



## Public Excluded

## Report PE00.790

6 November 2000

File: R/6/1/2

Report to the Landcare Committee  
from Anne Manley, Landcare Planner - Policy, Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

## Land Purchase Proposal : York Bay

### 1. Purpose

- To inform you of an approach by Hutt City Council asking this Council to consider contributing towards the purchase of land in the East Harbour Regional Park area; and
- To seek agreement in principle to Council contributing to the purchase of approximately 21.5 hectares of land in York Bay, for inclusion in East Harbour Regional Park, pending further investigations by Parks and Forests officers on the purchase and funding of the land, and subject to final Council approval.

### 2. Exclusion of the Public

Grounds for the exclusion of the public under section 48(1) of the Local Government & Official Information and Meetings Act are:

*That the public conduct of the whole or relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists, (i.e., to preserve commercial confidentiality).*

### 3. Background

Leisure Services officers from Hutt City Council recently approached Parks and Forests officers, asking that the Regional Council consider contributing to the purchase of approximately 8 hectares of No. 2 Waitohu Road (the "McKay/Shaw property") in York Bay, adjacent to East Harbour Regional Park (refer **Attachment 1**).

Hutt City Council had previously considered swapping some of its land in Sorrento Bay for the 24.7 hectare McKay/Shaw property. Following further investigation, Hutt City Council decided against the land swap but requested that Leisure Services officers investigate the possibility of acquiring the property (or part of) using that Council's Reserve Purchase Development Fund and by seeking financial assistance from the Regional Council and the QEII National Trust.

The McKay/Shaw property stretches between York Bay and Lowry Trig and contains sections of the Main Ridge Track and the Francis Bell Track in East Harbour Regional Park (refer **Attachment 2**). WRC has been asked to contribute towards the purchase of approximately 8 hectares of the property, encompassing the area where the two tracks cross the property. Purchase would ensure that public access to the tracks could be maintained in perpetuity.

We advised Hutt City Council's Leisure Services officers that we would assess the land purchase proposal and report to Council, seeking direction on whether or not to proceed further.

## 4. **The Property**

### 4.1 **Environmental and Recreation Values**

Parks and Forests officers have visited the area to assess the site. The values on the McKay/Shaw property are contiguous with the high environmental and recreation values in the Northern part of the Park (refer **Attachment 3** for *Signatures* assessment). Although there is evidence that the property may at some time have been affected by fire, it contains regenerating scrub and bush. A wide range of plant species can be found on the property. Like the Rose property (directly adjacent, purchased by the WRC in 1996) the bush on the McKay/Shaw property contributes to the "green belt" on the east face of Wellington Harbour, an important landscape feature for the Wellington metropolitan area. This bush also provides habitat for indigenous birds, insects and other fauna. The Main Ridge and the Francis Bell Tracks cross the property providing important recreational opportunities within the Park.

## 5. **Degree of Protection**

Purchasing approximately 8 hectares of the property (as proposed by Hutt City Council) and placing a covenant over the tracks would protect public access, in perpetuity. Without protection, there is no guarantee that public access to those tracks (in that area) will be maintained in future. However, this course of action would *not* provide for protection of the ecological and landscape values of the property outside the area encompassing the tracks.

Parks and Forests officers consider that the environmental values of the property would be better protected if the lower reaches of the property, where the higher quality bush is found could be acquired, in addition to the area surrounding the two walking tracks. We have estimated the area of land suggested for purchase at around 21.5 hectares (out of the 24.7 hectares), although this would require further investigation.

Purchasing this land would secure further land on the eastern face of the Harbour in public ownership, thereby further protecting the ecology and that landscape (the “regional values”) for future generations. Furthermore, the purchase would complete the “jigsaw” pieces of protected vegetation in the western part of the Park from Days Bay through to Point Howard (refer **Attachment 2**), in addition to protecting the recreational values. The proposal to purchase 21.5 hectares is also consistent with provisions of the Hutt City Council District Plan and the current East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan (refer **Attachment 4**).

It is not envisaged that there would be significant costs associated with control and management of the land. The area could be managed as part of the Northern Block of East Harbour Regional Park (currently managed by Hutt City Council with assistance from the voluntary “Eastbourne Rangers”). Some pest control, track maintenance and interpretation may be required.

## 6. **Property Valuation**

Hutt City Council advised that a registered valuer has assessed the McKay/Shaw property to be worth between \$3,500 to \$7,000 per hectare. Parks and Forests officers would arrange for an independent valuation to be completed before entering into any negotiations on the property. The current land value of the McKay/Shaw property is \$99,000. The government valuation of the entire 24.7 hectares and improvements is \$167,000 (note: the improvements are on the 3.2 hectares to remain with McKay/Shaw).

