



Topic 5: Landscapes and Natural Character

Introduction

As part of the District Plan Review, Timaru District Council has commissioned a Discussion Document on landscapes and natural character to stimulate discussion and form a basis for public consultation. This can be found at www.timaru.govt.nz/dpr.

It identifies a range of issues with how the current District Plan manages landscapes, natural character, and significant trees; establishes potential options to address these issues and discusses the associated strengths and weaknesses. We seek your feedback on the issues and options.

Issues and Options

Issue 1

Landscapes – outstanding natural features and landscapes, heritage landscapes, and significant amenity landscapes

The current District Plan identifies outstanding and significant amenity landscape areas; however their extent may not align with the Regional Policy Statement criteria, the Canterbury Regional Landscape Study 2010, and best practice. A review is needed into whether the District Plan provisions which control activities within these landscapes, and in buffer areas adjacent to them, are sufficient to protect landscape values, while also providing for the continuation of appropriate rural activities such as farming.

The District Plan also does not identify or control activities associated with any outstanding natural features (e.g. geopreservation sites), or heritage landscapes over historic areas in rural areas. Investigation should be undertaken to determine whether such features and landscapes exist in the District, and if they are not otherwise suitably protected through their inclusion in other landscape categories (e.g. outstanding landscapes), what controls on activities within these areas should apply.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) review and amend the extent of existing outstanding and significant amenity landscape areas, so they are consistent with the Regional Policy Statement, Canterbury Regional Landscape Study, and best practice; (ii) review and amend the provisions for controlling activities within significant amenity landscapes and buffer areas adjacent to outstanding natural landscapes, to ensure the landscape values are not degraded, while enabling the continuation of appropriate activities such as farming; and (iii) identify and (if present) include outstanding natural features (e.g. geopreservation sites), and heritage landscapes in the District Plan, together with provisions controlling activities in these areas to ensure their values are not degraded.

This summary outlines the issues our district faces in relation to landscapes and natural character.

We welcome your feedback on this topic.

Steve Wills
Timaru Ward Councillor





Issue 2

Natural character – outstanding and high natural character areas in the coastal environment, lakes, rivers, and wetlands

The current District Plan identifies a rural coastal environment which controls certain activities within it. However, the District Plan does not identify areas of outstanding or high natural character in the coastal environment, lakes, rivers and wetlands, or specifically control activities within these areas. Investigation is needed on whether areas of outstanding or high natural character exist in the District, which are not otherwise suitably protected by regional plans, or other rules in the District Plan. Furthermore consideration is required for what controls on activities within these areas should apply. Consideration is also required as to what opportunities exist for restoring areas of degraded natural character in the coastal environment, and to enable activities which support their restoration.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) identify and (if present) include areas of outstanding or high natural character in the coastal environment, lakes, rivers, and wetlands to be consistent with areas identified in Regional Plans and Studies; (ii) include provisions controlling activities in identified areas to ensure their values are not degraded; and (iii) identify opportunities in the coastal environment where naturalness has been degraded and could be restored, and include provisions which enable restoration activities to occur.

Issue 3

Significant trees

The current District Plan lists and protects a number of significant trees in the District owing to their amenity or historic value. Rules control the trimming and removal of such trees, as well as activities within the tree's root zone. As a result of amendments to the Resource Management Act, tree protection can only be provided for 'urban' trees located outside of Council reserves. Consequently, consideration is required as to which significant urban trees require protection. Dead or diseased trees can present a danger to the public, and therefore rules to allow removal of such trees also requires consideration.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) remove protection for existing significant trees in rural areas and on Council reserves to align with the Resource Management Act; (ii) include protection of any new significant trees on private land identified by the community; and (iii) amend the rules for controlling pruning / removal of significant trees to enable removal without consent where trees are dead, diseased, or are dangerous.