

Environmental Management Committee meeting - 26th April 2011

The meeting today got away to a bit of a later start, at 1004hrs as Chairman Joe Carr welcomed all.

Apologies were received for 4; CEO Ken Patterson, Richard Booth, Brian McEwing and Di Maxwell but another officer was present to represent him. Nicole Anderson was believed to be coming late and Cr Bill Rossiter claimed Chair Craig Brown was absent, but hoped to arrive later.

The declaration of Conflicts of Interest and the chair stated that any 'Conflicts of Interest' were to be advised item by item as they progressed through the agenda and any appropriate action to be taken. He personally was not going to Chair Item No 6 as he resided in close proximity to this project.

Time now 1006hrs and Item No. 1 Confirmation of Minutes - 22 February 2011. Cr Bill Rossiter was missing page 9 *but many may have thought it was the reverse of page 9 that was of more interest to him.*

Cr Graeme Ramsey wanted an update on the sourcing of poplars. He was politely told Item No 9 was all about the sourcing of poplars. *Have you been caught out Graeme, Have you not read the agenda for today?*

Nicole Anderson as expected arrives at 1007hrs.

Item No. 2 at 1009hrs, Balance farm Environment and New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards.

Deputy CEO/Operations Director Tony Phipps advised that in the past they had invited winners to attend and do presentations.

Joe Carr was very supportive of the awards as they were based on good 'farming productive land use'. (Good explanation on page 10 of agenda, 2nd paragraph)

River Schemes and Works - Update Report, Item No. 3 (pg12) at 1013hrs.

Bruce Howse, Land/River Senior Programme Manager gave an update followed by a barrage of questions which he capably answered.

NRC Chairman Craig Brown arrived at 1020hrs.

One of the committee members, Dr Greg Blunden wishes for a presentation from Bruce Howse and this is to be arranged for a future meeting.

Item No. 4 at 1026hrs Appointment to the KeriKeri-Waipapa River Liaison Committee Cr Bronwyn Hunt had a query about no nominations for some of the positions and required some clarification. This was duly auctioned.

Gravel Management in Northland Rivers; Item No. 5 (1027hrs). Bruce Howse explained that gravel had accumulated in some rivers and extraction was necessary.

Cr Tony Davies-Colley felt that the RMA (Resource Management Act) had scared farmers from gravel removal. There needed to be publicity to enable extraction in a controlled way.

Cr Hunt emphasized that there must be good policies in place to monitor.

Cr Graeme Ramsey believed it was interesting to determine where gravel should be and shouldn't be as it's a natural process.

Bruce Howse confirmed there was qualified staff who could advise.

Cr Hunt wanted confirmation if there were costs involved for staff to go and advise.

Bruce Howse assured her there were no costs for visits and advice.

Chairman Joe Carr vacates the chair as previously discussed and Cr Graeme Ramsey launches into Item No. 6 Environment Fund Progress Report at 1044hrs.

Cr Rossiter felt this item brought changes to the rules.

Dr Greg Blunden explained that the funding was going into large life style blocks. They were well advised to assist them in that they know where some of the biggest problems are.

Cr Tony Davies-Colley queried whether they were better to look at the methodology to see if it can be improved.

Joe Carr claimed it was a small fund and they had tried to keep it out of the political arena.

Cr Bill Rossiter felt they needed to watch out for ratepayers improving their properties without environmental gain. Some were not aware of the need to protect forests or streams.

Craig Brown suggested that priorities should be emphasized. E.g. Protect Rivers. We get principles right and must spend on priorities.

Dean Evans, Land Programme Manager gave clarification of the criteria for funds from the Environment Fund.

With Joe Carr now back at the reigns for Item No. 7 Pest Control for High Value, Privately Owned Indigenous Forests (1057hrs)

Cr Bill Rossiter states that \$ for \$ they are getting good value for the money.

Mr Geoff Gover, Forestry Industry representative agreed.

Cr Ramsey suggested that they needed the criteria and weighting for the fund.

It was now 1103hrs and it was onto Item No. 8, Reducing the Cost of Pest Control Licences.

Tony Phipps helped by discussing this item and explaining some details.

Tony Davies-Colley claimed this item was damning of the government showing the cost of democracy was high. He had information that more harmful products were available over the counter while other items needed a licence. The issue was they needed low cost to eradicate pests and ERMA (Environmental Risk Management Authority) by doing this were going in the wrong direction.

Mr Chris Jenkins, Department of Conservation, suggested a letter be sent to ERMA outlining the issues.

Tony Davies-Colley believed there was plenty of opportunity to keep the costs of courses down.

Cr Crichton Christie believed "they were killing the goose that laid the golden egg by charging high prices for licences and giving money away on Item No.7" (*The previous Item on Pest Management*) "and were renewals really necessary?"

Joe Carr explained that the 'applicant may change.' A letter needs to be drafted, circulated to committee members and then sent to ERMA.

Crichton Christie suggested a letter also go to the local MP.

Item No. 9 Sourcing Poplars for Northland Soil Conservation Update Report. *This is what you were waiting for Graeme.*

It was now 1114hrs and Cr Tony Davies-Colley advises that some Councils grow their own trees.

There was quite a bit of discussion to this item.

Maybe some prospects sitting around the table that may branch out to growing poplars? Could nearly see \$ signs in their eyes!!

Chair Joe Carr states we need a realistic approach to this.

Wetlands Project Update, Item No. 10 at 1128hrs.

Joe Carr invited Mr Murray Douglas and staff member Tess Dacre, Monitoring Programme Manager - Water & Waste to join the committee at the table to take part in the discussions on the agenda item. *Joe, a real great touch to the meeting, great to see you involving people with the team.*

Tony Phipps gave an update on the project about what wetlands Northland had and how the NRC wanted to work with landowners.

