

10. NEW BRIGHTON COASTAL RESERVES TREE MANAGEMENT

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Board as to the long-term tree maintenance and replacement planting proposals for the New Brighton coastal reserves extending from Broad Park to South New Brighton Domain. The report was referred to the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee meeting on 7 May 2003.

HISTORY

Following the widespread damage that occurred to coniferous plantations and shelterbelts throughout the City in the snowstorm in August 1992, funds were allocated in the budget specifically to provide for the progressive removal and replacement planting of the older and more damage prone plantings. Of particular concern was the high safety risk presented by the aging pines along road and private property boundaries and also trees near high use park facilities. Subsequent large scale tree removal and replanting operations in chronological order have been as follows:

Thomson Park (1993) - Two inner rows of pines and macrocarpas overhanging sports field felled followed by replacement planting.

South New Brighton Park (1996) - Pines and macrocarpas felled to create safety strip along park boundary with private properties between Bridge Street and Beatty Street. Replacement planting carried out.

Kibblewhite Reserve (1999) - Pines and macrocarpas felled to create safety strip along park boundaries with private properties between Kibblewhite Street and Bridge Street. Trees were also removed as part of the operation to construct the new stopbank through the reserve. Replacement planting has been carried out.

South New Brighton Motor Camp (1999) - Selected safety suspect trees felled in and around motor camp and the felled areas replanted.

Thomson Park (2000) - Pines and macrocarpas along boundaries with Bowhill Road properties and Marine Parade, felled in vicinity of playground area and the area replanted.

South New Brighton Park (2000/01) - Clean up and felling of wind damaged trees following October 2000 storm followed by replacement planting.

Broad Park (2002) - All large pines and macrocarpas on park removed.

South New Brighton Park (2002) - Pines and macrocarpas felled along boundary with private properties to the north and south of Jellicoe Street.

The felling of the trees along the boundaries with private properties was mostly supported by adjacent residents who held concerns for their personal safety and potential damage to property because of the increasing incidence of conifer trees falling in their area.

NEW BRIGHTON RESERVE PLANS AND TREE MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

The principal reserve management documents and operations adopted by the Council together with proposed operational/planning activities are as follows:

Broad Park

Broad Park Landscape Plan

Includes short and long-term proposals for the removal of the over-mature macrocarpas and pines and ongoing landscape and other development work. The adoption of the plan by the Burwood/Pegasus Community Board and the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee followed extensive consultation and input from local residents.

Operations Carried Out to Date

It was originally proposed to fell only the large pines on the northern, western and southern edges of the park, leaving the trees on the eastern edge of the park for another five years. However, high winds that shortly followed the felling of the other trees, resulted in a number of trees on the eastern side being blown down. This necessitated the removal of all the remaining trees on the eastern side for reasons of safety.

Current Operations

Site preparation in advance of planting to take place this autumn planting season.

Future Work

It is proposed to retain the shelterbelt of young macrocarpa plantings at the park side of the dunes at present. A review of the situation, involving community consultation, will be carried out in four years time to decide the fate of the trees. In the meantime the trees are to be thinned out and pruned. As there are no mature trees remaining on the park, operations will concentrate on replacement planting landscape development, and provision of new facilities.

Budget

The budget allocated for the total development of Broad Park in 2002/03 is \$30,000 of which \$10,000 towards replacement planting is to be provided from the arboriculture Major Parks Tree Replacement code.

The sum of \$45,000 has been allocated for total Broad Park landscape development in the 2003/04 financial year.

Rawhiti Domain (including Thomson Park)

Management Plan

The existing (1988) Rawhiti Park Management Plan contains the following relevant strategic statements on tree management under section 2 Landscape:

"Detailed planting within the park shall supplement and enhance the existing coastal character of the park".

"Priority shall be put on planting to replace the existing mature pines and macrocarpas."

"Trees shall be managed with the primary aim of providing shelter and amenity value."

"Revenue production using existing trees and/or new planting such as woodlots, coppicing etc shall be considered in association with detailed design work."

