

Longbush Ecological Trust 10 Year Planning 2017-2027
19 February 2017 2-5pm at Longbush Cottage

MINUTES

The Trust's Chair Anne Salmond welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked them very much for attending.

1. Longbush in a Regional Context:

The meeting began with a discussion of Longbush in a regional context, led by Charles Barrie (DOC), Malcolm Rutherford (QEII) and Nicky Solomon (Te Ha).

Charles talked about DOC's strategy of linking sites and community groups – collaboration across landscapes. DOC's idea of bio-regions – people generating prosperity in ways that enhance ecosystems.

Much of DOC's current work involves iwi partnerships, rooted in the land – mountains, rivers and people. He mentioned the 'mauri compass' – focused on the health of ecosystems (including people), setting objectives and monitoring progress across ecological networks. A strong interest in landscape scale restoration projects, for instance from Longbush to Titirangi by the mouth of the Turanganui River.

Malcolm talked about QEII, and commented on the density of covenants in the area around Longbush, and the potential for collaboration. QEII representatives are also keen to contribute more to district plans, policies that relate to biodiversity, pest control etc.

Nicky talked about Te Ha's interest in a bio-region legacy project for Te Ha, with a focus on 2019. She discussed a meeting held with DOC and Eastland Group about a landscape restoration project on the lower Waimata; and with Activate Tairāwhiti. A prosperous, sustainable region.

Anne described the Waimata case study as part of the Te Awaroa project to restore rivers across the country – a geomorphological study of the catchment, a report on the settler history of the river and a collection of Native Land Court maps and evidence for each block from the mouth of the river to its headwaters have been completed. GDC staff are intending to begin an integrated catchment plan for the Waimata in 2018.

Charles added that Eastland Group are interested in a landscape scale project linked with falcons – branding themselves with this bird.

Key action points:

- *A landscape-scale community project to restore the Waimata River banks from Longbush to Titirangi by the mouth of the Turanganui River – supported by DOC, QEII, Eastland Group, Te Ha, Activate Tai*

Rawhiti, GDC, Longbush Trust? [Charles, Nicky, Malcolm, Anne – **Waimata River Restoration project proposal submitted by GDC to Freshwater Fund May 2017**]

- *Some recognition and fostering of the cluster of Protected Management Areas and QEII covenants in the lower Waimata catchment - District Plan, GDC workplans?* [Malcolm]
- *Integrated Catchment Management Plan for the Waimata River will involve Longbush – **estimated date 2018**.* [Anne, Charles, Malcolm]

2. Ecological Work at Longbush

Steve Sawyer described various **relocation projects** at Longbush, including native robins and oi (grey faced petrels). He mentioned the low levels of predators that have been achieved (1% for rats in tracking tunnels; kill rates for traps), and the recovery of native vegetation (photo points).

Steve discussed the challenges of funding long-term restoration projects, and the need for Longbush to engage with new kinds of funders, including corporate sponsors. At this point **Sarosh** mentioned that such funders require specific, sexy objectives that can be captured in images. Its also important to keep funders informed and engaged, especially in long-term projects.

Steve Sawyer then spoke about a **kiwi / weka fence** at Longbush – based on the existing fence, will keep out stoats and ferrets, possums and rats, and keep in kiwi and weka. Will still have to trap and shoot cats, deer and goats. Controlling mice is not realistic. Kiwi and weka a key attraction for visitors. Predator fences have to be designed for specific species – eg. oi, kiwi and weka.

Steve also mentioned health and safety risks, and the need to manage trustees' exposure to liability – insurance for about \$600 a year. He has drafted a Health and Safety strategy for Longbush, and this needs to be finalised and adopted.

Abi Salmond spoke about the need for a **strategic plan for Longbush** that sets key objectives, and quantitative monitoring that tracks indicators of progress. Funders will increasingly require rigorous evidence that projects are achieving the objectives set for their funding. There are relatively few restoration projects at this scale, and Longbush should report on successes and failures in ways that inform other projects.

Abi asked about the costs of the kiwi / weka fence – about \$300,000 according to Steve. She noted that if possums, cats, deer and goats still have to be trapped or shot, the costs and benefits of building and maintaining such a fence will have to be carefully weighed. It depends on the objectives set by the Trust – the restoration of several key species, or the health of the entire ecosystem, for instance.

