

# MINUTES

## NEW ZEALAND WALKING ACCESS COMMISSION MEETING

4:00pm, 6 May 2013

Hicks Bay, Gisborne

**Board Members:** J Forbes (Chair), P Brown, M Bayfield, B Stephenson, P Mudford and M Barnett.

**In attendance:** M Neeson (Chief Executive), H Barker (Corporate Services Manager) and J Wauchop (Regional Field Advisor).

### Opening Comments

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

#### 1. Apologies

##### Conflict of Interest Register

No conflicts of interest were declared. Board members were asked to update their Declarations of Interest.

##### Confirm Agenda

The Board confirmed the Agenda for the meeting.

#### 2. Walking Access Mapping System

The Board discussed a paper which examined, at a high level, matters that influence the strategic direction of the Walking Access Mapping System (WAMS). WAMS provides the public with authoritative information about the location and status of land open to public access. It also serves as a tool for Commission staff and regional field advisors (RFAs) to address access enquiries and resolve disputes.

The Commission's vision for WAMS is: *"[WAMS] steadily becomes the preferred entry point for outdoor recreation access information for all New Zealand. WAMS should complement the information, messaging and IT platforms of other agencies and groups.* The strategic question is whether the WAMS vision should be curtailed to match the currently available Commission capacity or whether the Commission should strive to achieve the full vision.

The Board noted that developing the recreation layer has been limited by a lack of support from potential contributors, inadequacy of available data, and the need for promotional effort and technical support from the Commission. It could be progressed with additional resources.

The Board discussed options for increasing the value of the recreation layer and what actions the Commission could take to assist potential partners (for example, a GIS-student, sponsorship).

A broad consensus was that the objective should be to develop WAMS into a reliable “brand”, improve functionality and increase the value of the recreation layer. The need for further technical and strategic advice was noted for the next board meeting.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **Received** a high-level paper on the future direction of the Walking Access Mapping System.

**Moved** M Bayfield      **Seconded** P Brown      **Carried**

### 3. **Walking Access Mapping System (WAMS) User Survey 2013**

The Board considered a paper reporting on the top level findings of the 2013 WAMS User Survey and discussed the strategic and operational implications of the results. The results are largely stable and reflect those of 2012 which means that the increase from 2011 has been sustained.

The most common suggested improvements for the desktop version were to make it faster and more user friendly, and to provide more detailed public access information. The Board was advised that the speed concern is a consequence of the huge amount of data managed by WAMS and bandwidth available to a user; there is little that can be done practically to “speed WAMS up” outside of reconfiguring the system.

The core concern is to maintain the overall level of satisfaction and increase the desktop and mobile functionality.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **noted** the findings of the 2013 WAMS users survey; and
- b) **noted** that additional resources are needed if the Board wishes to improve the functionality of WAMS.

**Moved** B Stephenson      **Seconded** P Mudford      **Carried**

### 4. **Confirm Minutes**

**Action:** The Board

- a) **confirmed** the minutes of the meeting of 11 February 2013 as being a true and correct record; and
- b) **confirmed** the minutes of the meeting of 19 March 2013 as being a true and correct record.

**Moved** B Stephenson      **Seconded** M Barnett      **Carried**

### 5. **Strategic review**

The Board discussed a process for reviewing and/or affirming its strategic direction pending proposed changes to the Crown Entities Act which mean that the Statement of Intent (SOI) for 2014-2017 could be issued at the same time as the Commission's 2014 annual report. The annual strategic planning process should identify and review the more significant "strategic questions" and operating assumptions so that the next SOI sets a firm and unambiguous direction with a clear appreciation of the implications for the organisation. Some of the topics that need to be considered are the direction of, and investment in, WAMS, "customers", priorities and funding.

Some indicative strategic topics, priorities and risks were identified and discussed including the need to champion successes, measuring success, the need to focus on walking access rather than the "nice to do", highlighting the access achievements of others. In respect of the latter point, the Board noted that one of its successes has been to provide a framework which has enhanced a national approach to walking access.

