

## 6. WINDSOR GOLF CLUB JUNIOR GOLF PROPOSAL

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The purpose of this report is to seek a decision regarding an application to lease an area of land within Bottle Lake Forest Park for a junior golf course and golf practise area.

### PROCESS

This report is being referred to the Burwood/Pegasus Community Board to approve or decline progressing the application. The Parks and Waterways Unit does not support the proposal going ahead in Bottle Lake Forest Park. Should the Board approve the application then the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee will be required to approve the release of the proposed site within Bottle Lake Forest Park from the Selwyn Plantation Board license. If the golf proposal is supported by Council, public consultation will still be required before a final decision is made as the golf proposal differs substantially from the Bottle Lake Forest Park Management Plan.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bottle Lake Forest Park is a forest park that caters for production forestry and multi-use recreation activity including walking, biking, horse riding and orienteering. Windsor Golf Club is located adjacent to the park and has applied to lease 5.2 hectares of land within Bottle Lake Forest Park on which to develop a junior golf course and practise golf area. The proposed area is north of the park ranger headquarters and opposite the entrance to the Windsor Golf Club.

The site is currently leased to the Selwyn Plantation Board and is planted in young pine trees. It has been identified in the Bottle Lake Forest Park Management Plan as a future picnic area in a forest theme setting.

A junior golf course is a desirable facility in Christchurch. However, it is not considered that Bottle Lake Forest Park is an appropriate site for the junior golf facility as such a facility would displace existing forestry, tracks, and wide ranging recreation opportunities. There is a growing need for unstructured recreation activities in a more natural environment. The proposed golf course does not comply with the Bottle Lake Forest Park Management Plan.

### CONTEXT

At its meeting on 4 March 2002, a report was presented to the Board on the application by the Windsor Golf Club to develop a junior golf facility within Bottle Lake Forest Park. While the concept of a golf facility for juniors is generally supported, the Parks and Waterways Unit strongly opposes such a development occurring within Bottle Lake Forest Park. This view is supported by the Leisure Unit. The following reasons were given as to why Bottle Lake Forest Park is not considered an appropriate venue for a junior golf course:

- (a) The Bottle Lake Forest Park Management Plan clearly identifies that the park is to be managed with the goal of providing for production forestry, and recreation and environmental values that are compatible with this activity. Golf cannot be accommodated within the forest and would alter the character and nature of the park.
- (b) The Bottle Lake Forest Park Management Plan was developed and agreed upon through public consultation. People who had input into the management plan process can reasonably expect the management plan to be adhered to.
- (c) The park headquarters area is the most intensive development scenario planned for the park. Development of visitor services in this area will affect use of the forest which in turn will influence further complementary developments in the park headquarters area. A series of picnic areas are proposed each with a distinctive vegetative theme in a forest setting. The golf proposal differs significantly to the Management Plan.
- (d) Development of a golf facility would displace existing and potential forest based recreation activities.
- (e) The Council's Recreation and Sport Policy categorises parks in the highest priority for recreational services (more than 90% support). Golf courses are included in the third priority (less than 46% support).

