

3. SCOTT'S VALLEY PURCHASE

Officer responsible Parks and Waterways Manager	Author Bill Morgan, Property Services Officer DDI 371-1581 Kelvin McMillan, Parks & Waterways Planner, DDI 371-1692
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The purpose of this report is to exercise a first right of refusal to purchase 10.5900ha of land for addition to Scott's Valley Reserve.

BACKGROUND

The Council, in 1999, approved and acquired 126.1535ha of land adjoining Castle Rock Reserve from Scott's Valley Limited for scenic reserve purposes. The area acquired is shown and depicted on the attached plan S3163 as Lot 2.

The purchase was a key part of the grassland part of the Port Hills Regional Park concept adopted by the Council in April 1999. It has local visual and recreational importance to the residents of Heathcote Valley as well as metropolitan importance. The purchase links five Council reserves together and provides visual ecological and recreation continuity between the John Britten Reserve in the east and Castle Rock in the west. The property forms the hills backdrop to the Heathcote Valley and is visible from central and eastern Christchurch. It is an area of high quality landscape and vertical cliffs uncluttered by buildings and has very high natural ecological values.

CURRENT PROPOSAL

At the time the land was acquired, the lower portion of the property was the subject of a City Plan decision restricting residential development to a relatively small portion of the applicant's property off Bridle Path Road. The proposal to zone the land for residential purposes was opposed by other submitters to the City Plan process. The owner subsequently lodged an appeal against the decision seeking to enlarge the residential area. This matter has now been resolved with the consent of all the parties concerned and the area rezoned LHA as depicted as parcels B and C on the attached plan S3163.

At the time of purchase of the reserve, the owner reserved from sale Lot 1 DP 82547 as depicted on the attached plan to provide a buffer between the reserve and the land rezoned LHA. As part of the negotiations the Council secured a first right of refusal to acquire this land should the owner wish to dispose of it. From the Council's point of view the acquisition of this area was seen as important in order to protect from residential development the virtually unencumbered open space panorama stretching from Mt Pleasant to Castle Rock reserve. The area also contains a four-wheel drive track, which was seen as important in order to develop a walkway system around the reserve. To provide an additional track further up the hill on the current boundary would be difficult given the steep nature of the land and the rocky bluffs and outcrops. The track runs from the homestead around the valley to link with the gondola. The area also contains a large number of trees including an extensive area planted within the last four to five years.

The owner is currently in discussion with a number of developers over the potential disposal of the LHA land and has approached the Council to determine whether it wishes to acquire part of the buffer zone as shown as Lot 2 on the attached plan. If not secured by the Council, this land could be attached to residential allotments to be created in the LHA zone and subsequently disposed of. The subsequent visual impact of this could be considerable, given the potential for a variety of plantings to be established on the area and, more importantly, the four-wheel drive track, and the opportunity to utilise it as a walkway system would be lost to the Council.

As a consequence of this, negotiations have been held with the owner and agreement reached, subject to formal Council approval, to acquire the land on the terms and conditions contained in the public excluded section of this report.

SOURCE OF FUNDS

Provision has been included within the 2000/2001 Parks purchasing programme to meet the deposit payable under the agreement, with the balance of the purchase price being allowed for within the 2001/2002 budget. The cost of maintaining the land with grazing and weed control along with maintaining the current farm track for pedestrian use is estimated at \$3,250 per year. There will also be the cost of fencing the new boundary on the lower side of the reserve, estimated at \$8,700. This can be funded from the Port Hills Capital fencing programme, which has a sum of \$40,000 on the 2001/02 Annual Plan.

The above report was referred to the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board for its comment. The Board supported the proposal to acquire the above land for scenic purposes.

Recommendation: That Lot 2 on the attached plan 21180/1 containing 10.4900ha be acquired for scenic reserve purposes on the terms and conditions contained within the public excluded section of this report.

(Note: Councillor Stonhill abstained from the discussion and voting on the above clause.)