

## Building consents gain momentum



COMMERCIAL activity includes Totally Vets Ltd's new building on Manchester Street, Feilding.

BUILDING consents issued by the Manawatu District Council have been quietly gathering momentum over the past four months even though annual numbers and values will be down on previous years.

A total of 735 consents valued at \$54.5 million have been issued for the first 11 months of this financial year (to May 31), as against 743 consents at \$84.3 million for the same period in 2008/09.

The high value of consents last year was largely due to the start of an extensive building programme at RNZAF base Ohakea.

From February to May this year, 341 consents valued at \$26.8 million have been issued, compared with 300 consents at \$47.8 mil-

lion for the corresponding four-month period in 2009.

Building Team Leader, Chris Henry, said the building industry in Manawatu had been trending upwards in the past two months, though much of it was small work such as farm sheds, garages and fireplaces.

"The housing market, however, is starting to move again and commercial activity in the district is fairly buoyant," he said.

Mr Henry said signs for the future were "pretty positive" with a number of builders having up to three months work booked.

"There has been a steady flow of housing consents as people continue to build in the district," he said. "We are processing up to seven a month and look to maintain

that interest."

He said Manawatu was noted for its "steady as she goes" approach and did not appear to experience the fluctuating booms associated with other areas.

The second stage of the helicopter hangar development at Ohakea would significantly boost commercial activity, as well as a number of jobs underway in Kimbolton Road, Feilding, and a motel complex at Manfeild.

Mr Henry said there had been good feedback from the building industry regarding council's services.

"Things are looking really positive and we are pretty proud of how we are delivering our service at the moment," he said.

## Technology replaces senses

ELECTRONIC advances rank as the biggest change experienced by Manawatu District Council's Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor, Russell Dean, during his lengthy career in the world of murky water.

Russell, recently honoured by council for his 35-year service in Feilding, said most of his time had been spent in manually operated plants.

"I suppose you can class me as being from the old school where you relied on your nose, ears and eyes," he said.

"Now, the new operators are all electronically wired up - but you need them, the computers and all the electronic gear to meet the high discharge standards required today. PC units have only recently been fitted to equipment, while process controls are automating things like valves so the plant can be run from a laptop."

Russell, council's longest

serving employee, has been involved with a number of major upgrades at the plant.

"Upgrades are more regularly needed to meet the discharge targets," he said. "It can be quite difficult, but it's something we are always working on, and that's what I find interesting - those sorts of challenges."

Born and raised in Hawke's Bay, Russell gained his qualifications in Tokoroa and worked at the town's treatment plant for three years before moving to Feilding in 1975 as the borough's sewage treatment plant operator. He continued in that role after the MDC was formed in 1989, before his appointments as waste plant manager in 1994 and plant supervisor last year.

"I have always found the job interesting because of the biological treatment system we have and the recent addition of chemical dosing to

meet high environmental standards. And what really fires me up is getting a result from the plant and seeing what the finished product looks like."

He said the plant, commissioned in 1967, had been one of the best of its type in New Zealand at the time, and he had been fortunate in being able to retain its high standard by purchasing proven equipment rather than the cheaper options.

"You want your gear to last a long time, like an English-manufactured pump that was part of the original plant and is still running."

Though he has no immediate thoughts of retirement, Russell is looking forward to further involvement in his family's major sporting passion, tennis - a far cry from sludge ponds, biological filters, heavy solids and UV treatment.



SUPERVISOR Russell Dean checks out a sludge pump in the digester building at the Wastewater Treatment Plant in Kawakawa Road, Feilding - his workplace for the past 35 years.

## Steady response to building survey

A STEADY stream of responses has been received by the Manawatu District Council as it seeks feedback from people who have dealt with its Building Services Department over the past seven months.

The customer survey is part of the department's commitment to providing an effective, efficient and friendly service regarding applications for Project Information Memoranda

(PIMs), Building Consents, Certificates of Acceptance, Certificates for Public Use, Code Compliance Certificates and enquiries.

Regulatory Supervisor, Karel Boakes, said more than

70 of the 650 plus survey forms posted out to customers who had received a building consent or Code Compliance Certificate since last October had been returned.

"There's been something coming in every day," she said, "and we are hoping it continues through to the closing date on July 1."

She said comments, generally, had been good, and

there were instances where it appeared council could look at improving its service.

"We are looking forward to collecting all the information so that we have something to work on. There has been quite a lot of written comment which is useful and always good to get."

Ms Boakes said people still had plenty of time to fill in the survey form that is also available at the customer service desk at the council's administration building in Manchester Street, Feilding, and online via its website, [www.mdc.govt.nz](http://www.mdc.govt.nz).

### Annual consents issued

Year	Number	Value
1998/1999	935	23,711,360
1999/2000	1074	25,429,011
2000/2001	1012	30,049,133
2001/2002	1115	31,338,317
2002/2003	1122	31,662,852
2003/2004	1275	41,177,699
2004/2005	1301	51,000,206
2005/2006	1280	68,050,016
2006/2007	1243	82,414,806
2007/2008	1088	78,513,749
2008/2009	807	86,780,948
2009/2010 (after 11 months)	735	54,575,107

### Council and Committee Meetings



Under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, notice is given that the following meetings are scheduled for July 2010:

#### Tuesday, July 6

8.30am Community Wellbeing Subcommittee

#### Thursday, July 15

8.30am Council. Public forum prior to meeting available - contact Customer Services and Democracy Manager for arrangements

8.45am Strategic Planning and Policy Committee

7.30pm Council - including Citizenship Ceremony

Unless specified, the above meetings will be held in the Manawatu District Council Building, 135 Manchester Street, Feilding, and are open to the public.

Lorraine Vincent  
Chief Executive