The Board felt that the Commission's strategic direction was on track, would continue to evolve and did not foresee any major change in the existing outcomes framework in the SOI. It noted the need to review progress and direction at regular intervals.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **agreed** to review the Commission's strategic direction for the 2014-2017 Statement of Intent (SOI) during the 2013/2014 planning period.

**Moved** P Mudford      **Seconded** J Forbes      **Carried**

## 6. **Enhanced Access Fund 2013 round**

The Board considered the recommendations of the evaluation panel in respect of projects for grants from the 2013 funding round of the Enhanced Access Fund (EAF). 33 applications were received for \$442,830 GST inclusive in total.

The panel noted the value of the regional field advisor assessments of each project and felt that the process this year operated well with clear criteria and priorities to guide the assessments.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **approved full and/or partial** funding for 9 applications totalling \$63,464.06 (GST inclusive);
- b) **agreed** that the chief executive advises each applicant of the Board's decision and invites successful applicants to confirm agreement to any conditions set by the Board;

- c) **directed** the chief executive to consider appropriate timing of the release of decisions and participation by interested board members and regional field advisors in local announcements;
- d) **agreed** that the Chairman write to the Minister for Primary Industries advising him of the decisions;
- e) **agreed** that the chief executive has authority to allocate money for projects which may need funding with a per project limit of \$5,000 and the total of all allocations in the year be limited to the fund net income for the last financial year less the amount allocated from this funding round; and
- f) **noted** that funding infrastructure including bridges and boardwalks is low priority and that this information will be included in next year's guidance to applicants.

**Moved**      M Barnett                      **Seconded**              J Forbes                      **Carried**

## 7. **Purchase of easements – “exceptional circumstances”**

At its meeting on 13 November 2012 the Board asked for advice on criteria for determining the “exceptional circumstances” where the Commission may use its resources to purchase Walkway easements or other legally secure forms of walking access. The Board discussed, in considerable depth, a paper on possible criteria. The focus of the paper was on purchase (payment) for the easements themselves, rather than other costs that may be associated with the acquisition of easements. In the context of this paper walking access easements are generally easements for walkways to be gazetted under the Walking Access Act 2008 (the WAA).

The Board noted that the exceptional circumstances that might lead to the use of Commission resources to purchase a walking access easement cannot readily be described in a finite way, but a process can be determined for considering the circumstances.

The Board is aware that securing certain and enduring walking access over private land is both a function of the Commission and one of its priorities. After considerable discussion and debate it decided, as a matter of policy, that it would not fund the purchasing of easements. The Board prefers to encourage voluntary donation of access and noted that purchase is not an affordable “routine” activity.

Mr Stephenson spoke for the proposed “exceptional circumstances” approach and the desire that the Board retain the opportunity and flexibility to consider cases on their merit. He considered that the purchasing of easements is one valid means of securing enduring walking access.

A consequence of the above decision was the need to review a decision made at the November 2012 meeting where the Board agreed that *“the policy for expenditure of the Enhanced Access Fund (EAF) should, in exceptional circumstances and on a case*

*by case basis, allow for the purchase of walkway easements or other legally secure forms of access.*” The Board considered, on reflection, that “exceptional circumstances” will be rare and decisions would be made by the Board after exhaustive discussions and consultation with other organisations and would be the subject of a special board paper/proposal. It decided to rescind the November decision.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **agreed** that the philosophy of the Commission is to encourage the voluntary donation of walking access opportunities;
- b) **noted** that the Commission has the power to purchase easements for walking access;
- c) **agreed** that, as a matter of policy, in general the Commission will not purchase easements for walking access;
- d) **agreed** that purchase of walking access easements *not* be considered within the criteria and processes that apply to EAF grants; and
- e) **agreed** to rescind its decision of 13 November 2012 that the policy for expenditure of the Enhanced Access Fund (EAF) should, in exceptional circumstances and on a case by case basis, allow for the purchase of walkway easements or other legally secure forms of access.