"Framework planting of the golf course shall conform to the links character of the course and retain a degree of openness and an undulating terrain."

Major Operations Completed to Date

Two inner rows of Marine Parade boundary pines/macrocarpas overhanging soccer fields have been removed and the area replanted.

Pines and macrocarpas to the north and east of the Thomson Park play area have been removed, the remaining trees pruned and the area replanted following consultation with residents/Community Board and subsequent decision of the (then) Parks and Recreation Committee.

Pines obstructing construction of new access road to service the archery and tennis club building have recently been removed together with unsafe pines overhanging tennis building and courts.

Current Operations

Replacement planting in vicinity of new access road.

New Rawhiti Domain and Thomson Park Management Plan currently being drafted.

Future Work

Review and report on the condition of the remaining pines/macrocarpas growing along the Thomson Park boundary with Marine Parade by 2003, as endorsed by the Parks and Recreation Committee in April 2000.

Conduct tree surveys on the Rawhiti Golf Course to determine condition and safety of older pines, macrocarpas and poplar trees situated near boundaries with private properties. The survey is to include those dense coniferous plantings that have been principally planted and positioned to provide "hazard" features for the game of golf. Any proposals that may require the removal of a significant number of trees will be subject to community consultation and a decision of the Community Board.

Budget

The sum of \$15,000 has been allocated for replacement planting along the new access road to the archery and tennis club building.

Any tree work that may be required on the Rawhiti Golf Course will need to be funded from the Leisure Unit's budget as the course is under its administration. A figure of \$5,000 has been allocated in the Unit's 2003/04 budget for tree maintenance work.

Blighs Gardens (end of Tovey Street)

Major Operations Completed to Date

Removal of storm damaged trees and replanting of cleared areas with more pines. Removal of trees obstructing construction of stopbank along the Estuary.

Current Operations

Sixty dead and dangerous pines and macrocarpas have been noted for removal. Consultation with residents and Community Board is to be arranged shortly.

Future Operations Under Consideration

Preparation of landscape plan for reserve with consideration as to raising the soil level in order to provide better growing conditions for trees in what are normally high water table or saturated soil conditions.

Budget

The costs of removing the dead and dying trees will be met from the 2003/04 Capital Works budget; costs have yet to be obtained from the contractors for the work.

Kibblewhite Reserve

Major Operations Completed to Date

Removal of trees and replanting of felled areas to provide a safety strip along boundary with properties in Blake Street, Santa Cruz Lane and Bridge Street and replacement planting. This operation involved consultation with local residents and approval of the Community Board in 1996. However, a notified application for resource consent to stop the road and reposition the Estuary stop bank through the park had to take into account the impact on all the reserve trees. The actual felling operation was subsequently delayed for over two years due to difficulties in obtaining the resource consent.

Current and Future Operations

Ongoing removal of dead and wind-thrown trees and replacement planting as and when this occurs.

Management Plan

The Council is bound by the conditions of the stopbank resource consent which states that "The Council shall ensure that appropriate tall growing and saline tolerant species are established in the reserve within the areas shown on the (application) plan as plantation planting so as to maintain an effective windbreak for the benefit of properties to the east of this reserve".

Budget

Funding for the above mentioned work will be sourced from the normal maintenance operations budget: Local Park Tree Maintenance and Felling.

South New Brighton Domain/Park

Operations to Date

In a series of separate operations commencing in 1996, plantation trees along the whole eastern boundary of the park have been removed to provide a safety strip between the bulk of the remaining plantation trees and the adjacent private properties. Several years ago a number of the more suspect trees were removed from around the South New Brighton Motor Camp perimeter. In October 2000, a severe storm caused extensive damage to the plantations and many damaged and suspect trees were removed. Planting plans were prepared for planting in the areas cleared of trees around the camp and the areas replanted. Since then there has been an increasing incidence of trees falling around and into the camp causing damage to property and narrowly missing campers. With the exception of the two safety strips felled last year, to the north and south of the Jellicoe Street entrance, all the previously felled areas have been replanted with a mixture of taller growing conifers/evergreens, with native trees and shrubs being planted closer to property boundaries.

