

Submission to Porirua City Council May 2021

Village Programme

Background

In 2008 Porirua City Council started its village programme with funding and personnel dedicated to helping each of Porirua's 14 villages to work on projects to benefit their communities.

These were projects that would not have been included in any business as usual. They were the icing on the cake and an opportunity for each village to engage residents and create unique and specific amenities.

After more than ten successful years the council is now considering axing the programme to save money.

We argue that the programme created many benefits in community relations and resilience. Cutting it will damage the positive relationships and trust built up over time between council officers and residents of Porirua's diverse communities.

Porirua City Council's village programme has won international awards and national recognition. This programme revolutionised the relationships between the council and the many communities it serves.

It completely reversed the adversarial, reactive and frustrating interaction that residents associations had with previous council departments.

With co-ordinators Ian Barlow, then Bill Inge, residents associations have had a conduit to all council departments. Their experience and institutional knowledge has facilitated easier communication between parties.

Both Ian and Bill have practical skills and wide networks which has enable them to give professional input to turn community-generated ideas into realities. They initiated council culture into one of working with communities to get things done.

As a result of this relationships have developed between council staff and residents, professionals and volunteers and between many organisations and community groups.

So, in the decade or more of the village programme more than just assets, events and projects has been achieved. A positive respectful environment has been created where local initiatives can flourish. Identity and pride of communities, positive working relationships, open

communication and sharing of ideas have exceeded the dollar value of assets created.

Plimmerton was the first village to get aboard the village programme and a brief look at some of the achievements made in that time demonstrates the overall success of the programme in all Porirua villages.

- **Plimmerton Taupo Heritage Trail** ... a team researched, wrote stories, sourced images and shared ideas with residents to create the physical trail with its centrally located map, website content, plaques on historic sites and printed material to promote the trail and support visitors. The key researchers Mary Beckett and Deirdre Dale continue to develop the trail content with new material for Plimmerton Domain. People of all ages were engaged in this project with school students creating public art, older residents contributing oral histories, families sharing stories and images, professionals, volunteers, PCC and the PRA working together.
- **Taupo Crescent community space** was created through the teamwork of Taupo Crescent families, local children, a professional mural artist, PCC and PRA. An unloved space was turned into a vibrant community area with a playground and landscaping. Artist Rachel Benefield worked with children to create the first of many murals marking major Plimmerton projects.
- **Karehana Park** redevelopment resulted from a resident with a grandson in a wheelchair who found he could not access the park from either Cluny or Airlie Roads. A two year project saw the park with revamped access and created by selling family pavers for \$50 a pop set in groups. When a group was complete that would pay for the next stretch of pathway! A new playground was installed with a kids cycle track. Intensive landscaping was carried out over several years with the generous additions of a pétanque court sponsored by Touhy Homes and a multi- purpose drinking fountain thanks to three local plumbers Leon Smith, ... and ...
This project involved families, children, schools, kindergarten, professionals of all sorts from engineers to landscaper designers, funding agencies, PCC and PRA all working together.

- **Plimmerton's refurbished railway station** opened on 10.10.10 after more than two years of hard work by some 200 volunteers putting in 2000 hours plus input from many local tradesmen and fund raisers. The heritage railway station was totally refurbished and saved for this community. Ian Barlow was especially helpful at devising practical solutions to the many problems that arose. PRA's project managers Dave Anderson and Allan Dodson proved adept at harnessing volunteers. This project is one of New Zealand's most successful community restorations.
- **Plimmerton Community Shed** (part of the NZ Menzshed movement) is another PCC PRA joint project that has huge practical and social benefits. The shed team produces environmental products including pest traps for local Pest Free groups, nesting boxes for Friends of Mana Island, bird feeders and lizard hotels to encourage native species to flourish in our back yard. They also do building work for other local charities like the Salvation Army and Mana Arts.

The shed is urgently looking for new premises as its current shed and site on Plimmerton Domain are needed for the rail development.

- **Business signage at the caravan and motor home park.** Some projects are huge and others are small but they still make a difference. A map of Plimmerton village with local businesses identified was produced for the new motorhome park. This has resulted in most visitors walking across the domain and accessing services and products from local shops. All businesses chipped in for the sign which was designed and produced as a village programme project.
- **Beach signage** was designed and produced to replace decades of random signage at ten beach entrances along the foreshore. Consultation with local groups clarified the signage content and the signs and their steel stands were designed by graphic artist Anne Johnston and landscape architect Linda Kerkmeester who have been involved in most design work in the village for different projects.

Seating along the foreshore was another massive three year project. The first year was spent scoping the idea with Massey

University school of Industrial Design and having seat design for Plimmerton foreshore as a curriculum option for students. The second year was design by students, public consultation and later public selection then development of prototypes. In the third year seats were sold to local families who each paid \$1500 for a plaque recognising their family or in memory of a loved one. The seats were then built by local tradesmen including the late, talented boat builder Bernie Perano.

- **Cafe corner and Beach Road promenade**
- **Café corner ...** the first project undertaken in the village programme absolutely transformed Plimmerton. This was the creation of café corner with its widened path and paving, the decorative safety fence and dog clips. A safe central gathering place was created for school pick-ups, business meetings, early morning dog walkers and other regulars. A three metre wide macrocarpa boardwalk was created to link Beach road with sunset Parade with bench seating and under seat lighting. This enable residents and visitors to now walk along the entire foreshore safely for the first time.

Many Plimmerton residents have spent years working on the creation and maintenance of these projects. We value the relationships we have built up with PCC staff and other community agencies.

The village programme is the most effective communication channel that PCC has.

It has proved highly successful in reflecting pride in the diversity of all communities in Porirua.

We want the village programme to receive the respect and funding it deserves.