

Friends of Baring Head Newsletter



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October 2011 Number 1

Message from the Chair



Welcome to the first newsletter from the Friends of Baring Head Charitable Trust. We've been up and running now for some nine months and in this time have attended the opening of Baring Head, in force with smart tee-shirts, and met with officers and a committee of Wellington Regional Council and prepared submissions on several key documents.

At our own monthly meetings, we have set our future priorities, developed our strategic plan and given our views to the Council on biodiversity values at Baring Head, as well as on a draft management plan for the area. We've just been granted money to begin conservation work on the pump house by the river, and will be in touch about opportunities to volunteer with this. There are also further opportunities for volunteering for weed eradication and we're arranging the logistics of this with the Council at the moment.

I know out there are heaps of people who expressed interest when the purchase of Baring Head was being advocated, so we're now in the process of making contact, to confirm your interest and see how you can be involved in future activities.

Joy Baird
Chair

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About the Trust

How and why the Trust was established

After a short but intensive campaign, initiated and co-ordinated by the Wellington Natural Heritage Trust, the Greater Wellington Regional Council purchased the iconic Baring Head property in June 2010. It's one of those rare places with a comprehensive array of geological, ecological, landscape, historical, recreational and amenity values, and the community recognised the imperative to protect these for future generations.

Besides the urgency of the campaign, the acquisition was unusual for two reasons. Firstly, several public agencies (Hutt City Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Department of Conservation and the Nature Heritage Fund) and a private benefactor jointly contributed funds towards the purchase. Secondly, there was a large and diverse range of stakeholders who were passionate about the property and lobbied strongly for its addition to the public estate.

Some of these people, too, wanted to continue to help in a significant way to protect the park, enhance it and increase public's enjoyment of the area, while also assisting the Wellington Regional Council in its stewardship role. From this group Joy Baird (chair), Gwen McDonald (deputy chair), John MacDonald (secretary), Colin Ryder (treasurer) and Helen Beaglehole, Paul Hughes, Bill Kemp, Richard Nester and Graham Wolf have become trustees.

About the Trustees

We thought you'd like to have some information on the trustees. (Graham's interests will be outlined in the next instalment):

Joy Baird, chair, is a former Hutt City Councillor, teacher, public servant, a long-time supporter of environmental issues, a native tree planter and a keen gardener. In 2010 she worked strenuously behind the scenes to bring about the Hutt City Council contribution to the purchase of the Baring Head site. Her interest is in protecting, yet making accessible, an area with such a wide range of ecological, historical and geological values, which is so close to the major centre of population in the Wellington region.

Gwen McDonald, deputy chair, is Bill Kemp's daughter. As a lighthouse child, she spent some of her formative years at Baring Head. Now a Hutt City Councillor, she was instrumental in setting up the Friends of Baring Head Trust in order to retain and upgrade the entire existing complex for future generations. She is a keen gardener and environmental lobbyist, and has two children and one grandchild.

Colin Ryder, treasurer, has been awarded a number of national and local awards for his volunteer efforts. Behind this public face lies some twenty years experience in project managing and resourcing conservation initiatives in the Wellington region. These range from eradicating mice on Mana Island to seventeen years of effort that led to the establishment of the Taputeranga Marine Reserve, and assisting DOC establish a conservation group in the Chathams. Colin said the campaign to protect Baring Head was one that gave him a great deal of satisfaction as it was a short, hard and ultimately successful fight against the odds.

John McDonald, secretary, has visited Baring Head on many occasions both prior to and post de-manning. A tradesman and manager, he realised the huge potential that Baring Head as a fully restored complex would offer to the Wellington region. He is dedicated to retaining this facility for all future generations.

Helen Beaglehole, as historian of New Zealand's lighthouses, has a particular interest in Baring Head. As an historian of New Zealand's lighthouses, the lighthouse site is of particular interest – its ease of access to the general public and its remaining buildings provide an almost unique opportunity to imagine a life and life style that vanished when New Zealand's lighthouses were fully automated. As a keen and active mountainbiker and trumper she wants to help preserve the park's recreational values and opportunities for her grandchildren; as a sailor coasting north, she knows the site's visual grandeur.

Paul Hughes is a long-term advocate for Wellington open-space and regional parks. He has served on several park boards and advisory committees and is an avid coast walker.

