

Wellington Conservation Board
Te Runanga Papa Atawhai
O Te Upoko O Te Ika A Maui

**Annual Report to the
New Zealand Conservation Authority
1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006**



Photo: New Zealand stick insect, of the genus *Acanthoxyla*, seen by Wellington Conservation Board members in the Orongorongo Valley.

**Serviced by
Wellington Conservancy, Department of Conservation
PO Box 5086, Wellington, New Zealand**

1. Membership of the Board

Members are appointed to the Wellington Conservation Board by the Minister of Conservation with appointments of any new members taking effect in September each year. Board members represent a wide variety of interests and reside in communities right across the Board's region.

During this year, Bev Abbott and Andrew Cutler were reappointed for three years, Haami Te Whaiti was also appointed for a term of 3 years. All started their terms in September 2005.

The Board membership and meeting attendance during the report period was as follows:

		No of Meetings Attended (6 were held)
Bill Carter Chairperson	Paraparaumu	6
Bev Abbott Deputy Chairperson	Wellington	6
Andrew Cutler	Wellington	5
Andrew Foster	Wellington	5
Diane Anderson	Eketahuna	5
Geoff Doring	Carterton	5
Haami Te Whaiti	Featherston	4 of 5
Helen Algar	Wellington	6
Margaret Wassilieff	Wellington	5
Ray Ahipene-Mercer	Wellington	4
Robert Logan	Wellington	4
Sally Baber (co-opted member)		1 of 1
Te Akapikirangi Arthur	Porirua	4



Members of the Wellington Conservation Board back row from left: Andy Foster, Maggy Wassilieff, Geoff Doring, Helen Algar, Andrew Cutler, Ray Ahipene-Mercer, Robert Logan
Front row: Bev Abbott, Bill Carter, Di Anderson (Absent: Haami Te Whaiti and Aka Arthur)

2. Board's Functions & Powers

The functions and powers of the Board are formally set out in section 6 M & N of the Conservation Act 1987. The Board's activities under these functions and powers are recorded in sections 5, 6 and 7 of this report.

3. Board's District

The Board's district (as shown in figure one) is south of a line from the mouth of the Manawatu River, through the Manawatu Gorge south of Woodville and across to the east coast, south of Cape Turnagain. It is the same area as the Department of Conservation's Wellington Conservancy but excludes the Chatham Islands.

