Projects for 2026**
- i. **EA Network Centre drainage channel and slopes-** progressive planting until 2028.
 - ii. **Ashburton Dog Park** adjoining the riverbank- community event. Weed spray completed and planting with suitable natives will be undertaken in 2026.
 - iii. **Mill Creek Riparian Planting- Allens Road and Pages Road axis.**
 - iv. **Hinds’ septic soakage field planting-** Project brief already sent to contractors and project to be awarded in 2026 subject to funding. We expect the planting to be completed thereafter.
 - v. **Stage 2 Taylors Stream Reserve planting-** Bridge side slope and infill planting – still in planning phase.
 - vi. **Stage 2 Bowyers Stream planting** - Wet areas beside the plantation that are difficult to mow and infill if needed – still in planning phase.
- 7. Planned Community Volunteering Events for 2026**
- i. **Planting at the EA Network Centre** - scheduled for Saturday 11th April 2026 and to be undertaken by a community group, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
 - ii. **Lake Camp/Clearwater wilding pine removal** – Sunday 26th April 2026.
 - iii. **World Biodiversity Day Planting 2026-** Wakanui Beach Reserve Restoration – Sunday May 22, 2026.
 - iv. **Annual Harris Scientific Reserve Planting** – 2nd weekend in September (annually-collaborative event with Ashburton Community Conservation Trust).

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 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 appropriate
- Provide advice to Council on biodiversity related matters.

Membership

Representatives on the advisory 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 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 Gilkison

Cr Phill Everest

Toni Durham (GM Community & Open Spaces)

Ian Soper (Open Spaces Manager)

Dr Christian Chukwuka (Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor)

Ashburton Community Conservation Trust

Awa Awa Rata Reserve

Department of Conservation

Environment Canterbury

Federated Farmers

Fish & Game

Fonterra

Foothills Landcare Group

Forest & Bird

Kanuka Trust

Lake Heron Conservation Society

Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective

Mt Somers Walkway Society

QEII Trust

Synlait

Upper Rangitata Gorge Landcare Group

Membership of the Advisory 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 elected 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