

Executive summary

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements for the 2006/2007 year relating to recreation, culture and heritage. This activity encompasses regional assistance for the redevelopment of Yarrow Stadium and assistance in maintaining and enhancing three of Taranaki's regionally significant and nationally recognised gardens – the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens, Hollard Gardens and Tupare. Through these activities, the Council is providing for high quality and diverse recreational experiences and is contributing towards making Taranaki a sustainable and vibrant region.

Set out below is a summary of the main activities carried out in relation to recreation, culture and heritage by the Taranaki Regional Council in 2006/2007:

- On-going repayment from targeted rates of the Taranaki Regional Council grant towards the development of Yarrow Stadium. 2006/2007 was the fifth year of the 10-year life of the targeted rate
- Implementation of the development phase of the asset management plans for Tupare and Hollard Gardens
- Regular planting, tree surgery work, woody and herbaceous husbandry and weed control undertaken as part of the on-going maintenance and upkeep of Hollard and Tupare gardens
- Stakeholder funding arrangements between the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust and Council continued.

The main focus for the year was to make substantial progress towards the implementation of the Tupare and Hollard Gardens asset management plans. Progress has been slow but steady. The development phase of the asset management plans will be completed and launched in 2007/2007.

Both Tupare and Hollard Gardens have benefited from the increased operational and capital commitment from the Council over the last few years. They are starting to reach the visions outlined in the asset management plans. The completion of the development phase of the plans over the next year or so will complete the rejuvenation of the properties. The Council will then be well placed to maintain the standards of the properties going forward.

Table of contents

1.	Introduction	1
1.1	Purpose	1
1.2	Background	1
1.2.1	Objective	2
1.2.2	Programme	2
2.	Report on progress	3
2.1	Funding for the development of Yarrow Stadium	3
2.2	Strategy and plans for the regional gardens	3
2.3	Management and development of the regional gardens	4
2.3.1	Hollard Gardens	4
2.3.2	Tupare	5
2.3.3	Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens	6
3.	Conclusion	7

List of figures

Figure 1: The regional gardens	1
--------------------------------	---

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements relating to recreation, culture and heritage activities during the 2006/2007 year.

1.2 Background

Through the Taranaki Regional Council Empowering Act 2001, the Taranaki Regional Council ('the Council') has the ability to undertake, implement, encourage or maintain any service, works or facilities that are for the recreational or cultural well-being of Taranaki, or that are for preserving or encouraging the reasonable enjoyment of the physical and cultural heritage of the Taranaki region.

Taranaki has several outstanding gardens that are regarded as being of national significance. These gardens are a defining point of difference for the region and are a national and international highlight for residents and visitors alike. They are also treasured community amenities. Three of these gardens are:

- Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens;
- Hollard Gardens; and
- Tupare.

Following the enactment of the Taranaki Regional Council Empowering Act, the Council in consultation with stakeholders reached agreement on the ownership, governance and funding arrangements to maintain and enhance the three gardens. These arrangements included the Council taking ownership and responsibility for the management of Hollard Gardens and Tupare and providing financial and other support for the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust towards the operation and development of the Pukeiti Gardens (Figure 1).

Prior to the Council taking ownership or providing financial support, Pukeiti, Hollard and Tupare gardens had struggled with financial constraints. Furthermore, in the absence of a strategic professional approach to the garden's future maintenance and

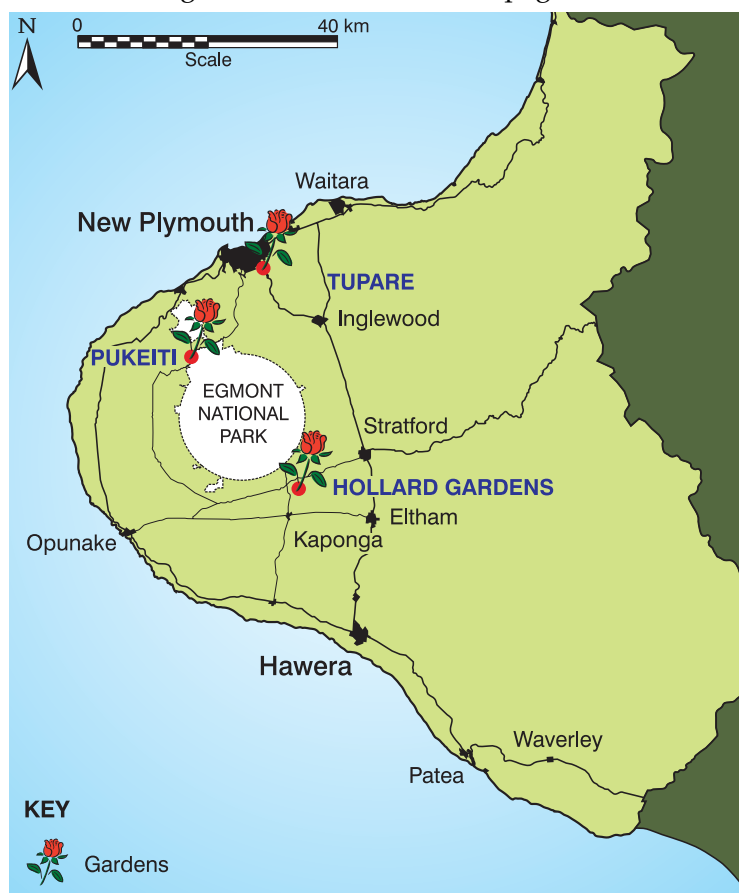


Figure 1: The regional gardens

development, there were risks to the long term quality of these amenities.

