

8. THE GROYNES SHARED CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL/NORTH CANTERBURY FISH AND GAME COUNCIL FACILITY INVESTIGATION

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Community and Leisure Committee of the current status of the investigation into the proposed shared Christchurch City Council / North Canterbury Fish and Game Council facility at The Groynes.

BACKGROUND

In early 2002, a draft concept plan for The Groynes was released for public comment. One key concept proposed in the plan was for a shared Christchurch City Council Park Rangers / Fish and Game Council facility, comprising buildings for offices and a public centre, the emphasis of which would be for environmental education and interpretation. This concept was reported separately, with a report on the analysis of submissions on the draft concept plan, to a combined meeting of the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee, Community and Leisure Committee and Shirley/Papanui Community Board on 16 April 2003. Recommendations from that meeting were that approval in principle be given to the concept, investigations be carried out, further public comment then sought on the concept, and a further combined meeting of the Committees and Board held when such additional information and public feedback were available. These recommendations were adopted by the full Council at its meeting on 24 April 2003.

INVESTIGATION

A cross-unit team of staff was set up to progress the investigation of options for a shared facility at The Groynes. This included staff from the Parks and Waterways Unit (including the Plains Area Head Ranger at The Groynes), the Property Unit and City Solutions. Ross Millichamp, the Regional Manager of the North Canterbury Fish and Game Council, was also a key member of the team.

As the investigation progressed it became apparent that there were a number of issues and viewpoints relating to the options for a shared facility at The Groynes that needed to be considered. These included the uncertainty around the proposed state highway bypass to the west of Belfast which, if built, would possibly require a new entrance to the park to be built in the medium to long term. It was felt by members of the team that due to the uncertainty around the future park entrance location it would be difficult to advise the Council as to where would be the best site option for a shared facility at The Groynes. In addition, it was considered that the existing Park Ranger facility at the park entrance was sufficient to meet the needs of the Park Rangers until such time when a decision could be effectively made once certainty had been reached regarding the proposed roading changes. At a final meeting of the investigation team on the 15 October 2003, at which Council Transport Planning staff were in attendance, the issues and possible alternative options for the shared building location were discussed.

NEW OPTIONS POSED

In light of the issues raised, including the uncertainty around what might be the future entrance to The Groynes due to the proposed state highway bypass, the effect of adjacent land development, and the condition of the existing buildings at the park that could be redeveloped for a shared facility, other options were tabled for discussion. These included:

- The Fish and Game Council solely utilising the ex-Park Ranger's house in the park near the boundary with the Clearwater development (shared development of this house constituted Option 1 in the previous reports in 2003).
- Moving the aforementioned house to, or developing a new building at, a new park entrance coming off the entrance road from Johns Road to the Clearwater development.
- Considering other possible options at locations other than at The Groynes; for example, at Roto Kohatu, the Styx Living Laboratory site or the Styx Conservation Reserve.

THE NORTH CANTERBURY FISH AND GAME COUNCIL RESPONSE

The North Canterbury Fish and Game Council resolved, at its meeting on the 15 October 2003, to put its co-location plans on hold, until the uncertainty is resolved regarding the development of the park entrance, roading, definition of the high-use zones of the park, and the level of need for the Park Rangers to move from their current front entrance site was established. The Fish and Game Council advised that it intended to reconvene its building sub-committee at the start of 2004 and look at all location possibilities, including other parks and purely commercial developments.

The current situation, as advised by Ross Millichamp of the Fish and Game Council, is that his Council has only just started looking at its building requirements again and that it is now reviewing a range of options, including The Groynes. He did indicate, though, that their focus at the present time is on a location other than at The Groynes and that they would know more in the next couple of months.

OVERALL PLANNING CONTEXT FOR THE GROYNES AND THE CURRENT SITUATION

The draft Groynes Concept Plan, with recommended amendments, was adopted by the Council on 23 April 2003. Since then, potential developments on land adjacent to the park, including expansion of the Clearwater development, residential subdivision development on other adjacent and nearby land, and the state highway bypass as proposed in the Northern Rooding Options Scoping Study (NROSS), continue to be discussed and processed. The potential impact on the green, open space corridor of the expanded park at The Groynes, as promoted in the concept plan, consequently continues to loom large as a result. Ultimately, there is a risk of this crucial, traditional, key metropolitan open space area being constricted and adversely impacted upon by the very urban infrastructure development (residential development and improved roading) that will depend on it to maintain a quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Potential effects of the proposed developments on The Groynes include the possible need for a new park entrance, loss of part of the park for roading purposes, increased visual and noise impact from road traffic, and the raft of issues and effects that would be expected to arise from future new residential development that is proposed hard up against the boundary of the park.

It is important for the Council to plan for the future of the park, and manage the effects the adjacent developments will have on it, by integrating this planning with that for the proposed adjacent land uses. There needs to be a comprehensive approach taken to the development, and hopefully improvement, of the whole area. The benefits from this should be the protection and enhancement of the public and environmental values of The Groynes, with opportunities realised to achieve an improved entranceway to the park, quality public facilities (possibly through a partnership arrangement), effective natural environment protection and a vastly improved network of walking tracks extending throughout the park and beyond.

One consequence of implementing such an approach will be the requirement to review the value of the current form of The Groynes Concept Plan. Future planning options can include further updating of the concept plan to reflect and integrate with the landscape development planning for current and future scenarios for development of the park and surrounding areas, and to acknowledge and promote the park as being one key link in a corridor of open space extending along the Otukaikino Creek and Waimakariri River catchments. Good communication with the community to obtain their views is crucial. One effective way of achieving that may be through the regular distribution of a newsletter to update everyone on the proposed developments affecting the wider area.

AREA PLANS

The Council is currently preparing area plans for Belfast and the Clearwater areas. In addition, the Council has agreed to vary the City Plan for Clearwater to plan their next stage of development. Public consultation is under way for these planning processes. The area surrounding The Groynes is changing from traditional farming to residential and tourism-based land uses. Given the scope of surrounding area plans, it is considered wise to take a conservative approach to The Groynes development at this time.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Community and Leisure Committee:

1. Receive this report as information; and
2. Note the Greenspace Unit's intention to continue to develop and update the concept plan for The Groynes, as well as plan for the wider area, including the Otukaikino Creek and Waimakariri River catchments.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the recommendation be adopted.