

Facing

Newsletter of Beacon Pathway

May 2006



Progress on the Rotorua NOW Home

The Rotorua NOW Home, a first-time collaboration between Beacon Pathway and Housing New Zealand Corporation, is now well underway. The home has been designed, and the construction process is being managed, by local architects, APR Consultants. Like the first NOW Home in Waitakere, the house is designed and sited to make the most of passive solar heating and cooling. The objective is to create a house which is cost-competitive, warm, dry and healthy for the average New Zealand family. Unlike the Waitakere house, this design utilises pre-painted steel wall and roof claddings.

Construction has been delayed by the recent spell of unsettled weather but footings and earthworks have been prepared and



Artist's impression of the house from the north

Building material manufacturers and suppliers have again shown strong support for the project. In return for material sponsorship, they will receive the results of the extensive two year monitoring programme of the home's performance and comfort. Lessons learned from this house will go towards improving house construction throughout New Zealand.



the concrete slab is now poured.

Polystyrene blocks insulate the concrete slab to retain heat

Construction is being undertaken by Warren Monk Builders who will have a strong emphasis on site safety. In the spirit of Community Renewal, students from Tumahaurangi Trust Construction Trade Training Unit will gain practical work experience helping out with the project. The project is expected to be completed by the end of July.

NOW Home Open Day

On Sunday 2 April, the Waitakere NOW Home was open to the public as part of Waitakere City's Eco Day. This is the second of the six-monthly public open days, and, despite the inclement weather, approximately 120 people were shown around the house. The NOW Home appears to be generating a high degree of awareness of the project and sustainable housing in the local community.

The feedback from visitors was very positive. A significant number of people were viewing the home specifically because they were designing/building their own home and were looking for ideas to make it more efficient. Some, including an architect, commented on the difficulty in sourcing the right kind of products or information.

What is a High Standard of Sustainability?

Beacon is working to find the answer to this question. Based on the NOW Home projects, experience using the Beacon footprint, and insights from National Scorecard research, Beacon is beginning to define a High Standard of Sustainability. At this stage we have identified five key performance indicators that we can use for both existing and new homes: energy, water, internal environment quality, waste and materials. Each will have features (e.g. solar hot water system), a measurable indicator (e.g. amount of water usage per year) and provide benefits to the home owner (warmth, health, comfort, cost savings). This will form a matrix for Beacon and the wider community to assess houses' current standards of sustainability, and also track progress towards Beacon's sustainability targets.

Further research is planned to help us move forward our definition of the High Standard of Sustainability. Beacon has consulted scientists at BRANZ Ltd for their view based on their experience with the Green Homes' Scheme, and also the view of Synergine consultants working on TUSC (Tools for Urban Sustainability) – a tool which currently assesses water and energy efficiency in homes and gives a range of ways in which the particular home can be made more energy and water efficient.

Lois Easton heads Policy and Regulation team

Beacon is pleased to welcome Lois Easton to head the Policy and Regulation research team. Lois is self employed, and is currently lecturing at Auckland University Planning School. She has previously held senior policy and operational roles at Waitakere City Council, including Parks Planning Manager, and, most recently, the City Development Projects Manager where she was responsible for a range of Waitakere City Council sustainable building developments.

Her priorities for the Policy and Regulation research stream include: working with local and central government to build value cases for appropriate sustainable building regulation; developing tool kits for use by government to promote sustainable building; and investigating policy options for retrofitting sustainable building technologies into existing homes.

Presentations

Registered Master Builders' Federation Conference Queenstown 23-24 April

Nick Collins, Beacon's GM led off an afternoon session entitled "Sustainable Building: where's it all going?" His overview of sustainable building and the work Beacon is doing, was followed by speakers from Department of Building and Housing, Ministry for the Environment, EECA and BRANZ Ltd.

Sustainable Wanaka

Beacon's GM spoke to a public meeting of 35 people who turned out on the evening before Anzac Day. "It was one of the most engaged audiences I have ever had" said Nick Collins. The planned one hour session starting at 7.30 finally finished at 10.00pm.

Industry Survey

In order to better understand the current and expected future demand for sustainable housing by consumers, and the current and future sustainable management practices, products and services available from the housing industry, Beacon's Market Transformation team are conducting a web survey of housing industry sector groups.

Information from the survey will be used:

- to identify the support that would help companies to improve their environmental performance
- in the online Sustainable Residential Building Manual

If your company or organisation is involved in any aspect of the housing industry, please take a few moments to complete our survey. The survey is available on Beacon's website: www.beaconpathway.co.nz/industry+survey.aspx. We are especially interested in examples of your good practice and what difficulties you have had improving your practices.

Win a case of wine

Each completed form that we receive from a company will go into a draw for a case of wine – produced by a member of Sustainable Wine New Zealand (of course!). There will be one winner drawn for each 200 forms returned.