
Report of the Bushy Park Futures Working Party

December 2010

Report of the Bushy Park Futures Working Party

Updated December 2010

Background

Bushy Park is a much-loved regional asset. Its facilities, including the \$1M predator excluder fence, have been established with the help of local and national funders and an awe-inspiring level of voluntary work.

With the establishment phase largely over and these strong foundations in place, there is need to review governance and management practices and set in place systems that will meet the park's future governance and operational needs.

There is also a need to rethink the park's strategic direction after the loss of the Ministry of Education-funded Learning Outside the Classroom programme last year, and high costs and other issues that forced the park to put a hold on the kiwi crèche. As with many sanctuaries of this type, it is a struggle to maintain financial viability.

Key supporters and stakeholders have concluded that long-term solutions that will sustain trust operations for the future must be found. At the meeting of the trust's board in August 2010, it was agreed to establish this working party to work on short term issues such as reserve management, funding and volunteers; provide recommendations on governance and management; and set a direction and process for a long-term strategic plan.

In October we submitted our interim report that considered the issues around governance and management and provided recommendations to the board in time to be presented to members at the AGM in November. This final report incorporates and updates the interim report (updated as a result of the consultation process), and also includes a new section with some comments on strategic direction.

In developing this report the working party has reviewed documentation including the rules of the trust, and consulted with a number of present and past board and management committee members, volunteers and stakeholders. We have also carefully considered written submissions and suggestions.

Finally we wish to make clear that although there is implied criticism of the present governance and management structures at Bushy Park in this discussion, we acknowledge the huge amount of goodwill and work that has gone into establishing and running the park. The number of people involved is actually a testimony to that and should be honoured. However, their successes have created an organisation of a size and scope such that it needs to move into a more streamlined and professional phase to prosper.

We believe that reorganising along the lines we suggest will lead to better use of people's time and skills, be more efficient, more effective, and hopefully more fun.

Bushy Park Futures Working Party

Members of the Working Party

Richard Thompson (Chair)	Consultant & Chair of the NZ Landcare Trust
Barry Wards	President, Forest & Bird, and member of the Bushy Park Trust Board
Mike Britton	General Manager, Forest & Bird
Jim Howard	Chair, Bushy Park Trust Board
Brian Rhodes CA	Treasurer, Bushy Park Trust Board
Nic Peet	Whanganui Area Manager, Department of Conservation
Greg Carlyon	Group Manager Regional Planning and Regulatory, Horizons Regional Council
Alistair Beveridge	Manager Biodiversity and Water Quality, Horizons Regional Council

Summary of Recommendations

We recommend a simplified structure with these key components:

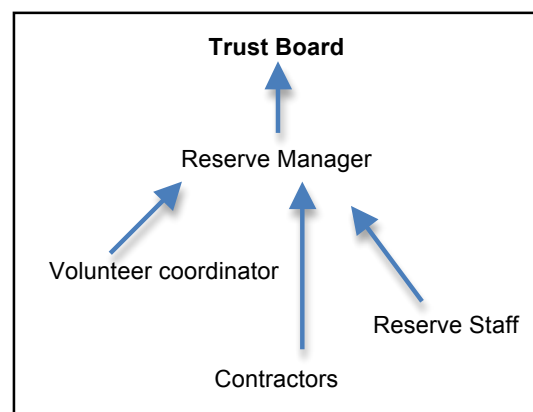
A board of 5-7 governors selected by an electoral college of Bushy Park's main stakeholders. Between them board members should cover the skills and experience necessary for governance of the park. Sparing use of sub-committees and these should always remain committees of the board, not become semi-autonomous groups.

A reserve manager who reports to the board and takes responsibility for all activity and who oversees:

- A volunteer co-ordinator
- Paid staff
- Volunteers
- Contractors etc

If board members act as volunteer workers they must be accountable to the reserve manager for the work they are doing.

The reserve manager's position could be paid or carried out by a volunteer but it is crucially important that there is one person with overall responsibility for operations.