We understand that previous owners of the McKay/Shaw property had discussions with the WRC when the adjacent Rose property was purchased in 1996. There was no agreement on a sale. We also understand that Andrew McKay met informally with Council officers several years ago regarding a possible sale of part of his property to the WRC, at some time in the future. Further discussions did not eventuate at that time.

The property is directly adjacent to the Rose property purchased by this Council for inclusion in East Harbour Regional Park in 1996. The purchase price for that property was \$65,000 plus payment of survey costs \$15,000 to subdivide off the reserve (which works out at approximately \$1800 per hectare). At that time, the Forest Heritage Fund contributed \$40,000 to purchase approximately 44 of the 46-hectare property and Hutt City Council waived the reserve contribution for the subdivision (estimated at between \$20 - 30,000.) This is now acknowledged to have been a conservative purchase price for the property.

## 7. **Regional Parks Reserve Purchase Account**

The balance of the Regional Parks Reserve Purchase Account at 31 March 2000 was \$645,469. The fund is currently accumulating interest of about \$40,000 per annum. The first priority for use of the Regional Parks Reserve Purchase Account has been identified as purchases relating to *existing* Regional Parks and recreation areas (refer Report 00.277). Priorities for the Account are set out in more detail in **Attachment 5**.

When the strategic vision for East Harbour Regional Park was discussed last year, the future of the Northern Block remained unresolved (refer Report 99.352). The Committee resolved that the continued inclusion of the Northern Block in the Park would be considered through the review of the Park Management Plan (due to commence in 2001/02), following public consultation undertaken through a visitor survey. If purchased, the future management of the McKay/Shaw property would be considered along with other parts of the Northern Block (parts of which are currently owned by the WRC, Hutt City and the Department of Conservation).

By joining with Hutt City Council and possibly a third party to purchase the land (21.5 hectares), the WRC would help achieve the aim of protecting the landscape (visible from the Harbour and parts of Wellington City as well as Hutt City) and ecological values, and the recreation opportunities on the property. The proposed purchase would also compliment the purchase of the Rose property, 4 years ago.

Hutt City Council has advised that the QEII Trust is supportive of the proposal to purchase the property and recognises the area as worthy of protection. However, due to financial constraints, the Trust is unable to contribute funds. Hutt City Council was planning to approach the Forest Heritage Fund for funding but we are yet to be advised of their response. Seeking contributions from a third party would be a key part of our investigations.

## 8. **The Next Step**

If you agree to Parks and Forests officers investigating the proposal further, we will:

- Liaise with the land owners and Hutt City Council to arrange an independent valuation and to look more closely at options for subdivision, survey costs and ownership of the title;
- Liaise with Hutt City Council on options for funding, including third party involvement;
- Report back to the Landcare Committee with options for consideration.

The Committee could then make a final decision on the purchase, conditions on any purchase, (e.g., title to be in WRC's name) and make a resolution on the use of the Regional Parks Land Purchase Reserve Account for funding purchase of the land.

## 9. **Communications**

This proposed land purchase is a confidential, commercially sensitive matter, which will require further investigation with Hutt City Council and the landowners. It would not, therefore, be appropriate to communicate the proposal to the public at this stage. There may be communication opportunities once further investigations have been completed and a final resolution made on the purchase.

## 10. Recommendations

*That the Landcare Committee recommends to the Policy & Finance Committee that the Council:*

- (1) *Agrees in principle to contributing funds to purchase 21.5 hectares of the MacKay/Shaw property, No. 2 Waitohu Road, York Bay, for inclusion in East Harbour Regional Park, recognising that environmental and recreational values in the Park and the Region will be enhanced by doing so.*
- (2) *Approves Parks and Forests officers working with Hutt City Council and the landowners to look at options for subdivision, land valuation, survey costs, and ownership of the title.*
- (3) *Agrees to Parks and Forests officers working with Hutt City Council regarding funding options, including contributions from third parties.*
- (4) *Directs Parks and Forests officers to report back to Council at the conclusion of those investigations, when the Committee will make a final resolution on the purchase of the land, conditions, (e.g., title), and use of the Regional Parks Land Purchase Reserve Account.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for Submission:

ANNE MANLEY  
Landcare Planner - Policy

SUSAN EDWARDS  
Manager, Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

ANDREW ANNAKIN  
Divisional Manager, Landcare

GREG SCHOLLUM  
Chief Financial Officer

**Attachment 1** : Letter from Hutt City Council

**Attachment 2** : York Bay Land, East Harbour Regional Park Map

**Attachment 3** : *Signature Values*

**Attachment 4** : District Plan and Management Plan Requirements

**Attachment 5** : Priorities for the Regional Parks Reserve Purchase Account