

## **Publicly available information from Report PE 04.714**

### ***Offer to Purchase Waitangirua Farm from Landcorp Farming Ltd***

#### **Background**

Belmont Regional Park (BRP) is unique in the network of regional parks. It is the only regional park to encompass land in both private and public ownership. While the public perception is that GW owns and manages the land within BRP the reality has been quite different. Land contained within the park's boundary is owned by 6 agencies (See Attachment 1). GW has formal rights to manage around 60% of the land in the park. Our management role in the other 40% is based around long standing good relationships between the landowners and our parks staff.

The Belmont Regional Park concept was modelled on the national parks of England. These parks comprise tracts of countryside which are recognised for their scenic and recreational value and comprise both publicly and privately owned land. Applying this concept to BRP was seen as a means of protecting and managing the landscape values and recreational opportunities while providing for its continued use and occupation by private landowners.

On 26 April 1977, the Minister of Lands agreed in principal to the inclusion of Waitangirua Farm into BRP. The Belmont Regional Park Management Plan records that although it was not formally stated at the time, it was implied that the land would become part of the park provided that farming operations remained viable.

In 1986, the newly created State Owned Enterprise, Landcorp Farming Ltd. took over ownership of Waitangirua Farm from the Department of Lands and Survey. The transfer of part of the farm from the Crown to LCFL was conditional on providing for covenants to protect shrub land and forest remnants, as well as walking access. From this commitment has developed the current informal partnership of management and ownership for BRP between LCFL and GW.

In March 2003, during a meeting between GW and LCFL officers, LCFL indicated that it was considering closing its operation on both Waitangirua and Whareroa farms. The process of closure at that time was not clear, but a 10 year exit strategy was discussed. LCFL indicated that it would be desirable for Waitangirua farm to remain part of the regional park and that LCFL could assist that process by continuing to farm the land until the exit was complete.

LCFL has now told us that they hope to dispose of Waitangirua Farm, and to exit the farming operation as soon as practicable. In preparation, the land has been offered to the Office of Treaty Settlements (OTS). This offer is part of LCFL's statutory requirement to offer any land it intends to dispose of back to OTS so that OTS may use the land to settle any treaty claims. Our understanding is that LCFL have been informed that the land is not required to settle any treaty claims at this stage and that they are now free to sell the property.

LCFL have been authorised by their Board of Directors to give GW the first right of refusal on the farm on a without prejudice basis.

## **Area offered for Purchase**

Attachment 1 shows Waitangirua farm in the context of Belmont Regional Park. It occupies the main ridgeline in the centre of the park with access from Hill Road (Lower Hutt), Takapu Road (Wellington City) and the north-western (Porirua) area of the park. The farm's total area is 1,243 Hectares.

When the land was transferred from the Department of Lands and Survey to LCFL the Government took actions to protect some of the environmental and recreational values of the property. Hence, there are conservation covenants over bush remnant areas. Recreational access across the Landcorp land is limited to Old Coach Road, Belmont Road (paper roads) and two formal walkway easements to Takapu Road and Cannons Creek. The farm is closed at times during the year e.g. for lambing.

The land is zoned Rural in the Porirua and Wellington District Plans with a Landscape Protection designation over the land immediately above Porirua East. The land within Hutt City is zoned General Recreation. Farming and recreation are permitted activities for these zones in all District Plans.

## **Waitangirua Farm's importance to Belmont Regional Park**

Belmont Regional Park is a significant area of open space immediately adjoining major urban centres (Lower Hutt and Porirua) with important environmental, heritage, and recreational values. The park has an estimated 110,000 visits per year.

As noted earlier the park is an amalgamation of several ownerships. Over the last six years, GW has achieved a large measure of control and management of the land within the park. For example, much of the DoC owned land is now vested in GW as manager, and the management of the HCC land is now, by an agreement, also under GW control. The balance of the land in the park is owned by LCFL, Porirua City Council (PCC), and Wellington City Council (WCC). The PCC and WCC portions are relatively insignificant. On the other hand, the LCFL portion is not only 35% of the area of the park, but also comprises the strategically important West-East and North-South links between all the other park lands. Although the existing walkways are protected, the centre of the park remains a strategic "lynch-pin" in the park that glues all the other pieces of land together.

Purchase of Waitangirua Farm to maintain existing regional parks and recreation areas has been identified as GW's top priority for regional park land purchase.

## **Financing the ongoing running of the property**

In 2003 a registered valuer estimated that the farm should net a positive return to the Council of \$86,000 per annum. This was at a time when LCFL had advised us it would hope to remain on as lessee after the sale. LCFL has now stated that it would be unlikely to remain on the land as a lessee after a sale. This withdrawal from the land by LCFL will also lead to a loss of rent from the other park blocks leased to LCFL at Dry Creek, Takapu and Kilmister. This income would now rely on the blocks being attractive to an alternative lessee. It may be pragmatic to acknowledge that income from a farming operation may not eventuate as originally foreseen.

The \$86,000 annual return assumed that the lessee would be responsible for ownership of stock, management and maintenance of the land and meeting costs of rates and insurance. This return, however, does not include any costs associated with the community's or the Council's desire for the property to contribute more to any sustainability outcomes than it already does. With the land being in public ownership, pressure will come on GW to provide recreation, environmental and heritage enhancement on the property. As well as this, there will be an increased farm management role on the existing ranger service.

The ongoing cost implications of purchasing the land, (in excess of funding the purchase price) would need to include such things as pest plant and animal control, road, track and facility development and maintenance, additional ranger support, ranger equipment, fencing and bunker restoration. All this we would estimate to cost in the order of an additional \$200,000 per annum.

