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Committee Landcare
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Queen Elizabeth Park Barn

1. Purpose

To advise the committee of the current state of the barn at Mackays Crossing, Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP).

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Planning for the State Highway One (SH1) Realignment project began over five years ago. Since the project began, Council officers have worked closely with Transit New Zealand (Transit NZ) consultants on the design aspects that could affect QEP and its users.

When Transit NZ finalised the route of the proposed realignment of SH1, it became apparent to Council officers that the realignment would mean that the MacKays Crossing entrance to the park would need to be reconfigured. This was seen as a positive move by officers as access to the park would be substantially improved through having access off slip roads rather than directly off the main highway. The existing horse riding concession operation would, however, need to be reassessed because boundaries would change and infrastructure and tracks would be affected.

3.1 The barn

For approximately 15 years, until 2005, the barn was rented by “Stables in the Park” concessionaire Mandy Robinson as a base for her horse riding business. There has been a lot of speculation about the age of the building and its original use but according to a report prepared by conservation architect Ian Bowman, the building is likely to have been built in the early 1900s. It would have been built for the MacKay family who farmed in the area and it would

appear that it was built as a barn and then adapted as stables in more recent years.

The barn was located close to the old State Highway 1. Transit NZ identified that the barn was within the designated alignment for the new highway and that a decision would need to be made about its future. At the resource consent hearing for the SH 1 upgrade, submissions were presented (not by GWRC) that the barn was a heritage structure of note and should therefore be relocated within the park rather than be demolished and replaced with a modern equivalent. Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) and the Historic Places Trust (HPT) advocated strongly for the preservation of the building as it was one of only two rural buildings listed in the Kapiti Coast District Plan as a heritage building and as such should not be demolished. There was a clear message from HPT that the Regional Council should be providing a positive lead on historic items consistent with the Regional Policy Statement.

As a result of this, the subsequent resource consent for the SH 1 upgrade issued by KCDC included a condition that the barn be relocated rather than demolished (see **attachment 1** for new location). The requirement to relocate the barn was accepted by Transit NZ and Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC). In a Memorandum of Understanding agreement dated 26 June 2002 between Transit NZ, GWRC, Department of Conservation and KCDC, Transit NZ were required to undertake only those measures needed to enable the building to be moved and secured on a new site in a stable structural condition. All parties acknowledged that the barn was in a poor state of repair. GWRC was then to be responsible for the eventual upgrade of the cladding to the walls and the roof. At the time of signing the MOU, however, the barn itself was not seen as integral to the Park's infrastructure and there were some who felt it should be demolished, although the requirement to have a building of some description as part of the horse riding concession was clear.

With that, Transit NZ has spent approximately \$100,000 reinforcing the building for the move, establishing new foundations on the agreed site, and transporting and placing it there. No commitment was given by GWRC to upgrade the barn other than to make safe.

Since that time the building has not been available for use by the concessionaire as it has not been in a habitable condition. Mandy Robinson continues to lease land in the park for grazing her horses and conducting her riding school business. Throughout the whole process of relocating the barn, Mandy Robinson has been kept fully informed.

3.2 The MacKays Crossing entrance to the park

Horse riding activities such as equestrian eventing, causal riding, pony club activities and the proposed horse riding concession were considered and allowed for in the management plan. A landscape plan for the MacKay's Crossing development zone is currently being prepared with input from key stakeholder groups and included feedback from the QEP Management Plan process.

The MacKay's Crossing area is the main node of equine related recreation within the park and this centralised location allows facilities to be shared between the different user groups.

The barn is now located in an ideal area to operate as stables for a horse concession and it allows riders safe access through the park separated from internal roads. This track network has been developed over the last five years and integrates with the other infrastructure such as grazing paddocks, water and road access (See **attachment 2**). Once completed, the new SH1 overpass will allow horse access to the Whareroa property via the underpass which has been designed for this purpose.

During the review of the QEP park management plan, care was taken to make no commitment as to the future use of the barn or the condition it would be upgraded to other than to make safe.

3.3 Compensation from Transit NZ

With the road works having impacted on the park, compensation has come from Transit NZ which could be used by GWRC to reduce the effects of the road project on the park. The compensation was agreed with Transit NZ to be used on some wetland restoration, a drainage upgrade, landscaping work, plus a large block of land at Poplar Ave being added to the park.

4. Current State of the Barn and Costs to Make it Useable

Transit has met its resource consent obligations and has relocated the barn to the area nominated by GWRC in a stable structural condition. The barn is now on new foundations in a location adjacent to the Tramways building.

The barn requires further work by both Transit to complete its structural upgrading and by GWRC to complete structural bracing, and cladding to its walls and roof before it can be offered to a concessionaire for commercial use. Transit has allocated \$14,000 to complete its share of the remedial work. Transit recognises that its work will require use of scaffolding and the removal of the roof. Transit has proposed GWRC should do its work at the same time to make joint use of the scaffolding and to avoid duplication of work. Alternatively, if GWRC is not ready to complete its share of the work, transit suggests that it provide the \$14,000 to GWRC and that GWRC take responsibility for completing the transit work.

GWRC has obtained an engineers report and assessment of the work required to complete all actions on the barn to bring it up to a standard suitable for use as a storage facility. The indicated cost is approximately \$89,000 which includes the \$14,000 of work which is transit's responsibility and a 40% contingency because of the present state of the building. The remaining net cost to GWRC is therefore \$75,000.

