

Hauraki Trade Seminars

August 21 & 22, 2006



Report

Co-ordinated by:

Hauraki District Council

Facilitated by:

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Sponsored by:

Waihi Mitre10 Home & Trade, Building Research Association NZ, James Hardy and Winstone Wallboards, and Hauraki District Council

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1. Introduction

The introduction of the new Building Act 2004 has considerably impacted the building consent process for New Zealand's building industry as well as local Authorities. Hauraki District Council acknowledged this and in August 2006 organised seminars to assist builders and those in the local building industry to come to grips with the requirements of the new Act. Seminars were targeted to outline changes in forms, additional application requirements and stricter timeframes for receiving Code Compliance Certificates.

Two trade seminars were organised and each facilitated the same program (see *Appendix A*). Waihi Mitre 10, Home and Trade generously sponsored significant costs of each seminar. Contributions were also received from the Building Research Association New Zealand, Winstone Wallboards Ltd and James Hardie. Hauraki District Council is very grateful to all sponsors for their contributions.

Credible speakers included Mr Bill Irvine from the Building Research Association New Zealand, Neil Gerrish, Managing Director of BuildCon Solutions and Mark Buttimore, Planning and Environmental Services Manager, Hauraki District Council. Speaker Profiles are attached in *Appendix C*.

Seminar details were as follows;

Paeroa Trade Seminar

Venue: Paeroa Race Course
Date: Monday August 21, 2006
Time: 5.30 – 7 PM

Waihi Trade Seminar

Venue: RSA Waihi
Date: Tuesday August 22, 2006
Time: 5.30 – 7 PM

1.1 Overview of this Report

Seminar outcomes (refer to Chapter 2) and an action plan (refer to Chapter 3) have been developed through seminar participants comments. Comments were facilitated and recorded in breakthrough sessions from each seminar proceeding. A copy of materials presented at the seminars can be found in *Appendix B* of this Report.

This report aims to summarize all seminar findings and present an action orientated plan for the Council and Hauraki's building industry to implement to work better together in the future. To implement the action plan outlined in this report and for the seminars to be beneficial and not 'just more talk at yet another meeting', it is important that Hauraki's building industry as well as the Hauraki District Council commits to steadily progress to implement the action plan.

2. Seminar Outcomes

2.1 General Comments

General comments received from the Paeroa and Waihi seminars are listed below and will need careful consideration to ensure appropriate, realistic initiatives are progressed. Some changes will be implemented in the near future, others may take some time and some are simply wish list items.

HDC current initiatives

- The industry was impressed that HDC¹ had taken the initiative to coordinate and deliver the trade seminars.
- The BCA² newsletter was recognised as a good initiative and should be continued and expanded on.
- The launch of the building section of the HDC website was commended.
- People felt that the proposal was good that BC³ applications were lodged by appointment when resources allowed

Suggestions for HDC :

- The Council to keep initiatives moving.
- The building team to provide more guidance at pre-consent phase.
- Increase the promotion of the Project Information Memorandum (PIM).
- The Act and the HDC to provide for more provision for urgent situations.

Hauraki's building industry needed to:

- Be more organised.
- Be able to track their building consents easily.
- Be more familiar with the new Building Act 2004 and the New Zealand Building Code changes.
- Be more familiar with different building products and how they comply with the New Zealand Building Code.
- Get ready for the LBP⁴ process.

2.2 Obstacles

Participants identified obstacles with the new Building Act 2004 in break through sessions. They were as follows:

General

- Some people do not use a computer, therefore websites are not appropriate tools for everyone.
- The Act advocates for designers to design, builders to build.
- The LBP process caused significant threats to peoples livelihoods and people were unsure what was required to qualify as a LBP.

Building Consent Processing

¹ HDC: Hauraki District Council

² BCA: Building Consent Authority

³ BC: Building Consent

⁴ LBP: Licensed Building Practitioner

- No clear definition of an amendment (s) to a building consent.
- Council issued several letters when they process a building consent rather than outlining all requirements from the start. This takes a longer amount of time for the applicant to get a Code Compliance Certificate.
- Minor changes to the approved documentation were taking too long.
- Applicants were not citing the New Zealand Building Standards properly.
- There was too much flexibility with inspection times.
- Inspection lead times were too long.

HDC Staffing

- Some participants expressed that HDC Customer Services 'acted as gate keepers' and 'did not allow some people to speak directly to HDC building staff'.
- Some people felt there was a lack of availability of the Customer Services people. The phone sometimes rang out or was engaged.
- Some people felt there was inadequate accessibility of officers.
- Sometimes, there was a lack of consistency in advice between the building consents staff and building inspectors.
- Some people felt the inspectors were sometimes not operating in accordance with the *Act*.
- Some inspections appeared not planned and scheduled properly.