Cr Bronwyn Hunt asked the cost of the project which was revealed and Cr Ramsey gave her support for the question being asked.

Item No. 11 River Trends. Tony Phipps gave an update at 1137hrs. Northland results are consistent with National findings.

Tony Davies-Colley queried whether the targets were achievable, or were they aiming for a pristine environment. If the benchmark is too high, what target are you aiming for? The Waipoua River is deemed to be the best in Northland, *but still fails to be pristine.* Cr Davies-Colley asks if they were 'writing a report to shoot themselves in the foot. What is the target?'

Time was getting on during the debate and many questions answered by Emma Simpson, Environmental Monitoring Officer - SOE.

Chair Joe Carr realizing time was dwindling suggested "We better rattle our dags as we have some major items on the agenda and thanked Emma for her help on this item.

Item No. 12 (1155hrs) Community Waste Water Treatment Plant Discharges - Current Compliance Status.

Tony Phipps gave an insight into the WWTP's (Waste Water Treatment Plants). Some have met with their resource consents and some have not. Some are also on 2nd chance at meeting their standards.

Cr Joe Carr questioned "How can they manage, without a management plan?"

Cr Tony Davies-Colley queried what were the time frames if there was no action before abatement notices were issued.

Cr Bill Rossiter states “What’s an abatement notice going to do , we are dealing with sewerage plants” *Interesting opinion Mr Rossiter, you have been there a long time, now Ladies and Gentlemen you know why Northland has sewage issues, un-swimmable beaches and harbours, polluted estuaries and streams, if Councillors have that opinion. Shame on you Willy.*

He continued, *after removing his boot from his mouth,* “Do we have the expertise in our Council to advise?” *It’s getting worse Bill, Quit while you still can.*

Tony Phipps replied ‘Yes we do’

Someone quipped ‘A number have management plans outstanding’

Tony Davies-Colley has his say ‘If you are lenient to one player you need to show the same lenience to the others’. *I think what Tony is saying is there should only be one rule book.*

Cr Bronwyn Hunt believed ‘we must have fairness. Far North District Council has been there for years and haven’t got it right’

Tess Dacre claimed that all FNDC plants were operating **either** under a current consent or an expired consent. That is to say, that they are all covered by consent conditions of some sort. There are 4 FNDC plants currently operating under expired consents (of a total of 16). Something we shouldn’t be at all pleased about.

Some obviously need to toughen up a bit and sort out all these ongoing issues to enhance our environment. Isn’t that what NRC are there for?

Ms Nicole Anderson, representing Cultural Interests, questioned the public liability if something goes badly wrong.

Tony Phipps replied ‘that liability was well covered. FNDC gets leniency, but Amnesty, NO.’

Cr Tony Davies-Colley asked if they could give the public some confidence that FNDC will comply with some time frames. If not do they, NRC, have to put a peg in the sand. *Tony, good call, I and many others would be only too pleased to help you hammer the peg in all the Districts, that are flouting their responsibilities on this issue. Bring it on.*

Tony Davies-Colley continued asking “what section of the RMA (Resource Management Act) allows for poor financial management to let you off the hook?”

Bronwyn Hunt supports by saying it is time to work together to work on these critical issues.

Cr Joe Carr suggests an addition to the recommendation, to have this as a standing item on the agenda, to keep it under regular focus

Cr Crichton Christie wants the original recommendation. *Yes Crichton bringing this up every meeting certainly won’t let you look great. As a WDC Councillor for many years, an Infrastructure chairman and still in charge as a Councillor of a sewerage system with issues, really you don’t want to be reminded of the failings. Fix it and it will go away!*

Cr Joe Carr still wants the added amendment, it is voted on and it’s Crichton Christie who is the only one against it standing on the agenda.

Item No. 13 Farm Dairy Effluent Monitoring Programme- Annual report 2010/11.

With the time now at 1219hrs Mr Murray Douglas gave an insight into his background and an update on the item. The Regional Council does its role, the dairy industry had 'upped the anti' to comply but there needed to be clarity and all had to aim at the same. Tess Dacre informed there were over 950 farms in Northland on the program in response to Cr Bronwyn Hunt's query.

Mr Murray Douglas confirmed 'If people don't constantly comply, then there must be enforcement'. *You are so correct Murray, some in authority need to get tougher.* Tony Davies-Colley whilst explaining that there were a number of issues about a risk to the environment, discharges to the environment and the risk in general, actually enlightened us all present to a new word for the dictionary.....Easier. *I think that's how Tony spelt it, but by all means check with him and if that's not right I am happy to correct it here. I've checked a few dictionaries and they don't appear to know so guess they will be checking with Tony also. 'Spell check' also had an issue with this.*

Time really getting into the lunch break at 1233hrs so Item No. 14 Report on Environmental Monitoring for the Period 1 March 2011 - 31 March 2011. There was very little discussion on this. In fact there was none. So it was on to the next item.

Time at 12.34hrs Item No. 14 Juvenile Oyster Mortality Rate Update Report. In Rian Elliot's absence Ben Lee gave a brief update.

Cr Bill Rossiter questioned about whether there was an effect only on the farmed oyster or does it also affect the rock oysters.

Ben clarified that there was no effect on the natural rock oyster.

Bill was happy but some-one tell him it's a fallacy about oysters, they are all BLUFF.

The meeting closed at 1237hrs. Joe apologizing for the lateness and Items 16, 17 and 18 (all presentations) postponed until the June meeting due to a lack of time. It was decided in future to start the Environmental Committee meetings at 0930hrs.

So it is now off for lunch and the Councillors, a quick bite, before the afternoon Finance meeting.

[LINK to appropriate Agenda](#)