
WELLINGTON CONSERVATION BOARD

SUBMISSION

WINSTONE AGGREGATES LAND EXCHANGE APPLICATION

February 2026

Preamble

The Department of Conservation has invited the Wellington Conservation Board to comment on the application by Winstone Aggregates for a land exchange application for Belmont Quarry Development under the Fast-Track Approvals Act 2024.

About Us

The Wellington Conservation Board is a statutory body established under the Conservation Act 1987.

One of the functions of the board is to advise the Director-General of Conservation on conservation matters within the jurisdiction of the board.

Board members are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines, including statutory planning processes, recreation, infrastructure development, nature conservation, volunteerism, environmental policy and ecology.

The Board's jurisdiction includes the area of the Winstone Aggregates application.

Summary

The Board has considered a range of views in formulating our comments. Overall, the Board considers that prioritising avoidance of effects, where practicable, should be the principal concern in considering the application.

The Board considers it important that:

- Areas containing swamp maire and other scarce indigenous species and ecosystems are explicitly identified and protected wherever practicable
- Landscape-scale ecological connectivity and catchment-level hydrological considerations are adequately addressed
- Restoration, pest control, and offsets are secured, legally and financially, for a duration aligned with the life of the quarry

Managing Conflicts of Interest

The Board discussed actual or perceived conflicts of interest associated with Fast Track applications. Specific to the application by Winstone Aggregates, two board members recused themselves from deliberations relating to the application.

Understanding the Application

Friends of Belmont Regional Park

On 28 February 2025 the Board received a presentation from Friends of Belmont Regional Park ("the Friends") on the proposed development during the time set aside for members of the public to raise conservation issues with the board. Minutes of the meeting are [here](#).

The Friends have subsequently advised the Board that additional populations of swamp maire have been found throughout the proposed land swap area through PhD research.

Winstone Aggregates

Winstone Aggregates presented to the Board on 19 September 2025 Board members asked questions to clarify their understanding of the proposal. Minutes of the meeting are [here](#).

Site Visit

Board members asked a range of questions of the Friends to assist in understanding their perspective.

At the invitation of the Friends, two Board members attended a site visit to the proposed development area with Friends. Greater Wellington Regional Council staff facilitated the visit.

Belmont Regional Park

The Belmont Regional Park is a significant landscape and recreational feature for the communities of Porirua, the Hutt Valley, and Wellington. It is rare for a major urban area to have ready access to some 3,500HA of land preserved for its recreational, conservation and amenity values.

Land use adjacent to the park has been the subject of considerable, and often controversial, public interest over many generations. As recently as 2006 there was significant public interest in land ownership arrangements associated with Waitangirua Farm and the impact on the character of the park. This was eventually resolved by reclassification as reserve land and formal incorporation into the park.

The Dry Creek Campsite is the closest facility for freedom campers to the Cook Strait ferries. Like all public camp sites in the region, it is particularly popular during summer periods. The Dry Creek valley is a deep valley flanked by elevated terraces. The sides and head of the valley contain remnant forest.

The Greater Wellington Regional Council has embarked on a generational restoration plan for the park, including retirement and replanting of significant areas of farmland. Greater Wellington is involved in discussions with adjacent landowners, and other agencies with ecology restoration obligations associated with other progress.

Volunteer groups, including Friends of Belmont Regional Park, are deeply involved in ecology restoration through plantings and pest control, as well as contributing to flora and fauna monitoring efforts. Other groups are heavily involved in enhancing recreational opportunities in the park.

Comment: Ecological Assessment Considerations

The Board notes that a detailed ecological assessment report ("Belmont Quarry Land Exchange: Overview of Ecological Values," BlueGreen Ecology Ltd) has been prepared to support the application. The report identifies ecological values within both the proposed exchange areas and the overburden disposal site, and outlines proposed mitigation and restoration measures.

While acknowledging the assessment, the Board believes that several broader issues have not been adequately addressed. We believe that landscape-scale ecology within the park, and surrounding catchment, would be helpful in considering the overall conservation impact of the proposal.

