

Russell Protection Society 32nd AGM January 4, 2018 Chairperson's Report

1. Introduction

Welcome everyone to the 32nd Annual General Meeting of the Russell Protection Society. I find it rather amazing to think that we have been working for over three decades to protect the iconic values and character of historic Russell and more importantly, that we have been largely successful in doing so.

2. Russell Plan

At our Spring Meeting we reported that progress had slowed in drafting a future plan for Russell. Since that time no real progress has been made. It is interesting to note that a draft of the Plan was presented to the Bay of Islands/Whangaroa Community Board, with the understanding that this would assist the Board and the FNDC when it comes to decision making for Russell. The Plan itself has no statutory basis and hence it more seeks to influence decision making under the Resource Management Act (land use planning) and the Local Government Act (Council planning and expenditure) by serving as an expression of the aspirations of the Russell Community. Among other things, the Plan seeks to strengthen the land use planning controls for Russell and asks for greater involvement of the Community in these decisions. It also attempts to direct Council resources towards projects that will serve to enhance the character and economic viability of Russell. Unfortunately it seems that Council officers appear oblivious to the Plan and its ambitions because they steadfastly refuse to notify key Resource Consent Applications.

3. Russell Sewerage Scheme

As a follow on from the October public meeting with Council our Community Board representative has sent back a response and this is appended to my report. For your information It is good to note that since that response the Council engineers have provided the RPS with a copy of the Bore Performance Report, which indicates that the bores do have some reserve capacity. Unfortunately the Scheme's management plan does not include the planned upgrades for 2018, however it hoped that the 6 monthly and Annual reports will address this topic, which in turn will affect our rates (capital charges levy). The Council's response does raise other issues in relation to the future of The Strand, which I will cover later in my report.

4. Resource Consent Applications

A common theme is again the unwillingness of both the Far North District Council and the Northern Regional Council to publicly notify Resource Consent Applications where these are non-complying, some to a significant extent. Also, despite earlier promises to seek the comments of the Russell Protection Society regarding Resource Consent Applications in Russell and to notify us of the results where we do comment, there have been a number of instances where this has not occurred.

With the closure of the former Waterfront Café on The Strand, the freeholder is redeveloping the site to provide for extra accommodation. As part of this they are seeking Resource Consent to develop an access drive and parking off The Strand. This is clearly contrary to the District Plan provisions which states that ***"car parking and vehicle access is permitted, provided that it is not accessed off The Strand, or located between any building and The Strand"***. This provision is fundamental to the Heritage Precinct and to the policies in the draft Russell Plan. Your Society has made strong representations to the FNDC in conjunction with the Kororareka Marae Society and others.

Uruti Bay Wharf and associated works - Approval was given on a non-notified basis for the construction of a long wharf at Uruti Bay that would be dependant on dredging, in an area which contains an important customary feral shellfish bed. The Applicant also used this opportunity to carry out earthworks and tree felling in order to put in place drainage pipes, for which they have no planning permission, thereby adding to the erosion and siltation that has already damaged the shellfish beds. This engendered considerable local negative publicity and as a result some of the works have been placed on hold until further information is made available regarding the effects on archaeological sites, shellfish beds and important riparian margins.

Hope Avenue – Work continues on building an ultra-modern two story house at the entry to Russell. The FNDC claims that it had no option but to approve this Application despite the fact that it is located in the Russell Gateway Overlay in the District Plan, which specifically seeks to protect the visual landscape in the entry to historic Russell. Despite the fact that there appears to be widespread support for the special planning provisions for Russell, as evidenced by clear statements to this effect in the draft Russell Plan, Council Officers continue to recommend approval to Applications that are clearly contrary

5. Future of The Strand

I have recently returned from a trip through Germany, Italy, France and Spain. In almost all of the historic cities in those countries many of the central streets have been pedestrianised. One only has to experience these pedestrian lanes, particularly in the evenings, to appreciate how alive and enjoyable these areas have become. The team developing the Russell Plan unanimously decided that pedestrianisation of The Strand should be investigated, using an incremental approach of temporary closures of a portion of The Strand to see what the effects are. The private properties with access off The Strand would still be able to use it as a road, as would the Russell Tour Operator. This proposed pedestrianisation has been talked about for years and at one stage Jill Grey and I were deputised by the Russell Business Association to survey Russell Residents in this regard. As always, there was a high level of support for this concept. Is this a concept that is worth pursuing further?

6. Russell Museum

This is an important new development of a public facility on a prominent site in Russell. We are fortunate in having Kate as our guest speaker to explain what is being proposed. It is likely that your Society will have a role in commenting or submitting on this proposal and hence it is an opportune time to have some discussion at our AGM on this matter. What are your views in this regard?

7. Best Wishes

On behalf of our Committee I would like to wish you all an enjoyable and safe holidays. Your continued support of the Russell Protection Society is greatly appreciated.