

Chairperson's [Executive Director] Report to the Friends of Maungawhau For the AGM 12 July 2011

The year has been active with regular Tues morning volunteer sessions and steady progress has been made by volunteers on Batger Quarry and the surrounding areas. Many thanks to Jean, Keith and the regular volunteers. There has been great friendship developed amongst the regular volunteers and neighbours have also got involved. Also community groups approach the Friends for information and offer assistance. Jo continues on her own in her patch and gives good botanical and cultivation advice. Jean has produced 110 reports covering over 2 years on the volunteer work and a great amount of expertise has been built up.

A good Love Your Mountain Day was held Dec 2010 although the traffic to the summit was not stopped. Many thanks to Eden Garden and Government House . April continued to do great work in organising the event and continues to do for the one this year. Successful applications were made to get funds to support the volunteers, upgrade the track through Batger Quarry, and erect signs. In addition a grant was received from the ASB for an ecological study to record and give better direction on the restoration and volunteer work.

Successful submissions were made to the new Albert-Eden Local Board on the Maunga and this resulted in a walk around with the new senior management to get improvements. A submission had to be made direct to the Chair of the Parks Forum to get officers to respond on the monitoring on the old concrete wall and failing shotcrete around the Batger Quarry. Submissions were made to the Auckland Plan and our advocacy to get rangers continues.

I have spent many hours and meetings in advocating and trying to get engagement with the Council on the Maunga. Unfortunately I have come to the end of the road and I need a rest. The Council has not been helpful in supporting us as a long-term volunteer group. In my experience we have been ignored in the monthly meetings except for the Ngāti Whātua representative: Many small items which include: can't get alignment between arborists and archaeologists, damaged gates and signs are not replaced; our 2009 archaeological report is ignored; unable to get the ASB grant underway in a meaningful way with Council, etc. In addition I see a growing army of consultants, contractors and lack of "holistic management" [as in the 2007 management plan] and we do not know the overall plan, priorities and where we fit in. The only promise is the Tāmaki Collective and Ngāti Whātua taking over as leaders. Even the volunteer coordinator for the Council who has given us good support appears to have been sidelined.

The Council is failing when it does not engage with active citizens who care for their community. The lack of success may be the advocacy approach I have taken - if so, it is not working and a new direction is needed. My concern is that volunteers could become "unpaid contractors". There needs greater clarity such as an MOU to guide all parties.

All this is not doing much for me nor my volunteering and I can not continue in this way. Therefore I will stand down as Chairperson and the Executive Director [as in our constitution] and offer the position to another person. I am still willing to continue on the committee but will take a lesser role and put my efforts elsewhere. Many thanks for all your support. We have made a difference but a change is now needed.

Kit Howden
Present Chairman Friends of Maungawhau