

11 October 2023

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-17020

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Request for information 2023-240

I refer to your request for information which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 17 September 2023 at 7:52 p.m. and the subsequent additional information requests on 17 September 2023 at 8:10 p.m. and 20 September 2023 at 7:37 a.m.

On 17 September 2023 at 7:52 p.m. you have requested the following:

- “1. What is GWRC doing to ensure the survival of the newly planted trees in the park? Specifically the trees currently being planted in the former horse paddocks?”*
- 2. How much extra (to already assigned funding) is this costing GWRC to ensure their survival?*
- 3. What are the chances of the newly planted trees/wetland plants survival through a hot, dry summer?*
- 4. Was the delay in the planting of these trees in the former horse paddocks due to the dry winter or to some other reason(s)? Please explain.*

The Pony Club that resides at the Raumati end of QEP has been assigned new grazing areas.

Questions:

- 1. How much land has been assigned to the Pony Club?*
- 2. How much more land (or less) was this than they had before?*
- 3. Is there a cap on the number of horses they can graze on this land? What is the change to previous horse grazing numbers allowed?*

4. What buildings and land besides grazing paddocks have been made available to the Pony Club? What is the total land area?

5. Has there been future thinking as to where these pony club members will graze their horses once they leave Pony Club when grazing is increasingly difficult to find?

At the meeting (between GWRC, Kapiti Stables/grazers and MoE on Wednesday 2 November) [REDACTED] asked remaining grazers if they would like the use of the barn, previously used by Kapiti Stables business, for the storage of horse feed and gear. We accepted this offer. Following the meeting we were advised that we were not allowed the use of the barn as it was going to have work done on it and be used for flax weaving. Instead we were advised we could park a horse float outside the paddocks .

Questions:

1. Why has there not been any work carried out on the barn? Is there planned work to be carried out?

2. Is it still going to be used by flax weavers? If not, what is it going to be used for?

3. Why was the alternative storage option for us to park a horse float at the park when we were clear at the meeting that none of the remaining grazers had a horse float?"

On 17 September 2023 at 8:09 p.m you have requested the following:

"1. What is being done to manage fire risk in QEP?

2. What is being done to manage weeds in QEP? What is the cost of weed control in the last financial year?

3. What percentage of QEP is currently covered in gorse and other weeds?"

On 20 September 2023 you have requested the following:

"1) We have been told that there will be a strip of tree planting taking place in Paddock 3. Please provide detail of the plans for Paddocks 1, 2, 3 and 4.

2) If there are plans for paddocks 1,2,3 and 4 please provide the timeline of work to be carried out and the costs for that work."



Greater Wellington's response follows:

In the responses below we have renumbered parts of your request for ease of answering.

1. *What is GWRC doing to ensure the survival of the newly planted trees in the park? Specifically the trees currently being planted in the former horse paddocks?*

The planting in "the former horse paddocks", we have interpreted to mean the area to the north of paddocks 3 and 4 shown in the map you provided with your information request. At this site the following measures have been taken to maximise plant survival:

- Installation of a rabbit proof fence, and control operations to remove rabbits and hares from inside the fence.
- Installation of weed mats around each plant to reduce weed competition and improve moisture retention.
- Planned maintenance schedule for spring and summer manual weed-release around plants.

Plantings in paddocks 1-4 will also involve:

- Use of hydro-crystals around plant roots to improve moisture retention in dry conditions.
- Installation of plant protectors around the more palatable species and prone to rabbit browsing.
- Additional pest animal control operations.

Should the summer be particularly dry (as is forecast) we may look to water plants at times.

2. *How much extra (to already assigned funding) is this costing GWRC to ensure their survival?*

All planting activities across Greater Wellington's programmes aim to achieve the highest possible survival rate. There is no extra funding being applied to Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP) planting specifically to increase plant survival.