Implementation of the *Act*

- Associated with a high cost of engaging professional staff, especially designers.
- Too many code changes caused confusion.
- J form – complex and confusing.
- The new requirements involved too much planning and paperwork.

2.3 Suggestions

Participants made the following suggestions for HDC to improve the Council's building consents process. Some suggestions were straight forward and can be implemented almost immediately whilst others will need to be given further consideration or are unachievable.

General

- Greater networking opportunities could be appropriate.
- Industry to be more proactive.

The building consent process:

- Carry out project pre-assessments.
- More advocacy of the PIM.
- More guidance by the building consents team and / or qualified persons at the concept stage.
- More information on how to get compliance.
- Provide just one notice of what is needed to have a full building consent application if there are aspects missing.
- Make forms and information user friendly.
- Explain and advocate staged consents including an explanation of what staged consents are and how to develop a plan for a staged consent.
- Explain engineering producer statements.
- The applicant needs to prepare properly for inspections.
- For all communications with Council to be recorded and a record to be maintained by the Council as well as a copy sent to other parties such as the owner, builder, designer and engineer.

- Inspectors to plan and organise inspections properly.
- Inspectors to provide a record of inspections on site.
- Council to issue a reminder to owners for the due dates for CCC requirements to be completed.
- HDC to issue acknowledgement of amendments, receipt of approved plans and inspections.
- Copies of communications to be sent to all stakeholders.
- Confusion with J Form – should have drop down tabs to prompt the applicant.
- Inspectors need to plan ahead and schedule appointments, not just turn up.
- Late consents to be fee reduced.
- The process for making minor changes to the approved documentation to be made easier.

Communication

- Industry need to notify Council of onsite changes.
- HDC to co-ordinate quarterly or six monthly trade seminars.
- Expand circulation of BCA Newsletters.
- Newsletters to flag changes in the requirements of the *Act* and associated amendments to the NZ Building Code.
- Common and popular issues to be placed on the HDC website.
- Website to reflect average waiting time for inspections and building consent processing.

2.4 Questions and Answers

The seminar forums provided an opportunity for Hauraki's local building industry to ask questions about building related matters. Some of seminar participant's questions and answers have been listed below. Answers were given by seminar speakers (see Speaker Profiles in *Appendix C*).

Question: When the Council reaches a problem when processing a building consent, do they continue through the rest of the application or stop where they find the problem?

Answer: Our intent is to send out one complete further information letter.

Question: Do you need to issue a permit to get a subfloor?

Answer: If you're altering below the subfloor e.g. ventilation, repiling or replacing the floor, you will need to apply for a Building Consent (BC) before starting work. If you have already applied and the plans have been altered in any way, then you need to check if the BC has been granted. If not, just a correction to plans will need to be made including re-submitting the altered plans.

If the BC has been granted or issued then an amendment form and new plans will need to be submitted. This will incur a processing time of 20 days from the date of receiving the amendment.

Question: Can Council request more time from DBH to help trades people work through the changes and requirements of the Building Act (especially with the LBP)?

Answer: A Building Industry Group will help to communicate views to the DBH. It is more effective to lobby as a group than as an individual.

Question: What is HDC doing about its short staffing issue?

Answer: Some work is being handled by external consultants to help with building consent processing. The Planning and Environmental Services Manager is currently developing a proposal for additional resourcing of the Council's building services. When the proposal is developed it will be presented to the HDC Chief Executive for final approval.

3. Steps Forward

Hauraki District Council's Building Team have a highly skilled and experienced team who are committed to provide the best possible service to the district's building industry. The team recognised there are some basic actions Council can take to improve its' service to Hauraki's building industry and the building consents process. Council's roles and commitments are outlined in this action plan. Furthermore, a key outcome that surfaced through the Trades Seminars was for Hauraki's building industry to undertake its own initiative to enhance members capacity including being up to date with the changes the new Building Act, 2004 brought.

This action plan suggests that the first and foremost essential step is for Hauraki's building industry to establish a Hauraki owned and controlled building industry group (see action point 1 below). The primary role of the industry group would be to educate the District's building industry to ensure members are up to date and able to meet the changes of new Building Act.

3.1 Building Industry

3.1.1 Action Item 1: Development of a 'Hauraki building industry community group'

Rationale: The effectiveness of the Hauraki Trade Seminars has recognised that for Hauraki's building industry to be sustained for the long term, it is important that a building industry group be established for the Hauraki region. The group will need to be representative of all trades and associated businesses within the Hauraki district.