Governance

Governance in Context

Before discussing and recommending a structure for governance, it is helpful to consider what the requirements are that best meet the current needs for Bushy Park, and which may also best position it for the future. At the same time, any discussion around governance must also be cognizant of the objects of the trust itself, as laid down in its Rules:

Activities at Bushy Park are currently mixed, ranging from reserve management to hospitality, commercial and non-commercial, and short to long-term. Without prejudging the outcome of a strategic review, our conclusion is that it is likely that future governance will be based around three key activities/assets:

- Reserve including the excluder fence,
- Homestead, outbuildings and the immediate property, and
- Development of new/improved facilities and attractions.

The objects of the trust and the spread of key activities/assets creates a need for governance to be disciplined and focused on a strategic direction for the whole of the park, rather than risk focusing on one aspect without due consideration of the others.

Governance is about leading the organisation at a strategic level. While the purpose(s) of an organisation, such as the Bushy Park Trust, is set in its rules or constitution, governors establish the strategic direction that describes the framework for how that purpose(s) is to be met. This encompasses setting long and short-term strategies, objectives and priorities; developing and monitoring governance policies; ensuring that financial and other resources are available and secured; and overseeing management operations to ensure objectives are met and the organisation complies with the law.

Board & Committees

Many non-profit organisations have difficulty separating governance and management roles and responsibilities. This is particularly the case for smaller organisations that have been established by volunteers and grown around a volunteer network. In response to increasing scale and scope of operations and a reluctance to continually call on volunteers to get work done, multiple sub-committees are often set-up to spread the decision-making workload. At first glance this is a logical response but it can create problems:

- **Autonomy:** The sub-committee gets a life of its own and can move in a direction that is inconsistent with organisational strategy. If there are two or more semi-autonomous subcommittees, their activities can conflict. (It is acknowledged that common membership between the committee and the board mitigates this to a degree).
- **Multiple Governance Layers:** Sub-committee members who are not board members are effectively second-tier governors without the range of responsibilities or information of board members and are not part of the board (strategic decision-making) team. There is a real risk of such sub-committee members becoming disaffected when a board decision goes against a committee recommendation, often resulting in fracturing of the relationship between the two bodies and personal views clouding good judgment.
- **Burgeoning Governance Workload:** As more sub-committees are formed, often in an attempt to separate governance and management decisions more clearly, the overall governance workload can increase and become inefficient if the task

delegation of the sub-committee is not understood or managed well. Much of this is unnecessary, either because it relates to management (see below) or it is a duplication of procedural matters – minutes, apologies, matters arising etc. The organisation can become top-heavy with more people working on committees than actually carrying out the work “at the coal face”.

- **Conflicts of Interest:** Because sub-committees tend to be more task-oriented, there is a tendency to include employees or others with a “relationship” to the business. This is done for the best reasons; “we are all in this together”, “they are affected so should be involved in decisions” etc. The potential conflicts of interest or duty, however, are often not declared (or even recognised) and, consequently, the decisions may not always be in the best interests of the organisation. Even if another committee member notices that a potential conflict exists, they may be unwilling to raise it or challenge or argue an alternative view because of the risk of jeopardizing good relationships. This can be especially difficult if the conflicted person is dominating or, worse, seeking sympathy. The all too human reaction is to let it pass but, in the end, it is the organisation that suffers. Governors must act in the best interests of the organisation at all times.

In our view, it is better to avoid the above problems by ensuring that the role and responsibilities of governance is kept within the one board. If it is felt necessary to delegate some *governance* responsibilities to a sub-committee, it should remain a sub-committee of the board, have clear terms of reference and accountability, and have no more than one or two external members. The quorum and decision-making should require a clear majority of board members. Decisions made by such sub-committees should also be ratified by the board. It should also be clear whether sub-committees are standing or ad hoc. Generally, there is very little need of standing sub-committees with a well-functioning board; their purpose is often to make necessary board decisions between board meetings. Ad hoc sub-committees are generally task-oriented, charged with a specific purpose for a finite time. When that task is complete, the sub-committee disbands.

