

Report 08.507
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Committee Regional Sustainability Committee
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Honda TreeFund funding allocation

1. Purpose

To seek the Committee's endorsement of funding guidelines for the Honda TreeFund in the Wellington region.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. About the TreeFund

The purpose of the New Zealand-wide Honda TreeFund is to invest in the community by funding the planting of native trees to offset some of the motor vehicle emissions and their impact on the environment. For every car sold, Honda New Zealand funds the planting of ten native trees via regional councils around the country.

The Honda TreeFund was launched in July 2005. Since then it has accumulated enough funds to plant around 320,000 saplings. Honda customers are invited to donate to the fund at the time of purchase. They are also invited to join in selected planting events with the Honda agent staff and their regional council. Projects funded must fulfil the following criteria:

Plants are to be NZ natives and may be used to support any of the following:

- I. Establishment of native tree populations (trees + required protecting cover)
- II. Water run off control
- III. Erosion control
- IV. Regional parks or other planting for beautification
- V. Biodiversity protection and restoration
- VI. Urban stream enhancement
- VII. Coastal protection and restoration planting.

What cannot be funded?

The Honda TreeFund is not intended to replace existing Council funding for conservation projects. It may not be used for urban amenity planting or small-scale landscaping projects, e.g. building surrounds.

How much money has come to the Wellington region?

Since the Honda TreeFund started, it has provided considerably more plant material than GW funding would ordinarily allow:

2005/06: \$47,955 or approx 9,591 trees

2006/07: \$59,195 or approximately 11,839 trees

2007/08: \$53,350 or approximately 10,670 trees.

Who decides where it's spent?

To date, the allocation of the Wellington region's Honda TreeFund has been carried out by representatives of GW Environment, Parks and Communications, liaising on a project basis with relevant Wairarapa staff.

While this arrangement has worked reasonably well, there is room for improving communication and coordination across GW. We would like to formalise a working group, including the above parties, inviting ongoing representation from the Catchment Management Division (including Wairarapa-based staff) and setting up regular meetings to plan and monitor progress.

As a condition of the funding, GW reports annually to Honda New Zealand on the locations and scope of various planting activities.

4. **Current funding allocation guidelines**

Greater Wellington encourages community participation in all its activities to make our region a better place to live and promote a sense of community ownership and involvement. Planting activities, in particular, help enhance the quality of our environment, raise awareness of what the region has to offer and build understanding of key issues e.g. biodiversity, pest control. They also help reinforce the sense of “ownership” and encourage social interaction amongst volunteers.

We propose the following guidelines for allocating the Honda TreeFund:

1. Approximately 60% of each year’s Honda TreeFund is to be allocated to the regional parks, with the remainder going to other planting sites around the region.

Rationale: In allocating the funds and implementing the planting programme, significant numbers of trees are involved. Of the nominal \$5 per tree we spend approximately \$3 per tree and \$2 on ancillary materials such as fertiliser, mulch and/or fencing. This helps to ensure a reasonable plant survival rate. However, we still need significant volunteer assistance to plant the trees. The regional parks have relatively easy access, rangers on site, good facilities and regular planting days. Therefore, they provide an attractive venue for encouraging more and larger-scale volunteer activities.

2. In determining the allocations we should aim for an even-handed spread of funding around planting sites in the region.

Rationale: Honda NZ asks that each dealer and their staff and customers be given the opportunity to participate in a planting day near their particular location. Honda dealerships are located in Masterton, Lower Hutt, Wellington and Kapiti. To date, Honda dealers have participated in plantings at the Waikanae estuary, Queen Elizabeth Park, Oku Reserve in Island Bay, Kaitoke Regional Park and Mauriceville in the northern Wairarapa. Other planting sites have included the Hutt River Trail and the Wainuiomata Recreation Area.

Demonstrating a reasonable spread of funding also promotes a general perception of fairness and impartiality.

3. A key role of the working group would be to identify and evaluate those planting sites that may not qualify for other funding, yet with support from the TreeFund and local community, could deliver significant benefits.

Rationale: We already have well-established relationships with the Territorial Authorities and local groups, especially through the Take Care and Key Native Ecosystems programmes. Since the inception of the Honda TreeFund we have been able to fund planting sites that may deliver significant biodiversity gains yet not be eligible for these other schemes nor

have other funding allocated e.g. linking bush remnants at Te Marua entrance area of Kaitoke Regional Park; planting Oku Reserve at Island Bay and Mauriceville Village centre.

4. Individual Honda tree planting sites should receive approximately three years of funding support to get the planting well established and be able to demonstrate progress.

Rationale: To get the full benefit of the Honda TreeFund we need significant community buy-in and support. To this end we promote the particular values of the site, work with the relevant volunteer groups and encourage community ownership and social interaction around these focal points.

5. Communication

As this programme is “owned” by Honda New Zealand Ltd, all communications are coordinated either with their national office or local dealers. Greater Wellington, in effect, acts as Honda’s TreeFund “agent” in our region. We facilitate the planting of native plants and provide opportunities such as planting events for Honda’s dealers and clients to participate and support the local community.

Honda New Zealand has a preference for what it describes as “hero” events. We manage this expectation by providing publicity opportunities for their local dealers, in addition to a photo opportunity when we receive the annual cheque from Honda.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. **Receives** the report
2. **Approves** the guidelines for allocating the Wellington regional share of the Honda TreeFund.

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