**Moved** M Bayfield      **Seconded** P Mudford      **Carried**

**Opposed:** Mr Stephenson asked that his opposition to the decision not to purchase easements be recorded.

## 8. **Enhanced Access Fund contract 11-17**

In 2011 the Board approved an EAF grant for \$8,000 to Inangahua Tourism Promotions Incorporated (ITP) for funding activities that contribute to creating off highway access between Reefton and Blacks Point by initial clearing of an old tunnel and assessing any ground support or remediation work needed. ITP recently identified a possible alternative to going through the tunnel to complete the walkway at a cheaper cost. This is for a wooden walkway on a rock ledge around the outside of the tunnel which could be constructed with volunteer labour.

ITP has asked that the Commission allow the unspent funding from the grant (\$4,360) to be used to obtain an engineering design for a wooden walkway on the rock ledge. This would enable the project to progress to seeking and confirming community contributions to building the walkway. There is no proposal for the Commission to fund the walkway.

The request would not affect the total amount allocated for the 2011 EAF round.

The Board considered and approved the request as it is within the EAF criteria.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **approved** that the balance of \$4,360 (GST incl) of the EAF grant (contract 11-17) to Inangahua Tourism Promotions Incorporated be spent on a new milestone

to obtain an engineering design for a wooden walkway on the rock ledge around the outside of an old tunnel between Reefton and Blacks Point.

**Moved** M Bayfield **Seconded** P Brown **Carried**

#### 9. Financial governance – credit card policy review

In November 2012 the Board agreed to a rolling programme reviewing all financial operating policies over a three year period. The current credit card policy was approved in May 2009. The Board considered and approved a revised credit card policy which better reflects the Board's role and current purchasing processes and removes some duplication of wording. It retains the essence of the original policy.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **approved** the revised credit card policy.

**Moved** B Stephenson **Seconded** P Mudford **Carried**

#### 10. Legislative compliance

At its 22 November 2010 meeting the Board noted a proposed list of significant legislation with which the Commission should comply and agreed that an assessment be undertaken annually.

The 2013 assessment took place in April 2013 and a report was considered by the Board. The report showed one matter warranting management attention (absence of smoke free signs). One change was made to the checklist - board members to provide annual declarations of interest.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **approved** the 2013 legislative compliance review; and
- b) **noted** the change to the compliance checklist re annual declarations of interest.

**Moved** B Stephenson **Seconded** M Bayfield **Carried**

#### 11. Conference on rural/urban relationships

The Board discussed a proposal that the Commission hold a conference on rural/urban relationships in New Zealand. The Board felt that the Commission could be a catalyst rather than the main promoter for an event and that a seminar might be more appropriate. It noted that other parties might like to be involved. The Board suggested that the topic be discussed at the next national stakeholder forum to gauge interest.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **agreed** to explore the idea of holding a significant forum on rural/urban relationships in New Zealand in 2015.

**Moved** J Forbes      **Seconded** P Brown      **Carried**

## 12. Resource Management Act 1991: Matters of National Significance

At its meeting in May 2012 the Board noted a pilot study undertaken to help the Commission understand the background to section 6(d) of the Resource Management Act, 1991 (RMA) and examples of best practice. Section 6 specifies the “Matters of National Importance” one of which is *“the maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes and rivers” (section 6 (d)).*

The Board agreed to expand the earlier study by including a further 10 local authorities. The Board received the expanded report analysing the policy approach of 18 district councils and 6 regional policy statements. Of the council plans reviewed, the Far North, Western Bay, Gisborne, Kapiti Coast and Combined Wairarapa District Plans are good examples of “best practice”.

The Board discussed the merits of making awards recognising best practice by local government and community organisations in providing for walking access. The chief executive was asked to explore the idea in more detail.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **noted** the updated report on policy approaches concerning section 6(d) of the Resource Management Act, 1991; and
- b) **asked** the chief executive to explore and report on the merits of awards by the Commission recognising best practice by local government and community organisations in providing for walking access.

