

12. COCKAYNE RESERVE - PLATFORM REMOVAL

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The purpose of this report is to seek the Board's support for the removal of the damaged viewing platform from Cockayne Reserve. Endorsement is being sought from the Board prior to the report being considered by the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee on 10 March 2004.

Standard maintenance checks carried out by Greenspace Unit staff on the Cockayne Reserve viewing platform and its interpretation panels, have found them to be excessively vandalised and in a degraded condition. Agreement has been reached through recent consultation that the platform be removed.

RELEVANT CURRENT POLICY

Safer Parks Policy.
Environmental design - Park Design and Management Plans.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

Background

Cockayne Reserve is a narrow strip of wetland bordered by the lower reaches of the Avon River and New Brighton Road, between Bower Avenue and Baker Street. Located approximately 2.5 kilometres upstream from the Avon-Heathcote Estuary, the 3.3 hectare reserve was established in the late 1800's and is one of the few natural wetlands remaining in Christchurch. The reserve now protects an example of native lowland fresh and brackish wetland which was once common along the coastal margins of the Canterbury Plains.

In the late 1980's a viewing shelter was funded by the Pegasus Rotary Club and installed in the reserve west of Baker Street, close to New Brighton Road. The structure intended to draw upon views across the wetland and provide a space of contemplation for visitors to the reserve.

Cockayne Reserve is zoned as Conservation 1 under the City Plan, and is identified as an Ecological Heritage Site.

Maintenance Issues

Parks and Waterways staff have carried out several maintenance checks on the structure and its interpretation panels since it was installed. Maintenance records indicate that in recent years the panels have been vandalised repeatedly and are now unreadable and in a degraded condition. A check carried out in February 2002 noted damage to the platform's hand rails, bolster joints and seating. A recent check has revealed further deterioration.

Photos of the damage are attached.

Proposal

Concern over the current state of the interpretation panels, appearance of the structure, and appropriateness of site location has led to consideration of three possible options to mitigate against further vandalism.

- Option 1 Minimalist approach - remove structure.
- Option 2 Involved approach - remove structure and liaise with interested community members to restore reserve and identify alternative sites for interpretation (\$5,000-10,000).
- Option 3 Alternative approach - retain structure and allocate additional funding to cover ongoing maintenance costs to bring the structure and its information up to an acceptable standard (approx \$15,000, including rebuilding structure and new interpretation panels).

The Greenspace Unit supports Option 2 and is keen to identify interpretation opportunities for the Park as a whole, and explore alternative sites that offer greater interpretative value.

Project funds from the Greenspace Unit will need to be allocated for any proposed information structure to be installed at this site.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

In light of these options, there are issues which need to be considered.

Placement of the Structure

The current location is not ideal as the majority of park visitors use the Jubilee walkway on the riverside of the Park (away from the traffic), and as such, the platform is seldom used. If the decision was made to retain the platform and allocate additional funding to cover ongoing maintenance costs, it would be of little added value.

The platform does not offer any better views than the views from the Jubilee walkway. Plant growth around the platform partially obscures views into the wetland. In addition, the platform is set back into the reserve and obscured from public view, making it an easy target for vandalism.

Effectiveness of Message Delivery

The educational value attained from installing an information panel on-site typically increases when restoration work has been carried out. From a funding perspective, it would be beneficial to wait until further restoration work is undertaken at the reserve before installing another information structure. In the meantime, more information on Cockayne Reserve could be added to the Council's web pages for easy access.

CONSULTATION

The Parks and Waterways Area Advocate has discussed the issue with the past President of the (now disbanded) Pegasus Rotary Club and the Coordinator of the Ascot/Freeville Residents' Group. Both representatives are agreeable that the structure be removed because of the level of vandalism it has received.

CONCLUSION

Ongoing vandalism to the Cockayne Reserve viewing platform and its interpretation panels has rendered the information illegible and the platform structurally damaged. Three options exist to rectify the situation, from which the Greenspace Unit recommends Option 2 above as the most preferred option. Support for the platform's removal has been obtained from key stakeholder groups. Funding is available during the current financial year to remove it from the reserve.

Staff

- Recommendations:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That the Board recommend to the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee that Option 2 for the Cockayne Reserve viewing platform, as outlined in the report, be adopted.

Chairperson's

- Recommendations:**
1. That the abovementioned recommendations be adopted.
 2. That the Greenspace Unit be asked to report to the Board on subsequent plans to restore Cockayne Reserve and to reinstate observation panels.