

Chairperson and Committee Members

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

20 JUNE 2013

Meeting Status: **Public**

Purpose of Report: For Decision

RATES REMISSION FOR CONSERVATION PURPOSES

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This report tables the rates remission applications for Land Protected for Natural or Cultural Conservation Purposes for the 2012/13 year and seeks approval for recommended allocations.

SIGNIFICANCE OF DECISION

- 2 The recommendations in this report do not trigger the Council's significance policy.

BACKGROUND

- 3 The Annual Plan for 2012/13 references a policy for rates remission for land protected for natural and cultural conservation purposes. The detail of this policy is included in the 2012 Long Term Plan as Part 8 of the Rates Remission Policy (Attachment 1).
- 4 This Part 8 of the Rates Remission Policy supports the provisions of the Kāpiti Coast District Plan regarding incentives for heritage feature management and protection. It recognises that most heritage features are already protected by rules in the District Plan and encourages landowners to maintain, enhance and protect heritage features by offering a financial incentive.
- 5 The granting of a rates remission as an incentive for encouraging the protection and management of heritage features is consistent with Council's responsibilities under the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Historic Places Act 1993. It is also consistent with Community Outcome 1: 'There are healthy natural systems which people can enjoy'.
- 6 Historically the remission fund has been consistently oversubscribed, leading to an increase of funding for rates remission for natural or cultural conservation purposes from \$15,000 in 2007/08 to \$26,803 in 2012/13.
- 7 A total of 94 ratepayers benefited from the policy in 2011/12, and the land area to which remission applied totalled 649 hectare (ha). Having applied successfully for rates remission, ratepayers may continue receiving it provided they follow approved management plans designed to protect the natural and cultural values of their sites.

CONSIDERATIONS

Issues

2012/13 Applications

- 8 The Rates Remission for Conservation Purposes programme was advertised in local media in March 2013. Two new applications were received, and are recommended for approval. These have been added (marked with an asterisk) to the list of recommendations included as Attachment 2.
- 9 The first application recommended for approval is for 5.1ha of regenerating native bush at 95 Panorama Drive, Paraparaumu. The area is part of Ecological Site K095, a 73ha tract of regenerating bush on the north-eastern slopes of the Paraparaumu coastal escarpment. This ecological site includes part of Council's Kaitawa Reserve, and is ranked as regionally significant in the District Plan Heritage Register.
- 10 The applicants are dedicated conservationists who are managing their land to restore its biodiversity values. They have built a fence to exclude pest animals, and are controlling weeds to encourage regeneration. They have planted hundreds of eco-sourced native plants, and have successfully introduced a rare native mistletoe, *Lleostylus micranthus*. Their property is becoming a haven for native fauna, and a seed source to boost regeneration of depleted or absent species in the surrounding ecological site. As the area is protected and is being managed for conservation purposes, the application meets the Rates Remission for Conservation Purposes criteria.
- 11 The second application is for .05ha of mature bush at 79 Belvedere Avenue, Waikanae. Though small, this area is contiguous with Ecological Site K133, a regionally significant remnant of swamp forest that includes Jack's Bush and Nga Manu Nature Reserve. The landowners are controlling pest plant species that persistently spread into the ecological site from the edges, and have planted appropriate native species to buffer the mature forest. The small amount of rates remission the landowner would receive if their application were successful would be an appropriate incentive for continuing this good work.

Principles of Rate Remission for Land Protected for Natural or Cultural Conservation Purposes

- 12 The following sections discuss the principles of rates remission, a range of funding scenarios (presented in a table format), and a recommendation made on the levels of rates remission for 2012/13.
- 13 The main principle behind this particular rates remission programme is to recognise the conservation efforts of ratepayers and the positive contribution their actions make to the district's cultural and biodiversity values.
- 14 The owners of these properties are often motivated solely by the desire to protect and manage their environment, and their actions are voluntary. Many are keen conservationists while others may fence off a bush remnant as the pasture gain is negligible or to better manage stock movement. Whatever their

motivation, addressing significant pressures such as stock grazing or noxious pests has a positive impact on the Kāpiti Coast environment.

- 15 Landowners could use the rates rebate for the upkeep of stock-proof fencing or pest animal and weed control. However in most instances the amount of remission is far less than the true cost of these activities.
- 16 Rates remission is an added incentive for landowners to respect the conservation values in the situation where that property has a legal protection mechanism in place. The provision of rates remission also provides a good basis for an ongoing partnership between Council and the land owner.

Calculation of Rates Remission

- 17 Rates remission amounts are calculated according to the size of the heritage feature as shown in Table 1. This method is coarsely related to the level of contribution towards the environment as larger areas of forest or wetland are generally more significant. This does not take into account, however, the presence of rare and endangered species or the amount of time and effort put into management.
- 18 This method allows an adjustment to the level of remission using minimum, medium and maximum remission bands as shown in Table 1. The selected band applies to all recipients. This year's (2012/13) budget allowed for a 2.4% increase in remission levels to compensate for inflation, and this increase has been applied to all remission bands.

Table 1: 2012/13 Level of Remission vs Feature Size

Size of total protected area/feature (ha)	Minimum rates remission possible (\$)	Medium rates remission possible (\$)	Maximum rates remission possible (\$)
Up to 1.0 ha	\$62	\$93	\$125
1.001 – 5.0 ha	\$122	\$186	\$250
5.001 – 10.0 ha	\$183	\$279	\$375
10.001 – 20.0 ha	\$244	\$374	\$499
20.001 – 30.0 ha	\$305	\$466	\$624
30.001 – 40.0 ha	\$367	\$560	\$749
40.001 – 50.0 ha	\$427	\$653	\$873
50.001 – 70.0 ha	\$488	\$746	\$997
70.001 – 100.0 ha	\$549	\$840	\$1,079
More than 100 ha	\$610	\$934	\$1,248

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 19 Applying the maximum band results in modest levels of remission, e.g. \$250 for areas between 1.001ha and 5ha, and most areas are smaller than 5ha. Council approved the application of the maximum band of rates remission for the 2011/12 year.
- 20 The amount of rates remission allocated in 2012/13 if the maximum band were applied would be \$27,312, exceeding this year's budget of \$26,803 by \$509. As the difference can be accommodated from within the wider Leisure and Open Space budget, it is recommended that the maximum band of remission is applied.

The payments are credited directly to the rates account for each property.

Legal Considerations

- 21 There are no legal considerations.

Delegation

The Environment and Community Development Committee has authority to decide this matter under the following section of the Governance Structure and Delegations document approved by Council on 18 April, 2013:

“ 7.9 Authority to consider and approve applications for Rates Remission for Conservation Purposes”

Consultation

- 22 There are no consultation considerations.

Policy Implications

- 23 There are no policy implications.

Publicity Considerations

- 24 A media release will be prepared to publicise the Council's decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 25 That the Committee approves the maximum band of rates remission to the properties set out in Attachment 2 to report CS-12-554 in accordance with Council's Policy for Rates Remission for Land Protected for Natural or Cultural Conservation Purposes.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission by:

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ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Policy on Rates Remission for Conservation Purposes

Attachment 2 – Properties recommended to receive Rates Remission for Conservation Purposes in 2012/2013, and recommended amounts.