

# SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

14 OCTOBER 2020

## AGENDA ITEM C2

### MOROA AND LONGWOOD WATER RACE REVIEW

#### **Purpose of Report**

To ask Council for funding to cover the external costs of a water race user and affected parties survey in the first instance to assist the Council and its community with the development of a long-term water race strategy for the Moroa and Longwood Water Race Systems.

#### **Recommendations**

Officers recommend that the Council:

1. *Receive the Moroa and Longwood Water Race Review Report.*
2. *Approve funding to be made available over the 20/21 and 22/23 financial years estimated at a rough order of cost (ROC) of \$50,000 to initiate and complete the Water Race review. This funding to be sourced from the water accounts.*
3. *Approve the Water Race review programme as submitted for implementation.*

#### **1. Executive Summary**

Council has recognised that changes in owner demographics and farming practices have evolved over time and wishes to establish whether the water race assets are still relevant to the user and wider community. The water races have been in existence since circa 1930 (Longwood) and 1890 (Moroa) and Council has stated that a water races review be included in the Annual Plan for 2020/21 but budget approval is required as it was anticipated WWL would assist at little or no cost to Council

Current environmental considerations driven by national policy and consequential regulatory trends with the management of surface waters generally in NZ; the way they function and are utilised poses questions for Council as asset owner to consider long term sustainability of these water race assets.

In addition costs and current benefits to the water race rate paying community is another matter that requires further examination as well as the current integration of storm-water disposal and water race conduits in the Greytown Urban Area.

The review being proposed is overarching in nature and will comprise several sequential steps.

Once completed Council can develop and adopt a long-term strategy for the water race systems.

## **2. Background**

The water race systems were provided to allow unrestricted access for stock watering where in rural areas that were intensively farmed, technology wasn't developed sufficiently to use groundwater resources, uneconomic or was not available. The races gravitate from the west to the south over the serviced areas and are entirely man made without pumping to assist flow. Discrete takes from the water race channels for other purposes are not normally permitted.

The Longwood Water Race System has a length of 40 km and services 62 ratepayers. The Moroa Water Race System is larger and has a length of 240km and services 282 ratepayers.

The Moroa resource consent for the take and discharge expires in April 2025. The Longwood consent expired in April of this year and an application has been lodged to renew this consent on a short term basis expiring at the same time as the Moroa system.

One of the main drivers for the Council review are the anticipated changes in regulatory requirements that will be imposed on water races aimed at minimising adverse environment effects. These changes may result in a reduction of utility and viability values currently associated with the water race systems for water race users.

Others include the changes in farming practices and stock watering requirements potentially resulting in lesser need for this service. The proposed user survey should provide an indication in these respects.

The current Longwood resource consent application in process ought to, once concluded provide a clear indication of what the Council (and water race users) may have to manage in the future in the regulatory sphere. An outcome to this process is not expected until early to mid-2021.

All in all a review commencing with a user survey with full engagement is regarded as being necessary to provide Council with governance direction for the future.

## **3. Review Discussion**

To provide a useful outcome it is envisaged that the review will consist of several discrete steps as follows:

- The implementation of a user and affected parties survey and the outcome of that as the first step. The survey will reference perceived amenity, historic and other values that the community may attach to the water race systems.
- Reporting of the outcome with feedback from the Water Race Sub Committee to the Assets and Services Committee and consequently Council.
- Linking of the outcome with the LTP processes and future public participation.

- Linking of survey and LTP feedback with the forthcoming rating review in 2021 to establish likely future costs to ratepayers.

Council's deliberations and decisions in respect of the medium- and long-term future of both the water race systems giving full consideration of the existing and new resource consents, their current and future requirements, given the imposition of improved environmental outcomes and other constraints and hence cost that may be imposed.

Project support will be provided by Council staff and external specialists including Wellington Water LTD.

### **3.1 Options**

Council can approve the survey and consequent steps as proposed or alternatively adopt the status quo and continue to provide the service and adapt to the changing environment without undertaking full engagement with the water race community.

The latter approach however is not consistent with the aims of the current Annual Plan and should not be pursued.

The review should point towards continuation or modification of the service or abandonment altogether. There are inherent risks either way for Council and its ratepayers the extent of which will not be known until the exercise is progressed.

On balance it is prudent to proceed with the User survey as a first step to allow the review to be properly concluded.

### **3.2 Consultation**

The user survey and associated engagement followed by the forthcoming LTP consultative processes are deemed to be sufficient at this stage of the review.

### **3.3 Legal Implications**

Bylaws exist for both the Longwood and Moroa Water Race Systems and relate mainly to usage of the systems. The Longwood Bylaw is outdated and requires significant change.

A single updated bylaw may be considered in the future depending on the outcome of this review.

### **3.4 Financial Considerations**

The review is contingent upon the Council being willing and able to fund the costs from the water race accounts which have not been allowed for in the current Annual Plan or the current LTP.

Reserve funds are available in the Moroa Water Race Account for funding of this work and can be utilised this financial year if the Council is agreeable.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The user survey and the subsequent review if it proceeds will provide the Council the information it needs to formulate a long-term strategy for the management of the Moroa and Longwood Water Race Systems.

#### **5. Supporting Information**

##### **5.1 Long Term Plan - Community Outcomes**

The review is consistent with Councils vision which is to work with and for the South Wairarapa Communities to affect the best social and economic outcomes which are based on valuing and respecting the people, the land and the resources.

##### **5.1.1. *Healthy & Economically Secure People***

As above.

##### **5.1.2. *Educated and Knowledgeable People***

The review will make available from people wanting to communicate their aspirations, input from informed and knowledgeable ratepayers, individuals and agencies to Council.

##### **5.1.3. *Sustainable South Wairarapa***

The proposed review is consistent with the goal where economic development and environmental management go hand in hand.

##### **5.2 Existing Policy**

The Water Race Bylaws and associated Code of Practice.

The management contract with WWL for day to day management responsibility of the water race systems.

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