Our Story

PROJECT LYTTTELTON
the soul of a sustainable community
Treat a person as they appear to be, and you make them worse. But treat a person as if they were what they potentially could be, and you make them what they could be.

~ Goethe

Project Lyttelton is a grass-roots organisation in Lyttelton, New Zealand, that is attracting wide attention both nationally and internationally. Its numerous successful community-led projects mean it is both an inspiration and a model for other communities wishing to build community resilience and sustainability through innovative projects and collective creativity.

‘PL: Our Story’ gives an insight into the organisation, the vision and what is possible when people work together to create their dreams.

Author Anneleise Hall is a former reporter and sub-editor and was a board member of Project Lyttelton from 2004 – 2009. This story is written from a first-hand perspective and experience of PL and through interviews with key people.

Cover design Anneleise Hall

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Introduction

Project Lyttelton (PL) is a grass roots community non-profit organisation based in Lyttelton, a township in the Lyttelton Harbour Basin, Banks Peninsula, New Zealand.

Lyttelton is the historic port town of Christchurch. Still a working port, the town is separated from Christchurch by the Port Hills and access to the city is via road and rail tunnels. There are 3000+ people permanently based in Lyttelton.

PL is registered as an Incorporated Society and has a board of trustees and members.

The achievements of PL in the past six years have been phenomenal. The organisation has embraced cutting-edge thinking to meet the challenges of a changing world. It is showing the way forward with community sustainability, using innovative methods to capture community imagination and help create a shared vision for the future.
Through projects as varied as Time Banking, a monthly newspaper, waste minimisation, energy initiatives, three seasonal festivals, community gardening and local food production, the Farmer’s Market, educational courses, and collective visioning workshops PL has made a significant contribution to the social, economic, recreational and environmental wellbeing of the Lyttelton community.

PL is committed to honouring Lyttelton’s unique character and identity, and co-creating a sustainable, empowered, resilient community based on values, inclusion and participation.

Central to its success is a commitment to valuing people, recognising that a community is rich with ideas, skills and talents.

Every person and every voice is important. Ideas are encouraged and people are supported to make things happen.

While PL has strong leadership, it works in a way that is non-hierarchal, welcomes all input and is open and transparent. This creates a fertile environment where laughing, sharing food, having fun, dreaming and creating together brings out the best in people and everything is possible. This attracts ever increasing numbers of people who feel they want to be part of something in their community.

A strong vision statement underpins all its activities so when ideas and opportunities emerge that align with this vision PL is able to move quickly to begin identifying the people and resources needed. While some projects are quite ambitious, and require funding to be sourced, others will start very simply, attracting what is needed as they grow.

For a project to move ahead it must have a champion, who will be part of a collaborative team and supported by the wider organisation.

By sharing what works well and what has been learned PL hopes to foster hope and inspiration in our collective ability to build cohesive, sustainable, resilient communities and offer a model for other communities wishing to undertake similar projects.
Who is Project Lyttelton?

Project Lyttelton has had a remarkable journey. The group began as a committee formed to address the Main Street Project in 1994 under the banner of Project Port Lyttelton. With a focus on honouring Lyttelton’s rich historic qualities it went on to manifest projects such as the award-winning Torpedo Boat Museum.

In 2003 the direction changed with many of the previous committee ready to step down and the election of Margaret Jefferies to the chair. The focus shifted: from honouring the past, to creating a collective vision of the future.

The change of leadership also began to define a change of process in the organisation to a more collaborative, co-creative model.

The introduction of creative community engagement processes, more opportunities to participate and an inclusive, informal way of working has attracted wider participation. A diverse range of projects has emerged that not only reflect the needs and interests of the Lyttelton community but have also captured the interest of other organisations, agencies and communities.

The Lyttelton Farmers market viewed from the old gaol wall.
Key elements of Project Lyttelton

- A grassroots community group
- Registered as an Incorporated Society
- Is not-for-profit and has charitable status
- Vision inspired and led
- Values based
- Uses nature as a model
- Mindful of and reliant on the generosity of its people
- Innovative
- It dreams, seeds ideas and makes things happen
- Successful in what it undertakes
- Empowers and supports project champions
- A happy organisation with a ‘can do’ attitude
- Providing inspiration and leadership to other communities
- A reflection of the dreams and values of the community

Margaret Jefferies describes Project Lyttelton as a group with a vision that uses strategy well. With a strong focus on co-creation, much of what Project Lyttelton does is the sum of the energy and dreams of the people involved, which she believes creates a special kind of energy.

“A lot of it is about having fun, enjoying each other’s company while we do things.”
~ Margaret Jefferies

“Some of the things that I would say about PL and all the people that are involved in it is that it’s an exciting group to be with. There’s sort of a life and vitality about it. The people that are involved in it love one another. There are differences within there, but that basic caring, being open, not having hidden agendas, that would be a really important part for the group.”
Margaret feels that one of PL’s real strengths is that many people are involved with different projects because they want to contribute to building a stronger, healthier and more sustainable community.

“There is a cultural belief that people don’t do things out of the goodness of their heart, but I think well, look here this is an example where this is happening. People are doing it for the good of the whole.”