We also believe that the drivers for multiple sub-committees will be reduced if there are good arrangements for management. For Bushy Park, we recommend that this will be achieved in two ways:

1. **Appointment of a reserve manager:** Many of the sub-committee tasks are management-related, not governance-related. This is especially the case with the management committee. If a reserve manager is appointed to take responsibility for these management tasks, there is no need for the board, or a sub-committee of the board, to consider every management decision. This is discussed in further detail below.
2. **Tasking a reserve manager to consult with stakeholders and experts without the need for a sub-committee.** A reserve manager can establish and oversee management/project teams for specific tasks. These teams need to be clearly distinguished from a board sub-committee because, although they may include board members, they would be under the direction of the reserve manager, not the board chair. In this respect, these members would not be working in the capacity as board members because their role and responsibility is management-related, not governance-related. It would be the reserve manager’s responsibility to ensure that this is clear. This recommendation is discussed further on pages 13-14.

Governance - Management Boundaries

It is typical and characteristic for organisations that have grown from a voluntary base to (a) have former workers employed in a management capacity to move onto the board, and (b)

have people from the community, who have experience and expertise in the “business”, to join the board. There are benefits and risks from such arrangements. While it is beneficial to have board members who are familiar with the “business” bring expertise from related areas to apply to it and are valued for the general advice they provide, it is important that they understand and conform to the requisite governance role and associated responsibilities. Without this it is all too easy to slip into being just another level of management that mostly reviews and ‘ticks off’ management decisions. This model also tempts the manager to pass-up all the difficult decisions and effectively hand-over all risk of blame to the board at the same time.

The boundary between governance and management is not clear-cut and there will always be tensions about overstepping one way or the other. Difficult management decisions will always need to come to the board; it is a sign of good governance and management that they do so for it fosters trust and transparency. Simply recognising the boundary issue is a positive start and often serves to focus attention on what an individual’s or board’s role is. Good practice would be for the board to regularly question if its level of attention is appropriate.

To help clarify the governance-management boundary, we recommend that the Bushy Park Trust board develop a set of governance policies to include a policy of delegations. The exercise of doing so will also be useful professional development for all concerned. The *Policy Governance* framework developed by John Carver is recommended because of its “permission approach”, where the board identifies what the reserve manager can’t do (rather than what they can), thereby enabling a relatively free hand in achieving objectives. This is very empowering for the reserve manager and avoids the board having to think of everything (that they can do) when developing guidelines.

Another good practice is to plan a yearly agenda. This helps the board to identify its governance tasks and provides a framework for that to happen. Some items will be on every agenda, such as brief management and financial reports. Other things will be discussed in more detail and may be spread through the year. For example, the board may choose to have a strategic planning session in September, adopt a strategic plan in December and approve a (management generated) business plan in February.

There are many other aspects of governance that could be reviewed and all boards, corporate or NGO, can make improvements. It is especially important for not-for-profits to do this because of the limited time and energy available to voluntary board members, and because turnover of members and appointment of unskilled members can lead to boards losing focus. As well as providing a reason to make sure the contribution is effective (time not wasted), good practice will make board positions more attractive and interesting to skilled governors.

Selection of Board Members

At present the rules provide for a trust board of 12 members, made up as follows:

- One nominee from each of:
 - Wanganui District Council
 - Horizons Regional Council
 - NZ Historic Places Trust
 - Department of Conservation
 - Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society
 - Ngaa Rauru
- A qualified accountant as Treasurer
- Chairman of the Management Committee

- Four other members appointed by the board

The working party supports the principle of stakeholder organisations having a say in the running of Bushy Park and its place in the wider Whanganui community. We recognize that Bushy Park is an historic and recreational asset to the whole community. It has the potential to further capitalize on its fixed assets beyond an accommodation facility. In addition, because of the effort resulting in construction of the predator-proof fence, it also has the potential for establishing a distinct and valuable place in the protection and preservation of indigenous biodiversity and using this as a basis for promotion of environmental education.

We believe, however, that representation of the community and the way the board is formed needs to be reviewed. While the above organisations are currently able to make nominations to the board, in practice some either choose not to do so or choose not to replace those that have left.

In addition nominating organisations tend to nominate a member of their own organisation. This can create conflicts where board members can, consciously or unconsciously, influence a decision in a way that meets the needs of the nominee organisation, rather than fully meeting the needs of Bushy Park. Take, for example, a decision about a heritage aspect of the park. A board member, who is a member of the Historic Places Trust (HPT) as well as the nominee of the HPT, becomes caught with divided loyalties: to the park and to the HPT.