Under the Taranaki Regional Council Empowering Act, the Council also provided 'one-off' funding and support for the development of Yarrow Stadium.

1.2.1 Objective

The overall objectives for recreation, culture and heritage activities for 2006/2007, as set out in the Council's 2006/2016 *Long-Term Council Community Plan* are:

"To facilitate the redevelopment of Rugby Park into Yarrow Stadium."

"To ensure that the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens, Hollard Gardens and Tupare are maintained and enhanced as regionally significant recreational and heritage amenities."

1.2.2 Programme

In response to the above objectives, the Council adopted the following performance measures for 2006/2007, as set out in the Council's 2006/2016 *Long-Term Council Community Plan*:

- A one-off grant of \$9.6 million was provided to the Taranaki Events Centre Trust in 2001/2002 for the purpose of developing Rugby Park into Yarrow Stadium. The only activity in this area for 2006/2007 is the repayment of the grant from targeted rates which is scheduled for completion in 2011/2012.
- Implement the asset management plans for Tupare and Hollard gardens.
- Provide funding support to the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust.
- Complete the development programme outlined in the 2005/2006 Annual Plan as well as undertake the following developments:
 - Tupare car park gatehouse entrance
 - Tupare cottage restoration
 - Tupare garden structures and features
 - Tupare House restoration
 - Tupare interpretation/wayfinding/signage
 - Hollard garden structural restoration
 - Hollard signage/interpretation
 - Hollard new service route to event area

2. Report on progress

2.1 Funding for the development of Yarrow Stadium

In 2002, after an extensive consultation process and following the promulgation of the Taranaki Regional Council Empowering Act 2001, the Council provided a one-off grant of \$9.6 million to the Taranaki Events Centre Trust for the purposes of developing Yarrow Stadium. Of this, \$6.4 million is planned to be repaid by way of regional targeted rates over a period of 10 years. In terms of Council activities, no further funding is provided for Yarrow Stadium. The only activity undertaken in this area is the repayment of the Council's grant from the regional targeted rates (\$876,000 per annum over 10 years). 2006/2007 was the fifth year of the 10-year life of the targeted rate



Yarrow Stadium, New Plymouth

2.2 Strategy and plans for the regional gardens

As part of the agreement for ownership, governance and funding arrangements, the Taranaki Regional Gardens Project Technical Advisory Group was established to develop an integrated strategy to maintain and enhance Pukeiti, Hollard and Tupare gardens into a nationally significant regional gardens package (hereafter referred to as 'the Regional Gardens Project').

There were two stages to the Regional Gardens Project. Stage I, completed in 2002/2003, involved extensive consultation and the preparation of the report entitled *Regional Gardens Project*. This report set out the strategic vision, purpose and goals in relation to the gardens. Stage II involved the preparation of more comprehensive and detailed asset management plans to develop, present, manage and promote all three regional gardens.

The Council adopted the final asset management plans on 25 September 2005. At the same time, the Technical Advisory Group finalised the Pukeiti asset management plan and forwarded the plan to the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust. The finalised asset management plans represented the conclusion of significant and extensive development and consultation process undertaken by the Technical Advisory Group.

The 2005/2006 *Annual Plan* provided the operational and financial budgets to begin the implementation of the asset management plans. These budgets were spread over two or three years (see the 2006/2016 *Long Term Council Community Plan*) to reflect the timeline for full implementation.

The Council has taken a number of steps to begin the implementation process. The most significant of these is the purchase of a neighbouring property at Tupare. The purchase of this property allows for the full and safe redevelopment of the entry and car parking facilities at Tupare.

The Council has also made the necessary appointments to provide the full staffing complement recommended in the asset management plans for both Tupare and Hollard Gardens.

In terms of timing, the Council has not made as much progress in the implementation of the asset management plans as envisaged when the *2005/2006 Annual Plan* was prepared and adopted. Part of this relates to the timing of the adoption of the asset management plans being later than envisaged.

Consequently, the operational and capital budgets established for 2006/2007 for the implementation of the plans were under spent. As the implementation of the plans reaches its conclusion, there will be a corresponding over expenditure in the 2007/2008 financial year.

