

THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 11 AUGUST 2009 AT THE OFFICES OF THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL, 388 MAIN SOUTH ROAD, GREYMOOUTH, COMMENCING AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

P. Ewen (Chairman), R. Scarlett, D. Davidson, B. Chinn, A. Robb, A. Birchfield, T. Archer, T. Scott

IN ATTENDANCE:

C. Ingle (Chief Executive Officer), R. Mallinson (Corporate Services Manager), S. Moran (Planning & Environmental Manager), C. Dall (Consents & Compliance Manager), T. Jellyman (Minutes Clerk)

1. PRESENTATION

Messrs Dave Ritchie and Andy England gave a presentation on behalf of recreational river users. Both men have a background in white water kayaking. Mr England spoke to a power point presentation. He drew attention to the recent report on Energy Demand and Supply that was presented to the July meeting by C. Ingle. Mr England stated that electricity prices on the West Coast are among the highest in the country. Mr England advised that TrustPower have publicly stated that putting in the Arnold River scheme will not make any difference to the price of electricity. Mr England does not want the West Coast to export power. Mr England's concern is that preferred rivers might be dammed to make way for hydro schemes. He stated that one of the main attractions to the West Coast is its rivers and outdoor lifestyle. He stated a lot of people around the world are now considering hydropower to be questionable as renewable or sustainable.

Mr England is keen to progress a smarter approach to hydropower which is based on holistic evidence. Mr Ritchie stated that safety is a major concern with regard to the alpine fault, he is concerned about the collapsing of dams should there be a major earthquake. Mr Ritchie is also concerned about dams affecting river silt levels, coastal erosion and replenishment of beaches. Mr Ritchie stated that there is no planning in place for the removal dams that were built in the 1930's that have now reached the end of their useful lifecycle.

Mr Ritchie gave examples of dams overseas that could be similar to those suggested for the West Coast, he stated that there is not a lot of employment opportunities in these areas. Mr England stated that there are a lot of people now coming to the West Coast for the lifestyle opportunity who are in professional employment. He feels if the outdoor lifestyle were taken away it would be even harder to recruit. Mr Ritchie feels there is a lack of a national strategy that bases the river resources in some kind of ranking order. He feels there is an opportunity to progress this in a natural and holistic way so that future hydro developments are not based on a case by case basis. He feels that it would be remiss not to take this opportunity. Mr England referred to the phrase in C. Ingle's report that talks about better enabling hydroelectric power; he feels this is too broad. He would like this phrased as better enabling smart hydro. Mr England stated he does not stand against hydro power full stop, but as kayakers every river lost is upsetting. He stated that kayakers use power also and they are not being stupid about this but he feels there are smart ways of doing hydro and dumb ways and that if it is done in a smart way then everyone is on a winner.

Cr Ewen stated that the Regional Council has a role in stating its position in this and that due to the large amount of DoC estate a lot of hydro schemes are never going to be won. He spoke of the opportunity for groups such as kayakers to make submissions on the next stage of renewable energy options. Cr Ewen is keen for this council to be seen as an authority that can facilitate progress with changes to the RMA and to progress energy options. He said that given the water resource on the West Coast then Council needs to look at those schemes that would be viable. Cr Ewen stated that Council's role is to investigate opportunities and present documents to gain debate in order to support ratepayers who are also recreational users, energy users, domestic and industry users. Cr Archer asked Messrs Ritchie and England if they felt that the majority of residents on the West Coast would share their view? Mr England stated that recreational users would be in agreement. Mr Ritchie responded that a minority of people on the West Coast would be adamantly opposed to hydro development but the majority would be in favour of smart hydro developments. Mr Ritchie stated that he is talking about the Coast as a whole but he wants the impact on specific rivers minimised and that major rivers are left undammed.

Mr England stated that he sees no advantage in the West Coast exporting power.

Cr Ewen thanked Messrs Ritchie and England for their presentation.

2. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

3. MINUTES

Moved (Scarlett / Davidson) *that the minutes of the previous Resource Management Committee meeting dated 14 July 2009, be confirmed as correct.*

Carried

Matters Arising

T. Scott drew attention to the error on Page 5 of the minutes that incorrectly recorded him as Cr Scott instead of T. Scott.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Cr Ewen reported that he assisted with the tender process for the Greymouth Floodwall Design tender. He stated a good number of consultants have tendered and the requirements have now been narrowed down. A further meeting will be held this afternoon to finalise the tender.