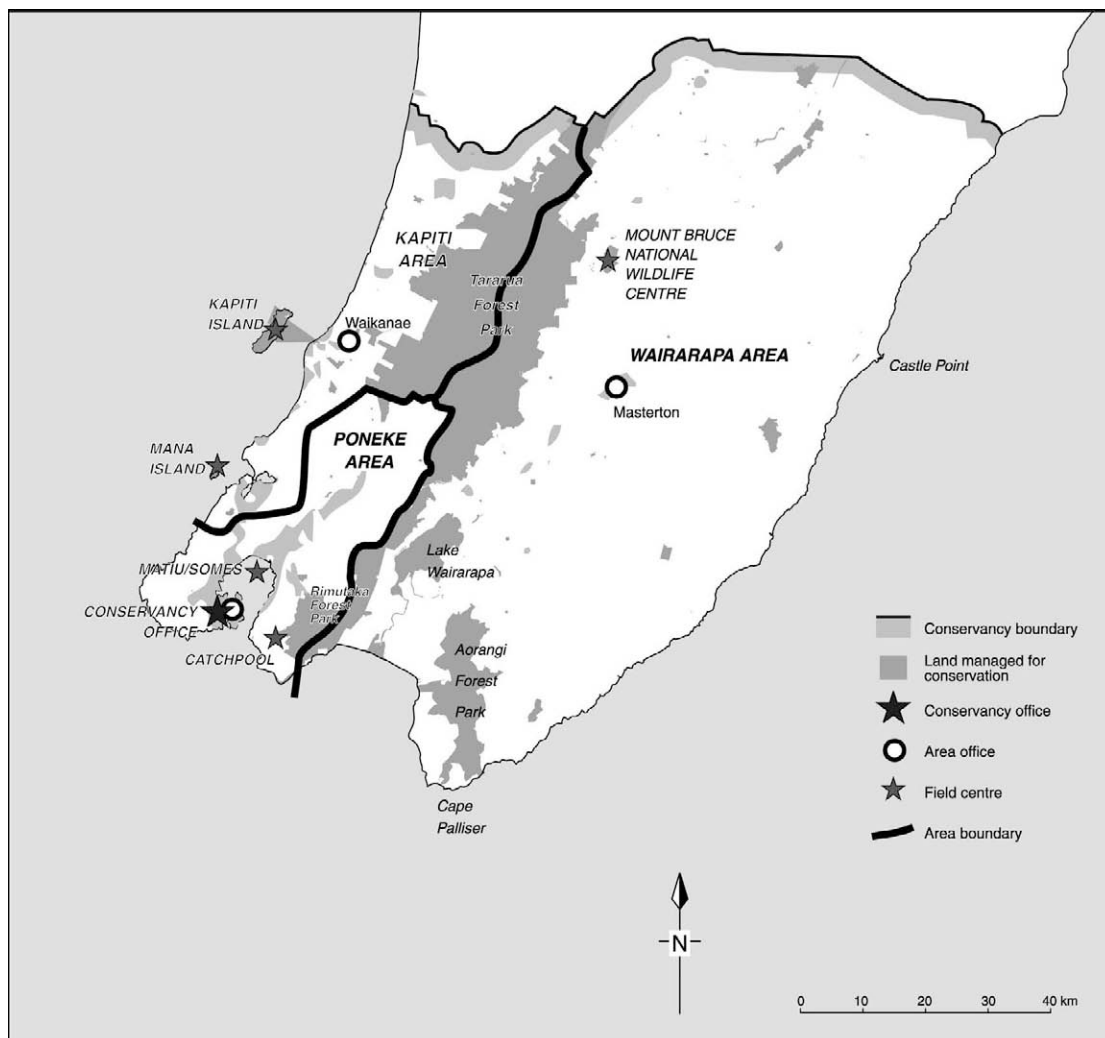


Figure 1: Map of the Wellington Conservation Board's district

The dominant landforms of the district are formed by the axial greywacke mountains in the Rimutaka and Tararua Ranges, and by uplifted hill country in the eastern Wairarapa and Tararua. The coastally influenced plains of Kapiti and Horowhenua lie west of the Tararua Ranges, and the Wairarapa Plains, Lakes Wairarapa and Onoke, and the eastern hill country lie east of the Tararua and Rimutaka Ranges.

The key places administered by the Department of Conservation in the Board's district are:

Lake Wairarapa Wetlands	Old Government Buildings
Carter Scenic Reserve	Turnbull House
Castlepoint Scenic Reserve	Pukerua Bay Scientific Reserve
National Wildlife Centre (Mount Bruce)	Paraparaumu Scenic Reserve
Putangirua Pinnacles Scenic Reserve	Hemi Matenga Scenic Reserve
Cape Palliser	Waikanae Estuary
Rewa Bush Conservation Area	Papaitonga Scenic Reserve
Rocky Hills Sanctuary Area	Snail Reserves, Horowhenua
Tora Scenic Reserve	Tararua Forest Park
Colonial Knob	Aorangi (Haurangi) Forest Park
Makara Coast	Rimutaka Forest Park
Pauatahanui Inlet, Porirua Harbour	Kapiti Island Nature Reserve
Pencarrow Head, Kohunga Lakes	Mana Island
Turakirae Head Scientific Reserve	Matiu/Somes Island
Red Rocks Scientific Reserve	Kapiti Marine Reserve
Dominion Observatory	Kapiti Island North Reserve

4.1 Board Meetings and Inspections

Board Meetings

Full-day meetings were held on:

- 26 August 2005 in Wellington
- 28 October 2005 in Wellington
- 9 December 2005 in Wellington
- 17 February 2006 in Wellington
- 28 April 2006 in Wellington
- 30 June 2006 in Wellington

4.2 Public Involvement

Prior to each meeting, the agenda was e-mailed or posted to a wide list of organisations and members of the public. Meetings were advertised in a national daily and several local newspapers.

Each Board agenda included a public forum where members of the public could speak to the Board about agenda items or other conservation issues. The Board regards the forum as an important part of its involvement with the community. Issues raised at forums during the year include:

- Quartz Hill and Makara Walkway – in relation to the Meridian Energy wind farm proposal
- The Te Raekaihau Point Marine Education Centre proposal
- Pauatahanui Inlet in relation to the wider issue of the Western Corridor Transport Plan
- Lake Wairarapa management
- Whitireia Park, Whareroa Farm and Waitangirua Farm
- The legal designation of feral deer

4.3 Field Inspections

The Board conducted or held a number of field inspections during the report period as part of its on-going programme of monitoring progress towards the objectives set out in the Wellington Conservation Management Strategy. Site visits also helped familiarise members with the conservation values of these sites and provided opportunities for Board members to discuss management approaches with DOC staff on site.