From the outside PL is seen as an innovative group that gets results quite quickly. This has led to an increasing number of visitors and enquiries from other groups and organisations and media attention.

Margaret says PL is very aware that people are watching PL and wanting to learn from its successes.

“PL is conscious that it’s creating a model. Not that others need to do exactly what we’re doing but they can see how things can happen. It’s more of a model that can inspire other groups.”
Leading edge

A Dynamic Partnership

While PL has attracted many skilled and innovative people to the board since 2003, and capable project champions, the dynamic, complementary partnership of chair Margaret Jefferies and Secretary-Treasurer Wendy Everingham has effectively created the foundation on which everything else has been built.

Their ability and willingness to dedicate full-time focus to growing the dreams of the organisation, inspiring leadership and excellent financial management has enabled PL to maintain its vision with stability and cohesiveness while creating and driving increasing numbers of projects.

Margaret Jefferies – Chair

Service to the community has been part of Margaret’s life as far back as she can remember. With qualifications in geography, music and theology, the former high school teacher and mother of five knew early on that community would play a strong role in her life.

“As a child I was in a clergy family so I had that background. Working for the community was really part of who I was, so I’ve come through life with that and gathered skills and honed them. In more recent times, I set up three national conferences, some with international speakers, called Spirit at Work, looking at spirituality in the workplace. As I was doing that I was getting more and more clarity around what my vision really was, not just for me - but for how I saw New Zealand.”

Margaret moved to Lyttelton and got involved in the community. She took on the role of chair for the community radio station running at the time and helped set up the Lyttelton Harbour Business Association.

Project Lyttelton, then Project Port Lyttelton, had been established in the mid 90s as an “Our Town/Main Street” project and had done some highly regarded projects particularly in the historic area. When there
was a national resurgence in this project, Lyttelton qualified and was reassessed. Margaret was involved with the subsequent consultation with the community, where things were listed that needed to be done.

“One of the things needed was to create a holding body for this process. It seemed logical to go to the body that had been set up before. The existing group had been involved for around 10 years and some were ready to move on. We were welcomed really and that was nice,” Margaret says.

“I’d agreed to stand for chair. I had the driving energy to do that, so it seemed logical. Quite a lot of the old board came along with us, but the style was quite different. The previous group had focused quite a lot on historic things, I came with this idea of building community.”

Margaret says the wider vision she holds for New Zealand is what drives her personally and underpins the way she works in her role as Chair.

“It’s about a country where we work at the optimal level of who we are, it’s about having clear communications, it’s about being transparent, it’s about loving one another, it’s about setting up things that are fun so those creative juices are able to move. It’s about welcoming technology that helps, and using that innovatively but never losing track or faith in the people behind that, it’s about honouring the land, respect, acknowledging one another – all of those values based things. When I came to Lyttelton it seemed to me ‘well I can work towards that vision within a community context’.”

Projects created through this vision have included the garden initiatives, community visioning days and the Time Bank. Margaret is always networking, creating links and building relationships with a wide range of people and organisations, pulling resources into PL. Her leadership style and success has led to a demand for her facilitation and speaking skills. She was also the recipient of a civic award for her service to the community.
When Wendy Everingham decided to move from Melbourne to Lyttelton in 2003, little did she suspect that within weeks she would begin a new community role which would see her create an award-winning walking project, run a range of festivals and even receive a civic award for her community efforts.

After arriving in New Zealand, Wendy began looking at houses in Lyttelton. When she made it known to the local real estate agent that she was interested in grass-roots community work, she was told about some visioning meetings being held by a local group.

Wendy attended and was excited by what was happening. When the group that became PL needed a secretary and treasurer Wendy put her hand up.

“It was a brand new country, brand new place. It was a good way to get to know the community. I’d met Margaret that first night and really liked her, so it was just intuition really,” she recalls.

“It’s all part of that experience when you move to somewhere new you’re open to anything. I never want life to be humdrum or boring so I always like to take opportunities when they arise and this one arose as soon as I got here.”

“I could have come along several years after it had all developed but was lucky enough to come right at that point, when it was crystallising in people’s minds what PL was. I didn’t really know what I was getting involved in, it was a big adventure. It seemed like something really different and cutting edge so I thought ‘let’s see where it goes’!”

With PL breaking out of the mould of mainstream organisational thinking, the early days on the new path meant it was mainly Margaret and Wendy holding the vision, while others watched to see where it would go.

“It was basically Margaret and I in the beginning, so the role then was to really support one another. I’m not particularly a visionary, but I think I helped facilitate PL to be accepted a bit more by mainstream.”
Wendy’s background as an accountant and experience in public sector transport planning advocacy was a real asset to PL.

The Discover Lyttelton walking project she championed not only put Lyttelton’s hidden historic walkways on the map, but also the organisation that created it. People were beginning to take notice of PL and recognise that it was something special. PL began to grow and attract a diverse range of people willing to contribute. Wendy loves the team spirit and diversity that created.

“In the beginning everything went through Margaret and I through necessity. Now we have a board where we are all doing the work. And it’s great to be with a whole team that’s all fired up and all dreaming up new things. It’s like ‘ooh, what’s going to happen next’!”

