

# Ashburton Water Management Zone Committee [Unconfirmed Minutes]

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**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Ashburton Water Management Zone Committee** held on Tuesday 27 September 2016, commencing at 1.05pm in the Council Chamber, 2 Baring Square East, Ashburton.

## **Present**

Commissioner David Caygill, Bill Thomas (Chair), Ben Curry, Cr Stuart Wilson, Gordon Guthrie, Chris Allen (1.12pm), Jackie Wright and John Henry (Arowhenua Runanga)

## **In attendance**

Environment Canterbury: Olivia Smith (Facilitator)  
Louise Glennon (Business Support Officer – minutes)

Approximately 9 members of the public attended the meeting.

### **1 Welcome and Karakia**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the opening karakia was offered by John Henry.

### **2 Apologies**

John Waugh, Chris Allen (lateness), Arapata Reuben (Te Ngai Tuahuriri Runanga)

### **3 Extraordinary Business**

None

### **4 Register of Interests**

Jackie is no longer employed by Canterbury District Health Board

### **5 Confirmation of Minutes**

**That** the minutes of the Ashburton Water Management Zone Committee meeting held on 26 July 2016, be taken as read and confirmed with the following amendment.

The August meeting was cancelled due to the unavailability of staff for the proposed dates.

Wilson/Guthrie

Carried

### **6 Correspondence**

None

### **7 Facilitators Update**

It had previously been discussed having a session specifically on the Ashburton River, however there was not adequate time to have it this month. It was agreed to go ahead with this at the immediately before the next meeting. The workshop will focus on the 5 year outcome for the Ashburton river.

Stuart asked for further information on nitrate levels for the river and data in graph format would be useful. Bob will provide an update on this at the next meeting. There has been an uplift of around 18m of ground water and a reduction from 6 to 2 in nitrate levels. Ben advised that it is currently moving at around 75m a day.

In addition, the MAR group would like to come along to provide an update at the next meeting.

Olivia informed the Committee that there is a full day field trip to the Upper Rangitata on Monday 7 November and the Committee is welcome to attend. Olivia to circulate further details to the group.

### **8 Plan Change 2 Update**

Federated Farmers appeal on Plan Change 2 relating to the depth of deep groundwater has been resolved. The agreed depth is now 80 m instead of 103m.

Other appeals from BCI and RDR are still under appeal.

It was discussed what are the most effective ways to communicate that the swap provisions are now operative and Stuart suggested putting details in the Courier. In addition it was agreed to send letters to the people who will be effected by this.

**That** the Committee would communicate this change to the wider public through the Courier and by sending correspondence directly to those affected by the change.

Thomas/Allen

Carried

David advised Gordon that Ecan has agreed to draft what it thinks might be a reasonable compromise or alternative position on the outstanding appeals. The next step is to hopefully get to an agreed outcome with the other parties. The two parties have agreed to put their appeals on hold for the time being to see if this can be resolved, however this is unlikely to be before Christmas.

David Just confirmed to the group that water swaps are only available to those who are looking to swap from surface water or hydrologically connected groundwater takes to deep groundwater on the same property.

## 9 Update on Ashburton Groundwater Levels

Patrick provided an update on this.

Patrick advised that 1,070+ wells drilled in the Hinds area alone, however some of these well are not in use – just bores drilled. John asked for a breakdown of wells to include only wells that are active and in use, rather than every well.

Overall ground water catchment levels are low, with very little recharge in both deep and shallow groundwater levels. There are about 100 groundwater consents that have adaptive management conditions.

Jackie wanted clarification of how the aquifers work and Patrick advised that some recharge is from rivers and from the RDR and district drainage, with the rest from rainfall recharge. Jackie requested further information on groundwater hydrology and specifically on the aquifer. Olivia to follow this up with Donna/David.

## 10 Zone Delivery: Actions to support efficient water using during upcoming irrigation season

### • Actively Promote Irrigation

Two workshops to promote irrigation efficiency are being run by Irrigation New Zealand in Dorie and Hinds on 11 and 19 October respectively. Ecan also plan to have two summer students employed to support farmers doing bucket tests. The aim is to review 150 properties with the students and hopefully get some case studies to look at from this. There is also an app which tells you how to do the bucket test and once you have put all this information into the app it provides you with a report which will also go to Irrigation New Zealand. This project is to support farmers with good practice. David noted his concern that we need to careful not to send the signal that the drought can be resolved by efficiency savings alone. Chris stated that it isn't all about irrigation efficiency, rather getting the best out of the system people have and to manage expectations.

