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THE DOMINION POST

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Plan to protect our best scenery

Tanya Katterns and **Paul Easton**

COUNCILS are clamping down on big developments in the Wellington region to protect outstanding landscapes.

The lifestyle property boom and big wind farm projects are about to be slapped with stringent controls as Greater Wellington regional council begins a review of the area's most dramatic scenery in a bid to control piecemeal development.

Landscapes recognised as outstanding will be designated as such in councils' district plans, offering them new protection.

Contentious coastal subdivisions and large-scale wind farms have sparked public outcries with many becoming locked in costly legal battles. They include housing developments at Riversdale Beach resort, Mighty River Power's Long Gully wind farm near Karori sanctuary, and the West Wind project at Makara.

Areas already identified and protected as outstanding natural landscapes include the Rimutaka and Tararua ranges. But there are growing fears that other landscape features are being lost because of lack of protection.

Regional council policy adviser Scott Ihaka said some local projects could have been better managed under clearer protection guidelines.

The review, being undertaken initially by environmental firm Boffa Miskell, begins in Wairarapa early next year. It will take in the Hutt Valley, Kapiti Coast and Wellington over the next two years.

It is the first robust stocktake of the region's environmental assets in more than 20 years and comes at a time of increasing pressure on land availability.

"There is some uncertainty under the Resource Management Act about what sort of development can be carried out on important landscapes," Mr Ihaka said. "It's that uncertainty that can create tensions in communities and an expensive and time-consuming process for applicants, affected parties and local and regional authorities."

Meridian spokesman Alan Seay said the process would clarify which areas were suitable for wind farms and remove uncertainty.

The firm did not regard the West Wind project as being on a unique landscape, "but we acknowledge that others have a different view".

Upper Hutt City Council has already moved to protect its patch. It contracted Boffa Miskell last year to carry out a Southern Hills Environmental Management Study to detail the valley's land resources. Mayor Wayne Guppy said the city realised it had to protect the hills. "If you don't have a plan you get these piecemeal developments that can leave you unable to fight back because you have failed to define what sort of protections should be placed on those areas."

The Greater Wellington review follows a similar process at Banks Peninsula, which took 12 years.

Wellington Mayor Kerry Prendergast said the review was not a quick fix. "Looking at all landscapes is going to take time . . . there must be flexibility."

SCENIC SIGNIFICANCE

What is a district plan?

- District plans set out how an area's resources should be managed. Under the Resource Management Act 1991, every council must prepare one. They deal with issues including urban growth, heritage protection, noise levels and subdivision.

What is being proposed?

- Planners Boffa Miskell will compile a list of important landscapes and features around Greater Wellington, starting with Wairarapa. The views of Maori, farmers, land owners, environmental groups and the public will be sought and important Wairarapa landscapes identified by July 2010. The information will be included in councils' district plans.

LENGTHY PROJECTS

- **Project West Wind, Wellington**: Meridian Energy's Makara wind farm. First proposed in the late 1990s, but shelved after local protests. Consent process started May 2005. Construction of the 62-turbine project started in September 2007 and is due for completion this month.
- **Project Hayes, Otago**: 176-turbine wind farm project. Resource consent process began in 2006. Thrown out by the Environment Court last month. Meridian Energy may fight the decision.
- **Marine Education Centre, Wellington**: First suggested for Te Raekaihau Pt in 1998, consent granted in 2006, but overturned a year later. Maranui Quarry suggested last year.

Cancer survivor celebrates cycle of life

Nathan Beaumont

JUST over a year ago Judy Burgess was lying on an operating table talking to surgeons as they removed a tumour from her brain.

The operation was a success but there were several side effects. She lost all co-ordination: simple tasks such as brushing her teeth, writing and holding a knife and fork felt "weird". She also went from being right handed to left handed.

As she learned to talk again she had to put up with people thinking she was a "cabbage".

Initially, Ms Burgess was given little chance of surviving the cancer. But the plucky Wanganui woman was not ready to die. Now the 44-year-old solo mother of two teenagers is in remission and back doing what she loves – cycling.

At the weekend she cycled till she was exhausted, finishing the 160-kilometre Lake Taupo Cycle Challenge in about eight hours.

She was awarded the Dan Dunne Memorial Trophy, given to athletes who participate in the race "against the odds". Mr Dunne died of cancer.

"It's quite bizarre to think someone can operate in your brain while you are awake. People think it's horrific, but everyone at Wellington Hospital was brilliant. They have given me a second chance at life and I will be forever grateful," she said.

"I have two beautiful children and that makes you want to try and get better and live a long, long time. They really motivated me."

The cycle race capped off a turbulent 14 months for Ms Burgess, which started when she visited her doctor in October last year, complaining of earache and fatigue.

A tumour was discovered in the centre of her brain, but a surgeon said it was too risky to operate.

Not content with the diagnosis, she found a saviour in Wellington neurosurgeon Ales Aliashkevich, who was willing to operate. But she had to be awake for the nine-hour craniotomy, in November last year.

Mr Aliashkevich said operating on awake patients allowed surgeons to remove the maximum amount of a tumour without interfering with critical parts of the brain, because the patient could talk to them.

