

Biodiversity Advisory Group

AGENDA

Notice of Meeting:

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

Date: Monday 12 February 2024

Time: 1.00pm

Venue: Hine Paaka Council Chamber, Te Whare Whakatare
Ashburton Library & Civic Centre, 2 Baring Square East, Ashburton

Membership:

Ashburton District Council

Cr Leen Braam (Chair)
Cr Lynette Lovett
Cr Richard Wilson
Mayor Neil Brown (ex officio)
Neil McCann (Group Manager, Infrastructure & Open Spaces)
Ian Soper (Open Spaces Manager)
Christian Chukwuka (Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor)
Bert Hofmans (Open Spaces Planner)

QEII Trust

Alice Shanks

Ashburton Water Zone Committee

Adi Avnit

Environment Canterbury

Donna Field

Forest & Bird, ACCT

Val Clemens, Edith Smith, Mary Ralston

Awa Awa Rata Reserve

Mary Ralston

Foothills Landcare Group

Gen de Spa

Department of Conservation

Ian Fraser, Brad Edwards

Kanuka Trust

Kim Wall

Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective

Angela Cushnie, Janine Holland, Willy Leferink

Fonterra

Lisa Adams

Synlait

Nick Vernon

Fish & Game

Nikki Dellaway

Federated Farmers

Mike Salvesen

Mt Somers Walkway Society &

Lake Heron Conservation Society

Barry Austin

Biodiversity Advisory Group

Timetable	
Time	Item
1:00pm	Meeting commences
1:05pm	Professor Bruce Clarkson, University of Waikato (via MS Teams)

ORDER OF BUSINESS		Page
1	Apologies	
	- Janine Holland, Mid-Canterbury Catchment Collective	
2	Extraordinary Business	
3	Declarations of Interest	
4	Confirmation of minutes – 13 November 2023	3
5	Presentation:	
	Bringing Indigenous Nature Back Into New Zealand Urban Centres	7
	– Prof Bruce Clarkson	
6	Q&A with the District Planning Manager- Ian Hyde	<i>Verbal</i>
7	Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor’s Report	9
8	Group Updates	20
8.1	- Forest & Bird / ACCT (Edith Smith)	
8.2	- Foothills Landcare Group (Gen de Spa)	

4. Biodiversity Advisory Group Minutes 13/11/23

Minutes of a meeting of the Biodiversity Advisory Group held on Monday 13 November 2023, in the Council Chamber, 137 Havelock Street, Ashburton, commencing at 1.00pm.

Present

Mayor Neil Brown and Councillors Lynette Lovett (Chair) and Richard Wilson;
Alice Shanks, Adi Avnit, Edith Smith, Angela Cushnie, Donna Field, Barry Austin, Lisa Peers-Adams, Kim Wall, Mike Salvesen, Val Clemens, Nick Vernon, Jan Kirini, Ian Soper (Open Spaces Manager) and Christian Chukwuka (Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor)

In attendance

Femke van der Valk (Policy Advisor), Bert Hofmans (Open Spaces Planner), Linda Clarke (Communications Advisor) and Mary Jenkin (Governance Support).

1 Apologies

That apologies received from Cr Leen Braam, Janine Holland, Gen de Spa, Willy Leferink, Ian Fraser, Mary Ralson and Neil McCann be accepted.

Wilson / Avnit

Carried

2 Extraordinary Business

Nil

3 Declarations of Interest

Nil

4 Previous Minutes

That the minutes of the Biodiversity Advisory Group meeting held on 7 August 2023 be taken as read and confirmed.

Avnit / Vernon

Carried

• Wilding management in Rural C Zone

The Biodiversity Officer will provide an update vegetation clearance in the Rural C Zone at the next meeting.

Council's Planning Manager, who was unable to attend today, will be invited to the next meeting. The Group have questions about the expected review of District Plan Rules, as they currently don't meet national standards. Clarification is also sought on whether the Biodiversity Strategy will supersede the District Plan rules.

It was reported that the vegetation clearance rule review depends on planning process and that Council is waiting on central government's direction on the RMA reforms. When directives are in place from the Strategy, they will be adhered to. The expectation is that agencies will work together to achieve a positive outcome.