3. *What are the chances of the newly planted trees/wetland plants survival through a hot dry summer?*

We are not able to answer this question definitively as each season of planting survival rates differ, year to year and site by site. Therefore, we have refused this part of your request under section 17(g) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (the Act) on the basis that that the information requested is not held by Greater Wellington and we have no grounds for believing that the information is held by or more closely connect to the functions of another local authority, or a department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

4. *Was the delay in the planting of these trees in the former horse paddocks due to the dry winter or to some other reason(s)? Please explain.*

This planting site was part of a wider schedule of planting this winter across the regional parks network. Greater Wellington worked in partnership with mana whenua to agree which sites were best suited for planting. Planting was scheduled as soon as was practical following final decisions being made. Initial plantings were scheduled for August/September 2023 with the final areas scheduled to be done in paddocks 1-4 following the end of the horse grazing licence.

The Pony Club that resides at the Raumati end of QEP has been assigned new grazing areas.

Questions:

5. *How much land has been assigned to the Pony Club?*

Approximately ten hectares within QEP is licensed for pony club activities and grazing by Kāpiti Pony Club (KPC).

6. *How much more land (or less) was this than they had before?*

KPC had approximately 19 hectares on their previous licence.

7. *Is there a cap on the number of horses they can graze on this land? What is the change to previous horse grazing numbers allowed?*

Yes, the new licence specifies a maximum number of horse and ponies (8) and allows for this to be adjusted (up or down) if park conditions change. The previous licence did not specify horse numbers, but they were limited by the lack of suitable grazing land (wetlands). The licence area land is being monitored by KPC and Greater Wellington. Park land conditions continue to change as natural

processes of regeneration occur. Areas not previously identified as wetlands have reverted, so the licence area is being adjusted as required.

8. *What buildings and land besides grazing paddocks have been made available to the Kāpiti Pony Club? What is the total land area?*

KPC is permitted to use the former shearing shed, dairy shed and associated area including the concrete yard area. This area is shared with Greater Wellington management use and is not accessible to the public. They have approximately 10ha for club activities and grazing. This includes their own barn off the Poplar Ave entrance, a small holding paddock there and paddocks to the north and south of the former dairy and shearing sheds. The events paddock is the large area beside the Te Ara o Whareroa cycle trail.

9. *Has there been future thinking as to where these pony club members will graze their horses once they leave Pony Club when grazing is increasingly difficult to find?*

No, Greater Wellington is not involved with future grazing arrangements of any pony club member's horses or ponies. However, KPC advise that their membership changes regularly and that most horse grazing on the coast is now in the Te Horo/Ōtaki area.

At the meeting (between GWRC, Kapiti Stables grazers and MoE on Wednesday 2 November) Al Green asked remaining grazers if they would like the use of the barn, previously used by Kapiti Stables business, for the storage of horse feed and gear. We accepted this offer. Following the meeting we would advised that we were not allowed the use of the barn as it was going to have work done on it and be used for flax weaving. Instead we were advised we could park a horse float outside the paddocks.

Questions:

10. *Why has there not been any work carried out on the barn? Is there planned work to be carried out?*

The intended use for flax weaving has not yet been eventuated. Greater Wellington's maintenance team has undertaken condition assessment inspections and found the building to be in very poor condition. Other groups including mana whenua and a local bike repair group have expressed interest in use. Possible future uses or relocation of the building will be considered during the planned master planning process where detailed site plans for the park's amenity areas will be developed. There is currently no work planned to upgrade the barn.

11. *Is it still going to be used by flax weavers? If not, what is it going to be used for?*

As above, possible future use or relocation of the barn is undetermined at the present time.

12. *Why was the alternative storage option for us to park a horse float at the park when we were clear at the meeting that none of the remaining graziers had a horse float?*

Greater Wellington interprets this question's reference to "the meeting" to mean the meeting on 2 November 2022, where Councillor Penny Gaylor along with Greater Wellington staff met with Kāpiti Stables and multiple casual graziers regarding the planned exit of grazing under the Kāpiti Stables concession. At that time, it was not clear how many Kāpiti Stables casual graziers would be able to remove their horses from the park by the end of the 30 November 2022 and how many would need additional time to find alternative grazing.

Casual graziers were asked to contact Greater Wellington after the meeting if they needed extra time. As a result, the remaining casual graziers that required more time to secure alternative grazing were issued temporary concession agreements which were eventually extended to 30 September 2023.

