

The Auckland Regional Council provides information, resources, training and advice to community groups working on environmental projects in the Auckland region.

**In this issue groups share their experiences of working in partnerships with other organisations and in their neighbourhoods.**

## Many hands *can* make light work



**Partnerships, whether personal or professional, can sometimes be hard work, but the rewards should far outweigh the effort.**

Working with other groups, agencies and organisations can be vital to community groups surviving and thriving.

Working in partnership can help your group solve complex and difficult problems by pooling resources. It can increase commitment through mutual accountability, make good use of community knowledge and resources, avoid duplicating or repeating other people's work and build skills and leadership.

Partnerships can also help ensure your project is relevant to the local community and builds understanding within it. And it can be great fun and an excellent way to meet new people.

There are as many different partnerships as there are partners, and to a certain extent each partnership makes its own rules. But if you want to make partnerships work in the long haul it's important to be clear about what kind of interaction you want, and to be clear about that to the other parties you are working with.

You can of course choose to go it alone, and for some objectives this is the

best option. However, working alone can lead to organisers taking on too much, competition between groups with similar aims and disenchanted or upset locals who are unconvinced about what you are doing or why.

So, while working in partnerships can be mixed bag, often it is very important. Partnerships advisor Jen Margaret, who works with community groups and local authorities all around Auckland, knows the skills needed to make partnerships manageable and successful.

"Partnerships may not always be what people want, but it may be what they have to do to get funding," said Jen. "Partnership is also one of those things, like consultation, which runs the risk of getting a bad name if it is not done well.

"It's important that people involved in the partnership, particularly volunteers, are valued. **Partnerships work best when there is a clear purpose and objectives and everyone involved is enthusiastic and passionate about working together towards them.**"

## We would love to hear from you

If you have any questions, ideas or comments about this newsletter, or your group has a story you would like to share, please contact us. Sustainable Communities-Community Advisor on 09 366 2000 or email [community@arc.govt.nz](mailto:community@arc.govt.nz). Thank you.

## Top tips for partnering

**Get the right people around the table, not just the usual suspects.**

Attract the most exciting, dynamic and able team possible. Make sure you've got the right mix of people with knowledge of the issues and energy to work together.

**Make it easy for people to commit consistently.**

Be realistic – not everyone loves weekly three hour finance meetings. Make the experience as varied and interesting as you can and be constantly on the lookout for new people to share the load.

**Keep clear records and ensure a clear hand-over of information if someone leaves the group.**

This makes it much easier for everyone to understand what is going on, and avoids having to repeat discussions and decision making.

## The anatomy of a modern partnership

How can we ensure our partnerships are strategic, and remain focused on what we want to achieve?

It's all too easy to get carried away and find you are spending more time networking than on the tasks. A helpful way to clarify your groups' interactions with other organisations is to consider where you would most like to place them on a continuum of commitment and closeness. This continuum includes five distinct varieties of interaction.

**Coexistence** means you know about each other but don't need to work together. **Networking** means you establish and maintain the relationship through informal discussions and information sharing, but have no formal agreements or shared decision making.

**Cooperation** means you help the other organisation to achieve its project or task. You may use a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to clarify what will be worked on together and to acknowledge common issues, interests and agendas. But there need not be a fixed term or long term relationship.

**Collaboration** means you develop trust based on negotiated and agreed action and principles for working together, often backed up with some formal documentation. It may include shared decision making and giving up some power and control, but provides an opportunity to add value to others as well as yourself. You do not have to share the same base values.

**Partnership** means you work from an agreed base of shared values, including trust, honesty and openness. It involves an emotional and spiritual awareness of each other through the connection of hearts, minds and passions. You share resources, accountability, visions, ideas, risks, rewards and decision making, if not necessarily equally, then at least fairly. This is almost always backed up with some formal and/or contractual obligations, and the development of support processes, systems and mechanisms.

You may find that interactions change from one type to another over time. Being able to clearly identify those changes will help you to manage that change while avoiding misunderstandings and potential conflict.

Based on *The Potential of Partnership*, by David Craig and Megan Courtney, Waitakere Partnerships Research Team, August 2004. Copies can be downloaded from: [www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/lpg/plainenglishguide.cfm](http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/lpg/plainenglishguide.cfm)

## Streams flowing together

**Project Twin Streams** is a joint council and community project that is working on restoring **56kms** of stream banks. The project is driven in **Ranui** by a partnership of **Waitakere City Council (WCC)**, **Te Ukaipo Mercy Initiatives for Rangatahi Ltd.**, and the **Ranui Action Project (RAP)**.