Comment: Offset Proposal

A swamp maire restoration (200 trees) is proposed as part of the conservation gain initiative, as well as other replanting efforts

Through the Friends, Dr Colan Balkwell provided the following comment:

"It is hard to envisage how the proposed swap could provide land that is ecologically valuable as the park land considered for exchange."

This view is consistent with a range of opinions shared with the Board.

We are concerned that the offset proposal does not clearly specify the duration propagation and planning swamp maire, or how security of long-term funding would be protected.

The timeframe and certainty of weed and pest control, and regeneration efforts, is an important consideration in assessing overall conservation outcomes.

Sourcing suitable native species for replanting activities is a challenge in the Wellington region, and assured long-term approach should be incorporated into plans.

The Board believes that these activities should be assured for a time appropriate to mitigate the area potentially lost to the land swamp. We believe this would be in the vicinity of 30-40 years and aligned with economic life of the quarry.

The Board supports the BlueGreen recommendations attempting to translocate 9 of the swamp maire to another location.

Where practical, areas or species of significance should be protected from disturbance for as long as possible, including adopting a planning approach of avoidance by default.

Comment: Research Opportunity

The Board believes that the proposed land-swap, should it be approved, presents considerable opportunity for longitudinal ecological research, including relating to trans-location of species, restoration efforts and changes in soil ecology over time. We recommend these opportunities be explored as part of any further mitigation and offset discussions.

Comment: Recognising Volunteer Effort

Volunteer-led efforts in the wider Belmont Park are a significant community engagement element in its ecological recovery and recreational development. Community groups have advocated and led most significant activity in the park. We believe that finding a mechanism to honor the multi-

generational commitment of volunteers in the park should be a key consideration in assessing the community impact of the land-swap proposal. Beyond activity in the park itself, the wider ecological and recreational context in the cities around the park has a wider role in promoting conservation values.

From a practical and community engagement perspective, ecological mitigation should include the use of volunteers, to the extent of their willingness and capacity, over the mitigation period.

Growing native species for restoration activities, in conjunction with community organisations, including iwi, may provide an opportunity to further contribute to promotion of conservation values in a wider sense, as well as providing an opportunity for education and workforce development opportunities. We believe this aspect should be explored as part of wider ecological mitigation plans.

The potential loss of amenity value and recreational opportunity should also be considered, perhaps following a similar approach to environmental, and be similarly based on community efforts, to the extent practicable.

Comment: Strategic Alignment between DOC, Greater Wellington, and Restoration and Offset proposals

The Department's 5 Year Regional Strategy (updated 8 January 2026) states that DOC will take an integrated landscape approach to conservation aligned to nature, rather than administrative boundaries. The intent is to ensure all factors and perspectives are weighed and priorities.

Supporting iwi and like-minded partners is critical to success. In this context, adopting a strong partnership-based approach to mitigation efforts is vital.

Greater Wellington is in ongoing discussions with organisations who have restoration obligations under various other consent processes. In some cases, restoration efforts for mitigation purposes have been mutually agreed to be conducted with the Belmont Park. In parallel, GWRC has indicated it will be retiring some areas of the park from farming and incorporating these areas into restoration plans.

These initiatives create a significant opportunity for collaboration opportunities within the park, allowing a multi-generational perspective on ecological restoration at a landscape scale.

As part of mitigation activity should the land swap be approved, the Board believes that incorporating mitigation efforts into a multi-generational, multi-organisation restoration plan for the park would make an impactful and enduring contribution to enhancing conservation values in the area.

Conclusion

The Wellington Conservation Board appreciates the opportunity provided by the Department of Conservation to comment on the proposed land exchange associated with the Belmont Quarry Development.

The Board also wishes to acknowledge and thank Friends of Belmont Regional Park, Winstone Aggregates, Greater Wellington Regional Council staff, and all others who have provided information, presentations, and site access to assist the Board in its deliberations. The willingness of all parties to engage constructively has supported the Board's understanding of the ecological, recreational, and community dimensions of the proposal.

The Board encourages the Department to ensure that any decision regarding the land exchange gives careful consideration to the ecological values identified, the importance of long-term certainty in mitigation measures, and the stewardship obligations associated with public conservation land.

The Board is committed to supporting outcomes that protect and enhance the ecological integrity and community value of Belmont Regional Park for present and future generations.