

Environment Co-ordination Department Report

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February 2000

1. Regional Native Plant Guide (John Holmes)

To update the Committee on sales of the Guide, 4200 copies have now been either sold or distributed since its launch in October of last year. The success of the document and continued demand has meant we have now undertaken a second printing (another 3000 copies). The Guide is currently for sale in 40 places but we believe there are still further opportunities to increase this number.

Our intention is to keep promoting the Plant Guide to our existing retailers, and also to investigate the potential for sales through selected supermarkets. We will do a significant promotion at the start of the autumn planting season to stimulate demand again.

2. Regional Inventory of Ecological Enhancement Projects

As a Royal Society Fellow, Masterton teacher, Hertha James, is undertaking a comprehensive survey of the work of the Region's ecological groups and agencies. She is relating her findings to the Draft Biodiversity Strategy. The Council is pleased to be acting as Hertha's host organisation, since the information she obtains will be of considerable value to us, especially the Biosecurity Department and the Environment Division. Hertha commenced her research at the start of February. The Fellowship lasts for a year.

3. Pauatahanui Inlet (Tim Porteous)

As Councillors will be aware, the Pauatahanui Inlet Advisory Group reported back its progress to a meeting of interested parties in December. The Group presented its Vision and a suite of actions it saw as necessary for the sound ecological management of the Inlet and its surrounding catchments. Its interim recommendations are (in summary):

- That there should be an administrative mechanism or group to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan;
- That a review of existing research and information gaps be undertaken urgently;
- That the management agencies for various aspects of the Inlet be consulted on the issues identified;
- That the wider community (beyond the local area) be consulted;
- That a final action plan be completed by June 30; and
- That the Advisory Group continue until this time.

Tim has been working on these recommendations, particularly the second and third bullet points. A brief for the research gap analysis has been written and we are exploring possible areas where research on such matters as sediment and hydrology might be useful. Talks with some of the management agencies have taken place and we have sought feedback from the regional community through an article in *Elements*.

4. **Environmental Education (Jo Campbell and Richard Morgan)**

The environmental education team is making good progress planning and developing the various programmes of the Environmental Education and Communication Strategy (i.e., Care Groups, Learnwell, and Business Bridges). We are also undertaking a number of activities of an experimental nature to test ideas and equipment for later use in these programmes (e.g., a water quality testing kit that can be used by members of community care groups, activities for school children to learn about water, and so on).

To make sure that the environmental trails we will develop as part of the Learnwell programme meet educational requirements and are taken up by teachers, we have enlisted the help of a focus group of teachers and educationalists. This group will be an invaluable source of advice over the next eight months.

We will report back to the Committee in detail later in this financial year on how we plan to implement the various aspects of the education initiative.