

14. NATIVE TREES

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Corporate Plan Output: Community Partnerships 9.4.1	

The purpose of this report is to inform Community Boards of the outcome of the Native Trees Please! Millennium Project and to seek some modest additional funding for information panels and ongoing support for each site in the respective Board areas.

THE CONCEPT

Native Trees Please! is a planting project based on the concept of re-establishing representative New Zealand native plant species that originally existed on the various flood plain surfaces throughout what is now Christchurch City. One of the aims has been to develop citywide 'living museums' of plant life and associated ecosystems that will also add to the City's landscape heritage and provide a valuable educational resource for schools, other institutions and the general public, benefiting both present and future generations. The plan envisaged having one site with the appropriate underlying soil type, selected within each of the City's six Community Board areas and to plant a total of 2,000 trees (symbolizing the year 2000) at each site.

IMPLEMENTATION

The original concept was developed through a series of meetings of interested groups and individuals commencing in 1997. A key factor identified was gaining support and funding from the Council's six Community Boards and also the support of local communities including schools. It was also important to have the support and co-operation of the Council's Parks and Waterways Unit as the planting sites eventually selected and approved were all on public reserves. It is pleasing to report that the support and co-operation of all parties involved was excellent and extremely satisfying to those closely involved with the project. These outcomes were achieved through the following actions.

Periodic meetings of the core committee - initially, Councillor Anderton, Dr Meurk, a representative of Turning Point 2000 and Neiel Drain - to develop the Natives Trees Please! concept to an achievable project, and formally seek Community Board support. The committee was then expanded to include representatives of the Council's Parks and Waterways Unit and other Council staff to develop plans of action including the sourcing of native trees, the preparation and planting of sites, the involvement of the wider community, and the staging of the planting itself throughout the year 2000.

Achieving these outcomes included site visits, the preparation of design and planting plans for each site, the development of a communication plan, the promotion of the event to various schools and community groups and organizing the planting days for the participants. Written guidelines were also prepared for the schools and others taking part in the planting. Outside the committee's role were the physical works, at times quite challenging, such as ground preparation and access undertaken by the Parks and Waterways Unit. In the end very pleasing results were achieved with all the planting undertaken. The keen interest of the schools and local residents, the enthusiasm and co-operation of Council staff, the support of Councillors and Community Board members at various sites on the day, together with the high quality of the plant material provided, brought a sense of satisfaction and achievement for all participants. The media was kept informed and some good coverage of most events was achieved including newspaper and television.

COMMUNITY BOARD AREA SITE REPORTS

The following is a summary of outcomes in respect of each community board area, during 2000.

Burwood/Pegasus - Travis Wetland

Parkview, Windsor, and Queenspark schools took part in the first planting in February 2000. CHTV, CTV, TV3 and the Press gave media coverage. A second planting with Freeville School took place in March. Altogether a very successful undertaking.

Dominant Trees: Matai, totara, kahikatea, and other swamp forest species.

Spreydon/Heathcote - Ernle Clark Reserve

This planting was held in May with Thorrington and St Peter's Schools participating. The school students alone planted some 600 trees and associated plants. The children appeared particularly excited by the task and responsive during the pre-planting discussion. A second planting was undertaken with supervision by City Care to ensure protection of a patch of regenerating bush close to the planting site.

Dominant Trees: Matai, kahikatea, totara and a range of smaller sub-canopy trees.

Fendalton/Waimairi - Yaldhurst Bush Reserve

The entire Yaldhurst School (approximately 130 students) took part in this planting held in early June, coinciding with the school's Arbor Day event but focused on Native Trees Please!. This was reinforced with the Turning Point 2000 banner being displayed on the day. A second planting was undertaken in October, partly to test the effect on the plants of seasonal conditions which can have a significant impact on this site. The success (survival) rate of the latter planting was very high (95%) and notably better than the first. Again, as with the other sites, the children displayed a genuine interest and enthusiasm for the project.

Dominant Trees: Yellow flowered kowhai and white flowered kanuka with novelty divaricating shrubs around the fringes.

