



Information Report

To	Environment and Hearings Committee
From	Andre Phillips, Building Manager
Date	07 August 2012
Subject	Update Report

1. Executive Summary

This regular report provides an update to the Committee on a number of issues in the Environmental Services Group.

2. Group Manager's Update

This report provides an update on some significant activities being carried out by the Environmental Services Group. Our staff strive to deliver good customer service on a daily basis. At times in regulatory functions, they receive few thanks, but I remind them that often the entire community are their 'Customer'. You will see from this report that there is a diverse range of important functions being delivered. In particular, I would acknowledge the staff from across the Council, who assisted with the Forest and Rural Fire conference this month and ensured that it was a successful showcase for South Taranaki.

3. Subject Matter

3.1 Significant Applications

Kaupokonui Quarry

At the time of the last Update Report two appeals against the Council's decision to grant consent for the proposed quarry near Kaupokonui had been lodged with the Environment Court. Since then we have been working through the appeal process. The Court was initially quite keen to resolve the appeals quickly and were looking at holding a hearing in August.

The appellants and the applicant have been working on resolving the appeals outside the court process and requested the Court delay the process so that they can complete this. The Court has agreed to a delay until 24 August, but has indicated they are likely to accept a further delay if negotiations are progressing well at that time.

The Council is not directly involved in the negotiations and consequently we are unable to provide any more detailed information about this process.

Contaminated Land Remediation

Four resource consents were issued to Shell Todd Oil Services earlier this year to remediate some land that was contaminated by oil and gas activities. Work at the first site has commenced with an investigation of the level of contamination at the sites. The

investigation has shown that approximately 300 m³ of soil is contaminated and needs to be removed from the site. Of that 50 m³ will be taken to Wellington where it will be stabilised so that it can be safely land filled. The balance has a lower level of contamination and will be transported to a consented land farm near Waitara. The remaining three sites will be remediated successively once the work at this site is complete.

3.2 Significant Projects

Significant Natural Areas Fund

The winter months are usually quite busy for farmers doing protection projects. This year we have paid out six funding grants during the winter period. Four of the six relate to areas identified as Significant Natural Areas in the District Plan. Half of our Significant Natural Areas now have some form of ongoing legal protection. There is typically a quiet period for the Fund at this time of year when farmers are busy with calving and have other priorities.

Taranaki Biodiversity Forum Accord

A signing ceremony was recently held for the Taranaki Biodiversity Fund Accord which came to the Committee for approval last year. The Accord is believed to be the first multi sector agreement relating to biodiversity in New Zealand and has attracted quite a lot of attention. Mayor Ross Dunlop signed on behalf of the South Taranaki District Council. The Minister of Conservation, the Honourable Kate Wilkinson attended the ceremony and witnessed the signing of the Accord by the 19 signatories. The Accord includes agreed priorities and targets for protecting and enhancing Taranaki's indigenous biodiversity and is expected to increase cooperation between the organisations involved with biodiversity in Taranaki.

Liquor Strategy, Swimming Pool Policy and Litter Infringement Policy

The Liquor Strategy is now open for public comment until 17 August. The Swimming Pool Policy and the Litter Infringement Policy were accepted by resolution at the full Council meeting on 2 July. These policies are an important tool for staff and will assist with the enforcement of relevant legislation, resulting in positive environmental improvement in South Taranaki.

Bylaw Reviews

We are currently reviewing several bylaws, the first being the South Taranaki District Council Liquor Control Bylaw. Issues under review include the zoning of liquor bans in the district, the times at which they apply and changes to the schedule. We are also reviewing the liquor ban signage with a standard sign being created for use in the entire district.



3.3 Matters of Interest

Resource Consent Customer Survey

We have recently received the results of the annual Resource Consent Customer Survey. Surveys were sent out to 65 customers from the previous financial year and 14 responses were received. This is a 21.5% return rate which is consistent with other years. Unfortunately the number of surveys sent out is less than in previous years because there have been fewer applications and several people have lodged multiple applications. The low number of returned surveys has affected the quality of the data.

The surveys were analysed by Ella Borrows of A1 Working Solutions and show an overall satisfaction level of 82%. This is slightly less than the target of 85% but shows a relatively high level of satisfaction among customers who have used the Council's planning service in the last 12 months. Unfortunately one customer gave each question the lowest score possible which has influenced the results more than it would have if the sample size had

been higher. The results showed some differences between repeat customers and first time customers. Repeat customers tended to rate the service they had received highly in comparison to other Councils they deal with while first time customers were less complimentary.

The summary of the results recommends a different survey methodology for future surveys to increase the sample size and some changes to our online application service, which hasn't been widely used. It also indicates a need to be diligent in delivering pre-application advice to first time applicants who are often less familiar with Council processes than returning customers.

Building Control

Over the next quarter the building control unit will be audited by International Accreditation New Zealand for accreditation as a Building Consent Authority. This is a very significant issue, as accreditation will enable the Unit to continue to provide building regulatory services to the district.

This will be the units third time through the process and IANZ have indicated that their expectations are being raised with each audit.

Over the next couple of months the unit will be undertaking reviews of all its processes and operations to insure that we are in the best possible shape for auditing in November.