Bill Kemp, now retired, is the author of *Pass Safely Sailor*, an account of his time in the Lighthouse Service. His last posting, before he was promoted to become a lighthouse inspector for New Zealand's lighthouses, was as lighthouse keeper at Baring Head. He visited the station on many occasions after de-manning and for a long time wanted to buy it. As a trustee, he hopes to help realise his long-term ambitions to preserve and return the light station to its condition prior to de-manning, and is a very keen advocate for retaining and upgrading all facilities.

Richard Nester is employed with the Department of Conservation and brings with him 14 years of experience in restoring, maintaining and advocating for historic places within the Wellington region. He has a keen interest in military and lighthouse history, so making it is an obvious choice to become involved with the Trust to help ensure that Baring Head's historic places can be seen, used and enjoyed for future generations.

Paula Warren trained as an ecologist, and works as a policy analyst for the Department of Conservation. Her key interest in Baring Head is to ensure that the geomorphological and ecological values of the area are protected and can be enjoyed by the public, and that Baring Head continues to be a key landscape feature for Wellington. As a sustainable transport advocate, she also looks forward to the future time when there will be a public transport service to allow the less fit to reach the area without a car.

Gareth Cooper, **Ross Jackson** and **Bronek Kazmierou** attend as representatives of the Greater Wellington Council and provide valued advice and input at each of the Committee's meetings. We'll tell you more about these people in future newsletters.



Ever wanted to know what NIWA get up to at Baring Head

Here is your chance to find out:

Gordon Brailsford,
Principal Technician
Atmospheric Chemistry
from NIWA will speak to
the public. All welcome;

Entry by gold coin donation

*Thursday 24 November,
7:30pm*

*Pelorus Trust Sports House
(Old Hutt Park Raceway)
Entry off Hutt Park
roundabout
Seaview
Lower Hutt*

Paid-up members

June and Sam Jackson, Allison and Les Molloy, Barbara Mitcalfe, Alan and Jill Bagnall, Pamela Hyde, Leonie Neil, Bill and Kitty Kemp, Hugh Barr, Chris Horne and Margaret Aitken have become the Trust's first paid-up members.

New members are more than welcome. We've sent all those not on email a membership form and details of how to join. The rest of you can simply [click on this link for the information!](#)



Have you visited Baring Head recently?

Splendid new information signs were erected in time for the official opening. Why not take a walk over the site on a fine spring day to enjoy the views and the information? Thank you to the Regional Council for the new signage.

What the Trust wants to do

We see the Trust's primary purposes as working for current and future generations by supporting and promoting the park's protection, maintenance and enhancement, and the restoration of Baring Head and its environment. This environment is broadly defined, and encompasses its historic landscape and its scientific, recreational and cultural values.

But we also believe that community benefits generated by a public asset should be matched by an ongoing community commitment to, and involvement in, its ongoing maintenance and enhancement. So while we want to help disseminate information about the park's features and values and increase the general public's understanding and enjoyment, we hope that doing this will enhance its own stewardship role. In this way the Trust works as an 'umbrella' for community participation, encouraging and assisting other groups meet common objectives for the area and ensuring optimal community involvement.

Council work on Baring Head

A considerable amount of council activity has been focused on Baring Head. The information signs have already been noted. A newly available pamphlet, *East Harbour Regional Park*, carries information on Baring Head, as well as the northern forest and Parangarahu lakes areas.

The Council, too, as a way of gathering essential information to inform the Baring Head management plan, has commissioned reports on the site's cultural values, a study has been done on the tourism and recreational options and on the work needed to upgrade the lighthouse keepers' cottages, and New Zealand Historic Places has reported on the site's heritage features. These, and a report on landscape values information, can be found under the heading Research Library, at <http://haveyoursay.gw.govt.nz/baringhead>



What the trustees have been involved in

We have not been dragging our heels. To date we have:

- negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the Council to ensure that our work complements the Council's
- mobilised significant interest in Baring Head
- created connections with a wide range of experts with knowledge and skills relevant to the area's management
- provided input to Greater Wellington on the site's biodiversity values and made a submission on the draft management plan (see below)
- notified Greater Wellington Council that the Trust is willing, in principle, to develop and run an accommodation business using the lighthouse keepers' houses, *as long as* we are satisfied that our involvement will be financially sound and that we are able to negotiate acceptable arrangements with the Council.

We are establishing strong links with other groups and experts – we want to bring the widest range of expertise to bear in our work, and we want to focus on areas that other groups are not already addressing.

We are also working with the Council staff to start work on two short-term initiatives (see below). These are projects for which the Trust can take responsibility, which can be done now and which support long-term goals. We'll be calling on volunteers to help!