5 Plantation Road proposal

Edith Smith presented images of *Clematis marata* and native brooms, explaining the significance of these rare native plants. Advocating the proposal to designate Plantation Road as an area of significance, with the opportunity to create another dryland site for the protection of native plants. Would the ADC take on the responsibility of looking after these plants? Recently the shelter belt was cut down and landed on the plants. It was ascertained in this meeting that it was the farmer's responsibility to clear up.

The Mayor noted that Plantation Road is a designated paper road and questioned whether it would be landlocked, if it was planted out. This would be investigated by Roading officers.

The Biodiversity Group agreed it would be useful for members to visit the Plantation Road site with Alice Shanks and the Biodiversity Officer next year. It was further agreed that a site visit would be arranged for Council members if the recommendation is supported.

Recommendation to Council

That Ashburton District Council investigates making the eastern end of Plantation Road an insurance site.

Clemens/ Field

Carried

Mike Salverson, Federated Farmers arrived at 1.40 pm

6 Update on Biodiversity Strategy

Femke van der Valk and Christian Chukwuka presented an update, following Council adopting the draft strategy for consultation. Council is encouraging people in the community to make submissions on the draft strategy for the district. They reported that there has been a positive response from the community – people are eager to read the Biodiversity Strategy document to get the overall picture.

The Biodiversity Strategy community consultation ends on 26 November and a public hearing is scheduled for 14 December.

7 Ecologist / Biodiversity Advisor's report

• 2024 meeting dates

The following dates have been agreed – 12 February, 13 May, 12 August and 11 November 2024, with one field trip in 2024 (date to be determined). It was agreed that meetings will continue to be held on Mondays, at 1pm. Calendar invites will be sent to members.

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

Smith/Vernon

Carried

8 Group Updates

• ECan

Donna Field provided an update on ECan-led projects noting around 4,000 nesting birds (black-billed gulls) were counted at the State Highway Bridge. ECan and Forest & Bird are putting up notices (and there will be some publicity around this), urging people to contact DoC if they see anyone endangering the birds. ECan has no legal right to enforce Wildlife Act to monitor this behaviour.

A trapping workshop will be held this Thursday night at the Mania-o-Roto Scout den. This includes a demonstration to the community on how to use the trap app and set up traps. ECan are also seeking volunteers and trappers.

On 25 November ECan are undertaking the Lower Ashburton bird survey and are seeking volunteers to count birds. This will involve a lot of walking / zigzagging across the river.

The Biodiversity Officer will liaise with Council's communications team to publicise these events.

- **Harris Scientific Reserve**

Work is being undertaken to preserve the *Clematis marata*. A new plant was discovered by Council's Ecologist/Biodiversity Officer on their last visit (displayed a drawing/artwork photo). Have been relying on seeds and there's concern about the loss of the species at this site.

The rings of Kanuka stem found at the site were professionally counted to discover the age and it was found to be 65 years old. There was a lot of Kanuka when Arthur Harris bought the farm. Also, a Manuka tree was discovered in the middle of the covenant area, but not in the Kanuka site, indicating it might have been a species that had been there too.

- **Lake Heron Conservation Society**

Barry Austin spoke about the trapping programme, there are two students from Christchurch that travel down every month to trap pests. Methven Lions have been contacting trappers to see how they can also help and assist with co-ordination. DOC will fund some trapping.

Barry commented on the Wellington's Miramar Peninsula which is predator free - they have a different trapping system with high success rates.

- **Forest & Bird**

Forest and Bird have a trapping strategy with DOC. The Banks Peninsula strategy for pest control has been highly successful. With good funding, management, technology and state of the art traps, good progress can be made. As an example, technology eliminates the need to attend a trap if no predator has been caught.

Donna Field suggested that, in this district, it would be best to identify high value areas where the trapping will make a difference.

- **Foothills Landcare Group**

Jan Kirini reported on the volunteer Weed Wrangling Weekend held in the Mid-Canterbury foothills 27-29 October. There was a lot of community involvement to remove invasive weeds.

- **Kanuka Trust**

Kim Wall reported that the Trust is working with schools and making good traction – 800 plants in schools this year and there has been lots of learning around that.

- **Federated Farmers**

Mike Salvesen spoke about the ongoing Synlait planting programme where they're providing native plants to farmers. He is also continuing to plant native trees on his own farm.