Riccarton/Wigram - Westmoreland East Valley Reserve

This planting, held on a Sunday in August 2000, was family orientated with families from the local rotary club and residents' association taking part. Both these groups have had involvement with this site in the past. There was a large turnout on the day, much enjoyed by all and with over 2,000 trees being planted.

Dominant Trees: Matai, Totara, and various broadleaf trees.

Shirley/Papanui - Styx Mill Reserve

A total of six classes from Breens Intermediate, Casebrook and Northcote Schools took part in the planting held early October. This had been preceded by classroom visits by the reserve ranger in this instance. A Guardian of the Styx and the team from Trees for Canterbury also played a part. Once again, a very successful day.

Dominant Trees: Kahikatia, pokaka, and other swamp forest species reminiscent of Riccarton Bush.

Hagley/Ferrymead - Charlesworth Reserve

Because of planning and design difficulties relating to the green edge concept and salt water intrusion it was not possible to achieve any planting on the chosen site.

The funds for this project remain in the Parks and Waterways Unit budget. Options to carry out this planting in an alternative area of the reserve adjacent to the freshwater ponds are currently being investigated and will be the subject of another report to the Board in due course.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF PLANTED SITES

As with any planting project the success of Native Trees Please! in the longer term, will in large measure depend on the commitment of adequate resources including funding, technical skills, and the interest and commitment of local communities including the schools. With regard to the latter, all participating schools were supplied with information kits and each student received a Certificate of Thanks signed by the Mayor as well. Also, the Council's Environmental Education Officer has offered in the meantime to undertake post - visits to the schools involved. It is hoped from these initiatives that the schools, with periodic input from Council staff, will continue to take an active interest in and have a sense of ownership of their local plantings. Perhaps by mutual agreement the schools concerned could adopt their local Native Trees Please! site under the Council's Adopt a Park scheme.

SITE INTERPRETATION

As indicated above, one element in the project for which sufficient funds were not available was the provision of on-site information/interpretation. This was always seen as an integral part of Native Trees Please! as a means of permanently explaining to the public the long term goals, nature and function of each site, at the same time signalling its importance as a Turning Point 2000 Millennium Project.

This site interpretation is envisaged as being in the nature of information panels, suitably sited and affixed, and containing text, diagrams, photographs and the like, covering for example information on site history, flora and fauna, and conservation and ecological values pertaining to each site. While no detailed costings have yet been prepared, the actual costs for each site would be quite modest in relation to the total funds expended to date.

CONCLUSION

The project has involved a considerable amount of planning, administrative detail, physical effort and sustained commitment by various individuals and groups during the past three years or so. The project has not been without some difficulties but these have been more than offset by the satisfaction of seeing the initial concept brought to a tangible outcome. However, its success ultimately will largely depend on the continuing support of the Council through its Community Boards, Council staff and the local community including the schools.

Thanks is due to all those involved who have contributed their expertise and energy to the project. To Councillor Carole Anderton who initiated and helped develop the concept originally and has been its strong advocate ever since, to Rae Finlay, Chief Executive of Turning Point 2000, and her team who provided valuable administrative support, to Craig Oliver in his capacity as Parks Manager together with various field staff who had the task of implementing the project on the ground*, other specialist staff*, Dr Colin Meurk for his expertise in selecting the appropriate native trees for each site and guiding the planting thereafter and last but not least, to each of the Community Boards for their endorsement of the project and for providing the funding essential for its implementation.

* Council staff other than those named above who contributed to Native Trees Please! Parks and Waterways Unit: Kay Holder, Anne Cossan, Steve Gray, Keith Marshall, Rod Whearty, Gary Harrow, Joe Cartman, Richard Doyle, Kelvin McMillan, John Parry, Ali Taylor-Hayhurst. Others: Rachel Leitch (Turning Point 2000), Kerry Everingham (Education & Promotions Co-ordinator), Janice Beaumont (Environmental Education Officer).

- Recommendations:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That the concept of the schools and/or local communities involved with the Native Trees Please! project formally adopting the planting site in their area be investigated.
 3. That subject to all details including costs of the interpretation panels proposed for each site being satisfactory to each Board, the installation of these be approved.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That the abovementioned recommendations be adopted.