Wellington Conservation Board members inspecting the storm damaged Tararua Tramping Club hut in the Orongorongo Valley

The Board has adopted a practice of noting key points arising from the field inspections and recording these for follow-up action. Details of the field inspections were as follows:

Western Corridor Transport Plan and Transmission Gully:

This inspection included an appreciation of the proposed route and its likely impact on public amenities, recreational use and potential impacts on the covenanted areas of bush. As well as the proposed Transmission Gully route, the opportunity was taken to look closely at the alternative proposal for upgrading the Centennial Highway between Pukerua Bay and Paekakariki. In addition, the likely traffic and environmental impact of the two roading options on the northern side of Pauatahanui inlet and wetland were looked at closely with an on-site meeting with the Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet and Pauatahanui Inlet Community Trust. The Board records its appreciation of the dedication and effort of these two organisations.

Wind Energy Issues

The conflicting views expressed by speakers in the Public Forum led to a smaller group of Board members visiting the Meridian Energy wind farm Te Apiti on the northern side of the Manawatu Gorge. This was followed later by a visit to the Makara area to see first hand the Quartz Hill site and the Makara area generally, with particular interest being taken in the Makara walkway and the likely visual impacts of the proposed wind turbine sitings. In addition, the World War II gun emplacements were inspected and noted as offering potential for heritage restoration and use as part of an extension of the walkway and as a recreational shelter with suitable signage. The Board studied

in detail the Department of Conservation's (DOC) submission with regard to the Meridian consent application for a landing site at Oteranga Bay and the associated roading up the valley that would be necessary for the construction phase of the wind farm. The Board supported fully the DOC's submission on the wind farm and decided not to make a submission.

Marine Education Centre

A small group of Board members also inspected Te Raekaihau point where the Marine Education Centre is proposed to be built, prior to the Board preparing its submission to the consent hearing

Western Rimutaka Range

The Board visited the Orongorongo Valley and Turakirae Head in February 2006. This visit covered both the Catchpool and Orongorongo Valleys which had suffered severe storm damage, and the extensive rehabilitation work that this has required of the Wellington Conservancy. The Turakirae Head reserve with its outstanding Marine Terrace Formation is a good example of a landform of outstanding character the Board is anxious to preserve from either further rock extraction or damage caused by livestock.

Whareroa Farm

Because of the intense public interest in the proposals to seek Government acquisition of Whareroa farm at Paekakariki, Board members as individuals and also as part of another field inspection took opportunities to familiarise themselves with this area. The Board was able to give support to both the community initiatives and the Kapiti Coast District Council and it was pleasing to note the decision by Government to acquire this land for conservation and recreational use.

5 Board Functions under Section 6M of the Conservation Act

The Board has maintained its role of monitoring the Department of Conservation's implementation of the Conservation Management Strategy (CMS).

At least two months before each Board meeting, members select a section of the CMS, and a small changing group of Board members puts a list of written questions to the Department. These are designed to identify what has been achieved since the CMS was approved in 1995, what has changed, and what barriers to progress and lessons have been learned.

The Department prepares detailed reports in response to the questions and circulates these with Board papers. The reports provide assessments on whether or not performance indicators have been met, details about any difficulties being encountered and other factors impacting on performance such as other DOC work priorities. Relevant DOC staff present the reports at each Board meeting and answer any supplementary questions from the Board.

The Board believes that the process it has developed to monitor the Wellington Conservancy CMS is an effective way of performing one of its critical statutory functions. Board members also consider that the reports and discussions play important roles in increasing members' understanding of the management challenges faced by the conservancy.

Topics in the CMS that were assessed during the year were:

August 2005: Public Awareness

It was noted by the Board that there may be an opportunity for a restoration workshop programme for people involved in the conservation area. Mediums for promoting awareness were discussed with the use of television, Wikipedia and linking webpages to local authorities promoted as options.