- **Synlait**

Nick Vernon also commented on the programme. 62,000 native plantings across Canterbury, around the Foothills lowlands and Upper Hinds. Synlait will continue to support catchment groups. They are seeing success on farms – for example Thompson's Track, and Mt Harding creek is doing well, as are the shelterbelts.

- **Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective**

Angela Cushnie spoke about the eight catchment groups and an upcoming meeting with a potential group in Mt Harding. Angela thanked Synlait for their support. The plants are an engagement tool, and their value is appreciated.

9 Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 12 February 2024

The meeting concluded at 2.28pm.

5. *Bringing Indigenous Nature back into New Zealand Urban Centres*

Invited Guest Speaker



Prof Bruce D. Clarkson

Programme Leader: People, Cities and Nature,
Environmental Research Institute, University of Waikato

Summary

For more than 20 years I have been researching and advocating for bringing indigenous nature back into New Zealand urban centres. New Zealand's urban centres vary considerably in terms of the extent of indigenous vegetation remaining in the built-up matrix and surrounding peri-urban zones, and in their approach to protecting and enhancing indigenous nature. But momentum is growing despite longstanding myths around the biological fitness of our indigenous flora and fauna. Since 2016 my team and I have been undertaking research in a purposely designed programme People, Cities and Nature built upon the concept that restored urban centres help reverse biodiversity decline while also providing sustainable, health-promoting, and resilient environments for people. I will outline some examples of how indigenous nature is being returned to urban centres. If urban populations value and act to protect the natural environment they could be key to regional and national-scale environmental protection in all its dynamic forms.

Biography

Professor Bruce Clarkson ONZM is recognised as one of New Zealand's foremost authorities on ecological restoration, making significant contributions to conservation through his ongoing research, education, protection, and restoration of native plants and ecosystems over a >40-year career.

Since 2016 he has led 'People, Cities and Nature', a government funded research programme focusing on restoring damaged or depleted indigenous ecosystems in urban environments. His research has guided biodiversity and restoration projects including the Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park and Hamilton's Nature in the City Programme, and he has contributed to many other conservation and restoration projects nationally and internationally.

He is the elected Chair of the Australasian Chapter of the International Society of Restoration Ecology, was a member, by appointment of the Minister of Conservation, of the Interim Oversight Group for the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy and is currently a member the Wildlife Act Review Strategic Oversight Group.

7. *Report from the Council Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor*

Author *Christian Chukwuka, Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor*

GM responsible *Neil McCann, GM Infrastructure & Open Spaces*

Recommendation

1. **That** the Biodiversity Advisory Group receive 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 November 8, 2023.
- The report brings about the opportunity for members to ask questions and seek clarification on any items mentioned.

Report

1. **Update on Biodiversity Strategy Development**

Public hearings and deliberations were completed on 14th December 2023 with positive outcomes from all presenters and elected councillors. The deliberation panel considered the new coalition Government statement for an urgent review of the National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity. While we wait to understand more from the Central Government, it is expected that the amended draft strategy will be presented to the Council for adoption in the first quarter of 2024.

2. **Plantation Road Insurance Reserve**

Council adopted ADBAG recommendation to investigate making Plantation Road, a native vegetation site, an insurance reserve on December 6, 2023. Consultation is currently ongoing with the neighbouring landowners. A report will be prepared and forwarded to the Council once the process has been completed for consideration and implementation. The outcome of the report will be presented to ADBAG before forwarding to the Council.

Also, the repair of dilapidated fences around the native plants has been scheduled and will be completed by our fencing contractor soon.

3. Biodiversity Stocktake Year ending 2023

Periodic biodiversity stocktakes provided to the Regional Council for Biodiversity Champions meeting held in Nov 2023 is provided in Appendix 1. This stocktake outlines significant changes/achievements by the Council since the last Long-Term Planning process in 2021 and does not include community groups' outcomes/projects. **Pg 12**

4. Ōtūwharekai Integrated Management Plan Development

Council Ecologist attended the Ōtūwharekai Integrated Management Plan Workshops held at the Mt Hutt Memorial Hall Methven on 23rd January 2024, organised for the Ōtūwharekai Working Group. The Working Group is made up of Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua representative, Environment Canterbury, farmers in the area, Department of Conservation, Toitū Te Whenua LINZ, Ashburton District Council, Central South Island Fish & Game, the Ministry for the Environment and Ministry for Primary Industries.

Storm Environmental is managing the project on behalf of ECan. The management plan will be circulated to all ADBAG members when it's ready for input.

