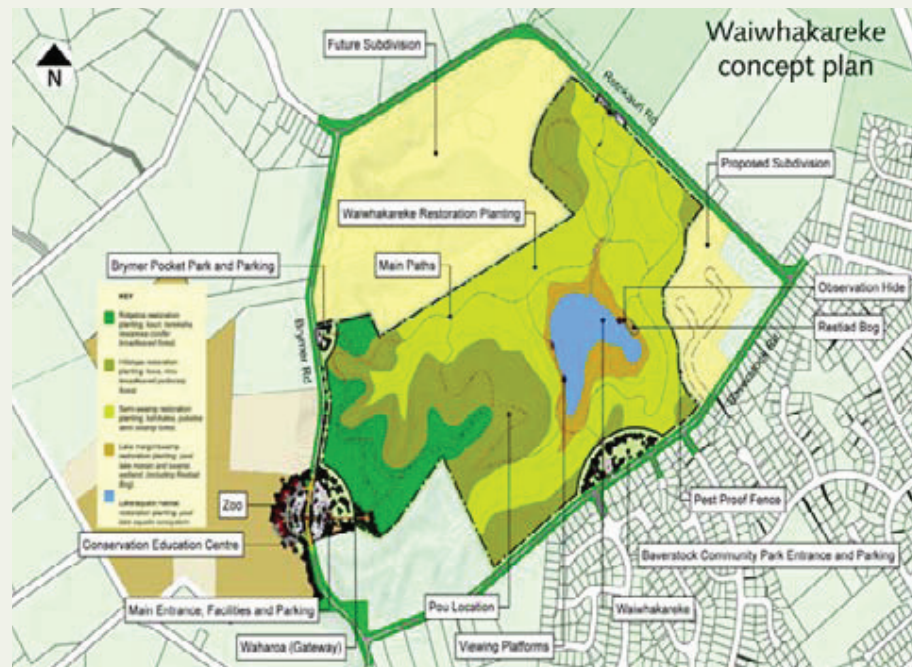


## Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park Restoration Project

Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park is a large scale restoration project which covers about 60 hectares on the north-west edge of Hamilton next to Hamilton Zoo. The project aims to recreate an example of the Hamilton Basin's previously rich ecological diversity.

The journey to restore it at Waiwhakareke began in 1975 when Hamilton City Council purchased the land surrounding Horseshoe Lake. Some 20 years later the wheels are well in motion with volunteers turning more and more of the park's 60 hectares back to its unique ecosystem each year. To date 16.5 hectares have been planted with approximately 165,000 native plants.

The Heritage Park concept involves the retirement of farm land and ecological restoration of the land surrounding Lake Waiwhakareke, through restoration planting, pest control and the introduction of pest-proof fencing. Three forest ecosystems will be completely reconstructed (kauri, tanekaha, rewarewa conifer-broadleaved forest; tawa, rimu broadleaved-podocarp forest; kahikatea, pukatea semiswamp forest) and two ecosystems will be restored (peat lake margin including a Restiad bog, and swamp wetland; peat lake/aquatic ecosystem).



Waiwhakareke will provide an opportunity for students and the wider community to learn about native plants, animals and ecosystems through their involvement in restoration activities. Several agencies will be involved in research and education delivery related to the Park, including Hamilton Zoo, WINTEC, University of Waikato and local schools and community groups.

Planting days are an important means for community involvement. Arbor Day is an opportunity to engage schools and teach our younger generation the basics of planting, a skill that can be transferrable to their homes and positively influence their environmental values and attitudes later in life.

This year over 1300 people joined the "Big Dig In" Arbor Day event held at Waiwhakareke, taking on the challenge of planting 30,000 trees on three hectares within three hours.

Over 150 students joined us on a post-planting tour around the lake with guest speakers talking about the aquatic species, exotic invasive species and potential future native species and the historical aspects of the area and region, and the importance of restoring ecosystems.

There is an opportunity to create a significant link between the site and Hamilton Zoo. It is intended that there will be shared facilities between Waiwhakareke and Hamilton Zoo. These facilities will include an education facility, public toilets, parking, tourist shop, information centre and café. Hamilton Zoo would also be involved in the project through rearing and breeding of native birds, reptiles and insects for release in the Park.

When it is finished Waiwhakareke will draw native wildlife back to the city and be a rich resource for everyone to enjoy - supporting recreation, education, conservation and science.

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