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## *Biodiversity Advisory Group*

Minutes of the Biodiversity Advisory Group held on Tuesday 2 February, commencing at 1.08pm at the Council Chamber, 137 Havelock Street, Ashburton.

**Present:** Councillors Diane Rawlinson (Chair), Bert Hofmans (ADC); Steve Fabish (ADC); Val Clemens (Forest & Bird and ACCT), Mike Salvesen (Federated Farmers); Barry Austin (Mt Somers Walkway Soc. & Lake Heron Conservation Soc.); Donna Field (ECan & Whitcombe Landcare Group); Alice Shanks (QEII Trust); Ian Fraser (DOC); and Brad Edwards (DOC).

**In attendance:** Aisling O'Reilly (Governance Support - minutes); Angela Cushnie (Kānuka Trust and Water Zone Committee), Richie Owen (Mt Hutt Ski Area), Justin Legg (MHV Water)

### **1 Apologies**

Mayor Neil Brown, Cr Lynette Lovett, Jayde Couper, Gen De Spa, Mary Ralston, Marcelo Wibmer and Edith Smith.

Austin/Field

Carried

### **2 Extraordinary Business**

Nil

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

Nil

### **4 Confirmation of Minutes – 8/12/20**

**That** the minutes of the Biodiversity Advisory Group meeting held on 8 December 2020 be taken as read and confirmed.

Clemens/Austin

Carried

*Ian Fraser and Brad Edwards arrived at 1:12pm*

*Moved to agenda item 7 as Richie Owen was running late.*

### **7 Agency Updates**

#### **Department of Conservation (Brad Edwards)**

- Over the past 18 months DOC have been working closely with runaka Arowhenua to form a relationship and together are working towards creating a river management plan for the Rangitata (Rakitata). A working group called the Rangitata Restoration Working Group has been formed.
- There will be some workshops with the residents who live along the river to see how they can draw these people into the project.
- This will be an ongoing project. There is no specific timeline.
- The working group have created a vision statement with a set of objectives under this. There are action points cascading out of this. Vision is to restore the

mauri of the river. This is the vision for Arowhenua also. This is central to the project. Great opportunity to take the story of the Arowhenua out to the rest of the community.

- Barry Austin advised that Ecan have been awarded a lot of money to restore the flood damage of the river and asked if this will hinder what the group have to do. Brad advised that ECan are on the same page and the flood works restoration is a part of the conversation.

Ian Fraser

- This is now the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> season in the Rangitata River in terms of predator control work which has been partly funded by ECAN. While things have improved, it is probably not enough. Some LINZ funding will go towards predator control work.
- Recruiting through LINZ funding to hire a 3.5 year position to manage this work. This is all Covid recovery money.

### **Forest and Bird (Val Clemens)**

- Black-Billed Gulls: Edith has been in close contact with the family whose farm has been used as a nesting site. This family has been monitoring the birds and trapping pests. There is also a nesting site at the Arundel Bridge.
- Harris Reserve: the latest planting of *Carex secta* along the water race went well. Another large area has been sprayed and ripped for future plantings and an enclosure for tiny plants is being constructed. This will house plants such as *Craspedia* “Wakanui” and the smaller members of the *Carmichaelia* or native broom family, among others.
- Just before Christmas two members dealt to 40 flowering Russell Lupins and about 250 of their offspring, from near the old rubbish dump in the Hakatere Conservation Park. Some willows, broom and gorse were also treated with herbicide.
- The next Forest and Bird Meeting is Tuesday 16 February at 7.30pm at Sinclair Centre. Ecologist Nick Head will be speaking at this meeting on the topic: “*Battle for the Biome - The Mackenzie Basin - a fraught journey to protection (or not)*”.  
With barely a native species to be seen on the road between Christchurch and Timaru, the Canterbury Plains are a stark reminder of the issues confronting nature conservation in low- altitude, low-lying environments of New Zealand. As a result, remaining dryland ecosystems are the least protected and most threatened in the country. This talk provides a recent history of the struggle to protect the internationally significant biome of the Mackenzie Basin.
- Val spoke to the group about the case for a Biodiversity Officer.  
The need for this role is obvious when reading the Biodiversity Action Plan which lists 5 objectives and 26 actions needed to support those objectives. The National Biodiversity Strategy was launched in August 2020 which will begin to increase the work required by ADC. To do this work effectively and efficiently will require considerable expertise.  
Selwyn District Council has two Biodiversity Officers, one of whom has a Master’s Degree in Conservation and Ecology. There is a need within council for similarly qualified people.
- Forest & Bird see an opportunity to hold a seminar for people who are looking to do some native planting. Many landowners are very keen to enhance any areas with remaining native plants on their farms, or to plant natives as shelter belts or general enhancement. Natives not only provide resources for beneficial

insects (research at Lincoln University has found that ti kouka/cabbage trees support 19 species of beneficial insects and no insect pests), but also food and shelter for birds. They also don't need trimming every year or two.