5. Biodiversity Grant

A new round of grant applications has opened since February 1, 2024. Council reviewed all grant criteria on December 16, 2023, and the revised biodiversity grant criteria are attached in Appendix 2. The main changes include: **Pg 15**

- Sites with ongoing and legally binding protection, such as a QEII open space covenant or are within areas of significant conservation values (ASCV) in the District Plan will take priority in funding allocation.
- Projects with the purpose of habitat protection or restoration and initiatives or projects that will enhance environmental education or school programmes in the district have been introduced to boost environmental education.
- Projects that have been completed cannot be funded.
- Volunteer time cannot be claimed but could be estimated and used as applicants' contribution to the project.
- Volunteer time to be estimated using the minimum wage at the time of the application.
- Shelterbelt planting has been removed from ineligible projects, but the funding would depend on an acceptable ecological buffer to support biodiversity linkages.
- All funded projects are to be featured on the Council Biodiversity GIS page.

6. Community Engagement

A free Community Workshop on Pest Control was held on January 25, 2024, from 4.30 pm at the Mt Hut Memorial Hall Methven, in collaboration with the Department of Conservation, Environment Canterbury, Methven Lion and Kanuka Trust. About 55 community members attended the workshop. The workshop explored ideas on Methven Lion's birdsong initiatives, how to set and manage trap lines and trap libraries and funding availability for pest control and biodiversity planting in general.

Also, consultation is ongoing for community appetite on street tree planting using native trees in Rakaia township. We have two streets already to be trialled and will extend the model to other towns once completed for both new or replacement tree plantings.

7. School Programme

Methven Primary School Biodiversity Project at Taylors Stream Reserve: The Methven Primary School Children (aged 10) undertook mulching activities at the Taylors Stream Reserve, the newly planted native trees, on November 30, 2023. This is the school's commitment to expose the children to real-life scenarios outside the classroom and away from the school. They have indicated an interest in managing the site going forward as their school endeavour.

Ashburton Borough School Planting programme: Ashburton Borough School Year. 8 pupils will be undertaking planting at the Smallbone Drive reserve as part of their school project on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. They picked the 15th goal, life on land, for this project. Native Plants for the project are being donated by the parents and Council Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor will oversee the project.

Ashburton College - made contact with the Council for an area to lease for a native planting project as part of their school project. Discussion is ongoing on a suitable site to be leased to the school.

8. Routine District-Wide Biodiversity Monitoring

The district-wide biodiversity monitoring is ongoing across the summer season to monitor existing biodiversity in the district including native vegetation clearance and weed survey. This involves using aerial imagery and drive-throughs around the district and the event is completed every six months. No access to private farmland is required.

9. Pudding Hill Stream weed Control (collaboration with Donna Field, ECan)

Control of willows, sycamore trees, larches, Douglas fir, Himalayan honeysuckle, alders, poplars and monkey musk along the pudding hill stream is ongoing. The project was initiated by the Ashburton District Biodiversity Advisory Group and managed by the Council Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor and ECan's Biodiversity and Land Management Advisor. We have received \$8,000 in funding from the Water Zone Committee towards the project.

10. Completed and Ongoing Projects (Planting and Pest Management)

- a) ***Pest Control at Awa Awa Rata Reserve:*** Quarterly animal pest control using night shooting completed at Awa Awa Rata Reserve. We have extended the project coverage into DOC land and have gotten buy-in from the neighbours. The next project phase will be March/April 2024.
- b) ***Annual animal pest control around Lake Camp/Clearwater*** is planned for February 2024. This is to reduce the number of rabbits/hares around the area and part of the extensive pest management approach at the Council-managed land at the Lakes. A long-term solution would be installing rabbit-proof around the huts. Consultation with Hutholders and Council contractors is ongoing.

- c) **Weed Control:** We completed annual weed control at Ashton Beach and Lake Camp/Clearwater in December 2023, before the summer holidays. This is to suppress the spread of undesirable weeds around the area. Some of the weeds sprayed include Russel lupins, gorse, broom, wilding pines, rowans and silver birch.

11. Update on Wilding Management in Rural C Zone within the legislation – item from previous ADBAG meeting – *Planning manager will be speaking on this today.*

Three pieces of legislation are put together when considering Plantation Forestry activity in the Rural C Zone. These include the Ashburton District Plan, National Policy Statement on Indigenous Vegetation and National Environmental Standards for Plantation Forestry.

