

# **OPEN**

# **MINUTE ITEM**

# **ATTACHMENTS**

**Ordinary meeting of the  
Environment Committee**

**Thursday 3 September 2020  
Commencing at 9.00a.m.  
Council Chamber**

**Civic House**

**110 Trafalgar Street, Nelson**

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**Environment Committee**

**3 September 2020**

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**REPORT R20282**

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**Environment Committee - Chairperson's Report**

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**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the Committee on matters relating to its areas of responsibility

**2. Recommendation**

*That the Environment Committee*

- 1. Receives the report Environment Committee - Chairperson's Report (R20282).**

**3. Food Resiliency and Climate Change**

- 3.1 During this period of uncertainty, greater appreciation of the importance of local food resiliency during a crisis - climate or COVID-19, has evolved. The pandemic triggered rapid purchases in seeds and seedlings and provided time for 'bubbles' to plant and grow their own food.
- 3.2 Increasing food resiliency means improving the ability of our food supply to resist changes in supply chains, and ensuring everyone has access to the food they need for wellbeing, in a way that supports the health of the environment.
- 3.3 We also have a greater understanding of how vulnerable essential life forces - soil and water - are to climate change. And we now know food production and waste are massive contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. Yet, they could be the opposite.

**4. Growing Food Differently**

- 4.1 As part of the COP21 Paris Agreement 2015, New Zealand signed the 4per1000 Initiative. As part of this agreement New Zealand agreed to diversify land use towards zero carbon. This Initiative focuses on increasing carbon sequestration through ecologically conscious land and soil management. It was developed by French Minister of Agriculture, Stéphane Le Foll. Also called 'agroecology', France has one of the most progressed regenerative agriculture programs in the world.

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- 4.2 Regenerative agriculture focuses on utilising the deep root and fungal systems of plant growth to restore soils and sequester carbon. Plants also absorb CO<sub>2</sub> through photosynthesis. It promotes a no-till and minimising chemical sprays and fertilisers in its approach to horticulture and land use. This approach improves soil structure and decreases soil erosion, run off and sedimentation. Instead of tilling, it utilises thatching layers and mulching which improves water retention and creates local microclimates. It also promotes composting food and green waste to create biologically living soils, as well as ecologically managed small herd grazing, because composted manure naturally enriches soils. As well as increasing food production, regenerative agriculture can result in increased income potential, and increased nutrient content of food, compared with chemical based intensive farming practises.

**5. Creating Regenerative Urban Spaces**

- 5.1 Committed to a Zero Carbon future, we should consider healthy food choices, grown restoratively for our planet. Urban community gardens, edible landscaping and food forests are able to play an important role in providing local plant-based food sources.
- 5.2 Improving local food resiliency also creates greater connected communities, improves health and wellbeing outcomes, and improves environmental outcomes in our recreational green spaces. It delivers on one of the objectives of Good Food Cities which is to increase the consumption of healthy plant-based foods.
- 5.3 The Parks and Reserves Activity Management Plan (AMP) is proposing work in the draft Long Term Plan to develop an Urban Greening Plan which will provide a greater strategic direction for options for Nelson's food resiliency, city greening and regenerative landscapes. This will allow the current work programmes and Adopt a Spot work relating to food resiliency to better align with Council's vision and objectives.
- 5.4 This can be through increasingly applying regenerative agriculture principles in our green spaces. Council currently plants fruit and nut tree species for community use along with 'bee friendly' plant species. Species are selected to be low maintenance to reduce spray use and high health for natural resistance to pest and disease. This is achieved via both planned work programmes and via various community groups where fruit and nut planting is undertaken through the 'Adopt a Spot' programme.
- 5.5 Council currently applies best practice amenity horticultural principles by planting species suitable to climatic conditions with consideration to minimising maintenance requirements. This includes a focus on weed control and water retention by utilising mulching and groundcover plantings where possible.
- 5.6 Through the draft Parks and Reserves AMP, it is proposed to develop ideas for Tactical Greening Initiatives, to further promote regeneration of our urban space at a community level. Also proposed in the draft AMP

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will be a glyphosate policy in 2021/22, to ensure best practice and cost effectiveness, as well as minimising unnecessary use of glyphosate as a chemical weed control in Council administered spaces.

**'Adopt a Spot'**

- 5.7 Recently, community groups such as the Nelson Environment Centre, Community Compost, Incredible Edibles, Good Food Cities, Ropu Kaitiaki - Group of Guardians and the Nelson Tasman Climate Forum Food and Community Resilience Subgroups have been seeking to increase food resiliency through creating areas where the community can come together and grow edibles.
- 5.8 I want to acknowledge and thank the Parks and Reserves Team for supporting these volunteers through the process of its 'Adopt a Spot' Program, particularly at Paddy's Knob Reserve and Cattle Market Reserve.

**Liveable Cities**

- 5.9 The City Development Team is having 15 PlaceKit modules installed in Upper Trafalgar Street shortly along with some rearranging of the other kit (hammocks, picnic tables, etc.) Five of the 15 PlaceKit modules can be used as planters. A balanced palette of edibles and ornamentals will be included to create desired aesthetic outcomes.
- 5.10 Conversations are taking place between Nelmac, Council and the Good Food Cities Food and Community Resiliency Subgroups as to how Council can support the community to maintain these planters. We will also be seeking local business support.
- 5.11 Within the Riverside Youth Pop-Up Space, eight of the potential 25 PlaceKit modules could be used as planters, including for edible plants. We are keen to explore collaboration with Enviroschools and Garden to Table.
- 5.12 Council can continue to consider further food resiliency projects in future.