“Oh I just do a really good job at the projects I choose to work on, pursuing my passions, and helping keep the administrative side kicking along. I like the challenge of starting new things and getting them to work.”

Wendy expertly manages PL’s finances with the assistance of office administrator Sue-Ellen Sandilands. She has been the main co-ordinator for a number of the summer and winter festivals which she continues to oversee.

Wendy has also had a key role in the Lyttelton Farmers Market since it began and was involved with the inaugural Ellerslie Flower Show display garden project.
Creating a collective vision

The Vision Statement

The first step taken by the new board in 2003 was to hold a number of public meetings to develop a mission statement that would define a collective community vision.

As new chair Margaret wanted to create a collective vision that reflected the values of the community.

“Coming on to the board it seemed important to me that you consult with the whole community, so we threw it open to everyone,”

“Of course you don’t get everyone but around 30 or so people came to a series of meetings to work out what our vision was as a community. So it wasn’t me as chair saying ‘this is what our vision is’.”

However, the new way of working was not without controversy.

“We garnered a bit of criticism. The common thing was ‘ah Lyttelton people are good at talking about things but never actually doing things’, it was seen as a talkfest but that didn’t daunt us,” recalls Margaret.

The vision statement was developed through a consensus model – the statement was not finalised until all participants agreed that it completely captured what was important to them. This statement underpins all of PL’s activities.

"Lyttelton – portal to Canterbury’s historic past, a vibrant sustainable community, creating a living future."

Of significant note was the fact that the word “sustainable” was included, as the term was not in common use at the time.

Margaret says the vision statement process really helped identify what was important to the community and how that might manifest.

“Once we got that vision statement it was really good because people had ownership of it, we were clear as to what we wanted to move
towards and we also insisted right at the beginning that if anyone was going to do a particular project of any sort there had to be a champion to run with it.”

Wendy believes the vision statement has served the organisation very well.

“It’s gone from strength to strength. The hard part was bringing it in at the beginning - now it’s unstoppable.”

“Every single project that we undertake has to reflect some aspect or all aspects of the vision statement. And if it doesn’t adhere to that vision it’s not part of PL. But I think just about anything a community does could be part of that vision.”

“Having words like vibrant, sustainable, history it’s actually quite holistic right from the very beginning, so it was really quite amazing that we came up with that.”
Working together

Structure

“PL is made up of a whole lot of different people but it’s more than the sum of the parts. All of those people are excited and passionate about things. So as a group it attracts other people like that into it.”

~ Margaret Jefferies.

Governance

While as an Incorporated Society Project Lyttelton has executive roles and a board of trustees as required, these positions are not indicative of a hierarchal mindset within the organisation – everyone is treated equally.

“It’s a flat organisational structure, there’s not too much ego stuff hanging around, so it doesn’t matter that you’ve got the role of Chair or Secretary or you’re a board member or anything like that, you just another person – and I don’t mean that in a derogatory sense either - we’re all important,” says Margaret.

“We don’t cling to those titles and who we are – that status.”

“Everyone that’s involved does a bit of every bit of work, there aren’t glamour positions where you dictate from on high what others are going to do, everyone cleans toilets. Gone are the days where someone can sit up on a top seat dreaming up fabulous ideas and pass them on out to the minions to do – it doesn’t work like that.”
Meetings

PL holds general meetings monthly and anyone is welcome to attend. There is an underlying belief that meetings are more productive if they are enjoyable.

“Meetings are kept as informal as possible,” says Margaret.

“We try to keep the business side of meetings within 20 minutes. I don’t know how many times we actually have got it done in twenty minutes, but that’s our aim. And that’s really just to get the business stuff out of the way so we can get on to the creative stuff of playing with ideas, where they might go and who might link in.”

It is quite common for PL meetings, particularly ones held for a creative purpose, to be held with a food component, such as a pot luck dinner, or morning or afternoon tea.

Champions

All the projects are required to have a champion, someone who is willing to run with that project.

This means the load is shared, and no one person at PL is responsible for every project. This helps create greater sustainability within the organisation and avoid burnout.

While board members may champion particular projects, the champion may be also part of the wider PL group.

“A champion pushes a project forward and attracts people to the project,” Wendy says.

“The champion is basically the leader - nothing works if you don’t have a leader. So our projects have all worked because we’ve had people who are passionate about whatever that particular issue is, and they’ve followed it through to the end. We’re lucky we’ve got such dedicated
people here in Lyttelton who want to challenge themselves and make Lyttelton a better place.”

Any person from the community can come to PL with an idea, and if they are willing to run with it and provided it falls in line with the mission statement, PL will support them to explore how that idea can be manifested. PL may initially pull specific people together to have a deeper conversation, offer advice or resources, write a story for the newspaper and invite people to express interest or arrange a brainstorm of what is possible.

Project reports and updates are presented to the board at monthly meetings and champions are resourced and supported.

**Culture**

**Values**

PL is a values-based organisation. Its values define both how people are treated within PL and also how the organisation communicates more widely.

PL is “honest, decent, kind, open and trustworthy and operates on basic core values”, Wendy says.

