



a passion for the Port Hills

Our Hills, Our Heritage

The Summit Road Society was formed in 1948 to further the vision of Harry Ell to preserve and protect the Port Hills and provide for public access. We own and manage four reserves on the Port Hills, including Omaha Bush and the adjacent Gibraltar Rock Reserve, both of which are within the Selwyn District. We also lead the backyard and community project 'Predator Free Port Hills'. We were very pleased to see the release of this biodiversity strategy.

General comments

We support the general direction, strategic goals, targets and actions for the Selwyn Biodiversity Strategy. This document is an excellent foundation for further efforts. However, plans alone cannot achieve the step change needed to protect our indigenous biodiversity. We need coordinated, collaborative and funded programmes which work to halt the decline and meaningfully restore our native ecosystems at a landscape-scale.

Ecological Restoration of the Port Hills

The devastating weather impacts in the North Island are highlighting the importance and urgency of both reducing emissions and building climate resilience. The Society's long-term vision includes restoring native vegetation to the gullies of the Port Hills including wetlands, shrublands and broadleaf-podocarp forest. Reforestation of the gullies will create ecological corridors, provide habitat for native fauna, reduce erosion and sedimentation, improve freshwater values, enhance community wellbeing, improve resilience to extreme weather events, sequester carbon and restore mahinga kai values. Landscape-scale projects require a collaborative approach, with councils, hapū, community organisations and private landowners working together.

Much of the southern Port Hills area is within the Selwyn District. Te Kāhahu Kahukura is a landscape scale project that seeks to restore a thriving and resilient indigenous forest to the southern Port Hills. Public reserves such as Omaha Bush, Ahuriri Scenic Reserve and Kennedys Bush contain some of the finest examples of native bush close to the population centres of Lincoln and Rolleston.

Pest and predator control

We have a very intensive predator trapping programme at Omaha Bush and we are progressively expanding the trapping network into Gibraltar Rock and the grazing block.

We have been working closely with local residents to grow Predator Free Port Hills Tai Tapu. Our programme relies on local connections, neighbours talking to neighbours.

We would also draw the Council's attention to the issue of feral pigs and deer on the Southern Port Hills and wider Peninsula. Feral browser control in our forests is a climate response. Forest and Bird have estimated that controlling feral browsing pests to the lowest possible levels across the country would increase the carbon sequestration of native ecosystems by 8.4 million tonnes of CO₂ per year, which is equivalent to nearly 15% of New Zealand's 2018 net greenhouse gas emissions.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Council for their support and involvement with Pest Free Banks Peninsula. This programme is achieving transformational change to eradicate pests and predators from the Port Hills and the Peninsula by 2050. The programme is on track to eliminate feral goats from the Peninsula by the end of the coming financial year – a momentous achievement. The programme has also eliminated hedgehogs from a section of Kaitōrete, which is a New Zealand first on the mainland. Similarly, we are excited about the potential of Predator Free Selwyn with keen community groups across the region leading the charge – however they need support and funding from the Council.



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Weeds

Weeds are some of the biggest threats to our native eco-systems. Weeds do not attract the same level of attention and funding for control measures as predators but they are a dire threat. They spread easily and outcompete and smother native species. They can completely overwhelm our special plant communities and displace the native invertebrates, lizards and birds that rely on them. We desperately need a coordinated, collaborative, funded programme to contain and where possible, eliminate weed species that threaten our native biodiversity.

Funding

The strategy will languish unless dedicated resource and funding is set aside in the long term plan and annual plan process to drive efforts. We are facing a dual crisis of climate breakdown and biodiversity loss. Nature-based solutions are crucial to sequestering carbon and building resilience. Spending on nature needs to be seen as an investment not a cost – the cost of inaction is far higher in the long term.

If hearings are held, we would like to speak to our submission.