

14. DRAFT PLAN FOR ESTUARY'S WESTERN GREEN-EDGE

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Corporate Plan Output: Conservation Policy Advice	

The purpose of this report is to inform Board members of the progress on the preparation of the draft plan for the long-term development of the Estuary's western Green-Edge including land now occupied by the Linwood Paddocks, the oxidation ponds and Bexley Reserve.

BACKGROUND

Recently, the City Council released its 15-year wastewater disposal programme, a key component of which includes the creation of a "Green-Edge" along the western margins of the Avon-Heathcote Estuary. It involves developing the margins (including land now occupied by the Linwood Paddocks, oxidation ponds and Bexley Reserve) as an extensive ecological and recreational reserve. This includes the restoration of existing remnant habitats, increased planting, landscaping and wetland creation, improved recreational access and education facilities and the experimental natural treatment of wastewater in engineered wetlands. Over the past six months, staff in collaboration with specialist consultants, have been developing preliminary concept plans for this area for implementation over the next 15 years.

DRAFT GREEN-EDGE CONCEPT PLAN

The Green-Edge concept plans focus on the undeveloped land currently in Council ownership on the western margins of the Estuary, particularly Linwood Paddocks, the oxidation ponds and Bexley Reserve. However, it is recognised that there are many other important areas around the Estuary, which provide significant ecological and recreational linkages with the wider Green Corridor, extending from the Heathcote Valley along the coastline up to Brookland's Lagoon. Many of these areas are already developed, or as is the case with Charlesworth and Bexley Wetlands, already have well advanced development plans. As a result, these areas have not been revisited within this Green-Edge concept plan but key consideration was given to ensuring that any new developments were consistent with and provided linkages with these other key areas.

Key elements of the draft concept plan include:

Bexley Reserve

- Development of Bexley Reserve into an attractive recreation reserve that would play an important role in the transition between the City's suburban edge and the more natural areas associated with the Te Huingi Manu Wildlife Reserve and Estuary.

Shoreline

- Development and implementation of a concept of landscape treatment for the Estuary's western shoreline involving, where possible, the removal of hardfill, and a revegetation/planting programme involving the re-introduction of saltmarsh species where appropriate. The re-profiling and/or replenishment of the western foreshore with earthworks and the deposition of materials, which will create a more naturalised and attractive shoreline.

Oxidation Ponds

- Re-configuration and restoration of the oxidation ponds and surrounding area to a mosaic of wetland habitat including the naturalisation of pond margins and estuary shoreline.
- Retention of islands as a vital breeding habitat.

Linwood Paddocks

- Habitat creation and enhancement of Linwood Paddocks including the re-establishment of saline and brackish ecosystems of saltmarsh and ribbonwood, establishment of coastal forest where possible and the enhancement of roosting and breeding sites in key ecological areas (for example, Sandy Point). Retention/provision of a significant area of open paddock grassland as habitat for Pukeko.
- Provision for the development of experimental natural treatment of wastewater in engineered wetlands.

Recreational, Amenity, Education and Heritage Values

- Provision of recreational facilities including picnic and car parking areas
- Creation of a continuous movement network for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Provision of habitat and recreational linkages between adjacent conservation and/or open space areas (for example, Bexley Wetland, Charlesworth Wetland).
- A strong educational focus encouraging greater knowledge and understanding of the special ecological and cultural values of the area. This may include an education centre, a series of interpretation signs and bird hides.
- Interpretation signs throughout area drawing public attention to key wildlife and heritage values.

TIMING AND BUDGET

The long-term work programme for the final Green Edge Development Plan is planned to be implemented over the next 15 years with work scheduled to begin in 2005 (initial phase expected to be completed by 2007). This programme has been included in the indicative capital works programme at a cost of \$14 million (including major re-configuration works to the oxidation ponds), with ongoing maintenance costs estimated to be \$300,000.

CONSULTATION/INFORMATION PROGRAMME

A public information/consultation programme has been developed to ensure that interest groups and the wider community have the opportunity to learn about the project, contribute their ideas and give feedback on the draft concepts. While consultation with key interest/user groups has been ongoing, an intensive public information programme is scheduled for June 2001 involving the release of the draft plans for public information and submission, a public seminar/presentation of the proposal, media release and a promotional booklet. The valuable feedback and ideas received throughout this process will contribute to the revised and final Green-Edge plan to be completed in August 2001 for adoption by Council in late September.

Recommendation: That the information be received.

Chairperson's

- Recommendations:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That the Green-Edge Project Team consult further with affected interest groups before a public information programme is launched.