October 2005: Coastal and Marine

The Board raised concerns regarding the public perception of the Kapiti Marine Reserve and the implication on the Pauatahanui Inlet of the two Western Corridor proposals. The demand for marine reserves was discussed, along with how sites for protection are determined. It was noted that marine reserves can end up as very small areas that are protected, and that resources need to be available for surveillance efforts.

December 2005: Landform Protection

Options for fencing Turakirae Head scientific reserve were discussed and it was noted that this location is one of the most significant geological sites in New Zealand. The significance of the vegetation of the area was also noted. The Board encouraged the Conservancy and iwi to expedite discussions regarding the change of the Kupe's Sail Rock Recreational Reserve (Nga ra o Kupe) to a Historic Reserve. The 4WD and trail bike damage at Red Rocks Scientific Reserve was commented on and the importance of protecting sites of regional significance was noted.

April 2006: Aorangi/Haurangi Forest Park

The Board raised concerns regarding the use of deer repellent in the Aorangi Forest Park and noted the effects of deer browsing on forest species. Concerns were also raised regarding access points in the Park and the lack of knowledge relating to access.

June 2006: Animal Pest Control

The Board sees a need to expedite the development and implementation of the Natural Heritage Management System (NHMS) if the present lack of detailed information as to the present condition of large areas of public conservation land relative to the activities of pest animals is to be rectified. There appears to be no hard data on damage caused by deer, in spite of a recognition that since commercial recovery operations have ceased there have been anecdotal reports of an increase in numbers. There has been minimal monitoring of deer damage in this region for the past 15 years. The Board has developed an increasing concern about the lack of detailed knowledge of possum, deer and pig effects on vegetation within the local mountain forests.

6 Advice on any other Conservation Matter [Section 6M(1) (d)(ii)]

Liaison with any Fish and Game Council on matters within the jurisdiction of the Board [Section 6m (1) (f)]

Liaison with the Wellington Fish and Game Council is maintained through the exchange of agendas and minutes. Bev Abbott provides verbal reports at Board meetings about current issues affecting the Council and the Department of Conservation. In the last year these have included hunter access to Lake Wairarapa, the control of raupo, the eradication of pest fish and concerns about the potential for the invasive algae didymo to reach rivers in the conservancy.

Advice to the NZ Conservation Authority

The Board has continued to provide comment to the NZCA on the eel fishery, concerns with the pressure on coastal areas and its support for a reinvigoration of the National Landform Inventory

Advice to the Director-General of Conservation and Department of Conservation – Wellington Conservancy

The Board provided feedback to DOC through CMS questions, concession reports and field trips. The Board provided feedback to the Conservator on the Department's 'Directions and Expectations' and supported the Proposed Additions to the fourth schedule of the Crown Minerals Act. In addition the Board has commented on:

Public Awareness

- Work on science based information from the fuchsia monitoring and trying to change people's attitudes to 1080 is the sort of targeted specific media that is becoming increasingly important
- Work involving the bats at Mount Bruce is good for the profile of DOC and for maintaining confidence in DOC

CMS

- The Board wants to use the CMS to be a pro-active strategy in which it clearly articulates the community's aspirations in terms of conservation outcomes and the policies behind these, with clear priorities by place and function
- The Board wants to use the CMS better to articulate and monitor achievement by DOC against clearly articulated indicators/measures (set in terms of outcomes)

7 Powers of the Board under Section 6N of the Conservation Act

Advocacy Role [Section 6N (2) (a)]

The Board has continued to focus on two major themes of concern to the wider Wellington Conservancy—coastal development and freshwater resources.

The Board has on several occasions considered it desirable to present submissions. This is not a step taken lightly. The matters raised, in statutory processes as well as outside these processes, were:

Regional and District Planning

The Board provided GWRC with comment on their discussion document—'Our region – their future', the first stage in the review of the Regional Policy Statement (RPS). The Board commended the quality of the information about Greater Wellington's performance over the last decade and the background on issues to be addressed in the next RPS. The Board's submission focused on topics where Greater Wellington and the Department of Conservation have similar interests, including ecosystems and biodiversity, freshwater and coastal environments, iwi and resource management, landscape, heritage and recreation. The Board also proposed that the next RPS include a separate section on Lake Wairarapa so that the numerous issues about the lake and its catchments can be addressed in an integrated way.

Management Plans – Other Authorities

The Board has welcomed the opportunity to review and comment on a number of Long Term Community Council Plans. The Board was pleased to note the increasing awareness of conservation issues that form an integral part of these plans. The Board also accepted an invitation from Wellington City Council to provide a member for the Community Outcomes Public Review panel.