- It was suggested that the Biodiversity Advisory Group support the staging of a seminar to provide some of the information people are looking for, ways to find support and fund their projects. Topics that could be covered in the seminar:  
Positive reasons for planting natives.  
Site selection & assessing environmental conditions at the site.  
Site preparation.  
Plant selection & where to buy plants.  
Best practice planting techniques.  
Funding opportunities and accountability.  
Record keeping.  
Ongoing maintenance, especially weed control.  
Support available from milk companies, local councils, etc.
- Volunteers from the Biodiversity Advisory group were sought.
- Alice Shanks mentioned how the planting that is going into the town now is not reflective of the Council's support for biodiversity as there is no native biodiversity being planted. Kowhai is the native plant for this district. Additionally, the trees that were planted in Hinds are the wrong trees for the soil type there.
- Angela Cushnie suggested that this discussion should all be part of the submission to the LTP.

#### **Mt Somers Walkway Society & Lake Heron Conservation (Barry Austin)**

- Starting wasp control programme tomorrow. Evidence suggests that the wasps are not as bad as they have been.

#### **Ecan & Whitcombe Landcare Group(Donna Field)**

- Ecan have done some water sampling at Lake Clearwater and will now be investigating further. People can now go swimming.
- Have received some funding from Fonterra to do some work on Mt Harding Stream. Looking at doing some restorative work with the mauri of the river here.
- Whitcombe Landcare group have received some extra funding. Wilding pine control is ongoing. Just completed a goose cull which was very successful.
- There was relatively small amounts of vandalism over the summer at Ashton Beach. Some ongoing problems with some people using their bikes.
- Underground beach to bridge run: keep an eye on Facebook for this. Unsure of how to best manage this at this point. Don't want people going down through to the beach and going through the reserve.

#### **General Updates**

##### **Lake Clearwater**

- Ian Hyde advised that Tangata Whenua, Ecan, FENZ DOC and ADC are very much involved. There are also hut owners involved. There has been a lot of work done by Ecan. It is emerging that there doesn't seem to be an easy solution but there are steps to be taken to improve the situation.

##### **Ashburton District Council (Bert Hofmans)**

- Bert updated on the process for the LTP in regards to the creation of a Biodiversity Officer role. Submissions will open in mid-march for about 4 weeks.

- It was discussed that individual submissions from each group should be done and that if the Biodiversity Advisory Group want to make a submission, Crs Rawlinson and Lovett will exclude themselves from the submission as they cannot then be part of the decision-making process if they make a submission.
- Biodiversity Field Trip  
Places to add to the itinerary:

Plantation Road	
Harris Reserve	
Swamp Road	Alice Shanks to speak at this area
Ferrimans Road	Edith Smith to speak at this area
Carr's Farm	Glenys Carr to speak at this area
Ashton Beach	Bert Hofmans to speak at this area

It was agreed that a half day would be enough time. A day in March will be suggested. Aisling O'Reilly to come back to the group with this.

## **Reports and Presentations**

### **Mt Hutt Ski Area**

- Richie Owen presented on the trapping programme at Mt Hutt.
- Trapping programme now in its third year. Had seen a decline in Kea numbers which was a concern.
- Formed a sustainability group and got funding to start with 50 traps. Trapping is all done on a volunteer basis.
- Since doing this they have had a sighting of one Kea over a number of weeks.
- Have gone around the schools in Mt Hutt and spoken to them about trapping and why Mt Hutt Ski are doing this.
- Started a replanting programme. Got these trees from DOC in Geraldine. Staff volunteers and planted all of these.
- Angela Cushnie stated that there seems to be a lack of cohesion in terms of doing work with the schools. Would be good to try and get some more connectivity around this and is looking for some leadership. Need a hub for our predator control programmes. Kānuka Trust have put an educator in place. The more of this that can be done, the better but need a collection place of the things all the groups are doing.

### **Agency Updates (*continued*)**

#### **Water Zone Committee & Kānuka Trust (Angela Cushnie)**

- Draft work programme has gone in. Working more towards community engagement.
- It is timely to acknowledge Lachie Ashton and the key role he had in getting the Carters Creek project going.
- Kānuka Trust have employed an educator to start their Footprint Project
- Will be working with Ashburton College at a Champions of Change Youth Hui. Hoping to time this in with Youth Council.
- Hinds Reserve Board have started doing some native planting.

### **Next Meeting**

Tuesday 6 April 2021 at 1pm.

The meeting concluded at 2:50pm