### • Public communication around opportunities for Water User Groups

Chris suggested that it needs to be about local farmers in particular areas sharing the amount of water available in an informal manner, for crops etc. that need water at different times of the year.

Ben asked whether it would be appropriate to do a mail out from Donna and her team regarding the Water User Group as few people had expressed interest in joining after the last workshop. This would be a good opportunity for them to get involved in Ashburton Water User Group. Chris also suggested it would be worthwhile for the groups to speak to their compliance officer to get a better understanding of the processes, their responsibilities as consent holders and who contact when issues arise.

Stuart asked about supplementing the Hinds River using targeted stream augmentation. Highbank has had a refurbishment of its generator and water from here could be made available for near river recharge at Hinds. Ben advised that there would be a requirement for additional equipment to enable the recharge from the RDR. Further discussion to take place with Arowhenua Runanga.

John advised that they are apprehensive about the number of consents being given out by Ecan. John has a concern that far too much water is being abstracted now and farmers need to understand that there is an issue with taking too much water. He feels that farming can adapt to the conditions but this isn't happening at the moment. David advised that part of the problem is that consents given out for 20 years or so allows the user to take what they have been authorised to, and unfortunately Ecan are unable to now turn around and ask them to take less as they are entitled to by law. David said the only changes that can happen going forward will be by making changes to the rules and this takes time; however they are currently being worked on. David advised that there are some areas which are no longer being issued consents due to recent changes.

- **Undertake communication on Swap to Groundwater**

Donna advised that people need to speak to their compliance or consents team about this. A consents planner will be based in Ashburton one day a month initially and then on demand in the future. Donna suggested that people need to be as proactive as possible.

Smart metering was discussed and Chris asked whether anything was happening in the urban area. Stuart advised that efficient use of water is promoted around the town and turf management found no overwatering of lawns in the town last year.

## **11 Zone Delivery: Update**

Donna advised that the next date for the consents planner to come to Ashburton is 17 October. People can just ring and make an appointment if they wish, however drop in sessions are available from 9am – 12pm at the Ashburton office.

The Hinds Drains Working Party community monitoring project is continuing for the next 5 years.

The consent for the variable flow trial on Boundary Drain was submitted yesterday and funding is just being firmed up now. Landowners have begun the trial already although 1 December is the date when the consent is required in order to continue with the trial.

There will be signs going up shortly regarding the Mahinga Kai sites. Currently there is a little bit of water in the upper one and a small amount is now starting to come through into the lower one.

Ecan via their biodiversity strategy had funded a consultant to look at the Ashburton Braided River bird population following concern raised by a delegation from Forest & Bird. They were looking at priorities to see what else could be done. Some limited consultation took place due to budget and time available, with some recommendations having come out of that. The final version should be out next week, with the next step being to look at priorities from the recommendations and how to implement them. Recently there has been a bulldozer in the river to remove dead vegetation within islands to enhance breeding habitats for black billed gulls. Signs will also go up to advise people to stay away during nesting season. Jackie asked for copies of the report and Donna will provide copies of the recommendations for the next meeting. David suggested that this work be talked about with someone from South Canterbury Fish & Game.

Donna advised that there is no ongoing contract with the management group following on from the report they did on the birds. Once the final report is complete, it is likely that they will sit down and discuss with the group on how best to proceed.

*The Committee adjourned for afternoon tea at 2.31pm until 2.52pm.*

## 12 Immediate Steps Fund New Projects for Consideration

Donna advised that the amount of available funding should read \$111,220 not \$101,220.

Donna's introduced a project for approval and state that it is understood is that there are mudfish in these project area however a query was raised as to whether they are in the project area or the pond above it. Donna will investigate this and report back.

The Limestone Creek project has been approved by Donna as this sits within her \$5k delegation. Ben asked why there is higher % allocated to two of the three projects and Donna confirmed that with the Limestone project the landowners and QEII are paying the additional funding required.

**That** Donna Lill approve all required projects up to her delegated limit of \$5k without a requirement to discuss with the Committee first.

Caygill/Allen

Carried

## 13 Groundwater Quality Update and Communications

Marta Scott, Senior Groundwater Quality Scientist with Ecan presented her report. Olivia advised that following the Havelock North issue, she thought it would be worthwhile having Marta along to provide an update on nitrate and E.coli levels as they are the key indicators which can pose a human health risk in drinking water. Every year Ecan does a groundwater survey and samples groundwater wells across the region. The testing runs from September to December each year. Out of the 67 wells sampled, 15 had high nitrate reading, 34 were within range and 18 were low, with 22% exceeding MAV. These figures show the highest concentrations found over the years of testing and weren't just for individuals years. Chris suggested it would be useful to show the depth of the wells (shallow or deep) and Jackie suggested that directional arrows representing groundwater flow direction also be added to the maps.

