



**Minutes of a Meeting of the
ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING COMMITTEE
held in the Council Chambers, 15 Seymour Street, Blenheim and via Teams on
THURSDAY, 18 APRIL 2024 commencing at 9.00 am.**

Present

Cllrs G A Hope (in the Chair), B A Faulls (Deputy), S A Arbuckle, R J Innes, B J Minehan, T P Sowman, Mr S Harvey (Rural Representative), Mr R Smith (Iwi representative)

Present via Teams

Cllr A R Burgess

Also Present

Cllrs S R W Adams, J A Arbuckle and J D N Croad

In Attendance

Mr H R Versteegh (Environmental Science and Policy Group Manager) and Ms G Ferguson (Consents and Compliance Group Manager), and Ms N Chauval (Committee Secretary)

Apologies

Cllrs Hope/Minehan:

That the apology for absence from The Mayor be received and sustained.

Carried

E&P-0424-375 Declaration of Interests -

No interests with items on the agenda were declared.

ATTENDANCE: Katie Littlewood, Council's Principal Coastal Scientist, was present for the following two items and Robyn Dunmore, SLR Consulting was present via Teams for the following item.

**E&P-0424-376 Changes to Te Hoiere/Pelorus Sound Subtidal
Reefs after Marine Heatwaves and Storm Events
E325-000-002**

Ms Littlewood noted that the purpose of the report was to present information to the Committee on changes to subtidal reef habitats in outer Te Hoiere/Pelorus Sounds. To highlight the report a powerpoint presentation was shown (presentation filed in CM Record No. 24113792)

Ms Littlewood noted that the reef monitoring occurs in outer Te Hoiere/Pelorus Sound as part of marine farming resource consent requirements. The reefs are located in high-flow environments, and are characterised by notable biological communities (e.g., sponges, macroalgae, tube worm mounds).

Members were advised that the reef monitoring has occurred annually since 2015. The recent monitoring has shown that reef communities have undergone distinct changes, some of which are likely due to intense marine heatwaves and storm events that have occurred in recent years. The changes have included declines in habitat-forming macroalgae and tubeworm mounds, filamentous algal growth on sponges and increases in echinoderm numbers (kina, sea stars).

It was reported that the Marlborough Sounds has experienced significant water temperature increases in recent years, in a large part due to the persistent marine heatwaves documented in the Cook Strait. In 2022 the average temperature in Te Hoiere was 15.7C and peaked at 20.4C, highlighting an average temperature increase of 0.7C over 8 years.

Members were advised that these findings highlight the negative effects of climate change (in particular, the increased frequency and intensity of marine heatwaves and storm events) on our coastal biodiversity and aquaculture industry.

Cirs Innes/Sowman:
That the information be received.

Carried

ATTENDANCE: Ms Jorgia McMillan, Council's Coastal Scientist, was present for the following item.

E&P-0424-377 The Importance of Seagrass on Estuary and Intertidal Health E325-000-002

Ms McMillan noted the purpose of the report was to inform the Committee on the importance of seagrass on estuary and intertidal health in the Marlborough Sounds. To highlight the report a powerpoint presentation was shown (presentation filed in CM Record No. 24113791).

It was reported that seagrass (*Zostera muelleri*) carries out a number of important ecosystem functions including providing habitat for fish, shellfish and other marine species by way of trapping sediment and stabilizing the ocean floor, as well as carrying out nutrient recycling which in turn improves coastal water quality. Seagrass also acts as a buffer between land and sea and can help minimise the effects of land based activities on intertidal health.

It was reported that Council's estuary monitoring programme, created by Salt Ecology in 2022, has shown there are areas in the Marlborough Sounds that have healthy and productive intertidal areas, with mass abundance of seagrass such as Umungata Bay, Fence Bay and Mistletoe Bay. While there are some areas with lower seagrass extent including Kaiuma Bay, Mahakipawa Arm and Ohinetaha.

Over the 2023/2024 summer months, the Coastal Science team have mapped over 20 of Marlborough's estuaries. The team are now analysing the data and compiling a report for the committee on the state of these estuaries, which will be presented to the committee later this year.

In response to a query from Mr Smith in regard to the rimurehia (seagrass) and whether signage could be installed to raise community awareness as a taonga. Ms McMillan advised that Council currently isn't but that signs are on the plan for the next financial year. It was also noted that the recent funding increase toward coastal restoration will enable the team to better educate landowners and community groups and create awareness around the benefits of seagrass and the importance of utilizing nature-based solutions to combat climate change.

Members were advised that Council and Salt Ecology will continue to monitor seagrass in Te Hoiere/Pelorus and Tōtaranui/Queen Charlotte Sound as part of Council's estuary monitoring programme.

Cirs Innes/Fauls:
That the information be received.

Carried

ATTENDANCE: Ms Nic Dann, Council's Regional Catchment Facilitator, was present for the following item.

