

6. 'NATIVE TREES PLEASE' INTERPRETATION

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The purpose of this report is to inform Community Boards of the options for interpretation of the Native Trees Please sites. Funding was originally requested for onsite signage, however, a review of interpretative options has revealed that the approach outlined in this 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 request to the Community Boards for funding for interpretation in February 2002.

“Native Trees Please was a planting project based on the concept of re-establishing representative New Zealand native plants species that originally existed on the various flood plain surfaces throughout what is now Christchurch. One of the aims has been to create 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 (Neiel Drain, 2000). The plan envisaged having one site with the appropriate underlying soil type, selected within each of the City’s six Community Boards and to plant a total of 2000 trees (symbolizing the year 2000) at each site.”

In the ensuing three years the plantings have grown substantially, particularly at Travis Wetland.

Native Trees Please Objectives: -

- To provide an educational asset within each Community Board area.
- To create a project in which schools and community groups can participate.
- To provide a natural recreation area within each Community Board area.
- To restore some of the original plantings of Christchurch .
- To provide a legacy of the year 2000 for our future generations.

THE INTERPRETATION CONCEPT

Several staff and original members of the Native Trees Please group met on May 13, 2003 (Kerry Everingham, Ali Taylor-Hayhurst, Kay Holder, Colin Meurk, Neiel Drain and Kim Morland) and agreed that the following interpretative 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 recognizing the Native Trees Please plantings. Four to seven 100mm tiles would be inset into a macrocarpa post or railway sleeper on three sites (depending on angle of approach).

Interpretation posts are recommended for the Native Trees Please sites for a number of reasons, as follows: -

- 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 map of site 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 interpretative 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

Recommendations: That the Community Boards support the use of the original funding for interpretation signage 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.

The Community Advocate comments:

"As the report indicates, the matter of a commitment to "Native Trees Please" was the subject of an earlier report to the Board (26 February 2002). At this time "a modest sum" (\$1,850) was sought for information ("interpretation") panels.

The Board, in adopting the recommendations, endorsed the work underway in planting at Yaldhurst, and agreed that an interpretation panel would be appropriate. The Board also agreed that part of the planting proposed for Yaldhurst Bush should also involve non local indigenous species. The Board's resolution was:

- “1. 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.
2. That \$1,850 be allocated from the Board’s discretionary budget to provide an interpretation panel at Yaldhurst Bush.
3. That future plantings consider the option for non-local indigenous species such as Kauri, Red Beech and Rimu.”

Members may recall that the subject of planting at Yaldhurst Bush has been before the Board many times in past years. Generally this has been through the Board’s annual allocations for Arbor Day planting (although this initiative has been more diversified in recent years) and, in mid 2001, there had been further reporting built around more planting and the proposal for diversion of the adjacent water race through the Bush site.

On the matter of the development incorporating the water race diversion it is noted that a concept plan was received by the (then) Works and Traffic Safety Committee on 19 June 2001. At that time the concept plan had also been submitted to the Selwyn District Council’s Water Race Sub-Committee, and there was an expectation that the final design would be presented to the Board and the Water Race Sub-Committee for final approval. This expectation was confirmed by the Board at its meeting on 3 July 2001.

On many occasions the pupils of Yaldhurst School have been involved with the annual planting routines and the Board has been supportive of the partnership established in this particular community.

More recently interest in the development of Yaldhurst Bush has been shown by the local residents, through the Yaldhurst Rural Residents Association. It would seem appropriate that further planting for the bush site should involve consultation with the Association.

On the matter of “interpretation” of the site it is considered that this should be handled separately to the LEOTC and website matters i.e. the original proposal for the Board’s funding to support an interpretation panel should be proceeded with, and the other initiatives be pursued through their own processes and budgets.

With a view to co-ordinating the remaining aspects of development of the Yaldhurst Bush site it is recommended that the Works, Traffic and Environment Committee be provided with an updated report identifying:-

- a) the planting required to complete the development of the site including the trees identified in part 3 of the Board’s 26 February 2002 resolutions;
- b) the proposal and timing for the water race diversion;
- c) the budget allocated for further development of Yaldhurst Bush; and
- d) the detail for a suitable interpretation panel based on that originally proposed.

Chairman’s

Recommendation: That the Works, Traffic and Environment Committee be provided with a report covering the matters referred to in the final paragraph of the Community Advocates comments above.