

RIVERLEA ENVIRONMENT SOCIETY INC. NEWSLETTER



PROTECTING RIVERLEA'S FUTURE

It goes without saying that we are delighted that Blacktop Construction withdrew their application for resource consent.

Blacktop pulled out due to the efforts of our Society and its many talented and motivated members. In particular, the actions of our planner Graeme Lawrence and lawyer Joan Forret were pivotal in getting the right result. Both of them deserve our heartfelt thanks. Together they made a major breakthrough by encouraging Hamilton City Council to decide that Blacktop needed an additional consent – land use consent – to operate on Riverlea Road. This meant that even if Blacktop had won air discharge consent from Environment Waikato, they would have had to revisit the process again to obtain land use consent. It would have been an expensive and daunting proposition for them.

Our Society also gratefully acknowledges the work of both regional and city councils in the process. Environment Waikato's commissioning of a review from an odour specialist was critical, as was EW's own recommendation that consent be declined. Hamilton City Council's Strategic Planning Unit's strong submission against Blacktop's application was also influential. Our community has made it very clear that dirty industry is not welcome here and that we have the ability and motivation to successfully oppose such industries.

What next? The Riverlea Environment Society believes that the issues in this area are bigger than Blacktop's application. We must now turn our attention to how we can best protect and enhance the future of Riverlea.

Our suburb has a unique character. It contains a magnificent remnant of lowland native vegetation in Hammond Bush. Rare long-tailed bats, kererū (wood pigeon) and tui are seen in our skies. Glow worms inhabit our gullies. But most importantly, motivated people inhabit our houses and care passionately about our environment.

Thank you for your support over the past five months. We welcome your views on what you would like to see achieved in Riverlea. Please let us know, using the contact details overleaf. We are also considering a public meeting in late May to get feedback on the community's needs.

Kind regards

Stephen Hamilton Deputy Chair, Riverlea Environment Society Inc.

ZONING UPDATE

The fact that an industry as noxious and offensive as an asphalt plant could potentially be allowed to operate so close to our houses surprised many of us, who consider Riverlea Road to be a 'light' industrial area. In fact, such a thing no longer exists in Hamilton in terms of zoning under the District Plan. Light and heavy industrial categories were used previously in Hamilton City, but abandoned within the last decade, leaving just one broad category of industrial zone.

We are therefore vulnerable to another heavy polluting industry opening up in Riverlea Road. If

the industry did not require a resource consent that was notified, residents would not even be advised. A return to light and heavy industry zones would protect people from having to live or work close to heavy industry, and would also provide more certainty to heavy industry searching for suitable locations. Both parties would be spared unnecessary expense, as would all ratepayers. (Blacktop's resource consent application drew considerable resources from Hamilton City Council's Strategic Planning Unit, which opposed the plant.)

HAMMOND BUSH

The special nature of Hammond Bush was one reason many residents were so passionate about stopping the asphalt plant. Hammond Bush is the most important remnant of forest left in Hamilton and provides habitat for native birds and our rare native bat.

The Riverlea Environment Society would like to enhance and extend Hammond bush by removing pest plants and planting more natives in both Hammond Park and on adjoining private land. We are fortunate that there is already a comprehensive bush restoration plan in place which was developed by ecologist Professor Bruce Clarkson and colleagues.

We are looking to take a coordinated approach which involves our members, Hamilton City Council, Environment Waikato and owners of the private land adjoining Hammond Park. We are also able to apply for funding. If you are interested in this bush restoration project please contact Martin Thrupp at thrupp@waikato.ac.nz or on 856 7637.

We will also call for volunteers when the work is going to be undertaken. Hammond Bush is also of particular interest to tui researcher John Innes from Landcare Research, who would like to be informed when tui are seen in the area wearing leg bands—or any other tui seen during their nesting time which is between December and February. John Innes can be contacted at email address innesj@landcareresearch.co.nz, or telephone 07-859-3714.

OUR HEIRS

Our Society sees itself as an extension of a group called HEIRS (Hamilton Environmental Improvement in the Riverlea Suburb). HEIRS was launched in April 1998 with the help of Hamilton City Council, and ran for several years.

The speed humps on Howell Avenue were a result of its lobbying, as was landscaping of footpaths and kerbs on Riverlea Road. The burning of dirty bark on Riverlea Road ceased when HEIRS negotiated a solution: Hamilton Zoo rhinos ate it instead. Hammond Bush was greatly enhanced through working bees to weed, collect seeds, and plant hundreds of trees grown from that seed. In response to these efforts, Hamilton City Council fast-tracked construction of the boardwalk and footbridge. A newspaper, *The Riverlea Rag*, kept residents up to date with these processes.

We envisage that our Society will work towards a range of projects of this nature, and we welcome your suggestions. To read more about HEIRS, go to www.resi.org.nz

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Society now has 217 members. The Blacktop campaign has cost the Society in financial terms, but not to the extent that it would have if we had to fight this beyond the local environmental authority. However, we do have a shortfall of around \$1500 as part of our costs incurred in securing the professional services of our legal advisor and environmental planner. A full statement of the Society's accounts will soon be delivered to all members and donors, and a suggestion that those who pledged funds towards this cause pay 10% of the pledged amount. This would allow the Society to settle all outstanding accounts. We expect confirmation of our charitable status in the next few months and will advise all members and donors accordingly. This will allow donations to be tax deductible.

Please contact us at

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