Key action points:

- *A Strategic Plan for Longbush that sets clear objectives with timelines, indicators for monitoring, a health and safety plan etc. [Abi, Steve Sawyer, Anne & Jeremy] **To be drafted for circulation to Trustees & others August 2017***
- *Kiwi / weka fence – cost-benefit analysis needed to help decide which species should be retained or excluded [Abi, Steve Sawyer, Anne & Jeremy] **Advice given by Jim Lynch, a visionary founder of Zealandia, in June 2017 – also note Jim’s comments below about the wider project:***

“My impression of the Gisborne area is that it needs a big vision like yours to restore a lost heritage, just as Wellington needed one 25 years ago. I’m constantly surprised at how little forest and habitat is left on that Gisborne plain and the surrounding hills. The encouraging thing is that your growth rates seem to be more like Northland than Wellington and you now have an emerging industry in honey to support it and create some economic impetus.

You certainly have an amazing asset in Longbush and it’s great to see how it is becoming an intergenerational project which is having a local multiplier effect. We were impressed with the amount of energy and effort that you have invested in the site over a comparatively short time. These restoration projects are long haul journeys and it’s great to see that you are looking far out into the future. I’m also encouraged that you have a greater vision of the context of the site as a potential kernel for the restoration of the whole catchment. I have long held the view that catchment restoration will be the way of the future.”

[Note: it would be great to exclude goats and deer if possible. If the fence carried an electric current, could this assist?]

- *Explore possibilities for corporate funders for Longbush [Anne, Sarosh, Steve Sawyer]*

Anne briefly reported on Meikle’s work for many years with Janine Te Reo to keep the **pa harakeke** in great shape. A number of iwi and educational groups are keen to use the pa harakeke to establish their own collections – how far is this desirable?

Malcolm then described progress with the 1769 Garden, where he is the part-time curator. A lot has happened over the past week, with paths of Matukituki gravel (from the Waimata River catchment) laid on base course and concrete steps being installed by Philip Smith of O2 Landscapes and his team. The rapid response to the drought, when irrigation was quickly installed and a team put in place, ensured that very few plants were lost.

The need to future-proof Longbush against climate change and drier summers was discussed, with a wish to have permanent wetlands on site. This may be challenging because of the local geology, which based on erosion from the hills and streams with strata of alluvial sand, which means that ponds etc are more likely to leak. One strategic question is whether to line the existing ponds, and if so how. Steve noted that David Clark would be happy to advise.

Philip's ideas for interpreting the wider landscape, and stories that link plants, birds and animals for kids were discussed – seed spreaders, collapsing hills, bat attractors, butterfly bushes etc.

Charles mentioned a stock pond at the end of Donner's Bush that retains water all year round. He also described the collaboration with EIT and Longbush Trust to restore Donner's Bush, which involves students in six-month courses working on different sections (micro-reserves). Relatively few plants were lost in the micro-reserve fenced and planted this year in Donner's Bush.

Key action points:

- *Finalise plan for 2017 work at Donner's Bush, and the Longbush contribution* [**Charles, Anne & Jeremy**] **Plan finalised July 2017**
- *Establish how best to establish permanent ponds and wetlands at Longbush – should the ponds be lined, and how? How best to get sound advice?* [**Abi, Charles**]
- *Complete development of 1769 Garden* **Streams and swales now in place in 1769 Garden, and 2017 planting underway**
- *Follow up on Philip's idea of interpretative trails and journeys through ecosystems* [**Philip, Anne & Jeremy**] **Work underway**

3. Infrastructure and Outreach:

Sarosh commented that infrastructure at Longbush largely depends on the Trust's objectives, and the groups we're trying to reach.

Anne noted that children are a key target group for Longbush, and that the facilities are there to provide an exciting, rewarding 'wild' experience for young people. Others include special interest groups (NZ Institute of Landscape Architects conference, Conservation Board etc) and possibly guided tours (cruise ships etc), or groups of visitors over the summer.

The parking and turning circle at the 1769 Garden will probably be limited to minibuses (20-25 people – kids, cruise ship tourists, special interest groups), to allow smaller groups to have a more intimate 'wild' experience at Longbush.

Sarosh mentioned that the Welcome Shelter was still incomplete. Overall the structure is holding up well.

Key Action Points:

- *Design and install northern sun screen in Welcome Shelter*
- *install power, wifi etc.*
- *Maintenance also an issue, with a staining schedule required* [**Sarosh**] **Maintenance – restaining planned November 2017**

He mentioned the possibility of installing small structures in the bush (balance beams, sculptural interventions (anamorphic mirrors that give extraordinary views of landscapes), an observatory in Longbush Reserve, to be designed and prefabricated in Auckland, and perhaps installed by EIT.