In those temporary agreements, Condition 16 stated:

No food or equipment storage facilities are available. This includes the barn building and Kapiti Stables sheds (removed). If horse food or equipment storage is required, the Grazing Manager must request this in writing to Greater Wellington. If temporary storage is required, it will be limited to a maximum of two (grazier owned) horse floats located in the public parking area at an agreed site.

Greater Wellington understands that condition 16 and the reference to grazier owned horse floats was a reasonable solution to providing a temporary storage facility.

13. *What is being done to manage fire risk in QEP?*

A fire threat management plan was developed and is being implemented. Fire threat management is ongoing operational work. The report identifies that the main ignition source is human activities and that most fires in the park are from beach fires lit by people and left unattended. The following activities summarise Greater Wellington's actions to manage fire risk at QEP:

- A programme of native vegetation and wetland restoration, known as Recloaking Papa ūānuku, seeks to restore the natural ecosystem within the park. This programme will take many years to fully implement. Restoration of native vegetation and wetlands is the best long-term defence against fire.
- Signs along the beach identifying fire prohibition and Rangers' patrol.
- Ongoing seasonal fuel reduction works. This includes baling hay and silage in the pony club events paddock and other suitable areas, cutting grass beside trails and removing highly flammable exotic trees that don't offer native bird habitat value.
- Pest plant mulching.
- Seasonal mowing of tracks and road margins to increase effectiveness of their use as fire breaks.

- Hazard reduction at priority areas where woody debris and other potential fuel sources are being removed or reduced.
- Staff and park volunteer training to better understand and manage risks and fire response actions.
- Public education activities including website information and social media.

14. *What is being done to manage weeds in QEP? What is the cost of weed control in the last financial year?*

Greater Wellington has been mulching gorse and blackberry in large areas of the park. We have been following up with spraying to prevent re-growth. This will be one of our key focus activities of environmental restoration, along with planting throughout the park over the next few years. Many volunteer groups also work in the park reducing weeds as part of restoration activities.

The cost of Greater Wellington's pest plant control programme at QEP in 2022/23 was as follows:

- Key Native Ecosystem programme \$41,500
- Pest plant mulching programme \$83,700
- Pest plant spray programme \$20,000

Note that these figures do not include pest plant and animal threat management work undertaken by mana whenua, park group volunteers or other programme work. You can read more about the extensive programme of works undertaken by the S in the park on the public website.¹

15. *What percentage of QEP is currently covered in gorse and other weeds?*

We have refused this part of your request under section 17(g) of the Act on the basis that that the information requested is not held by Greater Wellington and we have no grounds for believing that the information is held by or more closely connect to the functions of another local authority, or a department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

Additional information for part 15 of your request

The land is in a process of natural transition and recovery since grazing activities have ended across about 500 hectares of park. Two wet winters have assisted natural processes of recovery which have been supported by pest plant and animal control activities, ongoing environmental restoration plantings and other works such as nursery group and native seed collection and plant growing activities.

