

## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT PUKENUI/WESTERN HILLS FOREST CHARITABLE TRUST (March 2015)**

After the usual slow start, the year has really taken off, and so have the activities of the Trust. Where to begin?

Congratulations to Alan Martin, Sharon Morgan and the other members of our committee on what was a very successful walk-and-talk with Trust members and our guests, the Northland Conservation Board. Meeting at Russell Road, they walked the Maddren Track to the Quarry Gardens where their Operations Manager, David McDermott gave a talk on the Gardens and their new building, which should be ready soon. Through the auspices of Alan Martin, Margaret Pohe and I made a funding application to the Elaine Gurr Endowment Trust, which was happily successful and will help to pay for the on-going pest control in Pukenui Forest. There are still another 100 hectares to go before we have completed stage one of the proposed poison bait stations that we are currently allowed to poison.

Further to which, I would like to welcome on board to our team our new trapper, Luke Robertson. Luke is a very experienced hunter and, like his predecessor, Chris Windust, was involved in the removal of goats from Pukenui Forest. Bevan Cramp continues as our regular one day trapper. I think Bevan believes that our trapping work is starting to see many more pied tomtits, which is really what we are all about.

On a very hot day, and with the help of a number of Department of Conservation volunteers, we finished mulching around the many kowhai trees that we have planted at the Quarry Arts Centre, and I am sure we will see some of the bigger trees flowering next spring, with attendant tui.

Two weeks ago, I finalised the fairly in-depth Species Translocation Proposal for kiwi to be returned to Pukenui Forest. The six-page document is now with the Department of Conservation and we can now only wait to hear further from them. I would like to thank Clea Gardiner of Kiwis for Kiwi for the invaluable help that she provided to ensure the document crossed all the "t's", etc.

Further to which, I have been in contact with Barry Reiher, the developer at Three Mile Bush Road. His housing development backs onto Pukenui Forest and Barry has been very keen to build a dog-proof fence beside the forest, which is part of a walking track that he is also constructing. This fence is now close to being finished. Barry has also very generously offered to pay for two state-of-the-art boot cleaning stations to help keep the dreaded Kauri Die-back disease out of Pukenui Forest. The Trust (and the trees) strongly appreciates this act of conservation generosity.

Finally, I will be working with a couple of our committee members to see if we can successfully apply for DOC's mega funding initiative called Community Conservation Partnerships Fund. It closes on 2nd April and is in two stages. The fund totals \$26 million and last year \$8 million was handed out. It is a big deal and DOC is holding public meetings to explain how to work through the application process. Watch this space!

*Gerry Brackenbury*

**Community Relations/Advocacy (Part-time)**