

13. NATIVE TREES PLEASE! INTERPRETATION

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the options for interpretation of the Native Trees Please! planting site at Ernle Reserve and to revisit the initial request submitted in February 2002 for funding for this project.

In February 2002 a report was presented to the Board requesting funding of \$1,840 for an on-site information panel at Ernle Reserve to permanently explain to the public the long-term goals, nature and function of the Native Trees Please! site, to signal its importance as a Turning Point 2000 Millennium Project, and to acknowledge the Community Board and community support for the project.

Subsequently, a review of interpretative options has revealed that the approach outlined in the following report would be more effective at this time.

THE NATIVE TREES PROJECT

Neiel Drain, former Chairman of Native Trees Please!, explained the Native Trees Please! project in his original report to the Community Board in February 2002.

“Native Trees Please! was a Millennium 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. One of the aims has been to create city-wide ‘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.” (Neiel Drain, 2000)

Dominant tree species of matai, kahikatea, totara and a range of smaller sub-canopy trees were planted at Ernle Reserve in May 2000 by pupils of Thorrington and St Peter’s Schools. The school students alone planted some 600 trees and associated plants. A second planting was undertaken with supervision by City Care to ensure protection of a patch of regenerating bush close to the planting site. Schools continue to monitor the growth of the plantings. In the ensuing three years the plantings have grown substantially.

Native Trees Please! objectives are to:

- Provide an educational asset within each community board area
- Create a project in which schools and community groups can participate in the development
- Provide a natural recreation area within each community board area
- Restore some of the original plantings of Christchurch
- Provide a legacy of the year 2000 for future generations

THE INTERPRETATION CONCEPT

Several staff and original members of the Native Trees Please! group (Kerry Everingham, Ali Taylor-Hayhurst, Kay Holder, Colin Meurk, Neiel Drain and Kim Morland) met on 13 May 2003 and agreed that the following interpretive approaches would acknowledge the project and those involved and also raise awareness about Christchurch’s native habitats

Art Posts

Macrocarpa or railway sleeper interpretation posts with inset frost-resistant, hand-painted ceramic tiles highlighting key species will provide an upbeat, interesting way of recognising the Native Trees Please! plantings. Four to seven 100mm tiles would be inset into a macrocarpa post or railway sleeper (depending on angle of approach).

Interpretation posts are recommended for the Native Trees Please! sites for a number of reasons as follow:

- These colourful posts will highlight the biodiversity of Native Trees Please! sites
- They would acknowledge those involved in the project
- They would mark the sites as a Millennium planting

- They would provide a work of art in our parks
- They would include children's artwork on native themes
- They would provide plant, bird and invertebrate icons for each site, eg., for Travis a kahikatea, tree weta and shining cuckoo
- They would be less obtrusive than a sign
- Posts are less likely to be vandalised and less expensive to replace than signs – a recent sign survey found that signs in places with less surveillance were likely to be targets of vandalism

Learning Education Outside the Classroom Programme

The Christchurch City Council's Learning Education Outside the Classroom encourages teachers to use our parks and natural places for hands-on learning about our environment. Each of the Native Trees Please! sites provides a unique chance to monitor plant growth in different ecosystems, study native species, to observe changes to wildlife and soils over time, and to be involved with a restoration project.

A programme planner and brochure with a site map for teachers, highlighting how they can use the Native Trees Please! sites and get involved with other restoration projects, would support the programme.

Biodiversity Posters for the Christchurch City Council Website

A series of posters would support the education programme and be a cost-effective interpretation method for the greatest number of people. Posters could include the following topics:

- Wet Plains
- Port Hills
- Dry Plains
- The Coast

Information could include:

- Native Trees Please! title
- Ecosystem images and keys (designed for the publication Christchurch Naturally by Lucas and Associates)
- Native Trees Please! animal and plant icons from ceramic tiles
- A line acknowledging community board and community support for the project
- A line explaining the aim of the project
- A line encouraging people to get involved
- Contact details for more information
- Logos – Christchurch City Council, Native Trees Please!

CONCLUSION

The Native Trees Please! plantings will provide wonderful living museums and education sites for the future. The interpretive approach, including biodiversity messages as outlined in this report, will ensure that the significance of this Millennium project is maintained in perpetuity for the benefit of all citizens. It will also ensure that the support of community boards and the community involved with the project is acknowledged in a meaningful way.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Board consider providing funding up to a maximum of \$1,800, to be used to develop the following:

1. Art posts at each site.
2. A Learning Education Outside the Classroom programme planner and map brochure for teachers.
3. A set of posters to be sited on the Christchurch City Council website.

Chairperson's

Comment: Promoting community education is a key Board objective and the local schools have already contributed to this project. For discussion.