E.coli behaves slightly differently to nitrate and is easier to filter out and it also dies off over time. 9% of wells in the Ashburton area that were tested last time showed signs of E.coli. Most of detections are in shallow wells.

Chris suggested that having a concrete apron which extends above ground is key to well head protection. Ecan has previously issued a letter advising of drinking water risks to consent holders with private wells in South Canterbury however it is not confirmed that this happened in Ashburton District. It was thought that it would be useful to communicate the potential risk and advise people of how to get their water tested and actions they can do to prevent risk. Jackie noted that it's also important to communicate that old well heads need to be properly sealed if not in use.

## 14 Rakaia Enhancement Fund Update

Jackie was unable to attend the last meeting and no decisions were made as they didn't have a quorum. They are aiming for November to have application forms ready for circulation and are currently finalising assessment criteria and scoring. They have a CWMS staff member review the criteria on an ongoing basis. Prior to this meeting, Jackie had discussed with John Waugh about him being the alternate member for the group and he is happy to do this.

**That** John Waugh be nominated as an alternate to Jackie on the Rakaia Enhancement Fund.

Wilson/Caygill

Confirmed

## 15 Regional Committee Update

Ben advised that it had been a while since the last meeting which took place on 9 August. There was some discussion around who would joining and who would be leaving so not much business was discussed. In addition, there was a meeting of the chairs of the Zone Committees on 11 August which was useful for the sharing of information on processes etc.

Brett Painter has done a lot of work on the demand model and has spent considerable time on Aoraki/Temuka. In line to have an increase in minimum flow.

David advised that an interim decision had been made in Waimakariri on a request to put a storage pond in, with the final decision is still to be made. This is an appeal against a resource consent issued. There are no other planning issues and the report details what information is still outstanding from the applicant. This is a very careful examination of the issues that arise from these storage ponds.

Ben advised that the RDR application is currently open for submissions, closing on Friday 30 September at 5pm. A regional hearings committee will then decide who will run the hearing and at that time a date will be set, most likely post-Christmas, for the hearing.

## **16 Update on changes to Eel quota management in Canterbury**

Report received and noted.

## **17 Zone Committee Communications**

Olivia reminded the Committee of the propose visit to the Ashburton River to see the summer contact monitoring in action and asked if there was still interest in going along to this. It was suggested holding an educational public open day at the Ashburton River and Jackie agreed that this would be a good idea. Stuart stated his concern about the negative outcome if the river isn't in great health. The Committee decided that it would be a worthwhile and Olivia will arrange to get some further details for the next meeting.

Following a request from a member of the public, it was noted that the Committee would be willing to encourage a group to do an open day in support of the birds at the Ashburton River.

Olivia suggested putting together a newsletter for urban and rural audiences to profile action underway in the zone. This could include Hinds Drains Working Party actions, , PC2 and an update on MAR trial.

## **18 Reports for Committee Information**

### **18.1 Consents Update**

Seven of the consents have now gone to hearing. Following the Federated Farmers appeal the hearing commissioners were able to place more weight on the rules. Malloy consent has been granted and well interference has been dealt with. The Yollom Farm application has been refused.

Consents for Townshend and Bellwin Farms were granted with a further two still outstanding as have requested a right of reply so the hearing is still open. Mirrabook Holdings has also been granted and the applications from Wilson & Moore are likely to be issued.

David suggested that David Just could look into how many swap consents have been granted and see if this is working as intended. David Just also suggested looking at Ashburton River for review.

## **19 General**

Chris questioned what good management practice is for the management of roading runoff. He has noticed a section on SH77 where vegetation was cleared on the road verge and a gradient created that allowed unimpeded flow into a surface water body. David suggested writing to Ecan who will then take it up with NZTA and to also copy in Council.

David gave thanks to the committee for their hard work and patience and he is very pleased with everything that has been achieved to date.

Bill acknowledged David's contribution to the Committee and thanked him for his time and hard work.

## **Next meeting**

The next meeting of the Ashburton Water Zone Committee will be held on Tuesday 25 October 2016, commencing at 1pm.

The meeting concluded at 4.09pm.

Dated this 25 day of October 2016 \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair)