

Biodiversity Advisory Group

13 November 2023



Biodiversity Advisory Group – 13/11/23

Minutes of a meeting of the Biodiversity Advisory Group held on Monday 13 November 2023, in the Council Chamber, 137 Havelock Street, Ashburton, commencing at 1.00pm.

Present

Mayor Neil Brown and Councillors Lynette Lovett (Chair) and Richard Wilson;
Alice Shanks, Adi Avnit, Edith Smith, Angela Cushnie, Donna Field, Barry Austin, Lisa Peers-Adams, Kim Wall, Mike Salvesen, Val Clemens, Nick Vernon, Jan Kirini, Ian Soper (Open Spaces Manager) and Christian Chukwuka (Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor)

In attendance

Femke van der Valk (Policy Advisor), Bert Hofmans (Open Spaces Planner), Linda Clarke (Communications Advisor) and Mary Jenkin (Governance Support).

1 Apologies

That apologies received from Cr Leen Braam, Janine Holland, Gen de Spa, Willy Leferink, Ian Fraser, Mary Ralson and Neil McCann be accepted.

Wilson / Avnit

Carried

2 Extraordinary Business

Nil

3 Declarations of Interest

Nil

4 Previous Minutes

That the minutes of the Biodiversity Advisory Group meeting held on 7 August 2023 be taken as read and confirmed.

Avnit / Vernon

Carried

• Wilding management in Rural C Zone

The Biodiversity Officer will provide an update vegetation clearance in the Rural C Zone at the next meeting.

Council's Planning Manager, who was unable to attend today, will be invited to the next meeting. The Group have questions about the expected review of District Plan Rules, as they currently don't meet national standards. Clarification is also sought on whether the Biodiversity Strategy will supersede the District Plan rules.

It was reported that the vegetation clearance rule review depends on planning process and that Council is waiting on central government's direction on the RMA reforms. When directives are in place from the Strategy, they will be adhered to. The expectation is that agencies will work together to achieve a positive outcome.

5 Plantation Road proposal

Edith Smith presented images of *Clematis marata* and native brooms, explaining the significance of these rare native plants. Advocating the proposal to designate Plantation Road as an area of significance, with the opportunity to create another dryland site for the protection of native plants. Would the ADC take on the responsibility of looking after these plants? Recently the shelter belt was cut down and landed on the plants. It was ascertained in this meeting that it was the farmer’s responsibility to clear up.

The Mayor noted that Plantation Road is a designated paper road and questioned whether it would be landlocked, if it was planted out. This would be investigated by Roding officers.

The Biodiversity Group agreed it would be useful for members to visit the Plantation Road site with Alice Shanks and the Biodiversity Officer next year. It was further agreed that a site visit would be arranged for Council members if the recommendation is supported.

Recommendation to Council

That Ashburton District Council investigates making the eastern end of Plantation Road an insurance site.

Clemens/ Field

Carried

Mike Salverson, Federated Farmers arrived at 1.40 pm

6 Update on Biodiversity Strategy

Femke van der Valk and Christian Chukwuka presented an update, following Council adopting the draft strategy for consultation. Council is encouraging people in the community to make submissions on the draft strategy for the district. They reported that there has been a positive response from the community – people are eager to read the Biodiversity Strategy document to get the overall picture.

The Biodiversity Strategy community consultation ends on 26 November and a public hearing is scheduled for 14 December.

7 Ecologist / Biodiversity Advisor’s report

• 2024 meeting dates

The following dates have been agreed – 12 February, 13 May, 12 August and 11 November 2024, with one field trip in 2024 (date to be determined). It was agreed that meetings will continue to be held on Mondays, at 1pm. Calendar invites will be sent to members.

That the Ecologist/Biodiversity Advisor’s report be received.

Smith/Vernon

Carried

8 Group Updates

• ECan

Donna Field provided an update on ECan-led projects noting around 4,000 nesting birds (black-billed gulls) were counted at the State Highway Bridge. ECan and Forest & Bird are putting up notices (and there will be some publicity around this), urging people to contact DoC if they see anyone endangering the birds. ECan has no legal right to enforce Wildlife Act to monitor this behaviour.

A trapping workshop will be held this Thursday night at the Mania-o-Roto Scout den. This includes a demonstration to the community on how to use the trap app and set up traps. ECan are also seeking volunteers and trappers.

On 25 November ECan are undertaking the Lower Ashburton bird survey and are seeking volunteers to count birds. This will involve a lot of walking / zigzagging across the river.

The Biodiversity Officer will liaise with Council's communications team to publicise these events.

- **Harris Scientific Reserve**

Work is being undertaken to preserve the *Clematis marata*. A new plant was discovered by Council's Ecologist/Biodiversity Officer on their last visit (displayed a drawing/artwork photo). Have been relying on seeds and there's concern about the loss of the species at this site.

The rings of Kanuka stem found at the site were professionally counted to discover the age and it was found to be 65 years old. There was a lot of Kanuka when Arthur Harris bought the farm. Also, a Manuka tree was discovered in the middle of the covenant area, but not in the Kanuka site, indicating it might have been a species that had been there too.

- **Lake Heron Conservation Society**

Barry Austin spoke about the trapping programme, there are two students from Christchurch that travel down every month to trap pests. Methven Lions have been contacting trappers to see how they can also help and assist with co-ordination. DOC will fund some trapping.

Barry commented on the Wellington's Miramar Peninsula which is predator free - they have a different trapping system with high success rates.

- **Forest & Bird**

Forest and Bird have a trapping strategy with DOC. The Banks Peninsula strategy for pest control has been highly successful. With good funding, management, technology and state of the art traps, good progress can be made. As an example, technology eliminates the need to attend a trap if no predator has been caught.

Donna Field suggested that, in this district, it would be best to identify high value areas where the trapping will make a difference.

- **Foothills Landcare Group**

Jan Kirini reported on the volunteer Weed Wrangling Weekend held in the Mid-Canterbury foothills 27-29 October. There was a lot of community involvement to remove invasive weeds.

- **Kanuka Trust**

Kim Wall reported that the Trust is working with schools and making good traction – 800 plants in schools this year and there has been lots of learning around that.

- **Federated Farmers**

Mike Salvesen spoke about the ongoing Synlait planting programme where they're providing native plants to farmers. He is also continuing to plant native trees on his own farm.

- **Synlait**

Nick Vernon also commented on the programme. 62,000 native plantings across Canterbury, around the Foothills lowlands and Upper Hinds. Synlait will continue to support catchment groups. They are seeing success on farms – for example Thompson's Track, and Mt Harding creek is doing well, as are the shelterbelts.

- **Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective**

Angela Cushnie spoke about the eight catchment groups and an upcoming meeting with a potential group in Mt Harding. Angela thanked Synlait for their support. The plants are an engagement tool, and their value is appreciated.

9 Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 12 February 2024

The meeting concluded at 2.28pm.

