



Report 06.192
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Committee Rural Services and Wairarapa
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Kopuaranga River Enhancement Project

1. Purpose

To update the Committee on the proposed Kopuaranga River Enhancement Project, and to recommend a sub-committee is formed to approve the new rating classification.

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

Councillor Roddy McKenzie (Masterton District Council) had raised for a number of years that there was a problem with willows blocking the Kopuaranga River channel.

Following the flood events of 2004 it was clear that this was the case. Residents within the Kopuaranga River valley were cut off by the road flooding in a number of places and floodwaters entered some houses. This was also the case in the floods in 2005. Approximately 5 kilometres of roads go under water during larger events.

Public meetings were held in August 2004 and February 2005. The community requested Greater Wellington to investigate the possibility of creating a scheme to clear the willows. The community recognised the recreational and amenity values of the Kopuaranga River. They do not wish to have a “scorched earth policy” for clearing the willows, but rather to have the “crack” willows removed and replaced with appropriate exotic or native species.

A project sub-committee of interested landowners and Masterton District Council representatives was created to investigate the proposal. The 2005 floods prevented the investigation being completed, so as a one-off interim measure, an

isolated works programme of \$60,000 for the 2005/06 financial year was approved by Council. This is funded by a 50% contribution from the landowner, 20% from the Masterton District Council, and 30% by Greater Wellington. The isolated works completed to date have already made a difference to flooding and river flows in localised areas.

The Kopuaranga River lies to the east of the Tararua Ranges with its source being the Mt Bruce hills. Floods typically occur during north-westerly conditions. The river valley has a high percentage of erosion-prone land. The upper sections are well known for being water logged for extensive periods. Sheep and cattle are reared on the upland with intensive dairying occurring on the lower flats. The valley includes the small rural town of Mauriceville. All up there are probably 140 houses which can be affected by flooding.

4. The Process

In setting up the new rating scheme we will need to follow the process as set out in Attachment 1. The classification is almost finalised. Another round of consultation will be required to get endorsement of the scheme by the ratepayers.

5. What Have We Done

The project sub-committee, under the chairmanship of Gavin McLachlan, has met on a regular basis. It has:

- Inspected the affected areas of the valley
- Discussed and considered possible clearing options. Currently, it favours a combination of helicopter spraying and mechanical clearing.
- Viewed the aerial photography of previous floods.
- Visited landowners along the lower river section to confirm the extent of flooding.
- Held public meetings to inform the residents of the area on progress.
- Distributed newsletters.
- Assessed the state of the willow densities downstream of Mauriceville.
- Collated rainfall and hydrologic information.
- Surveyed 57 cross-sections.
- Created a hydraulic model to ascertain the potential impact of any major willow clearing.
- Completed a cost/benefit analysis. A very conservative analysis, which excluded the impact of large floods, the flooding of houses and social benefits (access by flooded roads), gave an internal rate of return of 8.6% and a benefit/cost ratio of 1.05. This exceeds the Council's requirement for a benefit/cost ratio to be greater than 1.0.

- Developed specifications for tree clearing.
- Installed water level recorders to confirm the travel times of flood flows.
- Investigated flooding problems at the Jacksons Line and Dreyers Rock road junction.
- Completed an isolated works programme of up to \$60,000 of works in the 2005/06 year. Currently, \$45,000 of work has been completed.
- Investigated rating classification options.
- Developed a works programme.

6. The Classification

The proposed rating classification comprises three elements:

- Class A - the most frequently flooded area
- Class B - the area only flooded by large flood events
- Fixed charges per separate use or inhabited part of the area of land, Class SA, SB

The ratio between Class A and Class B is to reflect the benefits received.

In total there are 140 houses situated within the Kopuaranga River valley. Staff believe that all the houses receive an indirect benefit. The majority of landowners need to have access up and down the valley to complete their business and get to services such as schools or banks, etc. A smaller number of houses will get a direct benefit from flooding and will pay a higher charge.

Masterton District Council will receive a benefit from this project. Discussions are under way to determine the size and scale of any Masterton District Council contribution.

Possible charges are:

- Class A ... \$25.40 / ha
- Class B ... \$ 6.35 / ha
- Class SA ... \$100 per dwelling unit equivalent
- Class SB ... \$ 50 per dwelling unit equivalent

8. Work Remaining to set the New Scheme Up

Staff are currently working on the actual classification. Shortly there will be an advisory committee meeting to address issues.

Landowners within the scheme will be invited to a general public meeting on 25 May and advised of their proposed contribution. They will also determine over what time they will pay off the loan from the Council. The meeting will need to

endorse the proposed scheme or the Kopuaranga River Enhancement Project will be delayed one year. Subject to the endorsement of the rating classification by the general public meeting, a sub-committee comprising Councillors Buchanan and Long be formed to recommend adoption of the new rating classification, subject to the endorsement of the ratepayers.

The Kopuaranga River Enhancement Project is part of the current LTCCP. It is proposed that the project spend \$100,000 annually between 2006/07 to 2009/10. It will comprise the clearing of “crack willows” from the river channel and the planting of appropriate exotics and native species.

9. Communication

The necessary consultation with the Kopuaranga River valley residents is in progress.

10. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***
3. ***Confirms the overall work programme as set out in the draft 2006/16 LTCCP.***
4. ***Approve Councillors Buchanan and Long forming a sub-committee and given power to recommend the adoption of the new rating classification, subject to the endorsement of the ratepayers, to the Policy, Finance & Strategy Committee at its meeting on 29 June.***

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