The **objective** of the group would be to discuss matters of mutual interest between the building industry and the Council where construction and development is concerned.

The formation of the group will initially be facilitated by the Planning and Environmental Manager of the Hauraki District Council with the vision of the group being an independent and self- running group within 6 months.

Action Points:

1. Hauraki's building industry asked HDC to organise at least three meetings for the group to establish the industry group's role, purpose and structure.. Meetings may run in the following sequence, or as the industry sees fit.
 - Meeting 1. Initial concept discussions, including objectives, shape, form, functions and representation
 - Meeting 2: Action planning
 - Meeting 3: Drinks, social function and support.

Areas for consideration:

Issues identified at the trades seminars should be addressed by this group, issues include;

- Lobbying and liaison with Central and Local Government Departments.
- Capacity enhancement of Hauraki trades people to be more organised.
- Provision of guidance for local industry to deal with credible professionals.
- Familiarity with the new Building Act and the NZ⁵ Building Code changes.
- Familiarity with products.
- Encouraging DBH⁶, HDC and trades people to cite building standards properly.

⁵ NZ: New Zealand

⁶ Department of Building and Housing

- Being up to date and ready for the changes the new Building Act 2004 brings, including the LBP⁷ process.
- Helping trades people to become up to date with technology such as computer use, online banking facilities and use of the internet.
- Encouraging people to prepare for inspections.

3.2 Hauraki District Council's Service

3.2.1 Action Item 2: Secure additional resources for HDC's Building Services

Rationale: The Hauraki Trades Seminar identified there was a additional demand on the Hauraki District Council's Building Control Authority team and additional capacity for building inspections, application processing and administration was required.

Action Points:

1. Based on all findings to date, including the findings from Hauraki Trades Seminars provide an assessment of additional resources required for the HDC's Building Services.
2. Present the proposal to the Chief Executive of the Council for approval

3.2.2 Action Item 3: Capacity enhancement of the HDC's Building Team

Rationale: The Hauraki District Council building team is made of highly experienced and qualified members who work well together and have a high level of capacity, experience and expertise. However, there is always room for improvement. Some of the biggest obstacles for HDC's Building team has been getting the building industry to comply with, and understand the new *Building Act*. For Council to improve its building service the building team need ongoing capacity enhancement.

Action Points:

1. Individual Building Team members have previously had their capacity assessed and capacity enhancement requirements identified as a part of the BCA accreditation process. The Building Services Manager will revisit the findings of the accreditation process and through consultation with team members assess if staff have additional requirements or not.
2. Team manager to develop a clear definition of an amendment/(s) to a building consent application and make sure all team members are familiar with it. The definition is to be posted on the building section of the Council's website.
3. Where possible, when processing a building consent, staff to outline all of the consent requirements, in one letter.
4. Manager of the Building Team to review the existing scheduling and planning of inspections and identify and implement, if any, areas for improvement.
5. Planning and Environmental Services Manager and Building Services Manager to review and build on current pre-assessment activities, including the assessment and implementation of resourcing issues.
6. Building team to provide a record of all inspections, a reminder letter for when a customers CCC is due to be issued, a receipt for amendments to documentation and for approved plans and specifications.

7. The Building Team to provide more guidance at concept stage, where, when and if possible.
8. The Planning & Environmental Services Manager to establish a system that ensures customers are provided with a continuity in advice, including the documentation of verbal advice.

3.2.3 Action Item 4: Capacity enhancement of Customer Services

Rationale: Building is business, business for the builder and business for the Council. Often, the Customer Services Team are the first people customers have contact with. The Hauraki District Council needs to ensure the Customer Services team are providing the best service they can for the Hauraki trades industry.

Action Points:

1. Planning and Environmental Services Manager to meet with Customer Services staff to work out ways to address the following issues:
 - Issuing receipts for building inspections, amendments to documentation and the receipt of approved plans and specifications.
 - Answering, recording and directing phone calls and giving advice.
 - Consistency in advice between the building consents staff and the building team.
 - Explore if the CSA's and BC team promote the PIM and explore further ways the PIM can be promoted.
2. Ensure the Customer Services Team are fully up to speed with the building section of the HDC website.

3.2.4 Action Item 5: Continue and improve the BCA Newsletter

Rationale: Hauraki Trade Seminar participants felt the BCA Newsletter was generally useful and should be ongoing. The newsletters are to be used as a tool for providing additional information about the Building Act and will be continually improved.