"The operation is about trying to be as aggressive as possible within the safety limits. It can be a fine balance."

Ms Burgess started the operation asleep so she didn't have to hear her head being drilled open.

Later, two of the surgical team kept her calm by chatting to her.

Afterwards, the biggest challenge was learning to talk again. Simple things such as ordering a coffee became "embarrassing".

"When I was asked what coffee I wanted and I couldn't answer, the woman looked at me as if I was a cabbage. It was a horrible feeling, but it made me more determined to recover.

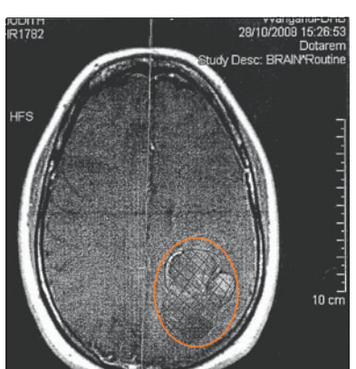
"I am almost back to normal but sometimes I still struggle with certain words."

Ms Burgess, who started cycling four years ago, said her co-ordination was also bad after the surgery, and it was months before she could think about riding again.

But slowly her skills came back and in July she began to ride hundreds of kilometres in preparation for the Taupo race.

"When I crossed the finish line it was such an amazing feeling. It was pure joy, especially knowing what I had gone through. It was the end of a chapter in my life."

Unstoppable: Judy Burgess has cycled around Lake Taupo a year after having surgery for a brain tumour. Photo: SIMON WOOD



Before and after: Judy Burgess, with daughters Tara, left, and Briar, 24 hours after her surgery. Left, a brain scan, with the tumour area outlined in red.

BRAIN SURGERY

- The first awake craniotomy on a patient at Wellington Hospital was carried out in July last year. The hospital now does the operation about once every two months.
- A neuropsychologist and a speech-language therapist prepared Ms Burgess for surgery. They checked she was psychologically ready, practised relaxation techniques and rehearsed the tests she would do during surgery.
- On the day of the operation, her head was clamped in a frame and she was given a general anaesthetic – she started the operation asleep so she did not have to listen to the sound of her head being drilled open. Once asleep, she was given a local anaesthetic.
- Surgeons cut a hole in the top of her head. Once her brain was exposed, a special machine mapped the tumour's boundaries.
- After the machine had finished mapping, clinicians put labels on different parts of the brain to mark the ridges. Electrodes were also attached to record electrical activity and detect any seizures. Surgeons then stimulated parts of her brain to check her movement.
- The general anaesthetic was withdrawn and Ms Burgess soon woke up. The local anaesthetic stopped her feeling pain.
- She was given tasks to carry out, including counting to 20, repeating phrases and identifying pictures. While she was doing this, the surgeons stimulated different parts of her brain.

THE REGIONS

Teacher charged

A teacher appears in court charged with assaulting three children at a Hastings Maori immersion school. He is the second staff member to be charged with assault this year. **NEWS A8**

Goodbye, not good buy

Tourism NZ directors have been forced to fork out thousands of dollars of their own money after a lavish gift earned Prime Minister John Key's wrath. A specially commissioned Dick Frizzell painting for departing chief executive George Hickton has been derided by Mr Key as "excessive expenditure of taxpayer money". Now the board members who approved the spending will stump up most of the money themselves. **NEWS A3**

Reinventing the wheel

Japanese inventors unveil the next generation in human transportation – the "mechatronic" unicycle". Dubbed the future of travel, the U3-X is nearly impossible to topple and makes no balancing demands on the bemused owner. **WORLD B3**

Passport to nowhere

Tough new passport photo rules cause chaos for applicants, with officials repeatedly declining applicants for minuscule errors. Glenise Unsworth just wanted to see her kids in Australia – but was subjected to being photographed four times. **NEWS A4**

He's out

Shane Bond's latest pain is Daryl Tuffey's gain. A distraught Bond was yesterday ruled out of the Pakistan test series after discovering a 1cm tear in his abdominal muscle. **SPORT D1, D8**

Red rage

Three boys are nabbed by Los Angeles police on suspicion of bullying or kicking red-haired schoolmates in a "Kick a Ginger Day" prank inspired by a *South Park* episode. **WORLD B2**

WEATHER PAGE A16

TODAY
HEAVY RAIN, SOUTHERLIES.
ANOTHER PEARLER DAY IN PARADISE

WELLINGTON CITY	HIGH 16	LOW 12
HUTT VALLEY	HIGH 20	LOW 14
PORIRUA	HIGH 19	LOW 15
KAPITI COAST	HIGH 19	LOW 15

TOMORROW
FINE SPELLS. COVERS ON, COVERS OFF AT THE BASIN

AUCKLAND	TAUPO	GISBORNE	PALMERSTON NTH	NEW PLYMOUTH	BLENHEIM
HEAVY RAIN	RAIN	RAIN	RAIN	RAIN	OCCASIONAL RAIN
TAURANGA	WANGANUI	NAPIER/HASTINGS	MASTERTON	NELSON	CHRISTCHURCH
SOME RAIN	RAIN	OCCASIONAL RAIN	RAIN	RAIN	OCCASIONAL RAIN

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