

Conservation and particularly control of animal and plant pests are being undertaken by more and more people, operating as individuals or as part of community initiatives. Their common interests and activities are leading to strong social bonds being formed whilst the natural flora and fauna continue to improve.

When they are actively thriving these communities add enormously to the well-being of society, in both the support and friendship generated and the improved living environment of more healthy birds and trees. Benefitting all local inhabitants and providing an enhanced environment for visitors.

Just as Council works to ensure that people have adequate facilities for safe and comfortable living, ensuring an adequate environment and social cohesion must also be looked after. Council must note that the contribution to the environment and social cohesion is more and more being provided by volunteer workers who are under constant risk of dismantling due to a lack of secure on-going funding.

At a recent biodiversity forum, the attendees were asked to pinpoint their most pressing concern. In all cases, the need for secure funding, which is assuredly ongoing, was identified as the most pressing issue.

It is horrific to contemplate a dismantling of many of these groups who tenaciously hang on whilst awaiting a grant to keep them going.

It is my hope that the Council allocate funds to support all those groups who are dealing with plant and animal pests on Council land and at the same time building positive social cohesion.

Picton Dawn Chorus is my particular concern. We have raised many thousands of dollars to create a viable trapping infrastructure working within Picton and surrounding areas, including Council lands such as Victoria Domain and Essons Valley. We now have a project plan to expand our activities from our present 1800 ha to 4500 ha, the majority of which is Council land. We are also starting to work more closely with adjacent private landowners.

During our 6 years of existence, we have held many popular public gatherings, we put out regular newsletters, we are in constant contact with our trappers and volunteers and I would claim that our efforts within and surrounding Picton have given the town's people something that we are all very proud of.

In the past year, the Society has revamped its constitution and is now governed by a Board of Directors (all volunteers) establishing a clear differential between governance and management. This has proven necessary given the growing scope of the trapping intensity and area. We employ two part-time contractors who carry out the essential professional work required; their workload will increase as our growth continues.

The Board has initiated discussions with Kaipupu regarding sharing many of the two groups administration functions; Rata Foundation is supporting this by providing a mentor to help facilitate the change.

To date, we have raised approximately \$390,700. to achieve our present goals of which approximately \$71,138. has been forthcoming from Marlborough District Council. We have traps in 377 properties within Picton and Waikawa (assuming an average of three people per household this equates to support from over 1000 residents), we have 145 volunteers and 126 members creating a significant group within the community.

Picton Dawn Chorus would request that the cost of a full-time employee be covered by Council for three years, to ensure that our volunteering work, in building a better environment and a cohesive community, can continue.