At the present time the approach road and the area around the building is compacted hard fill. Further work is required to bring this up to an acceptable standard. This would include forming a car park, fencing, traffic control, and

landscaping. The estimated cost of this would be in the vicinity of \$90,000, for a total overall GWRC project budget of \$165,000. These works are currently unbudgeted items and not allowed for in the 2005/06 Annual Plan.

5. The horse riding concession

It was intended that when the management plan review and the SH1 realignment project were completed, the scope and location of a horse riding concession for the area could be finalised and GWRC will call tenders and expressions of interest from interested parties. These applications will enable GWRC to select a concessionaire which best meets the needs of the park, will be complementary to other uses and users of the park and which provides a market financial return. The barn has been re-sited in the area deemed most appropriate for a horse riding concessionaire to operate from. The barn is now close to the park's entry road and to the new toilet facilities. The barn, if refurbished as stables, will provide storage, shelter and space for the operation of the horse concession along with the barn, other infrastructure may also be required to be developed to properly house the concession. We would look to offer the concession by tender after the transit road works are completed and all the infrastructure required to run the concession was in place so that a complete 'package' can then be offered to public tender. Alternatively, a concession could be offered without a building, but with the concessionaire given the right to provide their own building.

6. Does Council want to invest in the barn?

Given the considerable capital required to upgrade the barn, the main issue this Council needs to consider regarding the future of the barn is for what purpose do they want to invest in it for. Without that investment, the barn will sit idle and decay over time until it collapses or KCDC issues a consent for its demolition.

6.1 As an historic feature?

In our recently produced State of the Environment Report, "Measuring Up", we record a rising public interest in heritage, a reduction in the number of heritage items in the region, and the need for agencies like GWRC to act responsibly in managing heritage so that it is available for future generations.

While the barn may have some uniqueness on the Kapiti coast with its timber weatherboards rather than corrugated metal cladding, it is not unique in a regional sense. In addition, the structure has been modified over the years and is in very poor condition.

6.2 As a commercial building?

A number of private buildings have been erected on Council land. Generally though, these have been paid for by the building owner, often a club or interest group. Prime examples are the clubs who own buildings and lease Council land adjacent to the Gear Island water treatment plant.

More recently, a horse riding club constructed their own building at the Battle Hill Farm Forest Park.

Where a Council building is surplus to Council's requirements, then it can be leased.

Constructing a new building or significantly refurbishing an existing building to lease to a club or a private party appears to be outside of previous Council policies. There are several commercial risks in leasing a Council owned building on Council land. The return offered may not be sufficient to fund the capital invested. Also, the lessee may stop operating before the end of the lease.

If the Council was to embark on this direction then it is possibly best arranged through the Council's investment company.

7. Options

There are a number of options available to the Committee regarding the barn.

- (a) Accept the \$14,000 from Transit NZ, and GW completes the barn and associated works as outlined above. (\$165,000). With this option, there are various ways to spread the implementation of the project across two years. While the work on the barn needs to be done as a complete project (cost to Council \$75,000), the landscaping and parking could be completed in the following year. With the barn in a useable state, the Council could charge a higher rental than without it, though this is unlikely to give a fair return on the cost of the work.
- (b) Have transit complete its work and leave the GW work for the time being whereby the barn will be in an unusable condition and surrounding area in its present state and subsequently apply for funding in the 2006/07 funding round. With this option, Council would be in the position to weigh the value of this project against other priorities of the Council at that time. In the interim, a horse concession could operate at a reduced fee due to the lack of infrastructure.
- (c) The Kapiti Coast District Council and the Historic Places Trust have been the main supporters of retaining the structure. GWRC could invite these organisations to restore all or part of the building. Restoring say 25 percent would retain the concept of the structure but at a greatly reduced cost.
- (d) Apply to KCDC for consent to demolish the building. If the committee decided to pursue this option, KCDC officers have indicated they would almost certainly be recommending to their Council that the application be declined.

8. Conclusion

The age and condition of the barn has been the subject of considerable debate and expenditure, and the suggestion to demolish it and replace it with a new

structure was raised right at the outset. Both Transit NZ and GWRC were interested in demolition and provision of a new structure as that would have been the least expensive option, and the new structure would have been purpose designed and built for a horse riding concession. That opportunity was denied by the resource consent process and is now not an option. Transit NZ, in good faith, has completed its part of the work apart from some minor finishing.

Now that the barn has been moved to a new site close to the heritage trams, there is a KCDC and public expectation it will be retained. With the new ranger's office and adjacent toilet block near the MacKays Crossing entrance now open and operating, this is attracting more people into this area. Visitors are expected to increase further once the highway works are completed and the horse riding concession is fully operative. And it is expected that there will be applications for other commercial opportunities to be established in the area. The fact remains though that GWRC is not in the business of building structures to lease to commercial operations. A horse riding concession is a private good. The Council contributes to the activity by making land available.

9. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Declines to upgrade the barn noting the estimated cost.*
3. *Requests officers to invite KCDC and the Historic Places Trust to upgrade all or part of the barn.*

Report approved by:

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Murray Waititi
Manager, Parks & Forests

Murray Kennedy
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Attachment 1: Queen Elizabeth Park, Mackays Crossing plan

Attachment 2: Queen Elizabeth Park, Map showing horse facilities