Resource Consent Applications

The Board has a policy of carefully selecting Resource Consent Applications which involve issues of principle, or where the Board believes it can point up any aspects that may not be identified by other submitters. Two such applications have been the proposed Marine Education Centre at Te Raekaihau Point and the Wastewater Treatment Facility at Karori. In the case of the Marine Education Centre the Board was not unanimous in its view but agreed that it should bring forward for the consideration of the commissioners at the hearing points both for and against the application that members believed should be considered. On balance, the Board supported the application subject to a number of conditions, the most significant of these relate to decreasing the vertical profile of the building and replacing the current design with a building that is better integrated with the natural character of its coastal setting. The board also emphasised its desire to preserve public access to the rocky foreshore beyond the proposed centre.

In the Karori wastewater treatment plant application the Board recognised the need for the existing facility to continue to be allowed to operate in the interim, but considered that the time period sought of 20 years was excessive

and insufficient consideration had been given to potential impact of partially treated or untreated overflows on the Karori stream and the foreshore. The Board was also concerned at the risk of storm water penetration of the system and likely storm water volumes based on past weather records that did not take into account the obvious increasing periods of extreme weather conditions now being experienced by the Wellington region. The Board sought to emphasise the facility's continued use should be conditional on monitoring and satisfactory performance, and that plans must be made for its replacement.

Other applications the Board has commented on included:

The Western Transportation Corridor Plan – mitigation measures required were identified in the Board's submission.

The Board supported an application by Greater Wellington Regional Council for consent to discharge 'Endothall' and guar gum gel into water bodies (principally hornwort infested areas of Lake Wairarapa)

8 Board Responsibilities under the Walkways Act

The Board, in its consideration of the proposal to acquire Whareroa Farm, took into account the existing tracks and their possible inclusion in the national walkway Te Araroa. The Board has in the past been concerned with the deterioration of these tracks and endangered adjacent remnants of native bush that have been covenanted and yet to be fenced.

9 Liaison

The Board has continued to have a good relationship with the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) and appreciates the major part that organisation plays in promoting community awareness of regional conservation issues solutions and in the provision of recreation opportunities. It is to be regretted that the expansion of Board membership to the maximum permitted of 12 members has meant the loss of the Board's ability to co-opt a GWRC representative, which was its former practice.

Diane Anderson has continued to represent the Board on the Mount Bruce Wildlife Centre Trust Board. The Chairperson has maintained an active liaison role with the Kapiti Marine Reserve Committee, attending their meetings when possible. The Board receives reports at its meetings on the issues before the Committee. The liaison roles with these bodies is a very useful and informative way for the Board to keep in touch, particularly the Kapiti marine Reserve Committee which functions as a sub-committee of the Board with delegated authority.

Board minutes and agendas have continued to be distributed throughout the Board's region as well as to neighbouring conservation boards. This is an important way of communicating with people and organisations that have a shared interest in conservation values and ensures feedback is continuing.

Geoff Doring and Haami Te Whaiti represent the Board on the Lake Wairarapa Co-ordinating Committee (LWCC). The Committee is regarded by

the community as an important forum for public involvement in the management of the lake and wetlands. By contributing to the Committee membership the Board is able to help build public understanding as well as gaining an appreciation of the differing views that are held by landowners, recreational users and the conservancy responsible regarding the management of the lake and its edges. Of particular interest in this past year have been the discussions over variations in lake level and the extent to which hornwort, rapidly expanding raupo and wilding alders are raising concerns. There are very positive aspects of habitat improvement that have been initiated by bodies such as Ducks Unlimited.

Diane Anderson has been involved as a Board member, along with other interested parties, with the development of a Castlepoint Integrated Foreshore Plan which will suggest solutions to the problems that the growing coastal settlement faces with beach front erosion and increasing traffic to the beach area. Local residents see a real urgency in moving this process forward to an outcome that is acceptable to all the major parties involved so that the coastal erosion and traffic problems are dealt with effectively as soon as possible.