E&P-0424-378 Catchment Facilitation

E355-021-05-02

Ms Dann noted the purpose of the report was to present information to the Committee on the workflows around implementation of the Essential Freshwater fund following Government's recommended 'light touch' request. To highlight the report a powerpoint presentation was shown (presentation filed in CM Record No. 24113789).

Members were advised that the Regional Catchment Facilitator position, along with a policy position has been funded by the Ministry of Environment for the past 18 months, with funding expiring 1 July 2025. The education aspect of these deliverables has included the coordination of website resources contained within Marlborough Rural Hub, as well as specific Freshwater Farm Plan (FWFP) pages and general media communications. There are also links to fact sheets which are able to be updated if any regulations change in the near future. Other sources of education and information sharing have included a series of FWFP public meetings for targeted catchments, rural support organisations as well as NZWine industry professionals.

It was reported there are some constraints and one is that the order in Council for the Marlborough Freshwater Farm Plan sequence has currently been placed on hold until ministers decide what formal direction the system will take. This means that Council's first catchment that was to roll out on 1 July will be pushed back to a later date.

It was noted that as a result of the Council being directed to take a light touch on implementation until formal ministerial direction is received the FWFP meetings have been rescheduled to spring this year. Certifier training has also been postponed for a later date.

Ms Dann noted that Council is in a very good position to pivot and respond to any central government changes in the near future.

Cirs Hope/Faults:
That the information be received.

Carried

ATTENDANCE: Andrew McAlister, Trustee, and John Hellstrom, Chair, Marlborough Sounds Restoration Trust were present for the following item.

E&P-0424-379 Wild Ungulate Management in the Marlborough Sounds

E315-005-027-01

Mr McAlister provided members with an update on the recent community-led initiative being delivered by and through the Marlborough Sounds Restoration Trust (MSRT) targeting the high number of wild ungulates [deer, pigs, goats] in the Marlborough Sounds. (Presentation filed in CM Record No. 24113788).

To date, MSRT have facilitated and delivered seven operations spanning Whatamango Bay, Inner Queen Charlotte Sound, Outer Queen Charlotte Sound, Mt Cawte, Maud Island, Blumine Island and Arapaoa Island Scenic Reserve. The latter operations were predominantly working with the Department of Conservation. In total, these operations covered 13,000ha and removed 2,830 feral animals.

The Trust has received DOC funding through the Wild Animal Control framework to write an Ungulate Management Strategy for the Sounds. The strategy would involve having wider conversations with Iwi, recreational hunters, landowners and crown agencies to discuss what needs to be done to reduce the ungulate population and their detrimental effect on the Sounds environment. A detailed evaluation programme would be built into the strategy which would be Sounds wide. The Trust has a year to complete the strategy.

Cirs Faults/Hope:
That the information be received.

Carried

ATTENDANCE: Cllr J Arbuckle withdrew from the meeting at 10.30 am during the following item.

ATTENDANCE: Ms Charlotte Tomlinson, Council's Environmental Scientist – Hydrology, and Mr Peter Davidson, Council's Senior Environmental Scientist – Groundwater were present for the following item.

E&P-0424-380 Marlborough Drought Update - Autumn 2024 **E345-007-001**

Ms Tomlinson provided members with an update on drought conditions and the current state of water resources. To highlight the report a powerpoint presentation was shown (presentation filed in CM Record No. 24113786).

It was noted that on 14 March the government had classified drought conditions in the Top of the South as a medium-scale adverse event and the Top of the South Drought Committee has met for a second time.

Ms Tomlinson advised that the recent rainfall event was widespread throughout the region and soil moistures have risen, however, rivers for an annual total are low. Aquifers have somewhat recovered but will need more rainfall events for a full recovery.

Members were advised that the outlook ahead is that the El Nino conditions are returning to neutral conditions by June and there is not really a clear outlook beyond that but neutral conditions are a good sign in terms of dry weather. The 35 day outlook is still for below average rainfall and this will continue through to late autumn.

Ms Tomlinson noted that it is hard to say if the drought has been broken but the soil moisture has been replenished for now. River flows are replenished and water restrictions have been lifted, but crucially, the Wairau aquifer has not refilled from one single event like this.

Cllrs Minehan/Sowman:
That the information be received.

Carried

ATTENDANCE: Cllr Sowman withdrew from the meeting at 10.49 am during the following item.

ATTENDANCE: Mr Matt Oliver, Council's Senior Environmental Scientist – Land Resources, was present for the following item.

E&P-0424-381 Soil Mapping Update – April 2024 E355-004-008-06

Mr Oliver noted that the purpose of the report was to provide an update on the joint Council and Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research (MWLR) S-Map soil mapping project. To highlight the report a powerpoint presentation was shown (presentation filed in CM Record No. 24113783.)

Mr Oliver advised that the soil mapping work in Marlborough proceeds on schedule and within budget and mapping work for Wairau is nearing completion. A review for the Awatere Valley mapping is complete and work is ongoing in Blind River and Flaxbourne. A feasibility study of a digital soil mapping solution for the Marlborough Sounds is underway.