- (f) Golf is a well organised and formalised sport and has a strong support base from which to lobby for their needs. Informal, casual users of the park have not had the same opportunity to express their needs. This is much more difficult to achieve as there is no formal organisation representing their views.
- (g) Unstructured activities such as walking have significantly higher participation rates than organised sport and it is predicted that the greatest demand for outdoor recreation activities in the near future will be for passive activities such as walking and relaxing. However, the Ministerial Taskforce review of Sport, Fitness and Leisure confirms that the planning and provision for sport outweighs that for unstructured recreation. The Council has the opportunity to redress this imbalance by providing better access to natural resources via walkways, tracks, and reserves.
- (h) Visitor numbers have been steadily increasing in Bottle Lake Forest Park and this trend is expected to continue.
- (i) The size and availability of space within the forest park will affect its future carrying capacity.
- (j) Bottle Lake Forest Park provides the opportunity for people to participate in activities and experiences not available in a conventional park, thereby increasing the variety and diversity of parks in Christchurch.
- (k) Forest parks and recreation are in very limited supply. Bottle Lake Forest Park provides a unique forest experience unavailable elsewhere in Christchurch. In comparison, there are currently 17 golf courses in Christchurch, three of which are on Council owned land, one being managed by Council. A further golf course is proposed in Heathcote Valley. There are also five golf driving ranges in Christchurch. Specific golf facilities for junior players are available at Coringa golf course at McLeans Island. There are two sizeable existing golf courses immediately adjacent to the proposed junior golf site; Waitikiri Golf Course is over 43 hectares in size and Windsor Golf Course is over 44 hectares.
- (l) Leasing part of Bottle Lake Forest Park to the golf club would set a precedent for other clubs and organisations interested in becoming established in the area.
- (m) Current use of the forest resource is free and publicly available. The golf facility would be managed by a club and a fee would be charged for its use.
- (n) Bottle Lake is a natural resource which plays an important role in the well-being of the community and the provision of recreation opportunities. The wilderness nature of the park is expected to become ever more precious as urban growth continues to increase around it.
- (o) Recent contact with the community has shown increasing demand for the Council to protect and enhance environmentally valuable sites within the forest.
- (p) Golf is not considered a sustainable use of the site and would require continued irrigation due to the sandy nature of the soils. The proposed junior golf site is zoned Rural 1 (Coastal) in the City Plan. Soils within this zone are prone to erosion and are generally unsuitable for sustaining intensive cultivation. In order to maintain and enhance soil resources, forestry activities are encouraged.

The Board requested a further report on other potential locations within Burwood/Pegasus for a junior golf course. Possible options are presented and discussed below.

#### **RELEVANT CURRENT POLICY**

1. The Recreation and Sport Policy ranks golf courses in the third (lowest) priority for recreational services while parks are ranked in the highest priority.
2. The Bottle Lake Forest Park Management Plan requires that recreational opportunities be compatible with forest management. The area that has been requested for the junior golf area is proposed as future picnic areas in a themed forest setting with labelled arboretum trails. A golf course differs significantly from the management plan and would therefore require public consultation before such use can be approved.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL**

Windsor Golf Club has applied to develop a five hole course for junior golfers and a practise area, which could be used by all ages for learning and practising strokes. The proposed site is adjacent to Windsor Golf Club within Bottle Lake Forest Park. Alternatively, the club is also interested in the recently felled area to the south of the visitors centre.

A junior golf course is desired because it would be better suited to children's strength and ability and safer than using the existing golf course at the same time as other more experienced golfers.

Windsor Golf Club currently has a structured junior golf development programme to actively promote and encourage the involvement of Christchurch's youth and has 145 children registered with the club. The club aims to become the home of junior golf in Canterbury. The proposed junior golf facilities would be utilised as part of Windsor's development programme, as well as for the running of open junior tournaments. The course would be aimed at ages 13 years and under and beginners up to 17 years. Work is currently being undertaken with schools in the area to promote the game of golf.

The Bottle Lake site was clear felled and replanted mostly in 2000 with one hectare of older trees planted in 1989. The area would need to be removed from the forestry licence in order for the golf course to be developed. A compensation payment of \$10,069, as assessed by the Selwyn Plantation Board for the loss of the existing plantation, would be payable to the Board by Windsor Golf Club as per the requirements of the licence agreement between the Christchurch City Council and the Selwyn Plantation Board.

Windsor Golf Club has proposed a five year implementation plan to develop the Bottle Lake site. The cost of development and maintenance of the proposed golf course would be met by Windsor Golf Club at no cost to the Council.

The lease terms for the site would be negotiated by the Property Manager in consultation with the Parks and Waterways Policy and Leasing Administrator. A green fee charge of approximately \$2 is expected to be set for use of the junior golf course. Currently the forest experience is publicly available free of charge.