## **Publicly available information from Report PE 05.34**

### ***Waitangirua Farm matters***

#### **Background**

At the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee meeting of 16 December 2004, Council considered an offer from LCFL for GWRC to purchase Waitangirua Farm.

After that meeting, we contacted LCFL, informed it of the Council's resolution, and requested that it relay that to LCFL's Board of Directors for consideration at their next Board meeting (to be held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2005) as per their original request.

On January 14<sup>th</sup> 2005 (prior to the LCFL Board meeting), LCFL contacted us to say, that given the Council's intention not to purchase the entire farm at that asking price, it would be beneficial for Landcorp to have an indication from GWRC of our key areas of interest so that he could relay that to the Board to consider at its next meeting.

#### **Areas of interest to be purchased or otherwise protected**

In order to identify the key areas, we have divided the farm into blocks with each block representing a catchment area or significant landscape feature (see Attachment 1). The table (see Attachment 2) details the specific values that relate to each of these blocks as an indication of why the block should be protected.

We have also assessed each area for purchase based on whether the values of the land can be protected by means other than purchase i.e. reserves contributions. We have been careful to bear in mind that just because a piece of land is important for protection, purchase is not the only means of protecting the values it contains. Therefore our priorities for purchase consider the land's importance as well as other means for protecting it that may apply.

1 February 2005

**LAND ACQUISITION ASSESSMENT - WAITANGIRUA FARM, BELMONT**

In this assessment, we have identified 10 Key Areas of interest based primarily on the land's geography. An assessment of their priority for purchase follows:

<b>Area of Interest</b>	<b>Features/Values to be Protected</b>	<b>Acquisition Options</b>
Cannons Creek	<p>Takapu Road and Cannons Creek Bush covenants - lowland tawa/kohekohe forest remnant.</p> <p>Only remaining part of Cannons Creek catchment not in public ownership.</p> <p>Main park access to Porirua.</p> <p>Used by walkers, trampers, cyclists, runners and orienteers.</p> <p>Potential for greater use – cyclists/horses restricted at present. Likely to be supported by Friends of Park, Tangata Whenua and Maara Roa</p>	<p>Existing Conservation Covenants.</p> <p>Existing Walkway Easement.</p>
Hill Road	<p>Hill Road Bush covenants - regenerating mahoe and native scrub.</p> <p>Solifluction deposits and block fields at Hill Road.</p> <p>Leads to core of regional park WW2 magazines and Old Coach Road.</p> <p>Used by walkers, trampers, cyclists, runners, horse riders and orienteers.</p>	<p>Existing Conservation Covenants.</p> <p>Significant natural features recognised in the District Plan</p> <p>Existing Walkway Easements.</p>
Stratton Street	<p>Regenerating native scrub in upper Korokoro Stream catchment.</p> <p>Penepplain remnants and block fields on Round Knob hill top.</p> <p>Old Coach Road (1850's link Belmont – Pauatahanui), early settler homestead sites.</p> <p>Used by walkers, trampers, cyclists, runners, horse riders and orienteers.</p>	<p>Significant natural features recognised in the District Plan.</p> <p>Old Coach Road is part-formed paper road.</p>

Bunkers	<p>Open hill tops above 250 contour, landscape views.</p> <p>Penepplain remnants and block fields on hill tops.</p> <p>Maori routes, Old Coach Road (1850's link Belmont – Pauatahanui), early settler homestead sites, WW2 magazines 1942.</p> <p>Used by walkers, trampers, cyclists, runners, horse riders and orienteers.</p>	<p>Significant natural features recognised in the District Plan.</p> <p>Heritage features recognised in the district plan and HPT</p> <p>Old Coach Road is part-formed paper road.</p>
Round Knob Valley	<p>Open hill tops above 250 contour, landscape views.</p> <p>Regenerating native scrub in Duck Creek tributary to Pauatahanui Inlet.</p> <p>Penepplain remnants and block fields on Round Knob hill top.</p> <p>Limited walkway access at present.</p>	<p>Significant natural features recognised in the District Plan.</p>
Round Knob North Valley	<p>Open hill tops above 250 contour, landscape views.</p> <p>Regenerating native scrub in Duck Creek tributary to Pauatahanui Inlet.</p> <p>Block fields on ITA hill top.</p> <p>No walkway access at present.</p>	<p>Significant natural features recognised in the District Plan.</p>
Belmont Road	<p>Open hill tops above 250 contour, landscape views.</p> <p>Penepplain remnants on hill tops.</p> <p>Maori routes, Old Coach Road (1850's link Belmont – Pauatahanui).</p> <p>Limited walkway access at present.</p> <p>Used by walkers, trampers, cyclists, runners and orienteers.</p>	<p>Significant natural features recognised in the District Plan.</p> <p>Old Coach Road is part-formed paper road.</p> <p>Significant natural features recognised in the District Plan.</p>
Whitby	<p>Open hill tops below 250 contour, landscape back-drop to residential area.</p> <p>No walkway access at present.</p>	<p>Landscape features recognised in PCC District Plan</p>
Waitangirua	<p>Open hill tops below 250 contour, landscape back-drop to residential area.</p> <p>No walkway access at present.</p>	<p>Landscape features recognised in PCC District Plan</p>
Ranui	<p>Open hill tops above 250 contour, landscape back-drop to residential area.</p> <p>No walkway access at present.</p>	<p>Landscape features recognised in PCC District Plan</p>

