4. ISAAC CENTRE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION LINCOLN UNIVERSITY: CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL LIAISON AND ADVISORY GROUP ON URBAN ECOLOGY

Officer responsible	**Author**
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The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the formation of an Urban Ecology Liaison and Co-ordinating Group representing the interests of the Council and Lincoln University and with representation from Environment Canterbury.

BACKGROUND

Following representations made to the Mayor by Lincoln University, the author was asked to convene a meeting of officers from each organisation to canvas the idea of setting up a group that could further the interests of both institutions in the field of urban ecology.

After some months of exploration, a group has been established through an exchange of letters and has begun to meet. During this process an invitation was accepted by Ecan to be part of the group.

PURPOSE

According to the Memorandum of Understanding the objectives of the group are as follows:

Purpose

The group's purpose is to contribute to the goal of sustainable urban environments within their wider setting by promoting and co-ordinating research, teaching and education projects focussed in the area of urban ecology and benefiting both the University's academic objectives and sustainable city outcomes.

This purpose will be achieved by:

- *Maintaining an informed and comprehensive view of urban ecological processes and what constitutes the clean, green, sustainable urban environment against which proposals can be considered.*
- *Enabling contact, networking and relationship building between the partners leading to information exchange, access to national and international work in this area, joint use of visiting specialists, contribution to curricula and teaching programmes and opportunities for student and post graduate project work.*
- *Co-ordinating and publicising initiatives and contacts between the partners to ensure maximum benefit and to avoid duplication.*
- *Supporting and influencing the University's urban ecology research activity by joining funding applications, facilitating access to data, information and field sites and promoting work directed at knowledge gaps evident in the City's environmental management.*
- *Assessing proposals for joint activity against the City's urban and open space policy framework and other pertinent city, regional or national policy frameworks to ensure the work is relevant and applicable.*
- *Acting as broker between parties seeking research/investigation into urban ecology concerns and those able to fund and resource the work.*
- *Involving other stakeholders where their input is important to achieve a successful outcome.*
- *Preparing and maintaining a database of both academic and physical project work in the area of urban ecology.*

The group is keen to obtain support from those interests who stand to gain from a clean green city image-export businesses, tourism, convention/conference industry, etc and will explore the difference between clean green **perceptions** and the **reality** of a clean green sustainable city.

REPRESENTATION

Current representation is:

Lincoln University:	Ian Spellerberg (convenor) Kevin Connery David Given Andrew Dakers Glen Stewart Lynn Torgerson
Christchurch City Council:	Rachel Barker Kerry Everingham Jenny Ridgen Jonathan Fletcher Kelvin McMillan Allan Watson
Environment Canterbury:	John Talbot

The group will report its activities to the parent bodies every six months.

POSSIBLE PROJECTS

The group has met twice so project development is in its infancy. However, proposals are being considered and include:

- Greenroof (Bioroof) Construction

  Research on the feasibility of greenroofs in Christchurch, based on extensive research and trials in Europe. Benefits have implications for air quality, energy, and hydrology cost-effectiveness of roofs.

- Structured Soils Near Compacted Areas

  Research and trial aggregate and soil mixes to ease compaction near tree plantings. Well developed techniques in Canada.

- Urban Wetlands - Natural Systems as Sinks

  Review the current practice and knowledge within Christchurch in regard to the use of urban wetlands as a natural sink and regulators of stormwater.

- Urban Wildlife and Urban Biogeography

  A landscape ecology approach to the urban wildlife could help to identify ways of optimising wildlife survival and help identify gaps and opportunities.

- Airwatch

  The Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation - Waterwatch Programme for Schools and Communities has proved very successful. Why not extend this to airwatch - a community based but standardised monitoring programme for air quality.

- Germ Plasm Banks for New Zealand Indigenous Plants

  There seems to be an opportunity to bring together the expertise of the Botanic Gardens and Lincoln University to establish facilities for long-term storage of native plant material, species and varieties.

- Well-Being and Perceptions

  Research on the link between well being and people's perceptions of how plants and animals and natural wildlife communities and spaces contribute to Christchurch, as being a good place to live in and work in.

The report has also been considered by the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee which decided that an annual seminar be held to receive progress reports on the outcomes of the groups work.

Staff Recommendation: That the information be received.

Chairman's Recommendation: That the information be received. The Committee looks forward to, at least, a closer association between the researchers and the Council.