Cr Ewen reported that he has fielded a number of calls on the hydro and kayaking debate.

Cr Ewen advised that Solid Energy Ltd invited him to visit the Strongman Mine to view progress on the Harrison Bridge. He stated he was impressed with progress and the ridgeline has now been taken off to the coal seam to allow coal to be retrieved before the fire gets to it. Cr Ewen stated that some of the timber that had been burnt is now coming away again. Cr Ewen offered to arrange a visit to the Strongman Mine for other councillors should they wish to view the site.

Moved (Ewen / Archer) *that the Council receive this report.*

Carried

5. REPORTS

5.1 PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

5.1.1 PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGER'S MONTHLY REPORT

S. Moran spoke to this report advising that mediation for Wetlands Variation 1 is scheduled for the 1st of September.

S. Moran reported that he was unable to attend the Board of Inquiry hearing for the Proposed National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management due to heavy snow on the alpine pass. A telephone hearing was arranged for last week. He stated that the main points in the submission were discussed including costs to communities of having NPS's and NES's that aren't flexible and have the one size fits all approach. Unrealistic timeframes, requirements to change RPS that relates to funding issues and matters that could be dictated by LTCCP submissions and decisions through this process, were also covered during the teleconference.

S. Moran requested that Council approve the draft submission on the Review of the Air Quality National Environmental Standard. He advised that this was emailed to councillors on Friday and Council can now adopt it if there are no changes required. S. Moran offered to answer questions from Councillors regarding this matter.

Cr Archer stated that he was delighted to see the thesis on the health effects in this report but he asked where to now. S. Moran advised that he will be looking towards the outcome from the Minister's review. S. Moran advised that the points that will be looked at are raising the amount of allowable exceedences to five, not penalising industry and to be prepared to look at 2020 as a compliance deadline. Cr Archer asked if the Minister's approach would be to accept and adopt the NES with modifications or reject it. S. Moran stated that he is hoping the Minister will go further and be looking at flexibility and will look at air sheds on a case by case basis. S. Moran stated he would like to see the Section 32 analysis done again and look at the health effects again to see if each air shed ought to be regulated. Cr Scarlett stated that this is a very good report.

S. Moran reported that the flood warning alarm level was triggered on the Grey River following a recent heavy rainfall event.

S. Moran reported that funding has been received from Environmental Science Research for further investigation into the Arahura Mussel beds.

S. Moran reported that there have been approximately 18 exceedences of the NES for PM₁₀ in the Reefton Airshed during the reporting period. Discussion took place regarding air quality in general. Cr Birchfield stated that he feels we are on the right wavelength when considering costs. He gave an example of if all coal fires in Christchurch were to be phased out then another Benmore Dam would be required for extra electricity. S. Moran stated that heat pumps are an air conditioning unit and therefore use more electricity over the summer months as well.

Moved (Archer / Scarlett)

1. *That this report is received.*

2. *That Council adopts the Ministry for the Environment's review of Air Quality as presented subject to the amendment "they didn't want that at the expense of not being able to burn coal".*

Carried

5.1.2 END OF YEAR REPORT FOR THE TOTAL MOBILITY PROGRAMME

S. Moran spoke to this report and took it as read. He stated that the results are very good with a total of 15,000 trips from 567 users. S. Moran noted that the total mobility programme is a well utilised scheme with the majority of users very happy with it.

Moved (Scarlett / Davidson) *that this report be received.*

Carried

5.1.3 PCP DIOXIN INVESTIGATION: TOTARA LAGOON, BITTERN CK, RUATAPU DREDGE POND

S. Moran spoke to this report advising that Jonny Horrox has been closely involved with this investigation. He stated there has been a good level of cooperation between the agencies involved including MfE, DoC and Community and Public Health. S. Moran stated that the good news is the levels of PCP and dioxins at all sites, except the dredge pond, were below levels of concern. The contents of the dredge pond cannot go anywhere therefore the levels are not considered to be a significant problem. S. Moran advised that attempts were made over two nights to catch eels without success.