**Moved** P Mudford      **Seconded** M Bayfield      **Carried**

## 13. Public Survey - 2013

The Board was briefed at its workshop on 19 March 2013 on the results of the 2013 public on-line survey undertaken to inform firstly, the Statement of Intent (SOI) process, in particular, performance measures and reporting, secondly, refining the Commission’s communications strategy. The surveys help to develop solid performance measures, provide useful data about trends and impacts, make reporting and accountability documents more informative and interesting and help to demonstrate levels of success, trends and gaps.

Dr K Booth (Lindis Consulting) peer reviewed the report.

The survey confirmed two key aspects of the Commission’s operating environment:

- i) the moderate level of uncertainty about where to obtain information about access to public land and conditions of access (although this level of uncertainty has improved since 2011); and
- ii) the high demand for public access information and easy access to it.

The Board considered that information on the public perception of the Commission is important but also noted that the level of awareness may well reflect the amount of “marketing” the Commission does. It asked that the chief executive investigate whether other sized organisations undertake similar comparative exercises and the results, for example, levels of public awareness.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **noted** that the results of the 2013 public survey undertaken by Colmar Brunton about the New Zealand Walking Access Commission;
- b) **agreed** to repeat the survey in early 2015 and in 2018;
- c) **agreed** that the Chairman advises the Minister for Primary Industries of the results of the survey and that the report be placed on the Commission’s website with an explanatory statement covering its purpose and limitations; and
- d) **noted** the need to use Colmar Brunton survey findings to set targets that drive performance in the next SOI.

**Moved** P Brown                      **Seconded** M Bayfield                      **Carried**

#### 14. **Review of NZWAC risk management register**

The Board considered and discussed the risk register. It noted that since February 2013, one risk reduced, three remain unchanged and two increased. There were no new emerging risks, one was reduced and the balance remained unchanged. It was noted that the chairman had yet to meet the new Minister, that this year’s round of board appointments was pending and that there were staff changes pending.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **reviewed** and amended the risk register for May 2013.

**Moved** P Mudford                      **Seconded** J Forbes                      **Carried**

#### 15. **Chief Executive’s Report (April 2013)**

The Board discussed the chief executive’s report for the period 1 to 26 April 2013. The chief executive advised that the preliminary audit was positive.

The Board asked that work be undertaken on developing long-term performance measures and whether there are measures already developed by similar agencies that the Commission could adopt.

The Board discussed also possible organisations that might be able to sponsor some of the Commission’s work and projects, for example, WAMS and/or the recreation layer.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **noted** the chief executive’s report for April 2013; and



**Moved** M Bayfield **Seconded** P Brown **Carried**

## 16. **Strengthening access culture and heritage**

The Board received and noted a report describing the direction and intent of the Outdoor Access Public Education Programme Communications Plan 2013-2015. It is an operational level plan that supports the Commission's overarching Communications Strategy 2012-2015.

The promotion of responsible outdoor access behaviour and the value of access is a major contributor to achieving the Commission's Statement of Intent 2013-2016, particularly the impact statement: "strengthened access culture and heritage in New Zealand".

The plan identifies regular opportunities for promoting the Commission's educational resources efficiently and effectively. It describes how responsible outdoor access behaviour and the value of access can be effectively communicated.

The Board noted that The Commission's Outdoor Access Code and Both Sides of the Fence education site compete for attention with similar codes of behaviour and education resources produced by other organisations. Maintaining a point of difference is important if audiences are going to use these resources.

The Board discussed the Commission's "target audience" and agreed that it is the public generally with appropriate subsets.

The chairman considered that the plan is a valuable report and the way in which the Commission communicates to schools and students is intrinsic to building long term and long-lasting walking access values.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **noted** the Commission's communications approach to strengthening access culture and heritage in New Zealand, as detailed in the Outdoor Access Public Education Programme Communications Plan 2013-2015.

