

## **Presentation to the hearing panel – Porirua Proposed District Plan**

**Dr Robert Stratford, Whitireia Park Restoration Group, 2 November 2021**

### **Purpose**

This presentation briefly summarises our submission regarding the Porirua Proposed District Plan and also responds to some of the matters referred to in Ms Armstrong's evidence, and acknowledges Mr Goldwater's recommendations.

### **Background**

The Whitireia Park Restoration Group (WPRG) formed in 2005 to protect and restore the biodiversity values of the park. We have a membership of 485 people, with five coordinators organising restoration planting, threatened species restoration, pest and predator control, lizard protection and monitoring and education.

Until 2010, Whitireia Park, except for the bush remnant, the Golf Course and a small part of Onehunga Bay, was covered with grass and gorse and was intensively grazed. Restoration work by a range of groups, including WPRG, has seen a relatively rapid return of native species across the Park. In this regard Whitireia is an increasingly important natural, social, cultural and educational resource for the community.

### **Initial submission**

Our submission focuses on four key points:

The key points of our submission are that:

1. All of Whitireia Park must be protected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.
2. All land in Whitireia Park continue to be zoned Open Space, with amended bulk and location standards.
3. All of Whitireia Park, except small footprints of modified landforms in the Golf Club and RNZ mast and building area should be included in the ONFL policy overlay.
4. Some changes are required to SNAs 134, 138, and 136.

I understand Points 1 and 2 relate to other hearing streams.

### **Changes to SNAs 134, 136 and 138**

#### SNA136 – Whitireia Bush

This SNA includes the coastal bush remnant, adjacent wetland and a planted shrubland between the public toilets and the wetland. Amendments to the boundaries of this SNA are required as per Mr Goldwater's re-evaluation but with additional inclusion as per Ms Smith's submission and presentation so it includes areas planted by WPRG.

#### SNA134 – Te Onepoto Catchment

Mr Goldwater has accepted our submission that this SNA should be enlarged to include areas around the margin of Onepoto estuary.

#### SNA138 - Whitireia Spring Wetland

Mr Goldwater has suggested some additional land be included in this SNA138 which comprises the upper catchment of Te Onepoto stream.

WPRG sees this as sensible but submits that there is significant merit in SNA134 and SNA138 being connected by including the margins for the full length of the stream. This will achieve connectivity.

While there is a very short section of stream diverted underground through the golf course, maintaining and continuing to restore the entire waterway reflects the priority placed on the ecological benefits of the entire waterway as well as the quality of water entering the harbour. Since most of the waterways in Porirua have suffered considerable alteration since colonisation, the potential to protect the entire catchment of Te Onepoto stream is especially important. The benefits of having a relatively untouched waterway extend not just to water and harbour quality but provide a focus for restoration work and education.

### **Scope of ONFL003**

#### Submission

WPRG considers all of Whitireia Park, except small footprints of modified landforms in the Golf Club and RNZ mast and building area should be included in the ONFL policy overlay.

Our reasons for seeking inclusion are:

- The area is open space widely used by the local community for recreation
- The area is widely recognised and valued by the community and is highly visible from the road, tracks and many other areas of the park
- The area is highly representative of natural landforms and demonstrates the typical gentle rolling slopes and watercourses of this district
- The area has numerous springs and seeps which are the headwaters of Te Onepoto Stream which flows down the valley to Porirua harbour
- The seeps and wetlands associated with this area have naturally regenerated since grazing ceased in 2010. It is rare to find seepages and their associated wetlands vegetated with NZ native species in the Wellington region
- This area is an important educational resource for the community, including schools, to study the natural function and importance of protecting the headwaters of streams,
- The area is culturally and spiritually significant to many people in the Titahi Bay and wider Porirua community.

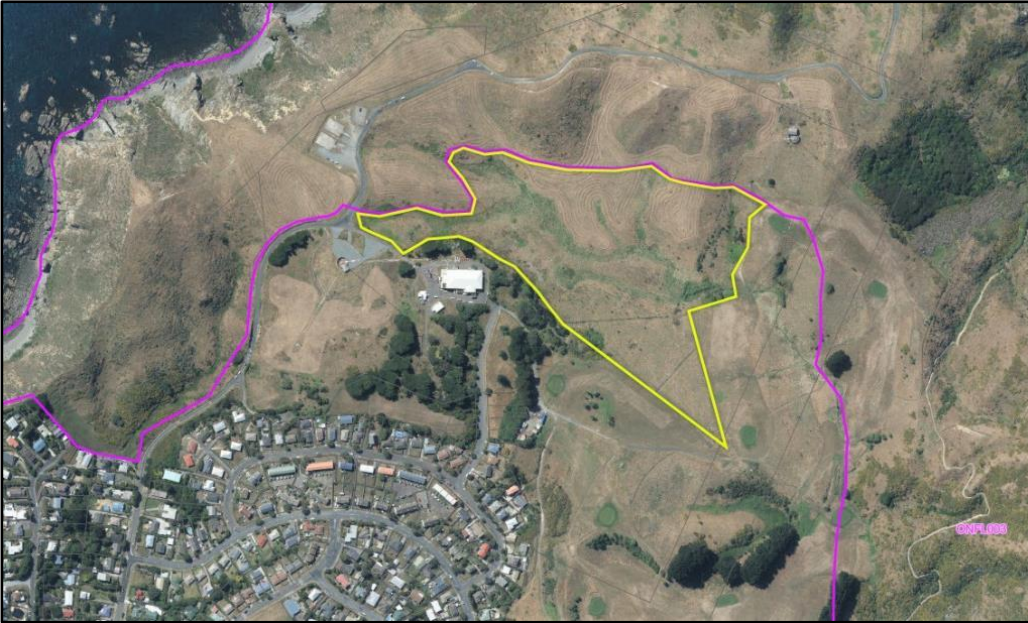
#### Focus on ONFL003 and Te Onepoto Stream

#### **Map 1: The ONFL003 overlay on Whitireia Peninsula (in the notified plan)**





### Map 3: Simplified Area to be Included in ONFL003



Additional points in support of our verbal submission

#### ***Omissions made by Rose Armstrong***

In her evidence Ms Armstrong has confirmed she did not evaluate land outside the mapped ONFL003 because it was “outside their brief”. The option of an expanded ONFL003 has not been assessed by council under Policy 25 of the RPS and rated using the NZILA 7-point rating. It appears that the land outlined in yellow has been excluded because Ms Armstrong is under the mistaken impression that that land is occupied by the Golf Course.