Members were advised that it is important to provide information and improvements on mapping to ensure soil data is adequate for modern land use such as irrigation allocation and nutrient management.

Members asked a number of questions at the meeting.

Mr Harvey/Cllr Faulls:
That the information be received.

Carried

ATTENDANCE: Meeting adjourned at 11.00 am and resumed at 11.15 am

ATTENDANCE: Ms Clementine Rankin, Council's Strategic Planner - Freshwater, was present for the following item.

**E&P-0424-382 National Policy Statement for Freshwater
Management 2020 – Report on Second Round of
Community Engagement** **M100-14-03-02**

Ms Rankin noted that the purpose of the report was to provide members with an update on the feedback received for the second round of community engagement (the engagement) regarding the implementation of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPSFM). The report on NPSFM Engagement 2 Proposed Long-Term Visions Values and Environmental Outcomes was attached the agenda item for members' information.

Members were advised that the second round of community engagement took place from 3 November to 15 December 2023. This round of community engagement focused on the proposed values, visions, and environmental outcomes for freshwater in each of the six proposed Freshwater Management Units (FMU) in the region.

A robust engagement package was created which included an update to the Freshwater Management section of the Council website, a questionnaire in dual formats, and a range of in person and online events. 46 individual relevant responses were received.

It was noted that the feedback received demonstrated the strong and often contrasting viewpoints regarding freshwater.

It was reported that the themes noted in the feedback included private property rights (particularly regarding access over private land), contrasting views on Ecosystem Health with differing emphasis on enhancing and protecting or providing a more balanced approach, forestry land use, irrigation water storage, and other irrigation activities.

Members were advised that Council staff will create a separate report comprising Council's responses to the feedback and the report be presented to the Committee in mid-2024.

Ms Rankin advised that the Government proposes to review and replace the NPSFM 2020 within the next 18-24 months and has extended the notification deadline by three years from December 2024 to December 2027. In light of the government direction no variation will be made to the PMEP for the NPSFM 2020 in 2024. Community consultation will also halt for now. The Council's NPSFM work programme will continue, focusing on working with iwi to understand Māori freshwater values, long-term visions, and assessing freshwater management against new regional and science information.

Members were advised that staff will continue to closely monitor Government information on the NPSFM review, liaise with the Ministry of Environment as needed, and report to this Committee when changes occur.

Cirs Innes/Minehan:
That the report be received.

Carried

E&P-0424-383 Appeals on PMEP Variation 1: Marine Farming **M100-11-002-07**

The following was noted in regard to the progress with resolving appeals on PMEP Variation 1: Marine farming appeals. A table of appellants was attached to the agenda for members' information.

32 notices of appeal on Variation 1 were lodged with the Environment Court and formal mediation on Variation 1 appeals commenced on 12 March 2024.

Progress is being made to resolve appeals through informal mediation. Consent orders have been issued by the Court to resolve, in full or in part, five appeals with respect to aquaculture management areas (AMA). Another two proposals to settle appeals on AMA are with the Court and await consent orders. Council has proposed a resolution with the appellants in two more appeals and discussions continue with two further appellants.

Cirs Fauls/Innes:
That the report be received.

Carried

E&P-0424-384 Appeals on the PMEP

M100-09-01

The following was noted in regard to the progress with resolving appeals made to the Environment Court on the PMEP. A table of appellants and a table of appeals status were included with the agenda item for members' information.

51 notices of appeal on the PMEP were lodged with the Environment Court. The scheduled Environment Court mediation on all topics has now been completed, although requests for further Court assisted mediation are being made when the parties consider that progress can be made.

One consent memorandum currently being considered by the Court and a further consent memorandum is in circulation.

Aquaculture Interests have withdrawn a significant number of appeal points subsequent to the public notice of the Variation 1 decision. Work is ongoing to consider the relationship between outstanding PMEP appeals, and the Variation 1 decision and appeals.

NPS for Indigenous Biodiversity has been gazetted and parties are now considering how the NPS direction may influence appeals placed on hold pending that gazettal.

Cirs Hope/S Arbuckle:
That the report be received.

Carried

E&P-0424-385 Information Package

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Clr Innes/Mr Smith:
That the Regulatory Department Information Package dated 18 April 2024 be received and noted.

Carried

E&P-0424-386 Decision to Conduct Business with the Public Excluded

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Clr Hope/Mr Smith:
That the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, namely:

- **Confirmation of Sub-Committee Public Excluded Minutes**

The general subject of each matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter and the specific grounds under Section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:

General subject of each matter to be considered	Reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter	Ground(s) under Section 48(1) for the passing of this resolution
Minutes and Committee Reports	As set out in the Minutes and Reports	That the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding exists under Section 7 of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Carried

The meeting closed at 11.48 pm.

Record No: 24115559