

18. PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS ON DRAFT BEXLEY WETLAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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The purpose of this report is to outline the submissions received on the draft Bexley Wetland Development Plan and to seek Board support for the draft Plan to be reprinted and distributed to the community.

Seven submissions were received on the draft Bexley Wetland Development Plan. Six supported the Plan, while one individual provided feedback that included tentative support and proposals for a few significant changes.

The six submissions in support ranged from total agreement to suggestions for minor changes. A preference to remove the contaminated material off site was backed up with the comment that the proposal for on site disposal was a good compromise. Other submissions highlighted the need to deal with the contaminated material as soon as possible. Enhancement of the ecosystem and the provision of birdhides and walking tracks received support.

A comment that more information on recreation and history would be worthwhile was followed with the suggestion that the Bexley Wetland Trust could get involved with regular monitoring and reporting on the birds visiting the area. It was also observed that the reintroduction of new species such as the Fernbird would need to be co-ordinated with the other major wetlands in Christchurch.

The individual who was “not altogether” in agreement with the Plan included a number of suggestions. This submitter did support the removal of contaminated soils, the tidal areas for birds and “beautifying” the “horse paddock”.

Four suggestions were made by the individual, as outlined below. However, it is considered that both individually and in total these would not provide any benefits in respect to the goal of “restore lost or damaged plant communities and wetland bird feeding, nesting and roosting habitat” and the objectives relating to the restoration of landscape character, plant and aquatic communities.

The submission suggests the “stopbank” must be retained for flood prevention. The retention of the “stopbank” is however, not necessary because the neighbouring subdivision of “Pacific Park” has levels set to avoid inundation. Water Services Unit recognises the “stopbank” is of no real benefit, and can be removed. Its partial removal is a fundamental aspect of the restoration of the wetland. Re-directing people and particularly dogs from this central corridor will substantially increase the core area for habitat restoration. The reintroduction of tidal waters will improve and restore salt mash, salt meadow and brackish sandpiper pools/inlets and mudflats.

The suggestion to construct a small bank around Cunningham's Yard fails to recognise natural processes of saline fresh water mixing, the objectives of extending habitat/planting associations and the fundamental benefits of increasing the size of the tidal wetlands. This suggestion along with the recommendation to build another causeway isolating the “freshwater” ponds adjacent to Bexley Road fails to acknowledge natural systems along the coastal margin where the mixing of fresh and saline waters provide unique and significant plant associations and habitats. Isolating the freshwater systems is of little benefit to an integrated landscape while reducing the size of central wetland. Wetlands such as Travis Swamp provide freshwater habitats while the Bexley Wetland Development Plan aims to redress the loss and infilling of the estuary margins and their associated habitats and communities.

The final suggestion to plant a plantation of White Pine (Kaihikatea) within the salt marsh, salt meadow and brackish pools and mudflats continues to override the need to counter-balance the loss of estuary margin communities. The conservation zoning is based on the recognition that this landscape needs protection and restoration in context with its location. Opportunities for White Pine forests are available in other freshwater wetlands, for example Travis Wetland; it is not considered desirable or appropriate to superimpose such a plantation at this location.

The final comment in this submission was to keep it simple and get on with it. The plan may appear complicated, however the fundamental premise is very simple and that is to restore Bexley Wetland in context, balance and harmony with the adjacent estuary of the Heathcote and Avon Rivers/Ihutai. The plan is about reconnecting, re-establishing and restoring not about continued artificial barriers and isolated communities.

- Recommendations:**
1. That incorrect street name references in the draft Development Plan to the Pacific Park Subdivision be corrected.
  2. That the Parks and Recreation Committee be requested to approve the Development Plan for reprinting and distribution to the community.

**Chairperson's Recommendation:** That the abovementioned recommendations be adopted.