



Media Release

Auckland, 14 July, 2007

Dutch Museum Project Set to Receive \$100,000 in Capital Funding

Support for the Dutch museum centre that's planned for Foxton - The Dutch Connection - has just received a major boost from the Horowhenua District Council, which has committed \$100,000 from its Community Facilities Fund to the project.

"It's absolutely fantastic news! That we've been selected to receive \$100,000 through the Council's major grants scheme in 2008," says Arjan van der Boon, Chairperson of 'The Dutch Connection' museum trust. "It shows the commitment of the District Council to work closely with the Dutch community that's spread far and wide throughout the country, to create a focal point that will tell the proud story of our Dutch contribution to New Zealand. By combining Foxton's 17th century replica Dutch windmill - De Molen - with a museum centre, we will create a major sight-seeing attraction that should substantially boost the town's reputation as a tourist destination."

"Council has traditionally assisted community organisations in the development of major facilities like De Molen, the Levin Events Centre, and the Manawatu Estuary Visitor Centre", says Brendan Duffy, Mayor of the Horowhenua District Council. "This year we will support the xxx, yyy and zzz projects, and next year it will be the Dutch Connection. These are all projects that reflect and fulfil the sporting, environmental or cultural needs of the district.

The plans for adding the Dutch Connection to De Molen fit right into the strategic direction for the Horowhenua district, and will create synergies with Foxton's

Maori Flax Stripping Museum and Maori arts workshop Whare Manaaki, as well as the audio visual museum, the town's historical museum, the tourist Trolley Bus, and the horse drawn Tram.

"Through this new project we believe that the Dutch Community and the community of Foxton can build a solid future based on harmonious co-operation by exhibiting the unique, yet complimentary, social, cultural, economic and political aspects of our past, our present and our futures", says Mayor Brendan Duffy.

"We are often called the 'invisible migrants' ", explains Arjan van der Boon. "The Dutch arrivals and their descendants have made a tremendous contribution to our country – ranging from Lockwood Homes and Vogel's Bread, to Verkerk's deli products and Rembrandt suits. Even Fonterra probably would not be what it is today without all those Dutch names in its cooperative, and its Chairman of Dutch descent Henry van der Heyden

"Still, our major immigration wave of the 1950s and 1960s – more than 40,000 migrants - is not even mentioned in Michael King's recent 'Penguin History of New Zealand', unlike just about all the other European, Polynesian and Asian migrants. We simply blended in too well.

"But now we wish to make our mark. Celebrate the contribution we're making to the arts, culture, sports and the economy – today and in decades past - and show that the many links between the Dutch and New Zealand are very important. After all, ever since Abel Tasman sailed the 'Tasman Sea' in 1643, and The Netherlands gave our country its western name, we've contributed in many ways to its welfare, wellbeing and progress.

"The Dutch Connection will become a place to celebrate the past, but also a centre to explore a better connected future for two small, down-to-earth, thrifty, seafaring nations that have much more in common than just some historic events."

"Whether it will be conferences or workshops on topics like global warming or wind power, an annual bike ride around Foxton, or a tulip growing competition... In combination with De Molen, our museum centre can give visitors a complete Dutch experience. And just imagine adding into the mix a Dutch pancake house and a café that serves a traditional brew of coffee as well as a cold Heineken, and we're completely sorted!"

The Museum Trust and the Horowhenua District Council have invested in creating a good relationship over the past 9 months.

"Over the past decade we have already built a strong rapport with the Dutch community," says Mayor Brendan Duffy. "Our pride in housing De Molen in Foxton already demonstrates that our strategic intent aligns with that of The Dutch Connection, as well as with the many Dutch organisations and migrants who now enjoy the fruits of this nation with us." says Mayor Brendan Duffy.

"Initial support like the \$100,000 in capital funding from the Council is very important," says Arjan van der Boon. "We will use it to make a solid start with designing and developing our facilities."

Other pledges of financial support have also been coming in recently, with two local Netherlands societies planning to contribute a total of some \$30,000 to the project. In addition, the New Zealand Netherlands Foundation, as the Founding Sponsor for the museum, has already contributed \$10,000 for Wellington museum expert Luit Bieringa (ex-director of the National Art Gallery) to further develop the concept for the museum centre and its exhibitions.

"There are some 150,000 New Zealanders of Dutch descent - some 4% of the population - with stories that are worth being recorded and heard," says Arjan van der Boon. "That's why we are receiving extensive community support to set up a museum or cultural centre for all 'Nederlanders'. We would like all New Zealanders to learn more about their 'invisible' compatriots and join us in celebrating their efforts and achievements.

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