**6. Waste Minimisation**

- 6.1 Diverting urban food and green waste from landfill through composting, not only benefits soil health, but it also decreases the subsequent greenhouse gas emissions generated from an otherwise anaerobic process that would take place in land fill.
- 6.2 As part of the Annual Plan deliberations this year we considered and approved an organic food waste trial using budget from the Climate Change reserve.
- 6.3 We received multiple submissions from our community supporting this initiative and encouraging Council to support developing a social procurement policy and in this particular case consider Community

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Compost as delivering other important community objectives as part of the procurement process.

- 6.4 As outlined in the Infrastructure Quarterly Report, Officers have now completed procurement and Community Compost will undertake the work which is expected to commence in October 2020.
- 6.5 Whilst this might appear to be only a small step forward to some, this is hugely significant with regards to creating a paradigm shift. Council's largest GGE contributor is the landfill. To remove food waste from landfill and turn it into living compost which we can then locally grow our food in is one of the simplest steps we can take in terms of individually and collectively reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. This is the first step.
- 6.6 Combined with Nelson Environment Centres Kai Rescue Programme this is also a step in the right direction towards meeting one of the Good Food Cities objectives which is to reduce food loss and waste by 50% from a 2015 baseline by 2030.
- 6.7 Council also recently purchased a new e-bike and trailer through the Climate Emergency Fund. Community Compost will use this to collect food waste from restaurants and cafes. The trailer includes fun, colourful and informative branding 'Turning Waste into Wonderful'. So look out for it on a Friday 'out and about' in our CBD!

**7. Enhanced Biodiversity Restoration and Climate Change**

- 7.1 Protection and enhancement of Whakatū's unique biodiversity is an important part of Council's role as a kaitiaki of the land it is responsible for. A changing climate poses a threat to this biodiversity, which is critical for the health of our environment.
- 7.2 We already support ecological restoration through our Nelson Nature programme, but Council can also aim to apply biodiversity principles across more of its activities. For example, we can increase the variety of indigenous plants endemic to Whakatū when planting, including edible and medicinal indigenous species, mow less, spray less, and plant appropriate species including 'bird and bee friendly' flowering plants.
- 7.3 Staff are continuing to consider where we can transition towards more sustainable practices in the development of the next Draft Parks and Reserves Activity Management Plan. In the Draft Transport Activity Management Plan staff are considering how to create Green Nature Corridors as part of our road reserves. Through the "Adopt a Spot" Program we can also continue to support community groups such as Friends of the Maitai and other volunteer groups taking care of Council-owned land.

**Saxton Creek Restoration Project**

- 7.4 The Fresh Fruit Company of Nelson, TA Freshco Nelson, is a seasonal export apple packhouse located in Stoke. They employ on average 75 seasonal workers, of which 40 are Tongan RSE's. Their packing season

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came to an end in late June, however the RSE's currently cannot get home to Tonga. Whilst waiting for repatriation they offered to contribute back to the Whakatū community.

- 7.5 Staff in our Science and Environment and Parks and Reserves Teams contacted Nelmac which offered to organise some mulching work at the Main Road Stoke end of Saxton Creek. Nelmac provided tools, equipment, and the health and safety induction, as well as organising the mulch transport and overseeing the work.
- 7.6 Council funded the transport of the mulch - with up to 500m<sup>3</sup> mulch available for spreading. The work has just started and I visited the site on Monday.
- 7.7 The mulching work being undertaken by the RSE workers will help the native plantings at Saxton Field thrive through dry weather, and also reduce the amount of chemical weed sprays needed for weed control – so our local biodiversity will really benefit as well.
- 7.8 The offer of RSE labour support from Freshco has been welcomed by Nelson City Council, and we really appreciate the input of both Freshco and Nelmac in helping to make this work happen. It's great to see social enterprise and environmental stewardship coming together for a great outcome.

**Zealandia**

- 7.9 Paul Atkins, CEO, of Zealandia recently visited the Brook Waimarama Sanctuary and met with Councillors and staff to share Zealandia's extraordinary 500-year Vision to restore a Wellington valley's forest and freshwater ecosystems as closely as possible to their pre-human state. Following his visit I had the opportunity to visit Zealandia and was shown first-hand what an incredible difference humans can make when they work together collectively to restoring indigenous flora and fauna. The success in the past decade is outstanding - with results including rapidly increasing some bird species populations in the Greater Wellington Region and saving other rare species from extinction.
- 7.10 Set around a picturesque reservoir it is now home to some of New Zealand's most rare and extraordinary wildlife - all thriving wild in a world-first protected sanctuary. The 225 hectare (500+ acre) ecosanctuary is a ground-breaking conservation project. Its 8.6km fence has been successful in keeping out introduced mammalian predators. Eighteen species of native wildlife have been reintroduced back into the area, some of which were previously absent from mainland New Zealand for over 100 years. Birds such as the tūī, kākā and kererū, once extremely rare in the region, are all now common sights around central Wellington. Their populations have grown from virtual extinction in the Greater Wellington Region to repopulation numbers in the thousands. Other vulnerable native species such as tīeke, hīhi, little spotted kiwi, and tuatara remain thriving safely in the sanctuary.

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- 7.11 Research increasingly indicates that on top of this biodiversity success, as a consequence of greater contact with the natural world there are social, health and wellbeing transformations for the people living in the Wellington urban area. Coined a "Nature Dose" spending time in nature, volunteering in nature and experiencing more nature in your backyard can result in decreased stress, depression and anxiety and increased social cohesion and positive mental health. As such Zealandia's living purpose also includes focusing on radically changing the way people connect with and value nature in their daily life.

**Author: Kate Fulton, Chairperson**

**Attachments**

Nil