S. Moran advised that the results relate to the sediments as they are insitu at the moment and if there is a disturbance of the sediments then a much closer look will need to be taken. T. Scott asked why there are no eels in the dredge pond. S. Moran responded that it is a landlocked pond but if eels could get into the dredge pond then they should be able to survive in it. Cr Archer asked what happens now, as there are no conclusions in the report. S. Moran responded that there is no issue so long as everything stays same but should there be a change in activity or proposed activity for the area then we would need to be concerned. Cr Ewen asked if it would be precautionary to have signage around the dredge pond for those who do not have access to the report? S. Moran responded that the area is fully bush enclosed and there is no evidence of walking tracks leading into the dredge pond therefore it was concluded that the area is not used for recreation.

Moved (Archer / Scarlett) *that this report is received and that no further action is taken.*

Carried

5.2 CONSENTS AND COMPLIANCE GROUP

5.2.1 CONSENTS MONTHLY REPORT

C. Dall spoke to his report advising that it has been a quiet month in the consents department. He reported that he prepared an affidavit in relation to TrustPower's application to strikeout John Groome's appeal. C. Dall advised that he was required to attend the hearing on the 29th of July for cross examination purposes. A decision is awaited on the strikeout appeal, should this be successful then it is likely that all the appeals can be resolved without going to the Environment Court.

Moved (Archer / Davidson) *that the August 2009 report of the Consents Group be received.*

Carried

5.2.2 COMPLIANCE & ENFORCEMENT MONTHLY REPORT

C. Dall reported that it was a typical month in the compliance area with ongoing follow up visits being made to non-compliant dairy farms. C. Dall reported that there have been a number of investigations into damage caused to riparian margins by stock. C. Dall advised that Westroads have not extracted any gravel from the Blaketown beach during the reporting period. C. Dall reported that there have been no recent complaints regarding the Greymouth Aquatic Centre's boiler.

C. Dall reported that there has been a non compliant result from Globe Progress Mine in the Devils Creek area. This was related to an old mine adit in the active pit area, which has since been plugged, a second adit has now been dealt with as well.

C. Dall reported that there have been no further problems with non compliance at Pike River Coal Ltd since the problem reported by the Company last month. C. Dall advised that after following up these complaints one was more significant than the other non compliance which resulted in the coal fines being found in Big River, therefore Council staff took enforcement action.

C. Dall reported that it has been a quiet month in relation to Solid Energy's operations.

C. Dall reported that there were a variety of complaints received during the reporting period. C. Dall advised that there was only one work programme for mining received during the reporting period.

Cr Birchfield asked if the complaint received regarding flooding of property allegedly caused by development works is at Kaiata Park. C. Dall confirmed that it is and is should be easy to resolve.

Cr Archer asked if a response has been received from Grey District Council regarding the sewage breach at Blackball. C. Dall responded that Mel Sutherland from Grey District Council has provided him with an initial summary that was passed around Councillors. C. Dall stated that he is reluctant to comment too much without seeing the final report but at this stage it appears that it was an unforeseen event and that Grey District Council took as much action as they could at the time.

C. Dall stated that it is interesting to note that only 20 properties have been connected to the Blackball sewage scheme at this stage. Cr Birchfield feels that the main cause of the breach was the fact that Ford Creek reverted back to its original channel during a flood event. He advised that it is important that Grey District Council ensure that a good job is done further upstream to ensure this doesn't happen again as the sewage ponds are in the same area as the original channel.

Moved (Archer / Chinn) *that the August 2009 report of the Compliance Group be received.*

Carried

6.0 GENERAL BUSINESS

Waste Minimisation: Cr Davidson raised the matter of the Waste Minimisation Levy, which came in on the 1st of July. This is \$10 per tonne for waste and 50% of this goes to the people who dispose of the waste and another 50% goes to help fund the study. He feels this seems high and he doesn't recall any consultation on this. S. Moran responded that the Waste Working Group commented on this. He advised that each District Council would have got about \$3000 each back based on the original model but following the submission process they could now get approximately \$80,000 for Grey District Council and the government has included a clause for those councils who are particularly hard up to get more funding but a project needs to be identified to qualify. S. Moran stated that a major concern at the start was that we were paying for more bureaucracy and for another agency to start up and that the money could be better spent if \$10 per tonne was to spent on waste management in your own district.

The meeting closed at 11.43 a.m.

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Chairman

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Date