2.3 Management and development of the regional gardens

2.3.1 Hollard Gardens

Hollard Gardens are located north of Kaponga. Established in 1927, the Gardens contain a large collection of temperate zone plants from around the world and a significant and unique collection of rare and endangered New Zealand plants. In 1982, the Gardens were gifted to the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust as a recognised landscape of national importance. On 1 July 2002, ownership was transferred to the Council to manage on behalf of the people of Taranaki.

Hollard Gardens receives between 3,000 and 5,000 visitors per annum. The main visitor season is between September and March with visitor numbers peaking over the annual Taranaki Rhododendron Festival in October/November.

The Council directly manages Hollard Gardens. In 2006/2007, the gardens experienced increased levels of care and maintenance. This was primarily due to an increase in staff levels which has ensured that attention to detail and a greater level of pruning and shaping of individual plants during the growing season has been attained. This increased plant husbandry manifests itself from the large trees right through to tiny herbaceous perennials.

Planning for capital works to be undertaken as part of the development phase of the asset management plan for the garden has also been completed.

BG Base, a plant database system, has been installed in the Council computer system and data entry has commenced for Hollard Gardens. This



Visitors arriving at Hollard Gardens



Hollard Gardens

system is used extensively throughout the world and is a very cost effective and comprehensive means of plant recording. The system will also be used at Tupare and Pukeiti and may also be made available to other public institutions in time.

The garden has also been reassessed and has retained its National Gardens of Significance rating. This is processed on a three-yearly basis.

2.3.2 Tupare

Tupare is located on the outskirts of New Plymouth. The 3.6 hectare property comprises a heritage residence and classical garden in a unique Taranaki setting. Developed over a 50-year period from 1932, Tupare assumed a reputation as one of the finest landscape gardens in New Zealand.

In 1985, the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust purchased Tupare. As from 1 July 2002, ownership and responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Gardens was transferred to the Council. The Gardens are estimated to attract around 2,000 to 3,000 visitors annually. The main visitor season is between September to March and peaking over the annual Taranaki Rhododendron Festival in October/November.



Tupare in Autumn

The Council directly manages Tupare. With a permanent staff for the first time in eight years, compared to a one day per week operation, 2006/2007 has been a very significant year for this property with increased plant husbandry, weed control and a general standard of care and attention to detail.



The work undertaken has included tree planting, the construction of a retaining wall at Mary Lane, the construction of a fence and gate at the bottom of Mary Lane and the rebuilding of the lower ponds in the water fall feature. Removal of the hedge in the Drive Paddock to include a new area, previously part of the adjacent property, the dismantling of the fence around the house potager, and site preparation for the new glasshouse and sunken lawn area has also been undertaken.

The interior of the cottage has been dismantled in preparation for the interpretation area and the house has received an interior refurbishment. Both house and historical reports are completed.

Extensive plantings have been completed in the Dell area, Watson Walk and Richard Walk. A large silver beech (*Nothofagus menziesii*, adjacent to the tennis court, has been felled and another large and significant tree in the Dell – a Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'),) was damaged in a storm and needed to be removed.

Planning for most of the capital works has been completed – the construction of a new carpark, the relocation of the gatehouse, the restoration of the glasshouse and sunken lawn area.

2.3.3 Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens

The Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens are an internationally acclaimed garden. Located on the north-west slopes of Mount Taranaki/Egmont and on the border of Egmont National Park and set in a rainforest setting, the Gardens contain one of the most comprehensive rhododendron collections in the southern hemisphere.

Established in 1951, the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust owns and manages the Gardens. The Gardens attract between 8,000 and 10,000 visitors annually. Over the past few years, visitor numbers have remained relatively constant with peak visitor numbers occurring in October and November in association with the annual Taranaki Rhododendron Festival.



Pukeiti has the most comprehensive rhododendron collection in the southern hemisphere.

As from 1 July 2002, the Council has entered into a funding agreement with the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust. In 2006/2007, the Council provided \$50,000 towards the management and development of Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens.

As part of the stakeholder funding agreement, the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust participated in the asset management planning process. A Pukeiti asset management plan was prepared and presented to the Trust Board for its consideration. Responsibility for the day-to-day management of Gardens remains with the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust, including the implementation of the asset management plan for Pukeiti.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Council has substantially met its performance targets for 2006/2007 as set out in the Council's *2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community Plan*. Through the maintenance and enhancement of three of Taranaki's regionally significant and nationally recognised gardens – the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens, Hollard Gardens and Tupare – and the development of Yarrows Stadium, the Council is providing for high quality and diverse recreational experiences and is contributing towards making Taranaki a sustainable and vibrant region.

Programmes and performance measures

1. On-going repayment from targeted rates of the Taranaki Regional Council grant towards the development of Yarrow Stadium. 2006/2007 was the fifth year of the 10-year life of the targeted rate
2. Implementation of the development phase of the asset management plans for Tupare and Hollard Gardens
3. Regular planting, tree surgery work, woody and herbaceous husbandry and weed control undertaken as part of the on-going maintenance and upkeep of Hollard and Tupare gardens
4. Stakeholder funding arrangements between the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust and Council continued.