The pump shed



One such initiative involves the pump house, close to the Wainuiomata River and near the eastern boundary of the property. Built in 1940, it pumped water up to a concrete storage tank above a military observation point. From there, pressurised water could be piped down to the barracks and wireless room (and during drought, to the lighthouse complex, though the keepers and their families remained primarily dependent on tank water). Consultants have advised us that the building, a link to the area's military history, could be a key hub for public enjoyment and interpretation as part of an attractive and conveniently located picnic area.

At the moment the building is sound but is showing considerable signs of neglect and lack of maintenance. This, if unchecked, would increase the rate at which it is deteriorating. In March 2011 Trust members Colin Ryder and Richard Nester visited the site. Richard's report, *Remedial work specification for Baring Head pump shed*, has identified the considerable general maintenance, minor carpentry, painting and site work that is needed to conserve the building.

In mid-August 2011, the Wellington Community Trust donated us almost \$3,500 for this project. It's ideally suited to volunteer work, so we'll shortly be looking for volunteers to help to carry out the identified maintenance.



Weed control

Work is urgently needed to eliminate any biodiversity weeds that could potentially spread rapidly across the area but which can be easily removed. One of these is karo, a tree that has been introduced to the area and is spreading rapidly. We're currently talking with the Council about the logistics of a working group tackling this problem in the early summer. Again, there'll be opportunities to volunteer. We'll be in touch!

Biodiversity values of Baring Head

On 16 March 2011, Friends reported to the public forum preceding the Social and Economic Wellbeing Committee of the Wellington Regional Council. In it we argue firmly that biodiversity values of Baring Head should have a high priority when putting together a management programme for Baring Head.

We set out five priorities for biodiversity work:

- existing biodiversity values to be identified and protected
- eco-sourced plants to be used for re-vegetation
- early re-vegetation work focusing on the rarest ecosystem types
- pest species to be removed early
- the site to become important for rare species recovery.

The Friends went on to suggest priority work areas and offered support or leadership in carrying them out. The areas are:

- seed collection in the immediate vicinity
- surveys of poorly documented species
- publishing a visitors guide to biodiversity for users of the main track
- undertaking a bioblitz – spending 24 hours locating as many species as possible in two to three years
- undertaking actions to prevent illegal vehicle access.

Input to Wellington Regional Council draft management plan

At the end of May the Wellington Regional Council, as part of their public consultation process, told us that they intended to reserve Baring Head as a scenic reserve and wanted to develop a management plan both for the newly purchased land and for the lighthouse reserve.

In August we forwarded to the Council the [Friends of Baring Head submission on the draft management plan](#). This is a careful and comprehensive statement on what the general shape of the management plan should be and on what it should include, and we developed specific recommendations for each of the major areas that the plan should cover. In broad terms we:

- outlined proposals to work with the Council to undertake specific, short-term, contained projects that do not need to be part of a management plan. The pump house, as noted, is one of these and we've identified noted a number of other such initiatives
- affirmed the need to retain, as an underlying principle, the integrity of the landforms in the management of the area
- detailed actions needed if the site's long history of Maori settlement and heritage, and its later historical, technological and military past are to continue to be available to future generations
- developed proposals for managing the ecosystems and principles for resolving conflict between indigenous and exotic species
- supported the existing recommendations on recreational opportunities, our possible role in the management of the lighthouse complex, other recreational opportunities and potential threats to these
- commented and developed recommendations on general land management
- identified ways of recognising the site's scientific values

We are now waiting on the Council to publish its draft plan and we shall make further submissions as needed.

How can I join the Friends?

There are four levels of membership – individual (waged \$20 or unwaged \$10), family \$30, or organisation \$50.

The financial year runs from 1 July to 30 June. However this year inaugural subscriptions paid between February and June 2011 will be valid until 30 June 2012.

For those with web access, [click here to get a membership/renewal of membership form](#). For those without email, a membership form has come with your newsletter. Please send your form and subscription to:

Friends of Baring Head Charitable Trust,
PO Box 38 076
Te Puni Mail Centre
Lower Hutt 5045.



Baring Head station and lighthouse, ca. 1950s. The Marine Department originally planned to bring all the construction materials to the site by sea but, deterred by the steepness of the cliffs, brought them down the Wainuiomata Road instead. The photo also gives an excellent view of the marine terraces for which the site is so noted. **Archives New Zealand, APBL 8848,W5221, B, Album.**