

LTCCP 2006-16 SUBMISSION

Submissions close on 5 May 2006

I wish to talk to the main points in my submission at the hearings to be held between Thursday 25 May and Wednesday 7 June 2006.

I am completing this submission:
For yourself

Number of people you represent:

My submission refers to:
Summary Version of the LTCCP

Page Number:

I also want to respond to:

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Your Submission:

Do you have any comments on the major projects in our Draft Community Plan?

My submission is a simple one. It touches the areas of tourism, identity, civic pride, environment, and biodiversity.

My proposal involves existing Parks resources, and a significant proportion of the \$37 million earmarked for Strategic Land Purchases.

My idea is a predator fence around Kennedy's Bush reserve. The vision is for kiwi and kaka to return to our city.

This predator fence is to protect native birds, and to introduce native birds, that would otherwise require thousands of years of intensive predator control to survive.

Benefits:

- Ecotourism attraction
- Cultural identity
- Civic pride
- Improved Environment and biodiversity
- Education

Costs:

- Predator fencing
- Ongoing maintenance
- Bird introductions and management
- Infrastructure development and maintenance
- Staff costs
- Contingency planning

Economic opportunities:

- People staying longer in Chch to visit
- Possible private sponsorship or partnership
- Transport concessions to take people to reserve
- Guiding concessions
- Cafe

**Your Submission
(Cont'd)**

Economic and other constraints:

Transport Congestion (although can be alleviated by bus, walking or bike only visitors)

Limited area for infrastructure

Statutory limitations may apply

I recommend a full feasibility and public consultation process be included in the LTCCP, so that this project opportunity can be fully explored.

Context: As a conservation scientist, I have come to the conclusion that New Zealand's ecological changes are so profound that we need to change our thinking. In a recent article in The Press I drew attention to the permanence of exotic species as a cause of celebration ("Vivid fusion of life forms". Friday 24 March 2006 - I have attached the text below). There is an exciting fusion of native and exotic species happening in Christchurch. I also drew attention to the permanence of the so-called "bad guys" possums, stoats, rats - all incessant predators of our native wildlife.

The implications of this are that if we want to protect and/or enhance biodiversity then we potentially commit resources for thousands of years. This strikes me as untenable financially and socially in the long term. However, there is a way in which we can both protect, and enhance, biodiversity.

This is by the construction of a predator proof fence, similar to the one that envelopes the Karori catchment in Wellington. The Karori Sanctuary has been so successful that native birds are now being seen in peoples gardens and in public spaces. I saw a tui feeding on a flax bush outside parliament recently.

The reason this is happening is that the populations are now overflowing the Sanctuary, and migrating outwards into bush areas around Wellington. There is possum control in surrounding non-fenced reserves which is also helping the birds.

What it is doing is giving the birds a chance to adapt to the new ecology we have in NZ. Over the last hundred years or so, native birds and lizards have faced an incessant onslaught of frequently overwhelming attacks from a spate of introduced predators. With little respite, populations are being dramatically reduced. This does not give those species which can, time to adapt through natural selection to evolve predator avoidance behaviours.

What a fence on the Port Hills can do is give native bird species a haven.

It can mean that we can reintroduce bird species which used to thrive in the tall podocarp forest of the Port Hills. These include kiwi, saddleback, kaka, tui and hihi.

This will not diminish the cultural farming and pine forest character of the rest of the Port Hills. There is room for all these strands of our heritage.

Recreation and tourism will be enhanced.

Summary and Recommendation: A predator fence around the Port Hills has merit. It deserves to be fully explored. I recommend a full feasibility and public consultation process be included in the LTCCP, so that this project opportunity can be fully explored.

Yours sincerely

Dr Steve Ulrich
41 Mackenzie Avenue
Opawa

**Your Submission
(Cont'd)**

Email: Tokeraubeach@hotmail.com

Attachment: Article published in The Press newspaper Friday 24 March 2006

"Vivid fusion of life forms".

We have a new ecology.

Several writers in The Press have recently lamented the loss of native biodiversity. We all feel the loss. But, we can not now go back.

We have an exciting new blend of species. Introduced blackbirds, swallows, and chaffinches are all adapting to the new opportunities deep in the bush. They are likely to evolve and belong to this land, just like the countless human immigrants who now call themselves kiwis.

Our cities are vibrant melting pots of native and exotic plant species. Christchurch has restored botanical balance over the last 10 years, and the city is alive with the song of native and exotic birds. A fusion of different life forms is reinvigorating the landscape.

In our production landscapes, this fusion of native and exotic species is also occurring. Rural and urban businesses are recognising that they have a key role to play in achieving environmental balance.

The old dichotomy of native is good/exotic equals bad is being replaced by a more sophisticated view. We recognise we need to protect native biodiversity. But there is also a growing acceptance that, just like the ethnic fusion in society, there is beauty in the mixing of native and exotic species.

However, the so-called 'bad guys' are also here to stay. Possums, rats, cats, stoats, rabbits, wilding pines, and wasps are here forever. They are now part of this land.

When I was a forest ecologist in Wellington, people used to ask me about the magic bullet to eradicate possums. My reply was that even if we did achieve the power to destroy them, we could never ethically unleash it. The Australians would prevent us to protect their possums - they remember the rabbit killer RHD travelled across the Tasman on a hanky.

No - we've got to learn to live with what we've got. We have to get on and look to the future.

That doesn't mean we stop controlling these pests and weeds - far from it. We should strategically refocus our resources to protect what we can. This means sustaining pest control for thousands of years. We can not do this everywhere for every species. This requires some hard choices.

Darwin teaches us that evolution by means of natural selection is occurring now. We need to be able to give those native species which can adapt the chance to do so. This means freeing them from predation for sufficient time for this to occur.

Ecologist Kerry Brown and I recently reviewed the science around 1080. We found evidence that aerial drops of 1080 every 3 years, timed to occur in springtime, may knock the possums and rats back enough to allow native birds to successfully breed. This may also be a tool to help kiwi over large areas, by taking out stoats through by-kill. This approach is being investigated in the Wanganui region.

We should focus more on biosecurity for our economic, social, and ecological health. We need to ensure that the next varroa or didymo is kept out of our special land.

**Your Submission
(Cont'd)**

Elsewhere, community-based restoration is helping to restore native species and ecosystems. Threatened plants are being planted in traffic islands and in gardens. Kiwi are being protected around small towns and villages by school children and their families.

The success of Wellington's Karori Sanctuary has resulted in tui, bellbirds, and even kaka turning up in backyards.

Christchurch could also put a predator fence around one of the Port Hills forest catchments. Maybe we can leave our descendants the raucous sound of kaka over the city in daytime, and kiwi foraging at night.

Dr. Steve Ulrich is a forest ecologist based in Christchurch. He has done research in Wellington, the West Coast and the Chatham Islands.

Do you have any comments on groups of activities (The activities and services the Council provides?)

Do you have any other comments or suggestions you want to make?