

Lowburn Valley Tenure Review – Summary of Preliminary Proposal



December 2021

Background

Lowburn Valley pastoral lease is a 5,814 hectare property in Central Otago located 7 kilometres north of Cromwell. It adjoins the Pisa Conservation Area and encompasses part of the Pisa Range (Tokiporutu) between the Kawarau Gorge to the south and Mitre Rocks (Kamekameka) to the north. The property includes the summit plateau and ridge crest plus steep faces into the Roaring Meg (Waikoroiko/Tititea), the Kawarau River and the Low Burn flats (Kokemoana).

Lowburn Valley is an extensive hill country property and ranges in altitude from 260 metres to 1,500 metres above sea level. A location map can be found in **Appendix One**.

The lease is held by Lowburn Station Limited (the Holder) and is currently used for running Merino wethers, Texel Cross ewes and beef cattle.

Advice on the inherent values of the lease was provided by the Department of Conservation (DOC) in the form of Conservation Resources Reports dated 2002 and 2012. These reports have been supplemented by information gathered during field visits by the Department of Conservation and Toitū Te Whenua LINZ throughout consultation on the preliminary proposal.

A preliminary proposal has been put to the Holder. A plan showing the preliminary proposal designations for Lowburn Valley (the **Plan**) together with a copy of the preliminary proposal can be found [here](#) (the **Proposal**).

Summary of the Preliminary Proposal Designations

The Lowburn Valley preliminary proposal designations are summarised below.

CA1 – conservation area of approximately 1,919 hectares



Figure 1: Headwaters of Skeleton Stream Lowburn Valley Pastoral Lease 📷 DOC



Figure 2: CA1 📷 QV

CA1 is shaded pink on the Plan and shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 above. It encompasses part of the Pisa Range summit plateau and the Mitre Creek and Skeleton Stream catchments, major tributaries of the Roaring Meg. The area includes a significant landscape feature, “Battleship Rocks” which consists of largely intact vegetation and an extensive array of rock tors. Vegetation ranges from shrublands and short tussock grasslands in the valley floors through good snow tussock and mountain fescue tussock grasslands, cushion field communities, screes, boulderfields and fellfield

communities, including montane bogs and wetlands with areas of sub-alpine shrublands. Nine botanical species and three bird species are classified as at risk. Three botanical species identified have a threatened classification and three rare ecosystems can be found within the proposed conservation area.

The area is of significant historical and cultural interest due to the Meg Saddle forming a trail for Māori moving between the Cardrona Valley and the Nevis/Wakatipu as part of traditional routes to gather kai and pounamu. The routes were later adopted by early European and Chinese settlers. Relics of the mining era remain including pack tracks, water races and pockets of prospecting sites. The routes have now become popular for public recreation.

CA1 is subject to an easement in favour of the Holder to provide access between the Low Burn and Roaring Meg portions of the property along an existing farm track ('k-l'). Access over this track is necessary for ongoing farm operations and will not adversely impact on values within the area.

CC1 – approximately 1,105 hectares



Figure 3: *Dracophyllum pronum* upper Packspur CC1 📷 DOC, March 2012



Figure 4: CC1 existing hut 📷 DOC, Nov 2020

CC1 comprises the range crest at the southern end of the Pisa Range to the southern boundary at Mt Michael, between an altitude band of 1,100 metres to 1,340 meters. The area contains rare ecosystems; cushion bogs, seepages, flushes and ephemeral wetlands. A number of threatened or at-risk botanical and bird species, as well as landscape values have been identified within this area.

The proposed conservation covenant provides for low intensity sheep grazing for two months per year. There is strong potential for ecotourism within this area utilising the Holder's existing accommodation unit. The covenant provides for the construction and maintenance of three additional accommodation units within CC1 and the adjacent CC2 subject to approval from the Minister of Conservation as to location, size and design. The covenant prohibits tree planting, oversowing and topdressing, burning and vegetation clearance. Easements provide access through CC1 for public and DOC management purposes.

CC2 – approximately 165 hectares



Figure 5: CC2 📷 QV

CC2 is located in the Low Burn headwaters and contains rare ecosystems, cushion bogs, seepages, flushes and ephemeral wetlands. A number of threatened or at-risk botanical and bird species, as well as landscape values have been identified in this area.

Due to the altitude of this area and its high inherent values, no provision is made within the proposed covenant for grazing. However, as part of the wider economic opportunities for the property, freehold with a covenant is considered an appropriate designation. The covenant provides for the construction and maintenance of three additional accommodation units within the area and the adjacent CC1 subject to approval from the Minister of Conservation as to location, size and design.

Easements provide access through CC2 for public and DOC management purposes.