We recommend that, to ensure valued input from key stakeholders, build and strengthen community interest, and support and select the right mix of skills necessary for effective governance of Bushy Park, the nominee organisations meet as an electoral college to select a diverse and balanced board. Their selections would not need to be from the organisations' own staff or membership and would not be "representatives" as such. Instead, they would be chosen to do the best job of governance for Bushy Park. Nominations could be called for through public advertising, with the electoral college selecting from the list of nominees¹.

If this recommendation is adopted, we also recommend that the membership of the Bushy Park Trust be represented on the electoral college, as shown below. One or two college members could be elected (or reconfirmed) by the membership at the AGM.

Proposed Electoral College:

Stakeholder Organisation	Number of Representatives
Bushy Park members	2
Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society	1
Horizons Regional Council	1
Wanganui District Council	1
Department of Conservation	1
NZ Historic Places Trust	1
Total	7

Although the trust rules say the board "may" delegate management to a management committee, the constitution requires the board to include the chair of the management

¹ The Whanganui Regional Museum successfully operates such a process for its Civic House board members.

committee and, therefore, seems to necessitate the committee's existence. We recommend that these ex-officio positions be removed because we do not believe it is necessary or good practice, to have a management committee.

Ngaa Rauru

We acknowledge that members of Ngaa Rauru strongly value all indigenous forest in their rohe, within which Bushy Park is located. They have a special status as tangata whenua and, because of this, should not properly be considered as just another stakeholder. Consultation with Ngaa Rauru has identified potential for future partnerships with the Bushy Park Trust, although that is not an immediate priority for the tribe. Once the new structure is in place it is recommended that the board work with Ngaa Rauru and local hapu to determine the most appropriate form of relationship with hapu/iwi.

Lessee

During consultation the lessee has indicated a strong desire to be directly represented on the board, or as a second best option, to have the right to attend board meetings on the same basis as the reserve manager (except where lease matters were being decided). The lessee explained that this desire is driven by historical poor relationships, poor communication from the board, and decisions being made that did not fully take into account the impact on the lessee's commercial operation.² From the perspective of the lessee, this situation has improved recently largely due to their presence at all board meetings, and there is an understandable fear that things will regress if this right is removed.

For the reasons given in the above discussion on selection we do not recommend direct representation on the board. The lessee will have two "duties": their duty to Bushy Park and their duty to their own business. The degree of conflict of duty is too large and will at times become a conflict of interest.

Although attendance at part of a board meeting may be a good idea (see below) we do not recommend a right of attendance throughout the board meeting. The board must be able to develop strategies and plans unfettered by observers with an interest. The same should apply to staff (other than the reserve manager) volunteers, other stakeholders and media.

It is readily acknowledged that the commercial activity of the lessee is deeply intertwined with the activities at the reserve. The success of one is to a large degree dependant on the other. Therefore the relationship between the organisation and the lessee must be very good: it must be based on trust, good communication and reciprocity.

In our view the best way to manage that relationship will depend on the management arrangement that eventuates. In principle we believe that the reserve manager should be responsible for day-to-day liaison with the lessee. The reserve manager should ensure that the respective lease conditions are being fulfilled and report on that to the board. They should also make sure that the board takes into account the impact of board decisions on the lessee's operation.

However, because of the unique nature of the lease, for relationship reasons it may be useful for the lessee to have the opportunity to attend a section of the board meeting. Certainly the views, interests and plans of the lessee should be discussed directly with them during any longer term strategic and business planning that the board is undertaking.

² This is the lessee's view only. We have not sought comment from the board on this aspect.

Skills of Board Members

We do not believe that **all** members of the board necessarily need to have specialist skills fully representative of the “business” of Bushy Park, eg, reserves knowledge and management, endangered species management skills or visitor services expertise. It would certainly be useful, however, to have that knowledge represented on the board and some expertise should be present among its members. Expert advice can be obtained as needed, including from the reserve manager, staff, volunteers and contractors.

Board members should, however, be able to effectively operate as part of a team and have a good understanding of governance. If experience and knowledge in these areas is weak, but specific members bring other valued skills, as well as a willingness to learn, then an effective board can be built with the provision of suitable training.