Jenny Chilcott from Waitakere City Council, Steph Tong and Emma Frost, both from RAP, Mary Foy, from Te Ukaipo

Jenny Chilcott, Mary Foy and Emma Frost talk about their early experiences of working together.

**Emma Frost, RAP:** "Both our community groups have a focus around youth in our work so we kept thinking we could offer something which could benefit each other."

**Mary Foy, Te Ukaipo:** "The project fitted with our commitment to youth and appreciation of Papatuanuku, Mother Earth."

**Jenny Chilcott, WCC:** "Te Ukaipo was the first of six community groups to take on a community contract, and we collaborated to create the project and how it would work, in a way that would build community ownership. From the council's point of view we didn't know exactly what that would look like, but it was heading towards a greater vision, firmly grounded on community development principles."

**Mary Foy:** "The council have gold in Jenny. The council didn't really understand community processes. The will was there but they did not know how to do it."

**Jenny Chilcott:** "Initially, there was a lot of suspicion about contracting a community rather than a commercial operator for what had traditionally been seen as council work. It took months to get this different kind of contract – one based on partnering principles – through council, but the contract developed here formed the basis for

contracts with the other communities."

**Mary:** "It was so new. I remember that when we signed the contract we brought the council here rather than us going to them, which I think was really important."

**Emma:** "It was a partnership, not a Memorandum of Understanding. It was a partnership which had practicalities rather than an MOU with these responsibilities and how to do this and that."

**Mary:** "At that time the council wasn't really ready for the process and project. But we were able to work together on the process. We don't do anything without consulting with each other. If we want to put out a leaflet for a planting day we flick it round to one another, that for us has been terribly useful. I have nothing to cause me to think negatively about this relationship. In the beginning we had some struggles around some of the policies and information, but Jenny did her best to broker these."

**Jenny:** "There is always a tension with working with councils because there are council timeframes and community timeframes, but where that happens we get round the table and sort it out. We have learned to appreciate our differences and the greater opportunities that come from this way of working together."

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[www.ranui.org.nz](http://www.ranui.org.nz)  
[www.projecttwinstreams.org.nz](http://www.projecttwinstreams.org.nz)

# Growing confidence

Greenfleet programme manager for the **Sustainable Business Network (SBN)** Mark Roberts says the **Auckland Regional Council's** role as matchmaker and chaperone in their latest partnership gave his organisation the confidence to try something new.



Pupils from Patumahoe School showing off their contribution to the programme

The Greenfleet programme works to help SBN members reduce carbon emissions from their vehicle fleets and offset the rest by planting trees. It also provides support, advice and information about new developments in sustainable vehicle technology.

"We have had a good working relationship with the ARC and so has Trees for Survival (TFS), so we were kind of introduced to each other through them," says Mark.

"Working with TFS is relatively straight forward as we are both non-government-organisations, which means we pretty well know where each other is coming from."

The partnership between SBN and TFS has now been formalised, with a Memorandum of Understanding detailing Greenfleet's commitment to support the growing and planting activities of six TFS

schools in Auckland. The schools, which are spread across the Auckland region from Pakiri to Patumahoe, will each plant a maximum of 1,000 trees this season.

Mark says the MOU was quite straight forward.

"We just wanted to clarify the capacity that they were taking and the requirements we were looking for and the conditions for planting and maintenance."

The new part of the deal was that TFS, unlike Greenfleet's other partners, also plant on private land. This was where the reassurance of TFS's work with the ARC really played its part.

"It just made us feel more confident about the commitments made," says Mark.

[www.sustainable.org.nz](http://www.sustainable.org.nz)  
[www.tfsnz.org.nz](http://www.tfsnz.org.nz)

## Cooperating for a healthy catchment

Co-existing environmental volunteer groups around Whitford have recently established their own informal network which is crossing boundaries and increasing cooperation.

The Friends of Mangemangeroa, the Whitford Estuaries Conservation Society and the Point View Heritage Society all work independently on bush protection and restoration in the estuary and reserve areas.

The Friends of Mangemangeroa are pleased to see the new activity among their neighbours.



Friends of Mangemangeroa set to work

Chairman Allan Riley said "In the past we had no say whatsoever about what happened in the neighbouring estuary, which feeds into the same bay, so it is good to be working independently but helping each other.