Current Operations

To eliminate the continuing risks presented by the falling trees, a felling operation to create a safety strip of 35 metres around the whole campsite area is in process at the time of writing. A landscape planting plan has been prepared for the affected areas and the plan will be presented to affected residents and the Community Board for approval shortly.

The replanting of the felled areas to the north and south of Jellicoe Street will be carried out this winter planting season after 1 July 2003.

Future Operations/Plans

With the main areas where public safety and property were previously most at risk from falling trees now made safe, the Parks and Waterways Unit has no current plans for further large scale block felling of trees for reasons of safety alone. However, consideration will need to be given in the future as to the ways and means of progressively replacing the existing aging plantation trees over a period of time.

A survey has found 200 standing dead pines scattered throughout the plantations. These are mostly relatively small having been deprived of light by surrounding trees. These trees need to be removed together with 200 dead, white poplar trees that have grown from sucker growth along the side of the Estuary near Beatty Street. The periodic removal of individual dead, dying and dangerous trees will continue as part of normal routine maintenance.

A landscape management document: "Landscape Development Proposal for South Brighton" was prepared in 1994 and adopted by the Community Board. While the sustainability of the conifer plantations is addressed in the document, the question of the safety of the trees is not, except in relation to fire risk. However, fire (in the crowns of the trees) is a relatively low risk compared with the ongoing, frequent risk of damage caused by wind-thrown trees to adjacent properties and high public use facilities.

A draft management plan for South New Brighton Park is to be commenced shortly. It will include all the factors involved in the tree management and development of the park. This new plan will provide updated policies for all future tree management in this area.

A draft landscape plan is currently being prepared for replanting the felled areas around the motor camp. This plan will involve public consultation and adoption by the Community Board.

Wastewater Ocean Outfall Pipeline

The Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee has stated that the Jellicoe Street alignment is the preferred option for the route of the proposed pipeline across the Estuary and through the park. Routing the pipeline through the reserve, if approved, would involve the removal of a number of plantation trees. The area affected would be completely restored with new plantings upon the completion of the work.

Budget

The periodic removal of dead, dying and dangerous trees, as this occurs, will be charged against normal operational Park Tree Maintenance and Felling codes.

The costs of replacement planting the areas recently felled in and around the South New Brighton Motor Camp, will be shared between the Parks and Waterways Unit's Major Parks Tree Replacement (Capital Works 2004/05) budget and the Leisure Unit's budget.

The costs of any tree felling and replacement planting required for the construction of the new wastewater ocean outfall pipeline will be provided by the City Water and Waste Unit's budget.

CONCLUSION

The main volume of felling work carried out on the New Brighton reserves to date has been directly related to public safety. There has been an urgent need to eliminate or minimise the increasing risks that aging/unstable plantation conifers present to "high hazard targets" such as residential properties and other areas or facilities with high public use. Most of the areas that were causing particular concern have now been dealt with and have been replanted with trees that will not cause the same problems in the future.

While the remaining plantation trees do not present the same degree of public risk, there is still the question of the long-term sustainability of these trees. Felling operations and losses in storms have left the remaining trees in a more exposed situation, and it is reasonable to expect that more losses will occur from severe natural climatic events in the future. The numbers of the plantation trees (planted mostly in large, even aged groups) will also be subject to natural attrition, due to old age, close growing conditions and disease that inevitably is going to increase over the years.

Urgent consideration therefore needs to be given to progressively felling and replanting these areas, a small block at a time. In addition to environmental and landscape considerations, the species planted and the manner they are planted needs to reflect the need for effective tall shelter, public safety, species diversity and the establishment of a range of different age groups throughout the reserves in the future.

Staff

Recommendation: That the information be received.

Chairperson's

- Recommendations:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That budget provision for replacement planting be sought in the 2003/04 Financial Plan.
 3. That a consultation meeting be scheduled for the South New Brighton area as soon as possible.