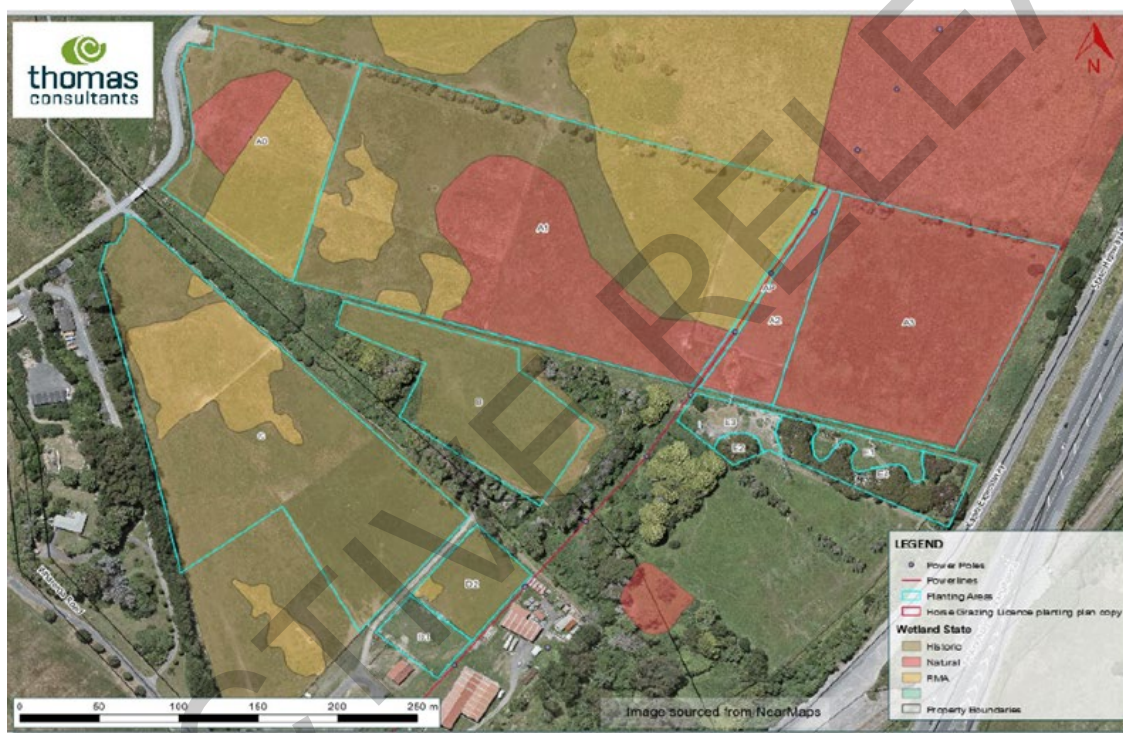
The area under active processes of pest plants and animal management and restoration is changing year to year. Some 'weeds' or non-native plants that are beneficial for natural processes of restoration or support biodiversity may not actively be removed. Large exotic trees for example can provide valuable habitat for native birds, tree lucerne is important food for kererū and in non-wetland areas, gorse can be a useful nitrogen fixing species which supports natural processes of

¹ <https://www.gw.govt.nz/parks/queen-elizabeth-park/whats-happening-in-queen-elizabeth-park/>

native vegetation recovery. You can read more about this on the public website² on the Recloning Papatūānuku programme pages. The many ways of undertaking and supporting restoration processes are detailed under the heading 'Restoration- practical approaches'.

16. We have been told that there will be a strip of tree planting taking place in Paddock 3. Please provide detail of the plans for Paddocks 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The diagram below shows the areas planned for planting this year, defined by the blue boxes.



Area A planting is almost complete (this area is protected by a rabbit proof fence).

17. If there are plans for paddocks 1,2,3 and 4 please provide the timeline of work to be carried out and the costs for that work.

Areas B, C, D and E correspond to paddocks 2, 3, 1, 4. The planting work for these paddocks is planned to start in early October and is expected to take about two-three weeks to complete.

² <https://www.gw.govt.nz/your-region/plans-policies-and-by-laws/plans-and-reports/parks-plans/toitu-te-whenua-parks-network-plan-2020-30/implementing-toitu-te-whenua-parks-network-plan-2020-30/restoring-ecosystem-health/recloning-papatuanuku-recloning-mother-earth/>

The total estimated cost of planting areas A-E is as follows:

- Plants: \$140,791.50 (62,574 @ \$2.25ea)
- Plant Delivery: \$3,500.00 (10x \$350ea)
- Rabbit proof fence: \$12,580.00 (labour) + \$18,802.29 (materials)
- Mats, Protectors, Hydro-crystals: \$65,186.00
- Contractor 1 Area A planting: \$146,000.00
- Contractor 1 Area B and E planting: \$32,000 (estimate as contract is yet to be finalised)
- Contractor 2 Area C and D planting: \$75,337.15

TOTAL \$494,196.94 (\$7.90 per plant)

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Lian Butcher

Kaiwhakahaere Matua, Rōpū Taiao | Group Manager, Environment