

THE MARLBOROUGH VINTAGE AND FARM MACHINERY SOCIETY INCORPORATED

SUBMISSION ON THE MARLBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL 2021 – 2031 LONG TERM
PLAN

Further to our initial comments under “General Topics” we wish to place a specific proposal before the Council for the acquisition and seek its support for the preservation and display of the building and plant currently owned by Marlborough Lines Ltd (MLL) on the corner of Old Renwick and Thompson’s Ford Roads, Blenheim, referred to as the Diesel Generating Station.

The building, dating back to 1930 houses two large diesel electric sets, the elder being a 1929 Davey-Paxman six cylinder engine of rather spectacular operation installed in 1930, and a somewhat more prosaic six cylinder Harland and Wolfe two-stroke engine installed in 1937. Both are coupled to alternators that supplied power to Marlborough to supplement the output from the Waihopai hydro station during times of heavy electrical load, especially during late afternoons and evenings and during cold weather. I understand sometimes they were required to run continuously for days at a time.

These two engines thus contributed significantly to the well-being of the people of Marlborough for close to fifty years at which point they were decommissioned and disconnected from the power grid. Accordingly, they are of considerable heritage value to the people of Marlborough and, insofar as they remain in running condition with their alternators intact, have the potential to provide a graphic heritage display for the public, especially school and interest groups.

MLL are essentially donating the building and its contents to the Society (well, they’re selling it to us for \$1.00 + GST), but before the building can be opened to the public, a long-standing asbestos contamination needs cleaning up and further seismic strengthening of the building is required. MLL is sponsoring the costs of the former, while MDC funding for the latter is requested, the quote for this being \$57,000 + GST.

With these two remedial works completed the Society intends returning the two engines to running order (easily done for they are still intact) and making a museum display out of the brand new spare parts (cylinders, pistons, bearings etc) that came with them, as well as of old switching equipment and vintage domestic electrical appliances.

In the longer term, the Society will assemble - either at the station or at Brayshaw Heritage Park - a turbine and alternator from the Waihopai hydro station to give a more full picture of some ways in which electricity can be produced.

The Society is also requesting continuing support for the everyday running and maintenance costs of the station, including rates (currently c \$1,100 pa), insurance and the repairs and maintenance of both plant and buildings. Specific figures will be presented during our oral submission but annual costs we estimate to be within \$10,000.00.

Further to the local heritage value of this building and its contents is the already evident national and international interest they are attracting. The Society has received overtures for visits by groups of machinery enthusiasts from around the country and also is receiving international attention on the internet. For example, the Harland and Wolfe engine is mentioned in a website in Ireland where it was

built with details supplied from Blenheim, while in a similar vein, the Davey-Paxman, being the only one of its kind in the world, is also attracting interest.

The Society feels that the opening of this station for heritage display and educational purposes will not simply be of interest just to the people of Marlborough, representing as it does a significant aspect of our modern lifestyles, but also further put Marlborough on the map as a desirable destination for visitors from around the country and the world.

On this basis, we earnestly request MDC support to turn this vision into reality.

John

JOHN NEAL
Hon Secretary
The Marlborough Vintage and Farm Machinery Society Inc.