To assist the work of the recommended electoral college, it would be beneficial to develop a list of desired board attributes. This could be made up of two sets:

1. Attributes that all members should have, or be willing and able to provide with suitable training.
2. Attributes that the board should have, e.g., specific skills or experience, such as financial management, experience of reserve management or visitor services etc.

Number & Tenure of Board Members

A small skilled group can be as effective and make as good or better decisions than a large one, provided the right information is available and presented in a way that facilitates good decision-making. We do not recommend a large board; there is no requirement to include representatives of many groups, and it is difficult enough to find members for a voluntary board let alone ones with experience and a good understanding of governance.

Accordingly, we believe that a board of 5 to 7 skilled governors is perfectly adequate to serve the needs of Bushy Park. The board should also have the ability to co-opt one or two other members to fill skill gaps or for particular purposes, but these appointments should only last until the next scheduled meeting of the electoral college where they could be reconfirmed or terminated.

Board members should have some limits to tenure, and preferably the terms should be staggered so that there is continuity of experience on the board. However, to avoid frequent convening of the electoral college, we suggest terms of up to 4 years be considered. The college could meet every second year.

Position of Chair

We recommend that the board selects its own chair. This is a critically important leadership position that is both demanding and requires specific skills as well as the total support of other board members. Most importantly, it requires someone with a good knowledge and understanding of governance, the difference between governance and management, and the ability to effectively manage meetings.

Summary

In summary, we recommend that:

1. The board consists of 5-7 members selected by an electoral college of defined stakeholders.

2. Board member terms are up to 4 years, and appointments are staggered to maintain continuity.
3. Board subcommittees are only be used for governance tasks.
4. The board delegate all management tasks to one reserve manager.

Management

General

We believe that managing, as opposed to governing, Bushy Park requires the following:

- 1. Operational Leadership:** Ensuring that the strategic governance leadership and oversight of the board is effectively and efficiently applied to the delivery of the business plan; the “tasks” that will ensure the strategic objectives of the trust are met.
- 2. Resource Management:** Ensuring that the resources available (including finance, people and capital assets) are effectively and efficiently used to deliver the best outputs of the trust.
- 3. Administration & Systems:** Ensuring that effective information, communication, marketing, security, financial and reward systems are developed and maintained and that these are administered in a way that supports the business plan and operational decision-making.
- 4. Business Plan Delivery:** Development of the business plan³, approved by the board, and ensuring that it is delivered on time and to budget. Includes the development and integration of the projects, activities, events and practices, good use of the available knowledge base and experience, training, quality, safety etc of resources.

Management of Bushy Park

We strongly recommend that the role and responsibility for the management of Bushy Park rest with **one person**, herein referred to as the reserve manager.

Management is essentially about organising and ensuring the doing gets done. Efficiencies in the use of human and financial resources, risk management, planning and budgeting etc are all components of this role. The reserve manager takes responsibility for it, has authority in it and is accountable for its performance. If one person has oversight of all activities, they can coordinate those activities more effectively and avoid conflicts, especially with uncertainties about decision-making and who is doing what. This is considerably more difficult if two or more people (or committees) are responsible for different parts of the role and separately report to the board.

Management can (but doesn't always have to) include technical or practical expertise. In the case of smaller organisations, in particular, the manager needs to understand the business and is sometimes the functional expert in the organisation. However, it is also possible for the manager to have a broad understanding but rely on others for highly technical knowledge and expertise.

While this recommended arrangement may appear to be distinctly “corporate” for a relatively small volunteer organisation such as Bushy Park, it is actually a simpler set-up that should make life easier for everyone as well as more effectively getting the “business” done.

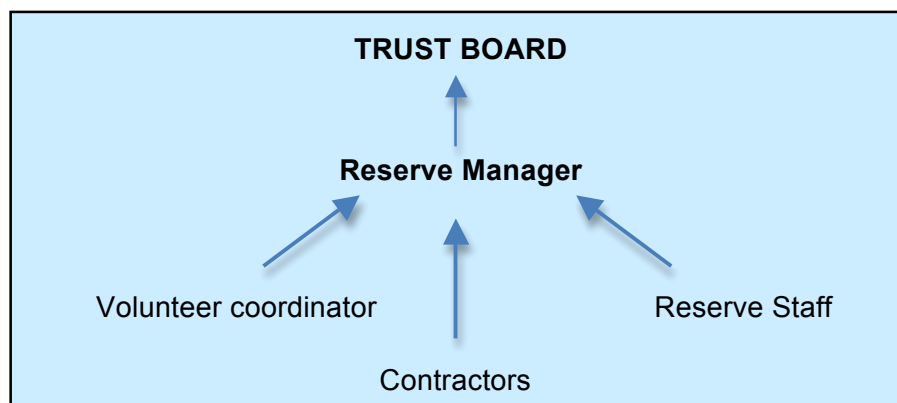
³ The actual “business” of the organisation. This encompasses all the tasks, activities and outputs that collectively contribute to ensuring that the strategic objectives, decided by the board, are met.