## **ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

In addition to the issues outlined above, loss of revenue is also to be considered. The proposed site for the junior golf course is currently leased to the Selwyn Plantation Board. It is anticipated that they will fell the trees on this site in 25-30 years time. The Council is a minority shareholder (39%) in the Selwyn Plantation Board. Reducing the area of land available to the Selwyn Plantation Board on which they are able to grow trees will, in effect, reduce the financial return to the Council.

## **OTHER POTENTIAL LOCATIONS INVESTIGATED FOR A JUNIOR GOLF COURSE**

Alternative options for the junior golf course were investigated and are discussed below.

### **1. Bexley Reserve**

A golf practice area has been incorporated into the development proposals for Bexley Reserve and there is plenty of scope to accommodate a junior golf course. However, the Windsor Golf Club does not consider the site to be suitable for the club's purposes because it is too far from the club's main facilities, it is exposed to the wind, and they are concerned about the potential health risk in playing on a former landfill.

### **2. Ascot Golf Club**

The possibility of developing a partnership with the Ascot Golf Club was raised. However, Windsor Golf Club has previously found Ascot's fees to be too high which is not conducive to developing juniors and they do not have confidence in a successful partnership with this club.

### **3. Private Land**

A block of privately owned land immediately to the north of the Windsor Golf Club would be suitable for development as a junior golf course but the landowner is unwilling to sell at present.

No further possible options have yet been identified. Junior player numbers continue to grow despite not having a purpose built facility.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Windsor Golf Club has been successful to date in developing a junior golf programme which is continuing to grow. Junior golf facilities located nearby would further enhance their programme. However, Bottle Lake Forest Park is not considered a suitable location for a junior golf facility because golf is not aligned with the values of the park. Demands on the park are increasing and it is not appropriate to displace other public recreation opportunities with an exclusive junior golf facility.

Alternative options for developing the junior golf facilities have been investigated. The Council is currently unable to provide a venue for a junior golf course.

## SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA

The golf proposal has been assessed for sustainability as follows.

### NATURAL + PEOPLE + ECONOMIC STEP ASSESSMENT

#	CONDITION:	Meets condition ✓✓0*	HOW IT HELPS MEET CONDITION:
<b>The Natural Step</b>			
N1	Reduce non-renewable resource use	×	Soils within this zone are prone to erosion and are generally unsuitable for sustaining intensive cultivation. In order to maintain and enhance soil resources, forestry activities are encouraged.
N2	Eliminate emission of harmful substances	0	No effect.
N3	Protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystems	0	No effect.
N4	People needs met fairly and efficiently	NA	NA – See People Step + Economic Step.
<b>The People Step</b>			
P1	Basic needs met	0	No effect.
P2	Full potential developed	×	While the proposal would offer increased opportunities for golf, it actually decreases people's access to open space because the area would no longer be publicly available. It also reduces the variety and diversity of open space by displacing forest recreation activities and creating a new area for golf adjacent to two existing golf courses.
P3	Social capital enhanced	0	The golf proposal would encourage participation in golf but would reduce forest recreation opportunities.
P4	Culture and identity protected	×	A golf course would alter the character and threaten the integrity of Bottle Lake Forest Park.
P5	Governance and participatory democracy strengthened	0	Communities of interest are yet to be consulted.
<b>The Economic Step</b>			
E1	Effective and efficient use of all resources	×	Removing trees during a growing phase of the forestry cycle requires compensation to be paid.
E2	Job rich local economy	0	There may be more golf coaching opportunities but reduced forestry work.
E3	Financial sustainability	×	There would be loss of revenue to Council by decreasing the area of land available to Selwyn Plantation Board for growing trees.

#### Staff

- Recommendations:**
1. That Bottle Lake Forest Park be declined as a site for Windsor Golf Club's proposed junior golf course and golf practice area.
  2. That the Parks and Waterways Unit continue to assist the club by trying to acquire additional farm land in the area subject to suitable price and funding and joint use such as access to other recreation areas for walkers and bikers.

#### Chairperson's

**Recommendation:** That the abovementioned recommendations be adopted.