Rural Fire

The Rural fire sector has been as expected very quiet of the winter months with no call outs to report. We did however have the opportunities to show case our district by hosting the Forest and Rural Fire Association of New Zealand Conference held at the Hub.

This was the first time that the conference was held outside a major centre. Therefore it was important that the South Taranaki District Council could provide a quality experience. That challenge was achieved and the feedback was extremely positive. Doug Ashford the chairman of FRFANZ spoke to me on the last day making the comment that of all his years of attending the annual conference, he has never received so many positive comments that related to the whole week. In nearly all other cases there was always something that did not go quite right, but in our case he could not fault any part of the programme.

3.4 Review of Legislation

Earthquake –prone Buildings

All of New Zealand will be awaiting the findings of the Royal commission of enquiry for the Christchurch earthquake. It is expected that any recommendations as a result of the enquiry will be part of a report currently due to go to the government sometime in November 2012. The Building Regulation Sector expects that a directive will consequently be made by the government, relating to building strength. This could have significant consequences for buildings that do not reach the strength level prescribed by the Crown.

This Council has a policy in place that was reviewed and adopted in 2010. It is a requirement under the Building Act 2004 s132 (4) that a review of a policy be undertaken at intervals of not more than five years. Any reviews made earlier than the five year requirement will only take place if directed by central Government, or if initiated by the Council. Any policy review could also address future planning for our town centres, if strengthening and / or replacement of our building stock is to occur. This will likely be a significant issue for the Council, if an increased level of building strength is required.

Outside of this process it has become very evident from the amount of requests I have been receiving for the names of engineers who undertake building inspections from current

building owners that the insurance companies have taken a lead in this area by requesting assessments be done on buildings before they will insure them.

Technical Advisory Group Report

In October 2011 the Government established a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to review the principles of the Resource Management Act 1991 and report back to cabinet with recommendations. The Canterbury earthquakes identified some weaknesses in the way the Act deals with Natural Hazards and the TAG was asked to investigate options for strengthening these provisions.

The TAG has recently released a report summarising the results of its investigations and some recommendations. In broad terms the TAG recommends some changes to Sections 6 and 7 of the Act to add Natural Hazards and Urban and Infrastructure Development to the list of matters to be considered when Councils grant resource consents.

The Ministry for the Environment is currently accepting feedback on the report which will be taken into account when deciding whether to make the changes recommended. Council Officers are relatively comfortable with the changes proposed and do not plan to provide any feedback.

3.5 Enforcement Issues

Dog Attacks and District Court Prosecutions

The Council has successfully conducted its first prosecutions against owners of dogs that have attacked either stock or people. Two owners were recently sentenced at the District Court for attacks on stock, both receiving fines and orders for reparation totalling approximately \$5,000 each. Another two prosecutions are underway for the owners of dogs responsible for two serious attacks that resulted in people being hospitalised. The maximum penalty for this offence is \$20,000 and three years imprisonment.

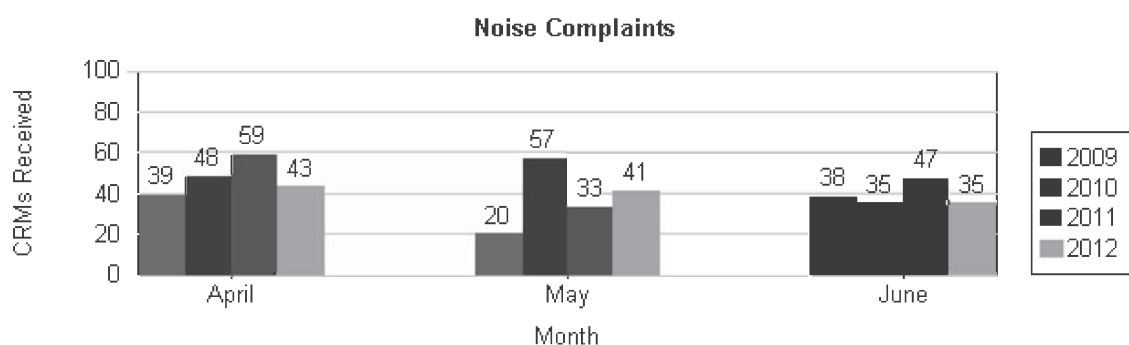
Parking

Electronic infringement system for parking enforcement is soon to be introduced. This means that Karen, our Parking Control Officer, will no longer need to write out tickets manually but merely enter details into her portable computer. A small ticker tape infringement notice, (which is tear resistant and waterproof), is printed out and left under the windscreen wiper.

The new system should speed up administration as the computer can be plugged in upon Karen's return and data is uploaded in seconds. The role of parking enforcement is an important one, as it relates to protecting public safety by detecting unregistered & unsafe motor vehicles; Plus the role assists with the efficient use of available parking spaces.

Noise Complaints

Reported noise complaints continue to remain lower than last year. Several recidivist noise offenders in the district have had noise abatement notices issued for periods of up to three months, which has provided a longer term solution than responding to every incident. Our proactive enforcement of noise control has been greatly appreciated by residents of neighbouring properties.



3.6 Objections by Consent Holders to Resource Consent Conditions

There have been no objections to consent conditions since the last Environment and Hearings Committee meeting.



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