With the **Ashburton District Plan rules**, all tree Planting in the Rural C Zone is limited to shelterbelts within the “Shelterbelt Areas” as shown on the ADC Planning Maps. The following trees with high wilding risk potentials below are not permitted to be planted.

Lodgepole pine	<i>Pinus contorta</i>
Scots Pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
Corsican Pine	<i>Pinus nigra</i>
Dwarf mountain pine	<i>Pinus uncinata</i>
Mountain Pine	<i>Pinus mugo</i>
Douglas fir	<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>
All poplars	<i>Salicaceae</i> species (except Lombardy Poplars: male clones)
All larches	<i>Larix</i> species
All alders	<i>Alnus</i> species
All willows	<i>Salix</i> species
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i> (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)

While Plantation Forestry in Rural A and B zones are permitted activities [DP 3.8.2(d)], Plantation Forestry in Rural C zone is a discretionary activity requiring resource consent [DP 3.8.5(a)]. The Council considers applications for this activity on a case-by-case basis using effect management hierarchy (avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects). Points to consider when considering plantation forestry activity in the Rural C zone include the wilding risk potential of the tree species, setbacks from public conservation lands, roads and areas of significant value and adverse effects on the landscape value.

Plantation forestry activities can continue within the National Policy Statement on Indigenous Vegetation provided that the adverse effects are managed in a manner that maintains the long-term population of any Threatened or At Risk (declining) species present in the area using effect management hierarchy (avoid, remedy, mitigate, offset or compensate). These include existing forestry plantations, new planting proposals or replanting. But where plantation forestry is allowed to take place would depend on the District Plan rural zoning rules.

Within the (**National Environmental Standards for Plantation Forestry**) **Regulations 2017**, “Afforestation must not occur within a significant natural area or an outstanding natural feature or landscape (NES-PF Part 2(12)”. Also, Afforestation must not occur within 10 m of an SNA, a perennial river with a bank full channel width of 3 m or more, a lake larger than 0.25 ha, an outstanding freshwater body, a water body subject to a water conservation order; 5 m of the perennial river and wetland larger than 0.25ha; and within 30 m of the coastal marine area. Recall that most of the Rural C zone in the ADC district plan are an outstanding natural landscape or an SNA and no plantation forestry is allowed within these areas.

Appendix 1

Stocktake of council biodiversity management actions – Ashburton District Council

A region-wide stocktake was undertaken in 2021, with the aim of compiling a region-wide understanding of the context and delivery of biodiversity management across all local government agencies in Canterbury.

The stocktake sought to identify gaps between the national and regional requirements and implementation and highlighted potential opportunities or priorities for a regional approach.

The responses below were provided by staff at your council as part of a discussion with Environment Canterbury Biodiversity Strategy staff.

With the release of the National Policy Statement (NPSIB), it is timely to update the previous stocktake and gather additional feedback regarding council implementation of the NPSIB.

Please indicate changes since the 2021 survey in the table below.

	Ashburton District Council (2021)	Ashburton District Council – 2023 (changes)
District population¹ and setting	35,400 Mainly rural with moderate urban population	36,800 Mainly rural with moderate urban population
Is there a clear strategic direction and/or work programme in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashburton District Biodiversity Action Plan (2017-22). Biodiversity working group drive BAP along and give external input into the implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashburton District Biodiversity Strategy 2023-2024 is under development and hope to be finalised in 2024. The Biodiversity Strategy will replace the already elapsed Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2022. Ashburton District Biodiversity Advisory Group (ADBAG)– comprises of stakeholders with interest in biodiversity around the district, meets 4x per year. The group will drive the strategy implementation at the community level.
Non-regulatory actions (funding, partnerships, community support, advice & education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No direct funding for work on council land. Sourced from other budgets, e.g. \$30k/yr from rural reserves to fund pest control, plantings on 3 pieces of council land. 3 x QEII covenants on council land. Council looking at setting up 'insurance reserves' to collect/protect most important species, as a last resort. No Enviroschools in district (or council support given). Native plant site markers placed around district, e.g. roadsides, to highlight significant biodiversity Administer \$15k biodiversity grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct funding for work on Council land is in place for pest control, restoration and revegetation plantings on reserves or Council land with ecological significance. District-wide biodiversity monitoring in place since 2022. 3 pieces of council land; 3 x QEII covenants on council land. Council looking at setting up 'insurance reserves' to collect/protect the most important species, as a last resort. 2 EnviroSchools, 7 Kanuka Trust and 2 ACCT-led school programs in the district. Funding is being sought through biodiversity strategy to extend the program to more schools.