"We have some of our people go to their volunteer days, and they have some at ours. We help them out, give them plants, and go to the odd meeting. We are just getting to know each other really."

Mike Johnson helped to set up the Point View Heritage Society alongside his wife Linden. He too was positive about the new connections.

"I think it has been very good, if nothing more than for the moral support," he said. "This work can get disheartening and it helps us to stay positive."

These two groups, combined with the Whitford Estuaries Conservation Society, mean that volunteer nature restorers now have an interest across a large area of the coastline.

For Allan Riley the potential for protecting the environment in this way is powerful.

"We are now thinking in terms of an eco-corridor, which would allow birds in particular to move from one reserve to another, through Hunua, Flat Bush, Murphy's Bush and Manurewa," he said.

## Finding fertile soil in the community

The work of Procure in Glen Innes is a text book case of how a partnership can allow activities to make a successful transition from creation by funded environmental and health organisations to direct control by the local community.

Lifestyle Co-ordinator Tania Lake began working under a contract between healthy living promotion organisation Procure and the Ruapotaka Marae. Both organisations saw the potential for contact with local people offered by the marae as a focal point in the community and the way in which Tania's work could fit with the existing services being offered there.



Facilitator Marion Jones explains how healthy eating can grow out of healthy gardens and a healthy environment in Glen Innes.

She describes how the most important initial phase of her work was not so much doing, as listening.

**"We set up our own network and went to community meetings and the like in Glen Innes to introduce ourselves," she said. "We see where we can piggy back on other events, let people know who we are and get our surveys out there so we can find out the kind of health and physical education activities people would like to have in their communities."**

That way they only run groups which they know will be supported, saving time and energy. These include edible gardening, herb lore, sports and exercise initiatives.

They then get the ball rolling (sometimes literally) by paying venue costs and helping to organise new clubs and workshops. The aim is that after a short period these will be self sufficient and community run.

This approach has been so successful that the new groups in Glen Innes are established enough for Tania to move on to a project in Panmure in partnership with the Faith Family Baptist Centre.

## Knocking on neighbours' doors

The **Le Roys Bush** and **Little Shoal Bay** Management Committee have been steadily building partnerships with other residents and local businesses in order to help tackle pest plants that are threatening to take over their local nature reserves.



North Shore residents are helping eradicate blue morning glory (*convolvulus*) and other invasive weeds from their neighbourhoods.

The committee helps North Shore City Council look after two reserves, Le Roys Bush and Little Shoal Bay, by controlling invasive pest plants and replanting native bush.

Chairman Keith Salmon says: "the people who work for North Shore City Council and for the ARC are great to work with and very supportive of volunteers. It's very difficult these days to get people to volunteer to do this kind of work so we are much more reliant on grants and professional contractors."

He says the committee realises how reliant the group is on partnerships. The committee is now working with a local garden centre chain that it recently discovered had been selling plants that were a threat to the area's native bush. Keith has also spoken to Highbury property owners on the reserve's boundary about the problem of introduced plant species and about the impact it has on the health of the neighbouring native bush.

Some of these neighbours were so interested in what Keith had to say they joined a focus group set up by the committee, and have since started clearing weeds on their land. Others have given permission for the committee to control the more invasive pest plants.

And at the lower end of the reserve, where the reserves open onto Little Shoal Bay, resident Bridget Armstrong approached the committee after she noticed there was a major problem with morning glory killing off mature trees. The residents and the committee formed a focus group and have since organised monthly working bees to tackle the problem.

The group has also approached a local business owners' committee, which since then nominated a representative to liaise on a development plan for the section of bush reserve adjacent to the shopping centre.

**[groups.google.co.uk/group/LeRoys-Bush-and-Little-Shoal-Bay](https://groups.google.co.uk/group/LeRoys-Bush-and-Little-Shoal-Bay)**

## Resources and Contacts

Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector

**[www.ocvs.govt.nz/publications/help-information-community-groups.html](http://www.ocvs.govt.nz/publications/help-information-community-groups.html)**  
Great resource for community groups and volunteers.

Community Advisors

If you or your group would like to talk to someone about partnerships, contact:

- Department of Internal Affairs Community Advisors in Auckland/ Waitakere: **09 834 9701**, or Manukau: **09 263 7372**; **[www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf)**
- Your local Council – ask to speak to a Community Advisor
- Sustainable Communities- Community Advisor: **[community@arc.govt.nz](mailto:community@arc.govt.nz)**