

STAFF REPORT

TO: Environment and Planning Committee

FROM: Jeremy Butler, Environmental Education Officer

REFERENCE: E394 - EcoFest
A902 - Environmental Awards

DATE: 9 January 2008

SUBJECT: Report on the 2007 Ecofest event and the latest
Environmental Awards - EP08/01/09

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This paper briefs Council on two environmental education initiatives held in the latter part of last year and provides an accountability report to Councillors..

2. ECOFEST

A very successful Ecofest programme was run in 2007. During the pre-Expo week public bus tours were run which visited a range of highly efficient, low environmental footprint homes and businesses. The home tours continue to be extremely popular. There appears to be a strong interest in sustainable building within the district and this reflect a growing national awareness of ones environmental footprint. There is also a strong link between sensible design and the ongoing costs of running a house. Unfortunately the business tour was less successful with fewer business people signing up.

The Ecofest Expo itself attracted approximately the same number of people as the 2006 event (approximately 8000). Commercial exhibitors continue to be very positive about the Expo, suggesting a good uptake of products and services during and following the event. The event remains viable and we have been able to use the small surplus generated each year to run the Smarthome and the Smart Living Month (which is generally held around March).

In 2008 there will be several additional challenges as the Trafalgar Centre will not be available. Therefore, a decision has been made to hold the Expo at Founders Park. This presents a number of increased costs including hiring a marquee, new signage, possible security contractors and fencing. However by utilising the accumulated surplus funds it is anticipated that the event can be run without any increase in funding from Council.

In 2008 it is intended that many of the pre Expo events be run much as they were in 2007. We intend to persist with the business tour and market it more heavily, as it is seen as an important and growing aspect of the sustainability drive. The success of the home tours taken together with the feedback from the public suggests that there

is a demand for advice on sustainable building options. In the future Council may want to consider options for providing such a service via the Eco-design advisor service sponsored by EECA.

It is our intention that the Founders Ecofest Expo should have a strong emphasis on sustainable transport with the free buses – which were a tremendous success in 2007 – being run from throughout the Tasman District. Also, in an effort to make the Expo even more “behaviour changing” rather than just “awareness raising”, it is intended to make many of the displays more interactive and engaging.

In 2009 and beyond, staff and management from both NCC and TDC are seeking to grow the Ecofest considerably with the aim of making it New Zealand’s premier event of its sort. If this approach is supported by Council it may possibly require an increase in Council funding as re-branding and greater publicity is likely to be required. However, we will also be able to increase the charges to stall-holders and exhibitors. The financial implications of growing the event will be looked at in more detail at a later date.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

The awards programme in 2007 was again successful, although entries were slightly down on last year with 26.

All sponsors were retained, except for Ngati Rarua Atiawa Iwi Trust who normally sponsor the “Heritage – cultural” category who this year sought to enter the awards themselves. This sponsorship was covered by the Tasman District Council’s heritage subcommittee. New sponsorship was sought for the slightly remodelled Primary Producer categories. However, the new sponsorship was not needed as there were no entries in those categories.

The ongoing lack of interest by the primary production sector is of concern and ideas will be explored for the 2008 awards as to how to engage farmers and horticulturalists. On the other hand, there were a large number of applications in the “Business and Industry” category reflecting the growing importance to businesses of being able to market themselves as sustainable and environmentally responsible.

Categories were judged by a panel of 3 judges made up of 1 councillor, 1 sponsor representative (where provided) and 1 relevant expert (in some cases a TDC staff member). Visits were made to as many applicants as possible. These visits were found to be extremely valuable both to the judges and to the applicants.

The ceremony was held at the Upper Moutere Community and Sports Complex. This was found to be an excellent venue and feedback suggested that the ceremony was professional and engaging. Also included in the ceremony was the presentation of two silver awards that were won by Ngatimoti and Parklands schools in the national EnviroSchools programme. It is likely that the 2008 awards will be run in the same venue so that the lessons learnt from the 2007 awards can be capitalised upon. Additionally, there are no plans to radically change the awards for 2008. There will be a push to try and increase the appeal of the event to the farming and horticultural communities. Some strategic thinking will be undertaken as to how to market the

event better in that area. Emphasis on businesses will also be continued as this is seen as an important area where such awards have value.

Overall, the Environmental Awards continue to be a positive and public way to reward and celebrate people, businesses and groups who actively undertake environmental protection and enhancement work. While it is difficult to know whether the awards encourage others to undertake environmental initiatives, it certainly encourages those who enter the awards to continue their work.

Any feedback on the ideas for the future of these events from the Councillors is most welcome.

RECOMMENDATION

That the report be received.

Jeremy Butler
Environmental Education Officer