We recommend that, to ensure some accountability and focus to achieving the business plan, the reserve manager's position is a paid position. This is not essential, however, since it could also reasonably be expected that a competent volunteer could carry out this function. The important thing is that the responsibility and accountability is well defined and understood. The position may not necessarily need to be a full-time one either; fulfilling the scope of the role may only require 2-3 days per week (see below).

We see the reserve manager as being responsible for all activities carried out at, and for, Bushy Park, described under the business plan, except governance. This will need to include:

- Reserve management, including fence maintenance and predator control,
- Maintenance and operation of facilities run by the trust,
- Liaison with the homestead lessee,
- Coordination of publicity and marketing
- Fundraising (most aspects but some maybe done in conjunction with the board),
- Staff recruitment and management,
- Engaging and supervising contractors, and
- Volunteers coordination.

It is likely that the reserve manager will delegate a number of these tasks and responsibilities to others, either staff or volunteers, but nonetheless should remain the sole person reporting to the board. Diagrammatically, the relationship looks that shown below.



Reserve Manager Position

How the reserve manager's position is configured will depend on the circumstances at the time. If the level of activity grows the scope of the job may necessitate establishment of a formal full-time paid position. In the meantime, there are a number of different scenarios for how the position could be configured. Much will depend on the current projects and available funding. It will also depend on the skills and experience of the people available. For example:

- **2 days per week:** Made up of one day funded by a conservation agency (e.g., from the Biodiversity Condition Fund) and one day funded through general fundraising. One day could be spent on general management and one day spent on specific outputs funded by the agency.
- **5 days per week:** Made up of 3 days funded by a conservation agency (as above), one day funded through general fundraising and one day funded through local

councils etc. Three days could be spent on agency outputs and two days spent on general management etc.

In the second scenario the funding is combined to make up a full-time position for one person with suitable skills. An alternative could be to have two part-timers carrying out these roles, as long as one was the reserve manager with overall authority. There are many other ways in which the position could be configured including, as mentioned above, for it to be carried out by a volunteer.

Volunteers & Coordination

Volunteers already make a huge contribution to Bushy Park. We believe that there is still scope to increase the use of volunteers and further their role as a significant part in current and potential park operations.

Volunteers could be individuals working on a casual or regular basis or as organised groups. Volunteer input can include practical manual tasks such as track maintenance, administrative tasks, such as minute taking, or specialised tasks such as strategic planning or marketing provided on a pro-bono basis by professional experts. There is scope to develop special partnerships with corporations and local businesses where staff members regularly volunteer at, or for, the park.

Managing volunteers should be no less professional than managing staff or contractors. They need to have a good understanding of the purpose and task, clear instructions, a safe and pleasant working environment, good equipment, good supervision and plenty of encouragement a reward system that makes them feel valued. Volunteer supervisors must remember that volunteers are giving their time freely and are not employees or slaves!

We recommend that a formal position of volunteer coordinator should be considered, especially if the use of volunteers increases. Even if the level of volunteer help stays the same, it may still be useful to have one person who has an overview of what's going on and has a specific responsibility in this area. This person will develop a good understanding of the make-up of the park's volunteer network and will ensure good matching of person to task. It would be essential for the volunteer coordinator to have excellent people skills.

If a volunteer coordinator position is established in addition to the reserve manager, then the liaison between these two will be critical. The coordinator will need to be guided by the reserve manager about task priority, access to the park and tools and other resources. They will report to the reserve manager, not to the board.

