

7. RICCARTON BUSH TRUST – APPLICATION FOR FUNDING

General Manager responsible:	General Manager Corporate Affairs, DD: 941 8540
Officer responsible:	Corporate Finance Manager
Author:	Lisa Goodman, Community Board Principal Adviser

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of a request for funding assistance made by the Riccarton Bush Trust, for a safety audit/general tree health audit for the exotic trees in the grounds of Riccarton House.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Riccarton Bush Trust has the purpose of protecting the heritage and conservation values of Riccarton Bush, House and grounds. The Trust is seeking a grant of \$3,375 (incl. GST) from the Board to meet the costs of a safety audit/general tree health audit for the protected exotic trees in the grounds of Riccarton House. Many of these trees are up to 150 years old. The audit will:
 - (a) Highlight any safety issues with the trees and recommend any remedial works.
 - (b) Provide guidance for remedial tree work that will enhance both tree safety and tree health.
3. Each tree in the grounds of Riccarton House would have a documented hazard evaluation form, plus an assessment of recommended remedial work if any. The application notes that the community visiting or passing through the Riccarton House grounds will benefit from a safer environment and an enhanced visual experience.
4. The Trust's application advises that this audit should be carried out on a regular basis, but currently operational funding is not in place for this to happen. It is an unbudgeted project brought about by a number of recent tree/limb failures.
5. From the perspective of staff with expertise in tree management, carrying out an arboricultural evaluation and assessment on a tree resource of this significance is warranted. It should be undertaken on a regular basis and would be considered "best practice". The assessment is also likely to consider the growing environment and any action required to protect and maximise the life expectancy of these trees. Because of their significance, remedial measures to address any health and safety or structural issues identified in these trees is likely to be quite different to the action taken if the same conditions were present in a "normal" situation.
6. Ultimately this should just be part of the normal operational cost of maintaining a tree resource of this significance, similar to the way the historic buildings are managed and maintained on the site. In that respect, under legislation the Trust is able to levy the Council for funding to maintain and improve the House and grounds. The 2006/07 levy is \$108,310, and additional funding has been provided by the Council by way of a grant of \$161,690 (\$141,690 for operating costs and \$20,000 for capital costs).
7. Previous funding provided by the Board to the Trust has been a grant of \$5,000 in 2006 for the refurbishment of an historic water ram.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8. Grant funding history from the Council is outlined in paragraphs 6-7 above. The balance of the Board's Environment Committee Fund is \$14,275.

Do the Recommendations of this Report Align with 2006-16 LTCCP budgets?

9. Community Board project and discretionary funding is provided for under Community Grants funding identified on page 103 of the LTCCP. These funds support local projects or initiatives.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

10. There are no legal implications to consider in relation to this request for funding assistance

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

Do the recommendations of this report support a level of service or project in the 2006-16 LTCCP?

11. The levy and grant funding provided by the Council to the Riccarton Bush Trust falls under the Parks and Open Spaces group of activities in the LTCCP (see page 129, Urban Parks activity).

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?

12. Under the Strategic Direction "Healthy Environment", this funding request is relevant to the goals of "Strengthen the Garden City Image" (by providing a variety of safe, accessible and welcoming local Parks, open spaces and waterways), and "Identify, Protect and Enhance the City's Native and Exotic Ecosystems" (by working with partners to protect existing habitats for native species and establish new ones).

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

13. No external consultation is required.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Community Board considers whether to allocate \$3,375 from the Board to meet the costs of a safety audit/general tree health audit for the protected exotic trees in the grounds of Riccarton House.