

8. **CENTRAL PLAINS WATER ENHANCEMENT FEASIBILITY STUDIES: LIMITED DELEGATION OF POWERS TO STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

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The purpose of this report is to advise the committee on progress with securing funding for Stage II studies and to recommend that the Council delegate certain decisions to the Strategy and Resources Committee to ensure there is no interruption to the current work if a decision is made to proceed to Stage II studies.

#### **BACKGROUND**

As reported last month, the Central Plains Water Enhancement Steering Committee is set to report the findings of its Stage I scoping study to a joint meeting of the Selwyn District Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee. This meeting is now to be held at the Rolleston Community Centre at noon on Monday 18 December.

The report indicates that Stage II studies, which would concentrate on a short list of project options, will cost approximately \$984,000 which includes contingencies of \$200,000.

To secure this funding, and minimise any request for further grants from the parent councils, the steering committee has actively sought support from suitable funding agencies including the Sustainable Farming Fund, Agmardt's Water Studies Grant, the Community Trust and the Industry New Zealand Regional Partnerships programmes. Last week Agmardt advised the steering committee that it had approved an immediate grant of \$365,145 and that it would consider a further sum of \$183,664 at its February 2001 meeting, totalling \$548,809, GST exclusive.

This funding provides the steering committee with an opportunity to move immediately on to Stage II work given a positive response to its presentation of the scoping study work, rather than lose three to four months while it awaits the outcome of decisions on the balance of the required funds.

#### **PROPOSAL**

To be able to continue work, the steering committee will require the approval of both councils to settle a contract with the technical consultants for a portion of the next stage, Stage II(a). This stage has already been defined in the original technical consultant's proposal and involves identifying a single favoured scheme and carrying out survey and site investigation work with Stage II(b) dealing with further technical work and environmental, social, cultural, planning and access issues.

The Selwyn District Council is meeting as full Council immediately following the 18 December meeting to consider its response. For Christchurch City the options available to secure a decision on Stage II(a) are:

- (a) To convene a special meeting of the full Council during the week of 18-22 December, or
- (b) To delegate to the Strategy and Resources Committee power to authorise Stage II(a) on the basis of the presentation on 18 December. The preferred option is (b) because of the difficulty of convening a special Council meeting in the last week of the year.

#### **BENEFITS**

Consultation with stakeholders has been a critical part of the process to date, including the establishment of a large database of potential water users. Publicity linked to the December meeting is being prepared and it will be of real benefit if this could include an announcement that work is to continue. Timing of the Stage II study is such that a decision in December would ensure completion of the work before the end of 2001. Further, for all parties involved, the steering committee, the technical and communication consultants and the consultative working party, going into recess for three or four months can only harm the forward momentum of the work.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Strategy and Resources Committee seek from the Council delegated authority to assess the steering committee's presentation of its Stage I scoping study and, if it so decides, to approve the continuation of work through to the completion of Stage II(a) as generally defined above.
  2. That this delegation include authority to allow the entering into of a contract with URS, technical consultants for Stage II(a) work.
  3. That no work on Stage II(b) be undertaken until the steering committee has reported to the parent councils on the availability of funds for completion of this stage.

- Chairman's Recommendation:**
1. That the above recommendation be approved, subject to the Steering Committee not entering into any contract which would require expenditure beyond the funds on hand.
  2. That a full report on the project and the funding of the balance of the feasibility studies be prepared for March.