Project Teams

For specific projects, it may be useful to establish project teams. These should always be under the supervision of the reserve manager, including teams working on strategic issues (such as bird introductions), even if the team includes one or two board members.

If a project is of sufficient importance that it requires board agreement, the reserve manager should develop it with input on operational implications from the people who would be involved. It then can be presented to the board for approval.⁴

Other possible projects that should be configured this way are:

⁴ The exception to this principle are projects that are governance only e.g. development of board policies. In this case the board should run the project.

- Development of new facilities e.g. caravan park, wetland boardwalks,
- Publicity and marketing initiatives e.g. leaflets and advertising campaign,
- Fundraising campaigns.

Board Members as Volunteers

Where board members act as volunteers (other than in the capacity of their board role) it is important that they are accountable only to the reserve manager.

In voluntary organisations, it is common for board members to also provide help to management and the delivery of operational tasks as a volunteer. While this is perfectly acceptable, and can actually improve the relationship and liaison between management and the board, it can also be problematic if board members, subconsciously or otherwise, bring some direct board authority and instructions to other volunteers or staff. It will undermine the position of the reserve manager and can create confusion on the ground. Similarly, the board member should not unilaterally instruct the reserve manager – this is for the whole board to do (unless the board has decided otherwise through agreement).

Transition

If the board adopts these recommendations, there will need to be a process to seek membership approval to amend the rules. We recommend that the board present this report, or a summary, and recommendations to members at the forthcoming AGM for feedback. The AGM could signal that a Special General Meeting will be held at a later date to consider and approve constitutional changes.

Strategic Direction

Our terms of reference call for us to “Set out a process for the development of a long-term strategic plan for Bushy Park, including recommendations on what factors need to be considered for the long-term future of the reserve and the homestead.”

Process

Setting the strategic direction of the organisation is arguably the most important leadership role of any governing body. It should not be outsourced, even though it can be useful to get advice and comment from experts and stakeholders, including staff.

We therefore recommend that the development of a comprehensive strategic plan be left to the board. If our recommendations on a governance structure for the park are implemented then it would be best for this process to undertaken by the newly appointed board. This should happen as soon as practicable after it has been established but allowing sufficient time for the board to familiarise itself with its own role and processes.

The disadvantage of this timeframe is that it will be four to six months before this process is commenced and longer to completion. However, in our view, the park has been handicapped by the lack of an overarching strategic vision, and set of contributing strategies. By developing a strong vision, and a set of challenging (but achievable) strategies the board will be able to empower itself and the Bushy Park team – its workers, volunteers, associates, members and supporters.

This is more than just a business plan – it is a pathway to realisation of the vision. If it is done well, then all who are involved will have been part of its development. They will be able to identify where the park is going, how, by when, and what their role is.

A cohesive strategy

For Bushy Park to be successful – which we interpret as achieving the purposes identified below – a cohesive strategic vision is needed. This means that conflicts between the purposes (or goals) have to be resolved as much as possible. All activities within the park should be working towards that vision. Things that are a “nice idea” or that have always been done may not necessarily be worthy of inclusion.

Activities or developments in one area that reinforce others should be sought. To encourage this approach we recommend that a planning process be used where an activity’s contribution to each of the goals is considered, and those with multiple benefits ranked more highly.

Previous strategic work should be studied carefully as much will still be relevant and there is much valuable information in this work on public perspective and use, tourism in the area and trends, and possible future initiatives.

Factors for consideration

The following points are put forward as ideas for consideration by our working party, at this point in time. They are ideas only and we encourage the board to not feel constrained by them.

We identified four primary purposes of Bushy Park:

1. Sustain the reserve
2. Maintain a sanctuary
3. Preserve the homestead
4. Use (of the reserve) and environmental education

And for each of these we identified the following factors for consideration.

1. Sustain the reserve

- The reserve needs to keep its wilderness aspect and, to that end, should remain in a natural state as much as possible. However it must also be safe and accessible for people to use. There is a degree of conflict between these two objectives that needs to be managed. (See also, 'Use' below)
- A level of on-going pest control will be required.
- Achieving this purpose is a relatively low-input activity, requiring on-going low-level expenditure on pests but little capital work.