**Moved** P Mudford **Seconded** J Forbes **Carried**

## 17. **Analysis of media coverage**

The Board noted the findings of a quantitative media coverage report prepared for the Commission covering the eight month period 1 July 2012 to 28 February 2013. The analysis assists with strategic planning for the Statement of Intent and refining of the Commission's communications strategies and plans. The analysis suggests that the Commission's media activity is achieving good value for money compared to traditional paid advertising. There is a return on investment of approximately 4.5 times the investment made in generating the coverage during the period.

Much of the Commission's work appeals to regional newspapers and the Commission is generating good regional coverage. Further regional media coverage could

potentially be achieved by placing a greater emphasis on promoting the work and success of the Commission's regional field advisors. Nearly all of the coverage was the result of Commission efforts.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **noted** the findings of the quantitative analysis media report prepared for the Commission and the importance of the regional media in conveying information about the Commission; and
- b) **noted** that a greater focus will be placed on the work and successes of regional field advisors

**Moved** M Bayfield      **Seconded** M Barnett      **Carried**

**18. Quarterly report: Third Quarter 2012-2013**

The Quarterly report for the period 1 January – 31 March 2013 was received and discussed. The Quarter saw more time devoted to case work, developing performance measures and strategic planning, policy and gathering advice on external funding. The focus for the next Quarter includes accelerating case work, commencing the strategic plan review, policy, Enhanced Access Fund and gathering advice on external funding.

An innovation was the inclusion of a diagrammatic “dashboard” in the financial report.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **noted** the Commission's Quarterly Report for the period ending 31 March 2013.

**Moved** M Barnett      **Seconded** B Stephenson      **Carried**

**19. Operations Quarterly Report: 1 January to 31 March 2013**

The Board noted and discussed the operations and regional field advisor (RFA) report for the Third Quarter (1 January to 31 March 2013). It noted the downward trend in the number of new enquiries.

The Board noted a comment in the report that informal access by one farmer was allowed and therefore the issue was not a priority. The Board noted that where there is only informal access and a willing landowner, the securing of enduring access by easement or other form should be a priority. The Board noted also that the matter was to be treated carefully by the RFAs.

**Action:** The Board

- a) **noted** the operations and regional field advisor report for the Third Quarter, 1 January to 31 March 2013; and
- b) **requested** additional information on access to the Tangihua Range in Northland

**Moved** J Forbes      **Seconded** B Stephenson      **Carried**

## 20. Audit arrangements

The Board was advised that letters had been received from Audit NZ proposing arrangements for the current and next 3 three years. The Board endorsed the chairman signing letters to Audit NZ agreeing formally to an:

- a) audit proposal for the next three years of audit;
- b) audit engagement letter for the next three years, and
- c) audit arrangements for the current year.

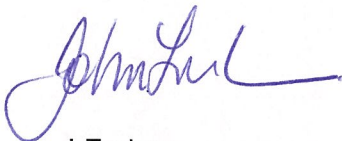
**Action:** The Board

- a) **agreed** that the proposals from Audit NZ be accepted and signed by the Chairman.

**Moved** M Bayfield      **Seconded** P Brown      **Carried**

## 21. Schedule of Significant Correspondence

**Action:** The Board received the schedule of significant correspondence



J Forbes

Chairperson

### Notes

- 1 The Board held a field trip on the afternoon of Sunday 5 May at East Cape and met with the owners of land at the East Cape. An inspection was made of the walking track giving access to the lighthouse at the Cape.
- 2 On Monday 6 May the Board held a workshop to discuss topics in some board papers including the walking access mapping system, strategic direction, recommendations from the evaluation panel for the Enhanced Access Fund and the results of a public on-line survey.
- 3 In the afternoon of Tuesday 7 May the Board hosted a forum in Gisborne for local government and invited stakeholders (18 people).
- 4 In the early morning of Tuesday 7 May some board members walked along a track at Hicks Bay which was the subject of an application to the Enhanced Access Fund.

