Press Release

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A Joint Venture Where Everyone Benefits

The concept behind Dargaville’s Gordon Street Reserve has impressed Kaipara District Council Commissioners who visited following the completion of two recent projects there.

“It’s a great example of how the Council can work with organisations such as Dargaville High School to provide enhanced amenities for the community” says Commissioner Richard Booth.

“The town potentially gains an attractive reserve, while the students get environmental experience in a practical way, a sense of responsibility and the satisfaction of creating an asset in their community.”

The project began in 2005 on a 3,500 square metre block the Council purchased because of flooding. Since then Council and the High School have joined forces to develop the area, focusing on a major stormwater drain flowing through it.

Goals included creating an attractive amenity, improving water quality and giving students hands-on involvement.

In fact the students have been responsible for much of the design and planning.

The watercourse has been realigned and its bed and banks reinforced with rocks. A pathway was built and a large number of native trees, grasses and flaxes planted.

In a separate project, Kaipara District Council and the High School joined with the Department of Justice to design and build a 30 metre long iron sculpture along the eastern boundary.

The sculpture, which is part of an anti-graffiti project, was funded by the Ministry, designed by students and built by Newman Engineering.

Recently the Dargaville High School students made novel use of a $1,400 grant from Council’s Biodiversity Assistance Fund to build “insect hotels” in the reserve, using ponga and totara logs to provide a habitat for insects, complete with observation hatches.

On 23 November Year 10 students rolled up their sleeves to plant 150 plants along the banks to improve water filtration and prevent erosion.

The plants, funded by BOC Gas, included pittosporums, nikau, carex grasses, flaxes and ake ake.

Science and Biology teacher Linda Bourke-Heerikhuisen sees the project as a win for everyone, especially the students.

"By doing the work and planning they get to understand what they are doing and why they are doing it."
Daniel Pull and Neville Bennett, who worked on the insect hotel and recent planting, are enthusiastic.

“We visited to check what was there and then planned what to plant and where,” says Neville who adds that it has been both fun and educational.

Both have found a sense of pride in building something for the community.

“I’d like to look back and see what we achieved and say ‘I did that,’” Daniel says.

They have checked on the insect hotels and say large numbers of ants appear to be the first residents taking up their offer of board and lodgings.

Water quality was tested earlier this year to provide base-line data against which results from annual tests can be compared, adding another educational dimension to the project and allowing its impact to be assessed.

Dargaville High School Students ready to start their recent planting in the Gordon Street Reserve.

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