

Editorial



Welcome to the first edition of Offcuts for 2015. Last year was certainly busy for our team and 2015 shows no sign of being any different. Data being released is showing significant trends of increased activity in both residential and commercial projects. Some industry players are predicting that nationally 2015 may be the busiest construction year in more than 25 years. Locally, 2014 saw a 29% increase in the value of building work consented. The majority of this increase can be attributed to several major developments in the commercial sector. While this is great news for the local building sector it does put pressure on resources to cope with this increased activity.

In this particular issue we will deal with communication, an update on the past year and resourcing issues.

Have your say

If any of the following topics are important to you we encourage you to join us for a meeting with Rachael Pull, Policy Planner from the Wanganui District Council:

Date: Friday, 13 March 2015

Time: 12:00pm to 1:30pm

RSVP: Chris.Heywood@whanganuiandpartners.nz

Transport (parking changes)
Advertising (billboards; property sale signs)
Financial contributions
Utilities (renewable energy)

Other topics that are part of this phase of the District Plan review include: Noise, Indigenous Forestry, Riparian Margins, River Margin Landscape Conservation Zone, Outstanding Natural Landscape Zone, Temporary Military Training Activities, Verandahs, Bees, Relocated Buildings and Earthworks. If you are interested in these topics, please contact Rachael Pull to set up a time to discuss them.

Rachael will do a presentation on the above topics, which are part of the District Plan review, followed by a Q&A session specifically for the business community.

Come and find out how you can have your input into this process to help shape our district

Come and join us for a light lunch

Venue: War Memorial Centre – Pioneer Room

If you have any questions or queries regarding the District Wide provisions or matters contained in this letter please contact Rachael on (06) 349 3131 or via email at: rachael.pull@wanganui.govt.nz.

Communication

An important part of what we do here at Council is to ensure we employ effective communication when dealing with our stakeholders. Effective communication is a valuable tool in ensuring that all participants in a building project are aware of their roles and responsibilities. With this philosophy in mind we are currently investigating two options to allow us to better communicate with the building sector.

Option one revolves around the use of a data base where subscribers would receive updates on issues such as staff availability which could impact on consent processing and inspection timeframes. It would also allow us to pass on valuable information in regards to industry changes or updates. This communication style could be in the form of a short email or a link to a website that will keep stakeholders fully informed and educated. This information portal would be a one-way system and any reactions or responses

to this information would need to go through the regular Council channels.

The second option being considered is to have face to face sit downs with a cross-section of the local building sector. This would entail a group of 10 or 12 participants and members of the building control team. We feel these smaller numbers are more conducive to ensuring attendees will be more comfortable in voicing an opinion amongst their peers. This will enable us to discuss the pertinent issues affecting our sector and encourage active participation in a more informal setting. These informal get-togethers would enable Council to gather valuable feedback and actively pursue issues on behalf of all participants.

These two options will hopefully encourage open lines of communication and we believe lead to better outcomes for all stakeholders. We expect to roll-out these options sometime in the middle of 2015. Watch this space for updates.

Current resourcing levels

As can be expected in busy times one of the first areas to come under pressure is resourcing. With a significant increase in our workload in 2014 and no slowing down in the first part of 2015 our resources are severely stretched. Traditionally January to early February is a period where the sector is predominantly at a reduced level thus enabling the team to catch up on any backlog and also for some members of staff to take leave. However, so far this year we have seen the busiest January and February for many years and with staff also on sick leave our staffing levels have been severely stretched. This has had a significant impact on inspection timelines and statutory days for building

consent processing. Previously in times of pressure on resources we have been able to call on neighbouring councils for assistance but this option is not viable at the moment as other regions are also trying to cope with increased activity. Therefore, when booking an inspection it is prudent to book well in advance. The 24 hour time limit for booking inspections is untenable at the present time. To ensure availability inspections should be booked at least 72 hours in advance to enable you to get the time slot you require.

Building control activities 2014

ACTION	2014	2013
Number of building consents (incl Clause 2 =15)	758 (773)	814
Value of building consents	\$79,298,384.00	\$56,475,118.00
Revenue received	\$850,777.28	\$698,011.86
Building consents processed in less than 20 days	94%	95%

~ 2014 in review ~

Of the 758 building consents received, approximately 6% went over the statutory 20 days. The average time taken to process consents was just over 9 days compared to 6.7 days in 2013. There were also 15 Schedule 1 Clause 2 exemptions which Council received and approved in 2014.

The impact of Building Act changes which came into force on 30 November 2013 was evident in building consent numbers. Central Government expanded the list of exempt work in Schedule 1 by removing low risk projects from the requirement of obtaining a building consent. The comparison between 2013/14 shows that, including Clause 2 exemptions, there was only a difference in applications of 41 projects. Taking into account these legislative changes it can be concluded that there is an upturn in activity in the District which is being driven by more complex high value projects.

There was a 29% increase in the value of approved consents compared to 2013 which shows that the projects being approved are more complex. Coupled with an 18% increase in revenue this signals that

the complexity of the projects has also added to pressures on statutory days and resourcing.

Council's BCA accreditation was also addressed in 2014 with International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ) confirming our registration as a BCA after attending in October 2014 for a special assessment. IANZ made specific comments on the BCA's progress and were very pleased with the direction that was being taken.

A representative from the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE) attended this special assessment as an observer and to also comment on Council's Territorial Authority functions. Council was deemed to be not complying with the Building Amendment Act 2012 changes and MBIE gave direction in obtaining compliance with this legislation. Council is currently in the process of appointing a Building Compliance Officer to undertake this role. This officer will work closely with MBIE to introduce an improved compliance schedule regime including audits of buildings which hold a Building Warrant of Fitness (BWOF).



WANGANUI DISTRICT COUNCIL
 Te Kaunihera a Rohe o Wanganui

Quarterly newsletter for the Building Industry

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