Key Action Points:

- *Investigate anamorphic mirrors*
- *Design, build and install an observatory at Longbush [Sarosh]*

Steve Salmond then discussed possibilities for interpretation at Longbush – digital and otherwise: a gaming approach that makes visits to Longbush like a quest: maps (treasure maps, fantasy maps, games and trails, botanical, birds, history, water); with narrated trails and points of interest. The website with a map; a Longbush app to download before visitors arrive; QR codes that give information at specific sites; Facebook page with activities and events, photos, a blog; Instagram photos of Longbush; Vimeo / Youtube videos.

The idea of an **intelligent fence** was then discussed – with webcam for titi, views from the top; equipment to measure CO2 sequestration rates; weather station.

A collaboration with the Cacophony project – birdsong analysis, predation rates, monitoring traps – a way of cost-effective quantitation monitoring. The intelligent fence could also work as a communications system, with a cell repeater, WiFi etc. **Jennie** discussed a possible collaboration with First Tribe, and their use of smart technologies in Gisborne.

Steve added an idea about ‘intelligent trees’ – with an RFID / QR codes for each tree, who planted it and when, its geolocation and species; track data over time –trunk diameter, height and condition – ‘Adopt a Tree’?

Key Action Points:

- *Explore costs and opportunities for an ‘intelligent fence’ [Steve Sawyer, Jeremy, Steve Salmond, Sarosh]*
- *Explore possible collaborations with First Tribe, Mind Lab and Cacophony project [Jennie, Steve Sawyer]*

Jeremy and Tim discussed future tracks at Longbush – the original plan from Wright Associates was circulated (attached) along with a new plan for tracks and a swing bridge in the near future (attached). There is a need to be able to allow visitors to move easily around the site, without entering the private spaces around the cottage.

Charles offered the assistance of DOC’s tracks expert, who could come out to Longbush to advise. Malcolm commented that private owners do not have to meet the DOC standards for tracks – these are guidelines, rather than requirements.

Key Action Points:

- *Meet with DOC's track expert and seek advice on the tracks proposed, standards etc* **Meeting held with DOC track expert May 2017**
- *Consider use of volunteers, contractors in making tracks* **Volunteers assisting with construction of Pa Hill Track**
- *Raise funding and execute track plan [Jeremy & Tim]* **Meeting with Steve Phelps of EIT to discuss new bridge August 2017; application to ECT for tracks and bridge underway.**

Jennie revisited the Trust deed, and the big picture goals of engaging with the community and providing unforgettable experiences for kids. She discussed the collaboration with Jarratt Create and Educate, who are working in the space between arts and sciences with children in the Wild Lab at Longbush.

There is also the possibility of relationships with Universities and particular research programmes already underway in the region through 'Curious Minds' funding (eg University of Otago work with manuka varieties); and 'citizen science' initiatives.

The Welcome Shelter could serve as a hub for engagements with artists; or a bio-blitz. **Charles** mentioned that DOC would be running a bio-blitz in April, and would like to base part of it at Longbush.

Key Action Points:

- **Charles** to discuss Bio-blitz in April. Role of Graeme Atkins, other botanists with links to Te Tairāwhiti
- **Anne and Jennie** to further develop relationship (with MOU) with Jarratt Create and Educate **Wild Lab proposal for Te Ha October 2017 submitted**
- *Explore opportunities for work with artists, research projects*

Jennie raised the question of digital networking, and Steve Salmond and Sarosh discussed the merits of Slack, Loomio or Facebook friends pages. There's a wish to carry on the discussion about many of the possibilities raised during the workshop

Key Action Points:

- **Steve Salmond and Sarosh** to advise on the best digital platform.

Jennie also discussed possibilities for working with volunteers at Longbush – how teams of volunteers can be organised, and by whom (paid co-ordinator or committed retired person), health and safety issues etc.

Charles offered that DOC could assist with organising volunteer work days.

It was agreed that making tracks and guiding groups of visitors would be great roles for trained volunteers at Longbush.

In discussing the stand of poplars by the pond, Charles gave the name of Chris Leath, a retired wood scientist, who could advise if there was a wish to fell and sell these trees, which are aging and dropping branches etc.

Malcolm raised the question about how we could record the location of rare plants at Longbush – eg the native orchids he recently found

Key Action Point

- *A private account with iMaps to record rare plants etc. [Malcolm]*