

8. GRAZING MANAGEMENT OF CCC RESERVES ON THE PORT HILLS

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The purpose of this report is to seek approval for grazing licences to be put in place to enable the grazing of 21 Port Hills reserves, as described in the report "Grazing Management of CCC Reserves on the Port Hills" and to delegate the selection of land and the grazing licence to Council Officers.

REASONS FOR LICENCE

The Port Hills Reserves are managed for a range of values, including conservation, recreation, cultural heritage and visual values. Unlike most conventional grazing arrangements, the conservation of the indigenous bio diversity, for example silver tussock, is regarded as more important than the financial return from the land. Ad hoc management and some grazing licences in the past have led to progressive deterioration of a number of reserves upon the Port Hills, and a loss of indigenous vegetation. The licence that it is proposed to offer will be conservation based, to ensure further deterioration of the reserve does not occur.

The use of grazing as a management tool is designed to perpetuate silver tussock grassland (in appropriate areas), whilst eliminating shrub weeds and rank grasses.

The most visible indigenous grass species on the Port Hills is silver tussock, however there are quite a few other indigenous grasses present. An example of these being New Zealand fescue, holy grass, *Poa* species and danthonias. The appropriate grazing regime will retain inter tussock herbaceous species that are present as well as the native grasses. Typical native herb species found amongst the grasses include New Zealand biddy bid, spaniard, harebell. There are indigenous shrubs in the areas that also need to be maintained. Some of the species found on the Port Hills Reserves include New Zealand broom, *Coprosma* species, matagouri, *Hebe* species, porcupine shrub, mahoe, New Zealand flax and prostrate kowhai. Although some browsing of shrubs within the grasslands will occur, the amount of damage will be kept low. Note that there are areas with native forest, or where shrubs are regenerating, that will be fenced off and not grazed.

GRAZING POLICY

The matters covered by the grazing licence will include the following:

Stock

Primarily sheep will be used for grazing. However other stock may be grazed from time to time, where the Port Hills Area Head Ranger and Councils Botanist agree.

Vegetation Removal

The level of grazing will be such that indigenous grass, herb, shrub and tree species, and their associations are maintained. No trees or bush will be cut down and no indigenous plants will be removed.

Over-sowing and fertiliser application

No over-sowing will be carried out and no fertiliser will be applied.

Cultivation

The licensee will not cultivate, break up or crop any part of the land.

Soil

Vegetation cover will be maintained so that erosion is minimised.

Pests

The licensee will act to prevent any increase in or spread of plant pests and will comply with any requirements of the Canterbury Regional Pest Management Strategy and the Biosecurity Act.

The Council will carry out control of animal pests.

Fences

The licensee will be responsible for maintaining the fences in good order.

Buildings & structures

No additional buildings or structures are to be built without consent from the Christchurch City Council.

Access

The public will have access to all reserves, on foot or bicycle. In some cases, access by motor vehicle or horse may also be appropriate. However reserves may be closed for short periods, with the agreement of the Parks & Waterways Unit Manager. This is primarily intended to allow closure for lambing.

Retirement of areas from grazing

The Council will retain the ability to fence off areas for planting or to allow natural regeneration to occur; the licence fee will be reduced accordingly.

Liaison

Regular contact with the Port Hills Area Head Ranger is required, at least monthly.

Monitoring

Two types of monitoring will be carried out to ensure the grazing levels are appropriate for these reserves:

1. Council staff will carry out regular monitoring to determine the success of the current grazing regime. Any required changes to the level of grazing will be discussed with licensees on a regular basis.
2. Long-term, detailed monitoring will enable the council to assess the success or otherwise of the grazing regimes put in place. Appropriate monitoring methods have been determined in consultation with Landcare and an initial assessment has been carried out.

Legal Issues

The reserves on the Port Hills are administered under either the Local Government Act or the Reserves Act (as either recreation, historic or scenic reserves). These Acts allow for grazing to be undertaken on the reserves, as outlined below.

Local Government Act 1974

Several of the Port Hills reserves are administered under the Local Government Act and grazing will be carried out under Section 231. In this case, a lease would be arranged, in accordance with the Public Bodies Leases Act.

231 Leasing of land by council

- (1) *The council shall, in addition to all other leasing powers exercisable by the council under any other provision of this Act, or under any other enactment, or under any grant, conveyance, or deed, have power to lease any land or building or other real or personal property vested in the Corporation of the district (not being land that is a public reserve within the meaning of the Reserves Act 1977 or a building on any such public reserve) in accordance with the Public Bodies Leases Act 1969, and that Act shall apply accordingly.*

Reserves Act 1977

For Scenic Reserves the Act requires that:

"...the indigenous flora and fauna, ecological association, and natural environment and beauty shall as far as possible be preserved" (19a).

For Recreation Reserves the Act requires that:

"where scenic, historic, archaeological, biological, geological, or other scientific features or indigenous flora and fauna or wildlife are present on the reserve, those features or that flora or fauna or wildlife shall be managed and protected to the extent compatible with the principal or primary purpose of the reserve" 17(b).