“People aren’t out to attack one another – it’s respectful.”

“I think it attracts a lot of people because often in life that’s not how people are treated. I find to this day really that people are quite amazed that there are people who want to and can operate in that sort of fashion.”

In Project Lyttelton every person is valued no matter who they are, or how little or much they contribute.
Built in, there’s a belief system that everyone is a treasure, Margaret says.

“Everyone has got skills and something to offer so one person’s voice is not necessarily more important than another.”

Wendy also believes that the way PL treats people is one of the major factors in its ability to engage and attract people.

“I think that’s the key, valuing people, it makes people feel that they’re needed and that they’ve got good ideas and that they’re trusted,” she says.

“It’s incredibly inclusive, whether you’re 5 years old or 80 years old it values the skills that you have. I think it works because it’s providing what most people want deep down. It gives you meaning. You’re helping people - it’s not superficial, it’s real.”

This culture of appreciation empowers people to share their ideas and feel heard so creativity and innovation can thrive.

“It allows me to try new things all the time,” says Wendy.

“It’s not boring. It’s not predictable. It allows you to live a full life really. It really works with people who like variety, like spontaneity, like experimentation.”

Many of the core people are attracted because they have identified their desire to contribute to a collective vision and see PL as making a difference in the community, Margaret says.

“I would say that they’re all conscious that they are going on a journey – a personal journey – which fits in with what Gandhi said about ‘being the change’. There is a genuine desire to make this community a wonderful place to be and to do that in a way that is sustainable.”

Change happens on many levels, Margaret says.

“It’s being the change within yourself, it’s being that change within those people that are holding key roles within PL, it’s being yourself,
walking the talk, being the change in the board in all the projects. It’s consciously being aware of that so it’s embedded at every level. It’s not just ‘do as I say’.”

The process of working collectively often means needing to let go of control. This allows each idea to have a life force of its own, creating a fertile environment where the projects almost grow themselves.

“Someone might come in with a great idea but by the time it’s been through a group process it may have changed. That person needs to be able to let go,” Margaret says.

Letting go of any sort of concept that ‘who you are’ hinges on the success, or not, of a project allows a project to become a collective process she says.

“It’s about seeing the bigger picture; and seeing your role in that particular project may have been seeding that idea, but it may be someone else’s role to grow it. And it may be someone else’s role to get inspired and run with it or it may be it is myself that runs with it - but that letting go is important.”

**Trust**

Trust is a big part of how PL works. For Margaret trust is a key element in putting the dreams into practice - trusting that the right things will fall into place.

“It’s really about a way of looking at all of life and thinking ‘the answer is here’,” she says.

“For me this whole process is really a spiritual journey. I put out my intent that what I want to be creating is a well, healthy, loving, fun, creative community. That may manifest in many different ways.”
“I was actually looking at a quote here the other day that I think is relevant to how I think:

*Be prepared at all times for the gifts of God and be ready always for new ones, for God is a thousand times more ready to give than we are to receive.* ~ Meister Eckhart, 1260 – 1329

It’s about having that underlying belief that we will be helped. We trust that we will be helped. You put your intent out, you work as best as you can to your ability, and know that the divine steps in.”

The other part of this is being open to receiving, trusting that the right people and the right things will fall into place and watching out and identifying them when they come and arrive, Margaret says.

“When you’re meeting people you need to think, well this might be the answer - this might be the divine part stepping in. The answer is always close by, it’s just are we open enough, are we awake enough to see this?”

“That’s why you need so much input from everyone because the littlest voice in the community might be the answer. It may be the huge turning point. It’s a bit like the emperor’s got no clothes with the little boy saying ‘but, he’s got no clothes on’. It took that one voice to draw attention to it. So when putting things into practice, I network widely.”

While Margaret is continually seeding ideas and possibilities into the community, she believes in allowing things to unfold in their own time and is not daunted if progress is not immediately apparent.

“I know that the things are going to come into place. But if they don’t it’s not something I’ve done wrong, it’s just that maybe the timing’s not quite right or maybe I just need to tweak something slightly. I
don’t believe in working hard, hard, hard, and I don’t think that’s what it’s about. It’s about working with delight.”

**People power**

People are central to the success of PL. While there is a range of core people including strong leaders, an active board, project champions and three permanent part-time staff, PL’s ability to take on a diverse range of ambitious projects is also reliant on the huge number of community members from all different backgrounds and walks of life who enthusiastically contribute their time and energy.

Working with people respectfully and effectively is another aspect that has helped shaped PL’s success.

While people are paid for various roles at different times, as with most not-for-profit organisations, PL works with a large voluntary component.

A number of years ago Margaret went to Toronto and was given a piece of advice she says has been very valuable.

The advice was: “Be aware that when you’re working with volunteers, sometimes you have them and sometimes you don’t.”

Being able to go with the flow is essential she believes.

“When you are in a workplace situation when you’ve got people on paid wages they turn up because otherwise they don’t get paid so you can mostly plan what you’re going to do with people. When you’re working with volunteers it’s a totally different situation.”

Being able to honour the needs of volunteers gracefully creates a culture where people feel valued and not beholden, Margaret says.

