

Resident takes tree protection issues to Council

Hearing the unexpected sound of a chainsaw one mid-April day, Colin Beardon looked out a window to see a 60-year-old pōhutukawa tree being felled on a Cory Road property.

Concerned about the potential fate of three more pōhutukawa close by, Mr Beardon says he sent out an urgent email to people he knew asking for help. The message was forwarded on and he was overwhelmed with messages from others worried about the felling of mature trees on Waiheke.

With a groundswell of support, Mr Beardon has subsequently presented his concerns about inadequate protection for mature trees to the Waiheke Local Board and here recently met with council officials.

On Friday 14 June he and fellow island residents, Sue Fitchett and Pam Oliver, met with Auckland Council's general manager for licensing and regulatory compliance, Craig Hobbs, and

head of compliance, Ian Small.

"It was a constructive meeting that covered a range of topics," says Mr Beardon who challenged the council officials over what part a lack of clarity in the original consent order for the Cory Road property played in the felling of the pōhutukawa.

"My view is that this lack of clarity led both the developer and the compliance officer in thinking that the tree could be cut down with no

Colin Beardon met with council officials about lack of protection for mature trees.



further paperwork," he says.

Those at the meeting agreed that there was an unclear clause in that consent and council would look into whether planners and compliance officers needed guidance to avoid such lack of clarity in future, he says.

In May, the owner of the property where the pōhutukawa was felled was ordered to plant three new trees. At the meeting, Mr Beardon learned that the developer

was also fined \$300. In a subsequent discussion with officials on non-compliance penalties, it was agreed that they were too low, and were more of an encouragement than a deterrent, he says. Council staff said they would look into whether they could be increased, says Mr Beardon.

Other issues discussed included the council website and it was agreed that the website should include a section on current tree protection rules as they apply to Waiheke. "[We] agreed that it would be an improvement if consent holders displayed their consent notice at the roadside so the public was made aware of the consent. This will be pursued by council staff," he says.

On the issue of public reporting, Mr Beardon says a clear set of guidelines for members of the public wanting to report tree incidents is required and it was agreed that the general Council phone number was inadequate as a contact point.

They also discussed whether Council rules could allow for more exotic trees to be 'listed' and the potential for strengthening tree protection through changes to the district plan, which would initially need to come from the Local Board, he says. •

Hand It On Bags keeps bags working

A service that enables reusable bags to keep circulating is launching in time for Plastic Free July.

Called Hand It On Bags, the initiative has been spearheaded by Prashanti Lovegrove from Island Waste Collective.

The first reusable bag drop-off box will be situated in the entrance of Countdown to collect surplus reusable bags, she says.

"It's a free service for customers who forget their reusable bag to borrow one and bring it back next time," says Prashanti.

"Volunteers will check the bags dropped off for general hygiene and put them neatly on the display stand."

The project came about from a conversation on a Waiheke Facebook page where people showed a strong interest for an initiative to encourage recycling the reusable bags that are now filling up their homes, she says.

"Some community members have up to 50 of these bags in their home because they purchase a new one each time they come to the store," Prashanti says.

"We need to re-use these bags many times to offset the ecological footprint of producing reusable bags compared to the impact of a single use plastic bag.

"Waiheke Countdown has sponsored four display stands to go into grocery stores around the island and Fiona Ward created the brand logo."

The idea is that people bring excess reusable bags to the drop-off box and any kind of reusable bags are accepted, including cloth vegetable bags as long as they are clean and uncontaminated.

The first stand was installed at Countdown on Wednesday 26 June and more stands are planned to appear at other



The first Hand It On Bags stand is up at Waiheke Countdown.

grocery stores over coming weeks.

Prashanti says there will be a sign-up sheet next to the Hand It On Bags stand for anyone interested in more information or willing to volunteer their time to check bags from the drop-off box. •