For Historic Reserves the Act requires that:

"...where scenic, archaeological, geological, biological, or other scientific features, or indigenous flora or fauna, or wildlife are present on the reserve, those features or that flora or fauna or wildlife shall be managed and protected to the extent compatible with the principal or primary purpose of the reserve" (18c)

and that "...except where the Minister otherwise determines, the indigenous flora and fauna and natural environment shall as far as possible be preserved" (18e).

The Reserves Act allows grazing licenses so long as certain conditions are met.

74. Licences to occupy reserves temporarily

(2) *Where in the opinion of the Minister or, as the case may be the administering body or the Commissioner, it is necessary or desirable for the management of the reserve for the purpose for which it is classified licences to occupy an recreation, historic, scenic. Government purpose or local purpose reserve, or any part of any such reserve may be granted for the following purposes: -*

(a) *Grazing gardening or other similar purposes*

"(3) *Before granting any licence under subsection (2) of this section, the administering body.....shall give public notice in accordance with section 119 of this Act specifying the licence proposed to be granted, and shall give full consideration in accordance with section 120 for this Act to all objections and submissions in relation to the proposal received pursuant to the said section 120".*

"(4) *The duration of a licence under this section to occupy a reserve or any part thereof shall not exceed five years"*

City Plans (Proposed and Transitional)

The offering of grazing licences on the Port Hills is in conformity of the objectives and policies of the Christchurch City Plan 1996 as amplified below: -

The Port Hills are identified as a major component of the Natural Environment in the City Plan.

"Objectives 2.7 - Maintenance and enhancement of the distinctive landscape and natural characteristics of the Port Hills.

..... the Council has a long term commitment to ensuring the majority of the Port Hills are publicly administered for both recreation and conservation purposes.....

Policy 2.7.3 - To identify and protect significant areas of indigenous vegetation on the Port Hills and promote partial re-forestation of the Port Hills with indigenous forest.

Work undertaken in recent times has indicated that there are some important indigenous grassland species present on the Port Hills which in terms of Section 6 of the Act have some importance in terms of protection. To date there has been modification to these areas, particularly through the grazing regime that has taken place on the Port Hills over many years. The intention is to ensure that land use activities undertaken in these areas are of low impact particularly in the upper areas of the Port Hills, to enable the versatility and residence of these areas to be maintained in the long term.

Tender

It will be necessary for the tenderers to have had previous hill country sheep farming experience, to ensure that the operation of the licence is successful from both the Councils, and grazer's perspective. For this reason, officers recommend a selected tender process is entered to ensure that the successful grazer has the necessary experience to operate the conservation grazing licence successfully.

It is recommended that the selection of the land area and the grazing licence be delegated to the Property Manager and the Parks & Waterways Manager together with the Legal Services Manager for terms & conditions as the most efficient way to manage the process. The licences may be of short term duration and therefore not significant for Councillor involvement.

NATURAL + PEOPLE + ECONOMIC STEP ASSESSMENT

#	CONDITION:	Meets condition ✓✓0*	HOW IT HELPS MEET CONDITION:
The Natural Step			
N1	Reduce non-renewable resource use	0	
N2	Eliminate emission of harmful substances	✓	Less use of herbicides for weed control
N3	Protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystems	✓✓	Grazing is an effective means of controlling some weed species, thereby protecting our native biodiversity
N4	People needs met fairly and efficiently	NA	NA - See <i>People Step + Economic Step</i>
The People Step			
P1	Basic needs met	✓	Access for recreation maintained
P2	Full potential developed	0	
P3	Social capital enhanced	0	
P4	Culture and identity protected	✓✓	Grassland landscape on the Port Hills is important to many residents.
P5	Governance and participatory democracy strengthened	0	
The Economic Step			
E1	Effective and efficient use of all resources	✓✓	Grazing provides cost effective weed control
E2	Job rich local economy	✓	Grazing licences will provide job opportunities to rural sector
E3	Financial sustainability	✓✓	Some income will be generated for the Council

Staff

Recommendation: That the Council selectively tender grazing licences over approximately 708 ha of reserves on the Port Hills, for the areas identified in the report "Grazing Management of CCC Reserves on the Port Hills" subject to the following conditions:

1. That the Council tender grazing licences, for a maximum term of five years, for any part of the approximately 708 ha of CCC administered land on the Port Hills.
2. That, where necessary, the Council give public notice in accordance with section 119 of the Reserves Act 1977 specifying the licence proposed to be granted.
3. That the Council delegate to the Property Manager and the Parks and Waterways Manager jointly authority to:
 - (a) Decide on any land within the Reserves on the Port Hills to be subject to grazing licences
 - (b) Consider any objections or submissions made pursuant to section 120 or the Reserves Act 1977; and
 - (b) If they deem it appropriate (after the consideration of objections and submissions), enter into grazing licences upon such terms and conditions as the Legal Services Manager approves.

4. That the above recommendation be included in the Council's policy register.

**Chairman's
Recommendation:**

That the above recommendation be adopted.