“Something might happen with their family so you might not have that volunteer for a while. Or a volunteer might offer more than they can actually do but they can’t actually produce it. All of that you have to be aware of with volunteers and just let it flow. If someone in some major role needs to withdraw, you just accept it and wish them well - and
mean it. And things just happen, something else turns up. It’s about watching with delight as things emerge and being thankful, it’s amazing watching what thanks does.”

Co-creating the dream

Mind Mapping

A mind map is a diagram which uses key words and images to represent ideas, tasks, objectives or other elements arranged visually around a central key word or idea.

Mind maps are used as helpful creative tools to generate, visualise, structure, and classify ideas.

PL frequently uses mind mapping as a visioning tool. A key element to achieving sustainable outcomes is recognising the interconnectedness of things and how they relate to each other. Mind mapping is a creative visual way of working out how elements relate to a central theme giving a much wider perspective to an idea.

Margaret believes mind maps are an integral part of beginning to create the community visions.

“With our vision statement we did a mind map of all the different aspects, the historic part, the sustainable community, and out of that a lot of us brainstormed what that might mean. We identified lots of things. We even identified early on a Farmers Market, because that word sustainable was there.”
Brainstorming

Recognising that diverse input creates depth and richness to ideas, PL holds frequent brainstorming sessions. These are promoted widely through posters, the Lyttelton News, emails and electronic newsletters.

A brainstorm is usually based around a question such as: “What might this look like? What is possible?” or “What is needed here?”

All input is valued - whether it is coming from expertise or not.

“Sometimes people will have more skill or more knowledge or more insight or more research or more reading on a particular matter so they may have more floor-space when they’re talking because that seems to be appropriate,” Margaret says.

“But at that time if someone else comes in with an idea, almost like a naive enquirer, that is also important.”

“When we sit round and do brainstormses to work out where we’re going next someone might come with a brilliant idea, so we sit round the table and work through it, and discuss and play with things and throw ideas in. At the end of that time we come out with something much richer because we’ve got the input of the person who’s done the research but also all that input from the others who come, and that has added to the mix.”

The Appreciative Inquiry Approach

Margaret discovered Appreciative Inquiry (AI) through her Spirit at Work conferences.

Excited by it as a way of creating empowered change, she became a trained facilitator.

AI is a core part of PL’s way of working.

The concept was developed as a change management method in the US by David
Cooperrider, a lecturer at Case Western University School of Management.

“The idea behind AI is that wherever you place your attention that’s where the energy flows towards, then that grows,” Margaret says.

“For PL it has become more of a way of being, which permeates every aspect of its activities and is how we are consciously with one another, at all levels. It’s not just in the public view that we try to do AI, it’s in everything, who we are, right at the beginning.”

Appreciative Inquiry is a strategy for purposeful change that identifies the best of “what is” to pursue dreams and possibilities of “what could be.” It is a co-operative search for the strengths, passions and life-giving forces that are found within every system—those factors that hold the potential for inspired, positive change.

The appreciative approach involves collaborative inquiry, based on interviews and affirmative questioning, to collect and celebrate the good news stories of a community—those stories that enhance cultural identity, spirit and vision. Appreciative inquiry is a way of seeing that is selectively attentive to—and affirming of—the best and highest qualities in a system, a situation or another human being. It involves an appreciation for the mystery of being and a reverence for life.

~ David Cooperrider

There are four steps to the appreciative approach.

- Discover — identify the relationships and patterns in the system
- Dream — create a clear results-oriented vision in relation to discovered potential and overall purpose
- Design — collaboratively create alternatives, opportunities and possibilities towards realizing the vision
- Destiny — innovative and collaborative actions, practices, experiments and outcomes that move towards realizing the vision
Key Projects

Discover Lyttelton Map

The Discover Lyttelton walking and signage project was the first major project for the new Project Lyttelton group. During the Our Town consultation process in 2003 it had emerged that people wanted some of the historic Lyttelton walking paths fixed.

With her transport planning background, Wendy identified the walking path project which involved creating a map showing all the historic walkways and different routes around the township with accompanying signage.

“What we decided was that we needed a project that fitted with everyone – that wasn’t controversial and easy to achieve to get some profile,” Margaret says.

The project was significant for PL in many ways. It was successful and raised the profile of the group in the community and also modelled how the organisation was choosing to work with the community.
Margaret and Wendy wanted the map to be developed through extensive community consultation, where people could see the results of their input.

“It was drawn up and put out to people, they all looked at it, and said you’ve got the spelling wrong there, or that road doesn’t go there, or that needs to be there,” Margaret says.

“It went back to the artist, back to the people, back and forth. Really true community consultation, so we were consciously modelling that. That really started the ball rolling.”

The creative snakes and ladders theme and discovery of many little known walkways all emerged through the community process, Wendy said.

“By asking people you get great responses. So that map to this day is incredibly creative for New Zealand. Other towns have even taken up the idea and done their own. The council got involved. It was the start of good relationship building for PL, and for me. At the time it even got acknowledged by Ministry of Transport.”