¹ Stats NZ Infoshare tool. Estimated Resident Population for Territorial Authority Areas, at 30 June (Annual-Jun)

	Ashburton District Council (2021)	Ashburton District Council – 2023 (changes)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No formal monitoring plan and little monitoring done. <p><i>From Fit For Future meeting notes (2020):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of stockwater race network – ecological assessments being carried out on stockwater races before closing. Project to increase flows in Wakanui Stream, including planting, supported by community. Ashton Beach/Ashburton River mouth – project to protect braided river birds (providing 4x4 park for bikes and cars elsewhere, extra fencing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native plant site markers placed around the district, e.g., roadsides, to highlight significant biodiversity. Administer \$15k biodiversity grants to the community. Biodiversity monitoring in place since Jan 2022. This includes biannual high country aerial imagery and drive-through to check for vegetation clearance. New Native Planting projects (e.g., Lake Clearwater, Lake Camp, Awa awa rata reserve, and Bowyer's stream reserves; Taylors stream and Rakaia Gorge revegetation planting). Pest monitoring using trail camera since 2022 and ongoing quarterly pest animal control (deer, possums, pigs, rat, mice, mouse) at Awa awa rata reserve and surrounding Department of Conservation forests. Project to increase flows in Wakanui Stream, including planting, supported by community is still under discussion with necessary parties.
Regulatory actions (planning, CME)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Plan – General clearance rules in current plan. ~100 SNAs identified but done a long time ago. Waiting for RMA reform, so plan review currently on hold. Compliance/enforcement is done but is a challenge. Follow up tends to lead nowhere. NPSIB will have a big impact – SNAs ID will need to be done as a fresh exercise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Plan – vegetation clearance rules in current plan. Areas of significant conservation sites (ASCV) contained in the current plan and currently under audit/review to reassess the values. Government has signalled that they want to conduct an urgent review into the implementation of the NPS-IB. Also waiting for RMA reforms, so District plan review is currently on hold. Compliance/enforcement is done but is a challenge. Follow up tends to lead nowhere. SNAs assessment under NPSIB will need to be done as a fresh exercise. Reserve management plan is currently under review to reflect present day legislation and upgrade few areas with ecological values as reserves. Harris Scientific Reserve fall is managed with Reserve management plan.

	Ashburton District Council (2021)	Ashburton District Council – 2023 (changes)
Budget & resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity 0.2 FTE \$30k spent on biodiversity on council land but no specific budget for this (found through other budgets). Work done through Planning. 1 FTE general enforcement. 2 FTE general compliance (cover all council activities) Contestable fund - \$15k biodiversity grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 FTE Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor Operational budget available for projects on council lands, community engagement and district-wide monitoring of biodiversity. Staff time for community engagements and ecological advice to the community 1 FTE general enforcement and compliance staff (cover all council activities). Contestable fund - \$15k biodiversity grants
Challenges (what makes life difficult)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community assistance can drop off (ageing group members). Availability of ecological expertise. Council resource and budget always a challenge. Political challenges - some councillors don't fully understand Council's mandatory role in biodiversity management and see biodiversity as a 'nice to do'. Some feel that farmers have enough to deal with. Other council priorities, e.g. flooding, overshadow biodiversity. Burdon of proof is hard in CME. Landowner understanding and caring is key to change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community assistance can drop off (ageing group members). Changing legislation and policies Political challenges - some councillors don't fully understand Council's mandatory role in biodiversity management and see biodiversity as a 'nice to do'. Some feel that farmers have enough to deal with. Resources for landowners support to maintain ASCV sites and other values not readily available
Opportunities & things that would help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some kind of regional resource for ecology. Regional assistance hub – assistance, coordination and leadership. Vegetation buffers along important areas. More regional council involvement and regional leadership needed. Supporting Enviroschools in district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional resource and support for pest management and replanting at the high country. E.g., wilding pine and animal pest controls in the high country. Supporting school programs in district (Enviroschools/Kanuka Trust and ACCT led-school programs) Vegetation buffers and corridors along important areas such as the three river channels and streams.
LTP 2021-2031 commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases in LTP (unconfirmed): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$150k/year in total (from 1 Jan 2022) Proposed: 1 Biodiversity officer FTE with ecological skills Plus ~\$60k operational budget – focus on delivering BAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed additional \$45,000 p/a funding for biodiversity strategy take-off in 2024 Draft LTP Budget (unconfirmed).

