

LETS Community News



May 2007

LETS Conference Christchurch 2007

Once more a select group of representatives from several LETS exchanges from around New Zealand met for their annual conference, this time in Christchurch. Visitors and us locals alike were greeted by clear sky and cold temperatures – and by locked doors at the conference venue at the St Matthews Anglican Church. With a bit of delay we were finally admitted inside, to a hot drink. The generous space allowed us to put up market stalls right away and leave them until Saturday night.



Friday evening was spent with a bit of trading, dinner together and a short and effective round of systems reports. Shortly after 9pm we all left, either for home or our billets.

Saturday morning saw an introductory session followed by the market until after lunch. Even though there was a fair choice at the market, attendance from both local members as well as people from out of town was low.

During the afternoon we had three speakers, Katherine Peet from Network Waitangi and Sustainable Otautahi Christchurch, followed by Chris Twemlow from the Lyttelton Timebank and Sharon Torstonson from the Council of Social Services (COSS).

The Sunday morning session held at the St Albans Community Centre featured an online session with CES and the conference concluded with the AGM of LETS Connect NZ.

Throughout the weekend our discussions were marked by our usual concerns: how to retain our members and how to increase participation again. Different exchanges reported on their mostly futile efforts to attract new traders. It was recommended that the LETS Connect Committee develop a branding strategy. In the second part of the opening discussion we also looked at an issue that was raised by Maxine from WINGS: licences for stalls that sell food on markets. We concluded that a food handler's certificate is only needed when there are sales to the public, but not within a closed community such as a LETS exchange.

The Saturday afternoon sessions with our guest speakers tried to raise some issues connected with the future of LETS. Where are we going and

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what is needed for us to successfully get there? Katherine started with giving us an overview of the big picture, doing so with lots of pictures! What are the values we want to pass on to the future? They include things like: sense of humour, caring for the environment, radical creativity, relationships/aroha, honesty, skills to participate in the community, acceptance, tolerance and others. We live in a society with a growing gap and disparity of incomes and wealth. Within that context, freedom is a complex issue. We need to concentrate on politics of generosity, not politics of self-interest.

Chris from Lyttelton then gave us an idea of the flavour of a timebank. He told us that it was about other ways of living and helping each other on a day to day basis. He also gave us some practical recommendations: have several coordinating positions, among them also 'ambassadors', people from different social circles who can take the message different parts of society.

Sharon talked about some very practical issues. Motivated to promote social equity, justice and wellbeing, COSS is working by advocating on issues, empowering groups and facilitating collaboration in the social services sector. COSS can help identifying barriers to social groups joining LETS and can help demonstrate how LETS promotes community wellbeing. The issue of how WINZ treats LETS trading income was raised, and as a result Sharon will help us to follow up on that and get more clarity.

In a feedback session at the end of the day however, it became clear that LETS movement in New Zealand as a whole has little vision of where it wants to be in 10 to 15 years. Yet there are an abundance of options that can be followed up on.

A fundamental change of mind might be necessary, though. People who put the conventional dollar economy as the final bottom line will never find what they are looking for in a LETS exchange. Ultimately this system will only work for people who can see that there are other, more important values in life than just conventional dollar wealth. LETS needs to link up with complementary areas like timebanks, community gardens and work on creating local directories of people and services that work according to a changed mindset. A long term vision could be for LETS system to become the 'bank' for the 3rd, or community sector – providing a means of exchange for the not-for-profit economy at a very low cost.

We all left the conference satisfied with the contacts and trades made. However, no date or location was fixed for either a South Island regional meeting nor for next years conference.

Notes taken at the conference can be requested by email at communitydollars@gmail.com



News from the Exchanges

There has been plenty to report from the various Exchanges in the last month



T.A.T.S. Timaru

A big thank-you to the CCD membership for hosting a fun-filled 2007 National Conference. I came away from the weekend feeling rejuvenated by the direction which NZCES is heading. For too long we have all just sort of ambled along waiting for “that mysterious something to happen” but with our economy going the way it is, now is the time to ensure we have strong local Community Exchange Systems up and running.

Marion Utiger

H.A.N.D.S. Golden Bay Autumn Flavoured Family Feast & Fun

Signs of Autumn greeted the crowd of almost 80 members (and a few non-members) of the Golden Bay H.A.N.D.S. Community on Sunday evening, 29th of April. A roaring fire in the wood-stove, colourful leaves, fruits, nuts and veges set the scene at Kotinga Hall for a wonderful evening of feasting and family fun.

The group spent the first hour getting to know more about each other with a fun survey to locate others for different categories. The Kids’ Corner was a popular site for aspiring artists with painting and leaf collages. Mellow tunes filled the air courtesy of a member D.J.

The bountiful feast was prepared by members and included choices of steaming soups, just-picked salads, fresh baked breads, savoury mains, nutritious beverages and scrumptious desserts. Many of the ingredients were locally grown by H.A.N.D.S. members.

Live entertainment followed the delicious feast with two outstanding music sets by members and a grand finale featuring a mesmerizing fire dance.

Everyone who contributed—decorating, cooking, serving, entertaining, and cleaning-up was paid in HANDS from the entry fees, which were 18 HANDS, or 15 for early bookings, and half price for under 16s. This group effort showcased the many talents of the Golden Bay H.A.N.D.S. Community and left everyone with only one question...when is the next feast?

Terry Burgess



Wairarapa Green Dollar Exchange

Local Green Dollar Markets in the Wairarapa have been taken this year to the wider community by deliberately seeking out a variety of venues such as church halls, senior citizens centres and community group facilities.

The intention has been to provide trading opportunities for members to sell not only to one another but to the wider community in the hope that this will also form an effective method to publicise our activities and generate therefore new membership interest.

Our most recent Market, held in Carterton's Senior Citizens' Hall, not only attracted a good number of members and guest stall holders but also drew many enquiries from those who took advantage of the Main Street location to drop in and find out a little bit about Green Dollars and how they might become involved in the Exchange.

Our next excursion will take us to the St John's Hall in Greytown towards the end of May and all being well the support from members and interest from the general public will be just as great. As always, the challenge then will be to convince those interested that not only do they have a lot to gain through membership but that the more they get themselves involved the more they will benefit.

Keith Sawyer

C.C.D. Christchurch

The Exchange finally has a new logo — and here it is: With the new logo we will now embark onto a sustained membership drive — we are still 40 short of the goal we set ourselves at our last AGM in August! Part of the marketing is also our new website (still somewhat under construction) at <http://communitydollars.org.nz>



Are you interested in downloading this newsletter from the internet? Are you curious to see some other newsletters from other groups internationally? The CES website offers a small selection of LETS newsletters from NZ, Australia and South Africa at: <http://www.ces.org.za/cen/index.htm>.