A copy of the colourful map, drawn by a local artist, was delivered free to every household in Lyttelton and is available for sale at the Lyttelton Harbour information centre.

The Lyttelton News

The Lyttelton News comes out as a monthly supplement in the free fortnightly newspaper The Akaroa Mail.

The need to establish a way for PL to communicate with the wider community led Margaret to approach Akaroa Mail editor Michael de Hamel and ask if it was possible to include a Lyttelton section where PL could provide the content. Finding him agreeable to the idea she set about networking to find the skills needed to help make it happen.

Margaret quickly enlisted the skills of a woman new to Lyttelton with a newspaper background to help set it up and between them, and a
small team of enthusiastic writers, the first edition of the Lyttelton news was published in September 2004.

The Lyttelton News uses a strong Appreciative Inquiry approach which focuses on the good news stories of the community - how it is at its best.

It contains interviews with people of all walks of life about what is important to them and tells their stories. Ideas are seeded and issues that affect the community are discussed. It promotes local events and opportunities to have a say or get involved. It also includes content by schools, children, local historians and enthusiastic writers. All the content is done by volunteers.

To make sure it is reliably delivered to all Lyttelton households the monthly edition with the Lyttelton supplement is delivered by Time Bankers for time credits.

### The Festivals

Lyttelton’s summer and winter street festivals draw thousands of people to the township. As well as being fun and vibrant these events also provide opportunities for local groups to fundraise and raise the profile of local businesses, musicians and artists.

These festivals began as joint ventures between PL, the Lyttelton Harbour Business Association and the Information Centre Trust. In recognition of the unique heritage and landscape of the area, this year PL created the Festival of Walking.

Over the past year PL has had interns from Christchurch Polytechnic’s Event Management course gaining work experience on these events.
Summer Street Party

The Summer Street Party was the first ever festival run by PL. In late 2004 discussions between PL and the Lyttelton Harbour Business Association, Lyttelton Harbour Information Centre and the then Banks Peninsula District Council Tourism and Economic Development department identified that Lyttelton could benefit from having some sort of signature event to both build community and draw people to the township. A steering committee was formed and a budget put together. With the appointment of a local event co-ordinator things moved quickly. Public meetings were held to ask the community what type of event reflected Lyttelton and its unique identity.

People wanted it to be family orientated, fun, not too posh. There was a strong message to keep things local; if it had music then they needed to be local musicians, and if there were market stalls that they were not to compete with local businesses, so no food vendors.

It was decided that the festival would be held in the main street, London Street, which would be closed for the duration of the festival.

The inaugural Lyttelton Summer Street Party was held on Sunday February 20, 2005 from 10am to 6pm. The programme included a puppet workshop, puppet show and puppet parade, 10 musical acts on a main stage at one end of the street, an all-day busker pitch at the other end of the street, over 50 market stalls - and the weather was perfect! The inaugural event attracted around 5000 people.

The summer festival has run every year since and has attracted increasing crowds each year. Over the years it has expanded and different elements have been added.

Additions have included a kid’s zone in the school ground with a bouncy castle and other attractions, a DJ area in the Rose Garden run by local community station Volcano Radio, Devonshire Teas at the
Anglican Church and one year a Saturday event was trialled with a 10pm finishing time and a headline band.

Over the years the amalgamation of Banks Peninsula with Christchurch Council and uncertainty with the Lyttelton Harbour Information Centre has meant the responsibility for running the festival has fallen mostly to a PL team. Following this year’s festival a decision has been made to create a more sustainable event by shifting the format to one more similar to the winter festival. This would mean a combination of smaller events where responsibility is shared by groups in the community.

**Festival of Lights**

Following the success of the summer party, it was decided to also hold a winter event. The Lyttelton Harbour Festival of Lights became a hugely successful ten day festival programme.

Lyttelton is encouraged to ‘light-up’ by putting up their Christmas lights and a masquerade ball is held to start the week’s festivities.

The week culminates with a Winter Street party held from 6pm which features a mask parade and fireworks.

Other activities vary each year and are run by a range of businesses, groups and members of the community.

This year’s programme included mask making workshops, an experimental music performance, a winter cookery class at Ground Culinary Centre, a recovery day at the magical Stables Wellness Centre, poetry readings in the Basement, off London Street, music in the library and the many bars in Lyttelton, Volcano Radio 88.5FM hosted an hour of children’s story time and the historic Timeball Station hosted torch lit walks. Speaker sessions on quirky topics were also held at the Wunderbar.
Festival of Walking

PL launched the Festival of Walking over Easter 2009 with over 39 walks being held in and around the Lyttelton Harbour basin. The walks ranged from short walks around Lyttelton Township to the top of Mt Herbert.

The programme featured historic walks, visits to the community garden, gaol walks, children’s quiz walks, Farm-stay picnics, tours of Orton Bradley Park, a writer’s walk, photography expeditions, a Quail Island Easter egg hunt and village walks in Diamond Harbour.

Hosted by local historians, various groups and community enthusiasts, the walking programme was designed to appeal to a wide range of interests, ages and fitness levels. Some walks had limited numbers and registrations were taken through the Lyttelton Harbour Information Centre.