Biodiversity Grant

Scheme Criteria 2024-25

Please read this information prior to completing your application.

Introduction

Ashburton District is rich in biodiversity that forms the district's natural identity and local environment. Protecting this environment requires protecting the processes which ensure its continuing survival – an important function of biodiversity.

Council recognises the importance of indigenous biodiversity to the district and the shared responsibility it has with the community to ensure it is sustained and enhanced, both now and into the future. Council provides annual biodiversity grants through two contestable grant application processes held in August and February of each financial year.

Purpose

The purpose of the Biodiversity Grant Scheme is to assist projects that aim to protect and/or enhance biodiversity in the district.

Grant Eligibility

All Biodiversity projects **must** meet the following criteria:

- Aim to protect, maintain and/or restore biodiversity.
- Be within Ashburton District boundaries (between the Rakitata (Rangitata) and Rakaia Rivers').
- Applications must be from individuals, Businesses, Trusts and Societies, Schools, Clubs and Landcare and Catchment Groups. Applicants must provide landowners' agreement if making the application on behalf of a landowner.

Assessment Considerations

- The degree to which the project will improve, protect, benefit, enhance, restore or reinstate indigenous biodiversity;
- The biodiversity values of the area to which the project relates, including such things as representativeness, distinctiveness, rarity, and long term sustainability;
- The degree of current risk or threat to the biodiversity values being restored, enhanced, protected or maintained as a result of the project;
- Evidence of the applicant's commitment to the project, particularly if it is a long term project;
- The degree of on-going and legally binding protection provided to the project site;
- The use of eco-sourced native plants for planting projects.

Funding

The maximum individual grant available is \$7,500 and can be no more than 50% of the total project cost.

The applicant's share of the project's costs includes volunteer time, donated/gifted goods and services and/or financial contributions. Volunteer time shall be estimated using the minimum wage at the time of the application.

All grants must comply with Council's Community Grants and Financial Assistance Policy.

Funding Priority

The fund is contestable and each application will be assessed on its merits on a case by case basis. Council will prioritise applications that meet one or more of the following funding priorities:

- Projects that will achieve positive biodiversity outcomes.
- Sites that have been the subject of an ecological assessment by a suitably qualified ecologist or biodiversity specialist.
- Sites that have ongoing and legally binding protection, such as a QEII open space covenant;
- Sites within areas of significant conservation values (ASCV) in the District Plan;
- Projects with a purpose of habitat protection or restoration;
- Initiatives or projects that will enhance environmental education or school programmes in the District.

Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be:

- Based in the Ashburton District.
- Applications from a national organisation must be made from the local branch of that organisation.
- Applications will only be accepted on the **completed** Biodiversity Application form.
- Incomplete applications that do not provide all of the requested information will be excluded from funding assessment.

Ineligible Projects

The following projects are **ineligible** for Biodiversity Grant Funding:

- Purchasing of capital items such as motorbikes, trailers, spray units, and tools;
- Projects that generate profit or are for commercial gain;
- Projects which are required by or are the responsibility of a government agency.
- Projects that have been completed at the time of application. Retrospective costs incurred in delivering the project cannot be funded.
- Maintenance of existing fences.
- Planting projects using exotic plant species.

Funding Agreement

Successful applicants must complete and return a funding accountability form on the completion of the project, and within the financial year which funds were granted.

Receipts are required for all expenditure.

Applicants that do not return a completed accountability form will not be eligible for future Council grant funding.

Disclaimer

The final funding decisions are made at the discretion of Ashburton District Council. Successful applicants' project details may be used for publicity purposes and all funded projects will be mapped on Council Biodiversity GIS page.

Application Dates

The Biodiversity Grant is available through two contestable grant application processes held in August and February of each financial year.

8. *Group activity updates*

8.1 Chertsey Tussocks – Edith Smith

Opportunities to protect this native vegetation site through ADC biodiversity strategy.



