

Palmerston North City Environmental Trust Chair's Report to the 17th Annual General Meeting 24 September 2008

Foreword

Environmental sustainability is vital to our welfare. This fact continues marching to the fore with major statements from world leaders in political, business, religious, academic, and not-for-profit sectors underscoring the urgency of transitioning from business-as-usual into a state of environmental sustainability.

Since its inception in 1991, the Trust has increasingly recognised that environmental sustainability is the core of our welfare as a city. All positive outcomes, including reliable economic performance, depend on it. In light of this, our central goal is to foster environmental sustainability within the city, through a range of projects and actions. To this end, 2007-08 has been a year of positive change and significant activity for the Trust.

Revitalisation of the Trust

In recognition of a pressing need to increase the environmental sustainability of our City, in June we initiated a revitalisation drive to recruit new Trust members, thereby tapping into new community networks, expertise, and interest in the environment. Since that time, we have received seven inquiries or expressions of interest, and are pleased to have appointed four new trustees who bring a new depth and energy to the Trust, and a unique set of strengths:

- Brendan Lucas (interests in natural systems for enhanced water quality and carbon sequestration, local businessman);
- Ee Kheng Ang (interests in youth and community awareness of the environment, lecturer in management at Massey University)
- Karine Chagne (interests in community awareness about environmental sustainability, lecturer at International Pacific College)
- Ian Cook (interests in at-risk youth and the environment, active business advisor and retired horticulturalist)

These four recruits join the rest of the team: long-time trustees Terry Kelly and Jon Proctor, and more recent recruits Christie Creed, Eddie Welsh, Tristan Lavender, Alan Fielding, and myself.

As is the nature of a city with an academic bent, it seems that all too often Trust members take appointments elsewhere. This year two Trustees took up academic opportunities outside the Manawatu, and in doing so withdrew with regret from their role on the PNCET.

- Dr. Craig Sloss, 2007-08 elected Chair of the Trust, left Massey University to return to his homeland and take up a professorship in November 2007 with the University of Queensland. At this point it was decided by Trust members that Brent Barrett would vacate the Treasurer's role and be Interim Chair, Terry Kelly would be Interim Treasurer. Christie Creed was appointed as Secretary shortly thereafter.

- Dr. Rick Fisher, member of the Trust, left International Pacific College and the Manawatu to take a position at The Open Polytechnic in December 2007.

Both Craig and Rick are again acknowledged for making valuable contributions to the City via the Trust. Of note Craig brought a focus on water quality and urban sustainability, and recruited Christie Creed to the Trust. Rick Fisher actively participated in Trust community events including judging the 'eco-ness' of exhibitors at a nation-wide conferencing expo hosted in the Manawatu.

Summary of PNCET Activities 2007 - 08

This year we undertook a range of activities in order to enhance the environmental sustainability of the City, including advocacy, interface with the community, and grant making often in tandem with provision of expert advice and direct assistance.

Advocacy of particular note is provision to PNCC of a deputation recommending an environmental sustainability decision making principle to augment their current framework, which remarkably does not include any such principle.

Interface with the community primarily took the form of the Trust members and marquee appearing at headline PNCC community events including Esplanade Day and Festival of Cultures, and the conferencing expo.

Over the course of the year, nine grant applications were received. Grants totalling in excess of \$24,000 were made to the following organisations and projects:

- Reel Earth - the 2007 Aotearoa Environmental Film Festival (\$3,500)
- Reel Earth - the 2008 Aotearoa Environmental Film Festival (\$10,000)
- Environment Network Manawatu: World Environment Day (\$6,000)
- Museum Studies Class at Massey University: plastics awareness video
- PN Girls High School: environment group digital media project
- Awahou School: plant nursery facilities and advice
- Takaro School: conservation action coastal field trip
- Hato Paora School: environment school initiative
- Urban Care: Community garden calendar

The three large grants were for projects with significant co-funding and professional leadership, with PNCET contributing essential support to three successful, large scale and high quality environment-centred projects in the City.

Where appropriate, Trust members have worked alongside the projects we funded offering expert advice (e.g. Hato Paora, Awahou School), practical help (e.g. World Environment Day), and in some cases taking leadership roles (e.g. Reel Earth).

PNCET Assets

The Trust members are its greatest asset, and the source of all its notable achievements. Financially, the Trust remains in a modest position, with investments in excess of \$100,000. This past year we have been particularly active in grant making, a marked increase after two years in which expenditure lagged behind revenue. Part of the reason for particularly high levels of grant expenditure in 07.08 is that our ongoing sponsorship of Reel Earth in 2007 (July)

and 2008 (May) fell into the same financial year. It is envisaged that the financial support request from Reel Earth 2009, to be held again in May, will be \$5000.

We have also decided to increase resources available by internalising our administrative workload and removing the associated costs with the appointment of a Trust member as Secretary, and the Trust's Treasurer taking a more active role in the management of our finances.

We note that 2008-09 is the final year of a three year grant arrangement agreed with PNCC which provides a \$10,000 annual grant from PNCC to the Trust; following the council-led severance of the closer link with the Trust in 2005-06.

Future Directions

With the welcome influx of new member's energy and ideas, the immediate goal is settling in as a team focused on environmental sustainability in Palmerston North.

Our first order of business is the revision of the Trust's mission and aims to better reflect the complement of expertise and interest held by our greatest asset, and to better reflect and meet the need to increase the level of environmental sustainability in Palmerston North.

The revision of aim and mission should then flow into debate and agreement of a revised and concise strategic plan, to be completed this spring, and delegation of roles to drive that plan forward.

A review of our branding will be appropriate once this process is completed.

There is opportunity for improved links with our local government staff and elected representatives, with thought leaders, with business leaders and entrepreneurs, and with environment groups. Progressing this is of vital importance to the Trust's ability to positively influence the City's environmental sustainability.

As stated earlier, I believe our greatest asset is our Trust members. Financially, there is scope to increase support for the Trust, including and beyond direct financial support from PNCC. This will be an area of work for Trust members to engage in over the course of the year, to better enable us realising our potential for enhancing the environmental sustainability of the city. While direct bids for support are appropriate, I believe our capacity and willingness to achieve significant non-financial outcomes will best drive financial support for the Trust.

Leadership of the Trust

I greatly appreciate the support I've received in my role as Interim Chair of the Trust since November, and thank each of the Trust members for their support and contributions. We remain in transition, with focusing of new talent and strategy revision on the horizon, a phase that I aim to see out to successful completion. As such, I'm willing to take up the chair of the Trust for the 08.09 year; on the condition that we delegate roles within the Trust, and that a succession of leadership being identified. In light of my other commitments; I believe that from 09.10 there will be those on the Trust better suited than I to best drive our agenda, and I look forward to the process of leadership evolution better serving the needs of the Trust and our city in achieving greater environmental sustainability.



Brent Barrett, Interim Chair, PNCET