Action points:

1. Changes to the BCA Newsletters to include:
 - Reflect and flag changes as a result of the Building Act 2004 and the New Zealand Building Code.
 - Broader circulation of BCA Newsletters by adding attendees of the Hauraki Trades Seminars who have marked they would like to receive a copy to the BCA mailing list and for building inspectors and the rest of the building consents team to actively promote the newsletter.
 - Questions and Answers, commonly asked questions and answers to be included in each monthly newsletter. Questions and answers to be provided through;
 - Seminars, events and public forums.
 - Email via the website being received through the building@auraki-dc.govt.nz address.
 - HDC inspectors and the building team, co-ordinated by Building Services Manager.

3.2.5 Action Item 6: Continue and improve the Building Section of the HDC Website

Rationale: Hauraki District Council launched the new building section of the HDC website on the 21st August, 2006. The website aimed to help Hauraki's building community better understand the Building Act 2004 and the building consents process. So far it has proved successful however, there is always room for improvement. The website is an effective tool to communicate with a large proportion of Hauraki's building community.

Action Points:

1. The following additions to be made to the website:

- Consents Tracking Mechanism: HDC's Planning and Environmental Service Manager to configure with HDC's Web Administrator, an online feature whereby applicants can track their building consents online.
- Information on LBP's: A section on LBP's will be added through web based research and liaison with DBH.
- Explanation of producer statements: Explanation of what one is, how to get one, making sure the building industry is choosing quality practitioners..
- Common Questions and Answers: Please refer to the BCA newsletters item (Action 5, page 9). These will be regularly added to the HDC website.
- building@hauraki-dc.govt.nz : an email where customers will have direct access to HDC's senior building officers. This address is currently in the process of being set up and it will be administrated by Mark Buttimore, HDC's Planning and Environment Manager, for the first month. This will give the building community direct access to the most senior decision maker in the Building Team.
- Staged Consents: Information about value of and staged consents, what they are and how to plan and prepare for them.
- More information on how to get compliance: information has been displayed on the HDC website. If more guidance is required then it is up to the applicant to contact Council.
- Promotion of the PIM: Review website to look for opportunities to provide more promotion of the PIM.

3.2.6 Action Item 7: Re- jig Form J

Rationale: Attendees of the Trade Seminars expressed they are having trouble understanding the J section of the Building Consent Application Form.

Action Point:

1. Redraft J section of the Building Consent Application Form to include prompts to aid the completion of the form.
2. Once drafted, update all forms for distribution including the ones that can be downloaded from the HDC website.

3.2.7 Action Item 8: Organise and facilitate more seminars

Rationale: At the first series of Hauraki Trade Seminars, participants felt it was a useful event and requested that the Council continues the initiative. The Council is willing to do so as long as the industry continues to actively participate.

Action Point:

1. HDC to plan and co-ordinate a series of seminars based on an initial survey of building needs.

3.2.8 Action Item 9: Provide more guidance at pre-consent phase.

Rationale: If people have expressed that there is not enough guidance given at pre-consent phase, then there is an issue. The Council will need to work out the best way to address this issue.

Action Point:

1. P & E Department to gauge:
 - How many people feel like this?
 - How much guidance is given already?
 - How can we give more guidance and what on?
2. Develop action plan and implement

4. Implementation & Timelines

The table below presents an outline of when each action point will be implemented. It is suggested each action point has a methodology and timeline developed for each task. The purpose of this table is to provide a basic overview.

Action Plan Timelines															
Action	Sept 06				Oct				Nov				Dec		
Week Ending ⁸	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	1	8	15
1 Development of a BIG ⁹															
2 Additional HDC BS ¹⁰ resources															
3 Capacity building BT ¹¹															
4 Customer Services															
5 Improve newsletter															
6 Website improvement															
7 Improve J-Form															
8 More Trade Seminars															
9 More guidance at pre-consent stage															

⁸ Please note we have specified the date of a working week, so therefore the date shown is a Friday

⁹ BIG: Building Industry Group

¹⁰ BS: Building Services

¹¹ BT: Building Team.

5. Conclusion

The Hauraki Trades Seminars were the first step for the Hauraki District Council and the Hauraki Building Community to come together to work through some of the new requirements of the Building Act 2004, however, there is still a long way to go. The action plan, in this report demonstrates some positive steps for both the Council and Hauraki's building industry to implement and resolve some of the obstacles and issues identified in seminar forums, however there is one crucial step the building industry must take to ensure the building industry is strong and sustainable for future generations to come. It is crucial that a Hauraki Building Industry Community Group is formed. A building industry community group will help Hauraki's building industry get organised and work together as a community, to tackle the new requirements head on.

Hauraki District Council would like to thank Waihi Mitre 10, Home and Trade for their generous sponsorship for both seminars and strongly hope that the action points developed from the seminars will be taken forward and the building industry in Hauraki will remain strong and able.