Largely initiated and driven by PL’s Rod Lawrence, the walking festival offered an ideal activity for families or individuals wanting to explore and have fun over the Easter break. Rod was delighted by the response to the festival and another event is planned for spring. With its strong focus on recreation this event has attracted the support of Sport Canterbury and it is hoped an ongoing partnership will form.
Lyttelton Farmers Market

The Lyttelton Farmers Market is one of PL’s most successful projects. It runs rain or shine and consistently attracts large crowds. The market is staffed by volunteers and PL earns an income from stall fees that can be put into other PL projects. It is held in the Lyttelton Main School grounds so the school also benefits.

There are around 30 stalls selling fresh fruit and vegetables, eggs, bread, meat, cheeses, baked goods, chocolate, honey, fish, flowers, plants, condiments, pickles and jams.

Starting a Farmers Market was an early priority. With rising awareness of the impacts from the global issues of peak oil and climate change PL recognises that securing and supporting local food production is a key to building resilient communities.

The market has brought many benefits to Lyttelton. Businesses thrive from the extra people it brings to the township, local people have access to high quality locally grown produce and local producers have an outlet.

Local musicians feature each week and the market is a popular place to mingle and socialise for the community.

Lyttelton Time Bank

Lyttelton has set up New Zealand’s first Time Bank. Time Banking is a way of trading skills in a community. It uses time, rather than money, as the measurement tool.

Members of a Time Bank share their skills with other members within the community and are given time credits for the work they do. With
the credits they gain, each member can ‘buy’ someone else’s time, and get the service they need.

The Time Banking concept was developed in the US by Edgar S Cahn. Since then it has spread to many countries around the world.

PL received three years of funding from The Tindall Foundation for a part time salary to set up the Lyttelton Time Bank. As a result the Lyttelton Time Bank is starting to flourish, and the idea of Time Banking is spreading throughout NZ.

The key driver in the Time Banking concept is reciprocity which recognizes that every person has intrinsic value and something to offer. In a Time Bank everybody’s time is equal.

Part-time Time Bank member co-ordinator Julie Lee loves this aspect of Time Banking.

“What really excites me about Time Bank is how you really value everybody. Nobody is more important than anyone else, there’s total respect for every individual.”

Members do not have to get into credit before they source services through the Time Bank. The system is about encouraging people to help one another. Time Banking adds a richness or fullness to Time Bankers’ lives and helps build a strong, healthy community.

The Time Bank transactions are run on special software. Members have profiles where they list their skills and can post offers and requests online.

Time Banking creates a database of the skills available in a community.
Sometimes people find it difficult to work out what skills to offer as a Time Bank member. Members may offer anything except what is done for their main taxable income. Often people don’t realise how valuable their other skills are.

Often the things that help others the most are things that are taken for granted; a helping hand around the house or garden, caring, listening, help getting to appointments.

Time Banking is a step on from volunteering. Project Lyttelton volunteers at the Farmers Market and those who help deliver the Lyttelton News receive time credits for what they contribute.

Local not-for-profit organizations are also joining up, keen to reduce pressure on their volunteers and Lyttelton West School is the first school in New Zealand to sign up to a Time Bank.

Julie is excited about this development and what is possible.

“It’s a much smarter and more effective way of working and gets them into the community, so they’re strengthening not just their own group but the community as well.”

If members don’t want to be given time credits for their volunteering, or accumulate more than they think they need, their credits can go into a community chest so that those unable to get time credits can still have their needs met.
Working Bees

One of the very popular and effective initiatives of the Time Bank is its regular working bees. Whether it is in a member’s garden, spring cleaning, working on a community project or tackling jobs in one of Project Lyttelton’s community gardens, people really enjoy the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and tackle the job as part of a team.

Bringing people together

Relationships form the cornerstone of an active and successful Time Bank and PL recognises that. The Time Bank co-ordinator circulates regular newsletters which keep people up to date with new members, give information about new offers and requests and share good news.

Several times a year gatherings are held over a pot luck meal. One of the very popular events is the Gift Swap. People are invited to bring any items they have around the house that are in good condition and no longer used or wanted to The Portal. All the contributions are laid out on blankets and tables then everyone is invited to choose things that they will use. Everything is free. The gift swap is followed by a pot luck dinner where people often share their ‘bargains’ with delight.

Sometimes there are short films shown, other times the gathering may simply be a community celebration such as a mid-winter gathering. These social events are opportunities for Time Bankers to connect, meet new people and deepen relationships.

Welcoming people into the community

When new people move into the community they are welcomed with a hand-made reusable shopping bag. The bags are made by Lyttelton Time Bankers and are filled with a map, bus timetables, information about the community garden and Time Bank and home baking, also made by members.
The Gardens

Community Garden

Lyttelton community garden is a place to grow food, socialise, learn and be part of a team. It attracts many visitors. The garden runs on a sweat equity system. If you work there, you can eat from the garden. The garden is run on organic principles.

A wide range of gardeners participate from kindergarten and earlier right through to seniors. Garden plans and the ‘things to do’ list are decided at weekly meetings over lunch.

At the height of the season surplus is given away to families that need it or sometimes sold at the Farmers Market.