CC3 – approximately 8 hectares

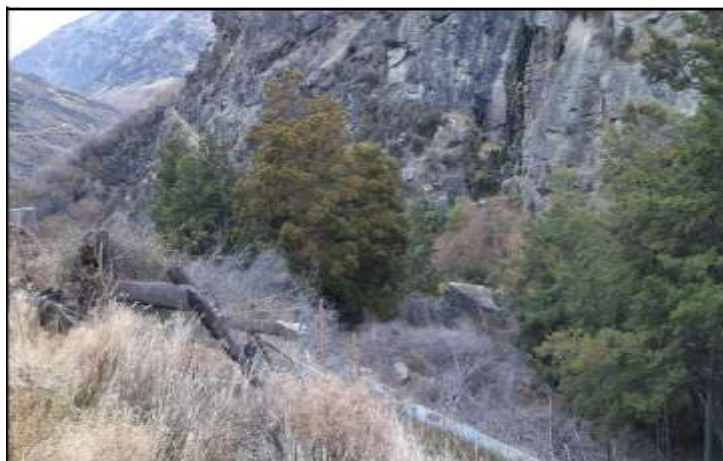


Figure 6: Silver beech trees within CC3 📷 QV

CC3 provides for the protection of a small area of mature and developing silver beech trees next to the Roaring Meg. The proposed covenant provides for incidental stock grazing. Full separation of this area from adjoining land would be extremely difficult, however the terrain and vegetation allow only limited stock ingress. The covenant prohibits tree planting, oversowing and topdressing, burning and vegetation clearance. An easement provides access through CC3 for public and DOC management purposes.

CC4 – approximately 47 hectares



Figure 7: Looking into Skelton Stream 📷 QV

CC4 is located at the confluence of Skeleton Stream and Roaring Meg. The proposed covenant provides for the protection of a number of threatened or at risk significant inherent values. It requires the area to be destocked and provides for wander-at-will public access.

CC5 – approximately 15 hectares



Figure 8: Shrubland in bottom of the Low Burn, CC5b 📷 DOC, March 2012

CC5 comprises of three isolated pockets (CC5a, CC5b and CC5c) containing remnant areas of significant vegetation. These areas are unfenced, and the covenant provides for continued grazing in conjunction with adjoining land designated for freehold disposal. The covenant prohibits tree planting, oversowing and topdressing, burning and vegetation clearance.

CC6 – approximately 1 hectare



Figure 9: New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) site F41/337. 📷 Holder, November 2021

CC6 provides for the protection of the remains of a boundary riders hut, one of the original stone huts on the original Mt Pisa run. The proposed covenant provides for grazing by sheep only incidental to the grazing of adjacent land.

Unencumbered freehold land of approximately 2,554 hectares



Figure 10: Proposed unencumbered freehold land 📷 QV

FH1 and FH2 (2,554 hectares) are designated for unencumbered freehold disposal and comprise the balance (44%) of the Lowburn pastoral lease. These areas encompass the limited flats adjacent to the homestead and parts of the eastern and western hill slopes.

The proposed freehold areas have been utilised for pastoral grazing since the late 1850s. The lower and mid slopes have been oversown and topdressed, while the balance has been conservatively grazed (particularly in recent years).

Provision is made for public and conservation management access easements over the proposed freehold land as shown on the Plan. Further details on these easements can be found in the preliminary proposal document. This land is also subject to existing easements in favour of the Lowburn Curing Club and Coburn Partnership Limited.

Objects of Part 2 of the Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998

The objects of tenure review are set out in section 24 of the CPLA. The Proposal is considered to meet these objects as it:

- Promotes the management of reviewable land in a way that is ecologically sustainable (section 24(a)(i)) through the retirement of CA1, CC2 and CC4 from pastoral uses. It is expected that the vegetation on these areas will increase in vigour and stature. Conservation covenants CC1, CC3, CC5 limit grazing with vegetation monitoring and the ability to further manage grazing levels. The proposed freehold land is predominantly land use capability class 6 which is suited to pastoral use. Much of it has been oversown and topdressed and freehold title will encourage investment to maintain this.
- Subject to section 24(a)(i), enables reviewable land capable of economic use to be freed from the management constraints of pastoral lease tenure (section 24(a)(ii)). Covenants are utilised where it is considered that ongoing economic use can be maintained while protecting significant inherent values. The Holder intends to continue to farm the property and pursue ecotourism uses and the Proposal will enable this.
- Provides for the protection of 1,919 hectares as conservation area (section 24(b)(ii)), protecting significant inherent values. A further 1,341 hectares will be protected through conservation covenants (section 24(b)(i)). The preference of restoration to full Crown ownership and control has been pursued where appropriate and necessary to protect significant inherent values. Areas with the highest ecological significant inherent values, including most of the summit plateau and slopes above the Roaring Meg (totalling 2,131 ha) will be protected within conservation area CA1 and covenant areas CC2 and CC4 - all farming-related activities will permanently cease in these areas.
- Secures public access to and enjoyment of reviewable land through 25km of public access routes (section 24(c)(i)). The public will also enjoy full access over 1,919 ha of conservation area and wander at will on foot access over 47ha contained in CC4. The Proposal will enable uninterrupted non-motorised public access from the Kawarau Gorge/ Roaring Meg and the Lowburn valley to the Pisa Conservation Area and beyond to the Cardrona and Upper Clutha valleys.
- Provides for 3,895 hectares of freehold land (section 24(c)(ii)) of which 1,341 hectares will be subject to conservation covenants.

Other matters taken into account

Treaty of Waitangi

Section 25 of the CPLA requires the Commissioner to take into account the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. A Cultural Values Report from Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu informed the development of the Proposal. Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu inspected Lowburn Valley on 22 February 2002.

Other Crown purposes

Section 25 of the CPLA requires that you consider whether the land or any part of it is required for any other Crown purposes. No other Crown purposes have been identified for this land.

Appendix One – Lowburn Valley Location Map