8.2 Staveley Camp & Remnant Native Forest – Gen de Spa

Report mapped to Biodiversity Strategy Goals

Goal 1: The remaining indigenous biodiversity in the Ashburton District is protected and maintained.

Goal 2: The indigenous biodiversity in the Ashburton District is restored, enhanced and ecologically interconnected for the benefit of the community.

Trapping & Trap Library

- Trap Library launched 25th Nov
- 14 members; 49 traps active; 70 animals recorded on TrapNZ project – 42 rats, 20 possums, 3 mustilids, 3 hedgehogs, 3 other – still some to enter, teaching members to use TrapNZ
- 2 staff to do NMIT/DOC Predator Trapping Methods training and 5 Minute Bird Count training this month

Weeding

- Public weed wrangling again this weekend (Feb 3rd) after successful October event with 707 hrs by 145 people covering 3000m²
- New worker, 30 hpw

Wasping

- Noticed wasps were still somewhat active over winter leading to what seems like larger numbers than usual
- 65 nests killed already this year at Staveley Camp
- Vespex use started – noticing a need to rehydrate to keep it active for a whole week

Nursery

- nearly 200 seedlings either pricked out or uplifted from pathways for growing on
- area recently cleared of weeds has been re-planted & natural regeneration well underway

Goal 3: Knowledge on biodiversity is gathered and shared, informing and empowering the stakeholders and the community.

Goal 4: Collaboration and participation among Council, Rūnaka and Stakeholders in the wider community for conservation and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity is encouraged.

- Presentation to ADC Biodiversity Strategy consultation outlining Staveley Camp Forest's potential for use by Council in fulfilling all biodiversity strategy goals
- KAKA heard on Thursday 11th Jan 2024 and Sunday 14th Jan at Staveley Camp Forest
- In Oct there were about 4 Kaka up Winterslow Rd (after the big wind) around for about a month
- Dead wallaby sighting on Hwy 72 near Taylors Stream
- Very active on social media now, sharing what we are doing to preserve the remnant forest, with lots of views and shares
- Mental Health groups from Step Ahead regular attendees for Fridays in the Forest; 84 volunteer hours from Sept – Dec 2023

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 Action Plan
- 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 landowner and general public where appropriately
- Provide advice to Council on biodiversity related matters e.g. ADC Natural and Built Environments grant applications

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 Action Plan.

Ashburton District Council

Mayor, Neil Brown (ex officio)
Cr Leen Braam (Chair)
Cr Lynette Lovett
Cr Richard Wilson
Neil McCann (GM Infrastructure & Open Spaces)
Ian Soper (Open Spaces Manager)
Dr Christian Chukwuka (Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor)

Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective

Angela Cushnie, Janine Holland, Willy Leferink

QEII Trust

Alice Shanks

Environment Canterbury

Donna Field, Henry Winchester

Ashburton Water Zone Committee

Adi Avnit

Forest & Bird

Edith Smith, Val Clemens, Mary Ralston

Foothills Landcare Group

Gen de Spa

Ashburton Community Conservation Trust

Edith Smith, Val Clemens

Federated Farmers

Mike Salvesen

Awa Awa Rata Reserve

Mary Ralston

Department of Conservation

Ian Fraser, Brad Edwards

Fish & Game

Nikki Dellaway

Fonterra

Marcelo Wibmer

Synlait

Nick Vernon

Kanuka Trust

Kim Wall

Mt Somers Walkway Society & Lake Heron Conservation Society

Barry Austin

Speaking rights will be granted to one member of each of the advisory group member organisations at each meeting.

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 term of reference review.

Meeting Frequency

Meet four times a year, with the option for one additional meeting if required.

Delegations

The representatives on the working group are expected to:

- Meet to facilitate the implementation of the Ashburton District Biodiversity Action Plan
- Form project groups where appropriate to work towards specific actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan
- 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

Ashburton District Council Biodiversity Funding

The Ashburton District Council has an annual fund of \$15,000 available for biodiversity projects. Funding applications are accepted twice annually, in February and August, however if the total fund is distributed in February another funding round will not be held.

Applications for a biodiversity grant are to be referred to the Biodiversity Advisory Group for comment, before going to Council for their decision on the funding applications.

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

9 April 2020 (*Reviewed 02/23*)