On NZILA’s 7-point rating, ONFL003 (as mapped) scores as follows:

- High Natural Science
- Very High Sensory
- Very High Shared & Recognised

There is no evidence to say that the Park would not get the same rating if the additional land was included. Ms Armstrong has not undertaken an assessment of this alternative. In Attachment A we have cited, and commented on, each of the assessment criteria under Policy 25 of the RPS.

#### ***Ngāti Toa***

We acknowledge Ngāti Toa as mana whenua for Whitireia maunga and the area described as Whitireia ‘Park’. We also note that Ngāti Toa neither supported nor opposed our submission.

#### ***Radio New Zealand***

RNZ (FS60) has confirmed that: “ONFL003 should not apply to land currently occupied, or surrounding, RNZ’s facilities. Otherwise, ***RNZ has no objection*** [emphasis added] to other parts of RNZ’s land being subject to the ONFL003.”

## **ATTACHMENT A: Assessment of Additional RNZ Land to be included in ONFL003**

### ***Policy 25: Identifying outstanding natural features and landscapes – district and regional plans***

#### ***Natural Science Factors***

*Natural science values: these values relate to the geological, ecological, topographical, and natural process components of the natural feature or landscape:*

*Representativeness: the combination of natural components that form the feature or landscape strongly typifies the character of an area*

Highly representative of landforms with headwater spring-fed seeps on gentle topography where water flows downstream through shallow gullies and wetlands and eventually forms stream channels where land becomes steeper.

*Research and education: all or parts of the feature or landscape are important for natural science research and education.*

This area is an important educational resource for schools and the wider public as it demonstrates the natural function and importance of how streams form and why protecting the headwaters of streams is important.

*Rarity: the feature or landscape is unique or rare within the district or region, and few comparable examples exist.*

It is very rare to find seepages and their associated wetlands vegetated with NZ native species in the Wellington region.

*Ecosystem functioning: the presence of healthy ecosystems is clearly evident in the feature or landscape*

It is evident that this ecosystem is healthy and functioning as there are no barriers or obstructions to water flow and the seeps are largely vegetated with NZ native plants.

#### ***Sensory Factors***

*Aesthetic values: these values relate to scenic perceptions of the feature or landscape:*

Demonstrates the typical gentle rolling slopes and watercourses of this district and provides a contrast to the steep escarpment and hills.

*Ecosystem functioning: the presence of healthy ecosystems is clearly evident in the feature or landscape*

The Te Onepoto stream from the headwaters to the estuary is a healthy ecosystem with no barriers to fish passage.

*Vividness: the feature or landscape is visually striking and is widely recognised within the local and wider community for its memorable and sometimes iconic qualities.*

Highly accessible from the road through the park and other parts of the park including the inland track and golf course and is widely recognised by and valued by the community

*Naturalness: the feature or landscape appears largely unmodified by human activity and the patterns of landform and land cover appear to be largely the result of intact and healthy natural systems.*

This landform is unmodified by human activity. Of note in the Whitireia Park Management Plan 1978 is “*the topographic feature of Whitireia Park is the internal valley which extends north of Te Onepoto Bay.*”<sup>1</sup> It goes on to describe how the valley

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/council-publications/Whitireia-Park-Management-Plan.pdf>

divides into a Y shape at the RNZ boundary with one branch heading towards Onehunga Bay and the other just north of the RNZ facility. The valley dissection is clearly visible from many areas within the park and area to the north and east outside the park.

*Expressiveness (legibility): the feature or landscape clearly shows the formative processes that led to its existing character*

This area is an elevated rolling plateau dissected by a central valley system. The soils are Porirua silt loams which are less free draining than the soils in the remainder of the park which are Porirua hill soils.

*Transient values: the consistent and noticeable occurrence of transient natural events, such as seasonal change in vegetation or in wildlife movement, contributes to the character of the feature or landscape*

The wetland seeps and associated wetlands are continuously wet and contrast with the dry surrounding land particularly in summer. As cooler weather comes in autumn, the spike sedge (*Eleocharis gracilis*) turns an orange colour and dominates the landscape.

#### **Shared or Recognised Factors**

*Shared and recognised values: the feature or landscape is widely known and is highly valued for its contribution to local identity within the immediate and wider community*

The area is widely recognised and valued by the community as the catchment of Te Onepoto stream

*Tangata whenua values: Māori values inherent in the feature or landscape add to the feature or landscape being recognised as a special place.*

This area has the headwaters of Te Onepoto stream which is recognised as a stream of cultural importance to Ngāti Toa [refer Schedule C of the proposed Natural Resources Plan].

*Historical associations: knowledge of historic events that occurred in and around the feature or landscape is widely held and substantially influences and adds to the value the community attaches to the natural feature or landscape.*

From the first arrivals, Ngāti Toa have had an ongoing association with the peninsula and the surrounding landscape. The area is widely valued and used for recreation as it is sheltered from the predominant northerly and north-westerly winds.