

20 November 2023

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-24134

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

### **Request for information 2023-263**

I refer to your request for information dated 23 October 2023, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 23 October 2023. You have requested the following:

#### ***“Reasons for Park Hours Reduction:***

- *What were the primary reasons for reducing the morning hours of access at Whitireia park?*
- *Have there been any budgetary or resource constraints that contributed to this decision?*
- *Were there specific concerns or issues that prompted this change?*

#### ***Consultation and Decision-Making Process:***

- *What steps were taken to consult with the community and gather input before reducing park hours?*
- *Who was involved in the decision-making process, and what criteria were used to make this decision?*
- *Were any public hearings or meetings held to discuss the proposed changes?*

#### ***Community Engagement:***

- *Please provide information on any surveys, public forums, or outreach initiatives that were conducted to gauge community opinions and needs related to park hours.*
- *What measures were taken to address the concerns and suggestions of the community during this process?*
- *How were the voices of underrepresented or marginalized groups within the community taken into account?*

### **Special Access Allocation:**

- *I am also interested in understanding the criteria and rationale behind the allocation of special access to only two or three residents.*
- *What process was followed to identify and allocate this special access, and were these decisions made transparently and equitably?*

*I kindly request that you provide a written response to this inquiry to address the above questions and concerns. If any relevant documents, reports, or meeting minutes are available, please include them in your response."*

### **Greater Wellington's response follows:**

#### **Reasons for park hours reductions**

1. *What were the primary reasons for reducing the morning hours of access at Whitireia park?*

Park usage was low during the winter months according to visitor/user counter data recorded. On average there were 9.3 people accessing the park between 6am and 8am each day. Vehicle access to parks is not allowed from dusk to dawn each day, this does not exclude pedestrian access to the park.

Greater Wellington Park Rangers could not respond to gate issues between 6am and 8am due to normal hours of work and safety concerns regarding working alone in hours of darkness.

2. *Have there been any budgetary or resource constraints that contributed to this decision?*

Yes, staff resource constraints meant that Greater Wellington had limited ability to respond to callouts attributed to the automatic gate malfunctioning.

3. *Were there specific concerns or issues that prompted this change?*

Decreased usage of the park during the winter months from 6am-8am. Greater Wellington staff were also aware of an increase in antisocial behaviour in the early hours of the morning.

#### **Consultation and Decision-Making Process**

1. *What steps were taken to consult with the community and gather input before reducing park hours?*

No community consultation was undertaken to stop vehicular access to the park with no change to pedestrian access which has not been restricted.

2. *Who was involved in the decision-making process, and what criteria were used to make this decision?*

The Whitireia Park board made the decision taking into account the advice of Greater Wellington Park Rangers. The matter of reducing the hours of vehicle access to the park to 8am-6pm was considered and agreed by the Whitireia Park Board on 24 February 2023.

At the Park Board meeting on 27 October 2023, the Board approved a change to the park opening hours to allow for increased recreational access to the park for summer, 6am-9pm during Daylight Saving Time (Summer), and 8am-6pm during New Zealand Standard Time (Winter).

The meeting minutes from the relevant Whitireia Park Board meetings, on 24 February 2023, and 27 October 2023 are available online. Please note that the Board meeting minutes from 27 October 2023 are unconfirmed until the following Board meeting on 1 December 2023.

- Whitireia Park Board meeting 24 February 2023: <https://www.gw.govt.nz/your-region/events-and-meetings/whitireia-park-board/>
- Whitireia Park Board meeting 27 October 2023: <https://www.gw.govt.nz/your-region/events-and-meetings/whitireia-park-board-6/>

3. *Were any public hearings or meetings held to discuss the proposed changes?*

Yes, the Whitireia Park Board meets four times a year. Public are welcome to attend these meetings. A schedule of upcoming Board meetings is available on our website.

<https://www.gw.govt.nz/your-region/events-and-meetings/?start=0&date-range=future-dates&from-date=07%2F11%2F2023&to-date=&topics%5B%5D=whitireia-park-board>

### **Community Engagement**

1. *Please provide information on any surveys, public forums, or outreach initiatives that were conducted to gauge community opinions and needs related to park hours.*
2. *What measures were taken to address the concerns and suggestions of the community during this process?*
3. *How were the voices of underrepresented or marginalized groups within the community taken into account?*

We have refused this part of your request under section 17(e) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (the Act) on the basis that that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

We have considered whether consulting with you would change our decision and in this instance, do not believe that consulting you would remove our reason for refusal.

### **Special Access Allocation**

4. *I am also interested in understanding the criteria and rationale behind the allocation of special access to only two or three residents.*

To my knowledge one person was given access prior to the opening time of 8am. This access was a 6-month trial which ended on 1 November 2023. We are refusing the part of your request regarding the rationale of access under section 7(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased persons.

We have considered whether the public interest in the requested information outweighs Greater Wellington's need to withhold certain aspects of the requested information. As a result, we do not consider that the public interest outweighs Greater Wellington's reason for withholding parts of the document under the grounds identified above.

5. *What process was followed to identify and allocate this special access and were these decisions made transparently and equitably?*

The person emailed our Park Ranger requesting access, the request was reasonable, so vehicle access was granted.

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, Taiao | Group Manager, Environment