2. Maintain a sanctuary

- A high level of on-going pest control and monitoring will be required to maintain in the reserve as an effective sanctuary. This is more than is needed just to maintain the area as a reserve.
- Keeping the integrity of the excluder fence is the key method. This will involve:
 - Regular inspections.
 - On-going maintenance of the fence.
 - Provision of a depreciation reserve fund for replacement.
- The back-up method of maintaining the sanctuary is pest monitoring and control activities to deal with any incursions and control of species such as mice that have not, or cannot, be excluded.
- Species monitoring and recovery activities are additional requirements. The level will depend on what species are present and whether any introductions have been made.
- Consideration of the introduction of new species should take into account:
 - Introduction costs (transport, facilities, personnel).
 - Monitoring and maintenance costs over the lifetime of the new species' presence in the reserve.

- Commitments to agencies or funders about release and care.
- Contribution towards the Trust's other purposes (e.g education) and strategies (e.g becoming a sanctuary "destination").
- Managing expectations about visitor experiences ("Where are the kiwis?")
- Plus, of course, all the technical considerations around site suitability, food resources etc.

3. Preserve the Homestead

- Regular repairs and maintenance will be needed to maintain the homestead in a good condition.
- Repair and maintenance work, and any capital improvements should not compromise the heritage values of the building.
- Security against damage from fire, earthquake and vandalism is required, and protection of heritage items from theft.
- Commercial and/or non-profit use of the homestead is not necessarily required to achieve the preservation objective. However, these uses may well be important part(s) of an overall long-term strategy for Bushy Park.⁵
- The homestead provides both benefits:
 - income from rental,
 - accommodation on site for an operator or manager,
 - attraction for visitors,
 - local icon etc;
 and costs:
 - on-going maintenance costs,
 - capital to make improvements for commercial opportunities.

4. Use (of the reserve) and environmental education

- Accessibility is an issue. The distance from town and gated entry is a barrier to easy access. Access for the disabled is a factor to consider.
- Entry fees and their costs and benefits have to be carefully thought through.
- Within the park well laid out and maintained basic facilities are important: tracks, signage, toilets, parking.
- The park should be attractive, interesting and welcoming.
- There is potential to extend the tracks and possibly have different "grades" of track. However capital development on new reserve facilities (such as tracks, wetlands etc) may not necessarily result in any significant increase in use or education. It may be better to put resources into other things that do.
- The provision of food and beverage services is another key factor that influences use.

⁵ It is acknowledged that there is a lease in place and these comments should not in any way be interpreted as commentary on the terms, present nature or future of this arrangement.

- Interpretation assists with education. Does it encourage more people to visit by enhancing the overall experience?
- The LEOTC programme was very important to the education objective and contributed to other goals (by providing funding for on-ground staff).
- Accommodation and function hire increases use (of homestead facilities) and provides revenue via a commercial lease that can be used to meet other costs. Does it result in increased use of the reserve, or environmental education?

Bushy Park Futures Working Party
December 2010

Appendix I: Objectives & Criteria of the Futures Working Party⁶

Objectives

The objectives of the Futures Working Party are to:

1. Identify and establish interim arrangements for management of the reserve,
2. Define the short-term priorities for management of the reserve,
3. Identify potential funding sources for short and long term initiatives,
4. Identify potential “in-kind” and volunteer support to assist with day-to-day operations and development of the reserve,
5. Provide recommendations on medium-term reserve management arrangements,
6. Provide recommendations on a suitable governance structure for the reserve,
7. Set out a process for the development of a long-term strategic plan for Bushy Park, including recommendations on what factors need to be considered for the long-term future of the reserve and the homestead.

Criteria

In achieving its objectives, the Futures Working Party will take the following into account:

- Maintenance and integrity of the predator-proof fence,
- Security of the reserve, including access and control of access,
- Priorities for maintenance of the reserve, including water availability, pest management, contingency plans and incursion response,
- Optimal arrangements for effective and efficient operation in the short to medium term,
- Identification of immediate potential funding sources for the homestead,
- How the management, governance and future operations of the reserve could be complemented by that of the homestead, and vice-versa,
- The unique features of the reserve that may lend itself to species introduction efforts at a national level, and
- Integration of the reserve and the homestead into the community “fabric” of the Whanganui district.

⁶ Excerpted from the Terms of Reference of the Bushy Park Futures Working Party.