10 Conservation Week

The Board continues to support strongly the national Conservation Week. A Board sub-committee combined with the Department of Conservation in July 2005 to select recipients for the annual Wellington Conservancy Conservation Awards and took part in the award presentations during Conservation Week. Board members felt that the awards evening was a success and that the public interest and the positive media coverage was encouraging for conservation. It is pleasing to note the increasing nominations being received for these awards and, in particular, the extent to which nominations are now coming forward from business concerns that have been responsible for initiating or supporting innovation in conservation, particularly with regard to heritage sites and buildings. The Board has consistently looked to encourage a wider recognition of heritage issues, recognising the importance of many of the historical sites and buildings in the Greater Wellington area. Habitat restoration has always been well supported in nominations and the Board takes great satisfaction from the number of voluntary groups and individuals active in its area. Equally, the Board is keen to encourage the participation of school groups and classes. An appreciation of conservation values sits easily within the education system and there are many examples of worthwhile projects. The Board has encouraged DOC to ensure that the conservation achievement of schools are more widely known and given recognition.

11 General

The Wellington Conservation Board has a series of pages within the DOC website (www.doc.govt.nz). The pages contain the names of Board members, confirmed minutes and the Board's annual reports. The Board looks forward to resuming the use of its web page within the reconstructed DOC website, with the emphasis that is now put on electronic communication. The Board sees a web page as an essential part of its communication with the public,

giving opportunity to post agendas and minutes as well as items of general interest and information.

During the report period, the Board has received a number of briefings (apart from CMS monitoring reports) from Department of Conservation staff on a variety of topics including: Progress with North Kapiti Island visitor procedures and policy; Marine Protected Areas Policy and Implementation Plan; Kapiti Island short-tailed bat transfer and the new Concessions processing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The Board noted the unexpected mortalities involved in the bat transfer.

12 Chairperson's Comment

The Board is fortunate in the breadth and depth of expertise within its membership, and in the willingness of members to put personal time and effort into the drafting of submissions and CMS questions, as well as taking part in field inspections to widen their understanding of conservation issues of importance to the Conservancy and the community.

Their support and dedication has made my task as chairman much easier. Thank you all and, in particular, my deputy-chair Bev Abbott whose support and advice I have really appreciated.

Similarly, the Board appreciates very much the capable efforts of our new Community Relations Officer Board Support Kerry Swadling, who has been with us since December. Over the previous six months that workload was shouldered by Jeff Flavell in addition to his other commitments. That loyalty and dedication was much appreciated. Thank you both for your efficiency and good natured acceptance of some of the pressures we have imposed on you.

As District Conservator Allan Ross has continued to maintain that good working relationship my predecessors have emphasised. A Conservation Board exercises no governance, nor should it cross into that area of management that is the province of the conservator, but there are many occasions when Board members seek information or comment that needs a diplomatic but meaningful response. The better informed a Board is, the better it is able to perform its primary role of advice and consent.

The Wellington Conservation Board is coming to the end of its 10-year Conservation Management Strategy, and we are looking forward to its revision and the drafting of the new CMS. Obviously, there will be significant changes, particularly as we move towards a more outcomes-orientated, place-based strategy. Much has been learned over this last 10 years, and we are ready to evaluate the changes made during that time against need and the responses to the regular monitoring carried out by the Board.

There are a number of factors that need to be recognised.

Funding for the many competing demands within the conservation estate will always be a problem and produce uncertainties and delays. A good example of the unexpected has been the impact of abnormal weather patterns in recent years and the need to divert more than \$1 million from planned work into urgent remedial actions within the conservancy in the last year.

No place stands alone. Every issue involves wider issues. Coastal policies have their starting point in the mountains, as do the implications of freshwater quality and sustainable availability. Aquaculture, marine reserves, maitaitai and taiapure have neighbours on shore as well as in adjacent waters.

Pest control strategies require sound knowledge that can only come from well-established monitoring of areas and activities over time. In a number of minds (mine included) there is a time bomb ticking away that is masked by our lack of detailed knowledge. I want to see this addressed as a priority for our Board in the next year.

The new CMS will need to be owned by the Board which must in turn know there is public understanding and acceptance of its strategies and the desired outcomes. Public ownership of conservation principles will determine how far those principles carry forward into the competing debates of the wider environment (including the coastal waters), heritage, economic sustainability and the management and economic development activities of local and regional government.

Conservation Boards will find an increasing need to extend their communication mechanisms with their communities in a two-way exchange of views. The revision of the CMS will be a good start.



Bill Carter
Chairperson
03 August 2006

Please note: The comments expressed above by the Board Chairperson do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Board members.

This report was adopted by the Wellington Conservation Board on 18 August 2006.