The garden is a lovely inspiring place to be where connections are forged, says community garden champion, Jacinda Gilligan.

Jacinda home-schools her two young girls and considers spending time in the garden a valuable part of their education.

“For us it’s like an extended family, it’s part of who my children are growing up with. As we garden they hear stories. They talk to Jim so they get stories from an older person about gardening and about life. They get that from all the gardeners really.”

She sees the role of champion as just holding everything together while allowing people to follow ideas they are passionate about.
She is excited that the garden is moving towards a more conscious permaculture design. Two new nut trees have just been planted and the gardeners are in the process of developing the orchard aspect. Maximising local food production so the surplus can be given to those in the community who need it is the thinking behind this, Jacinda says.

**Grow Local**

Using the former Christchurch Polytechnic (CPIT) organic garden site at Seven Oaks in Opawa, Project Lyttelton has established a community supported agriculture scheme (CSA) to produce quality produce for the Lyttelton community and provide education on sustainable matters to effect change in living styles.

PL was looking for more land to grow food when it discovered that CPIT wished to lease the site. It had previously been used for organic and permaculture courses but had since fallen into disuse.

PL acted quickly and registered interest. After the site was secured a number of major working bees were held to start clearing and reclaiming it. It was decided to start a system based on community supported agriculture which would grow specialty foods for restaurants and do vegetable boxes for the community.

Bettina Evans jumped at the chance to be employed part-time at the Seven Oaks garden.

“It’s a really stunning site, absolutely beautiful it has such a long history, it’s been gardened for around 40 years, and it seemed such a shame for it not to be used,” she said.

She was particularly attracted to plans to have an educational aspect to the garden where people are inspired and encouraged to learn about growing food.
The buildings on the site have since been leased to The Holistic Education Trust which runs a school there. Relationships were built between PL and the school and now the children are learning about gardening.

“Having the children working on site is really exciting,” Bettina says.

**Ellerslie International Flower Show**

Hours of collective dreaming became a stunning garden at the Ellerslie International Flower Show, representing Lyttelton’s food, features, diversity and community values.

The team from Project Lyttelton and Soil & Health Canterbury had a strong vision which became a reality with the help of local landscape architect Liz Briggs and thousands of volunteer hours support from the community.

The finished garden, ‘Dig This’, attracted a lot of media interest captured the imagination of the public, and also managed to collect a Bronze Award.

Winning the award delighted the Ellerslie team.

“What was so wonderful was that we were just a group of volunteers,” Bettina says.

“While Liz is a landscape architect and I am a gardener, as a group none of us was a professional. We were just people who were enthusiastic about something and were able to take it on and make it happen. And really we were competing with highly professional people who were at the tops of their game who had lots of money and lots of experience. That we managed to pull it off was just an incredible, wonderful experience.”

Helpers turned up to work on every detailed facet of the display, which included contributions from many talented local artisans and the efforts of dedicated plant-sitters.
The garden sought to represent living in harmony with nature and the seasons and illustrate the cycle of healthy soil, healthy plants and healthy people.

The garden also promotes recycling and composting through unique artistic features.

It used recycled materials in its construction and features and is affordable and sustainable.

“The feedback from the public was incredibly positive,” Bettina says.

“So many people came and said that ours was the best garden, or they had heard ours was the garden to see or people who came and said that ours was the only ‘real’ garden. People were asking how they could build the planters. It was just fantastic.”

The Portal

The Portal is the PL community building which is situated next to the community garden. The building is leased for a peppercorn rental from Christchurch City Council.

The building is on two levels. The top has the Project Lyttelton office, kitchen, toilets and large meeting space. There are always people dropping by, using the space. It is used for meetings, gatherings, celebrations, workshops, art projects, shared meals and film nights.

The lower floor became a ‘men’s shed’ and workspace for all the construction for PL’s Ellerslie garden. It is also currently used for storage.

When PL first took over the building it had been used for a woodworking business and had concrete block walls and concrete floors. Recycled carpets and paints were sourced through the community and many hours have been spent by volunteers creating a vibrant comfortable space. A grant was obtained to fit a heat pump and wool insulation now lines the ceiling. PL plans to make The Portal a model of what can be done with retrofitting an older building.
Having an office for Project Lyttelton makes all projects run more smoothly and efficiently, especially the Farmers Market. It is also an administrative hub for the Time Bank and festivals.

www.lyttelton.net.nz

As PL grew, the need for a website became apparent. A vital part of PL’s ongoing communications strategy, www.lyttelton.net.nz enables PL to have greater connection with the community and wider afield. The site receives many visitors and hosts information pages for all projects and events, blogs and project reporting.

The Imagine Lyttelton information and dreams of the community were transcribed and made available on the site as was all information collected through the open space energy event.

Recent board member and IT expert Chris Twemlow has been instrumental in the development of communications technologies within PL. The installation of a new content management system, which only requires simple training for people to be able to update content and add blogs and pictures, is the next step in helping create a dynamic and leading edge online presence.
Summary of all PL projects

The following is a summary of all the projects and initiatives undertaken by Project Lyttelton since the change of leadership in 2003.

Completed projects

- **Mission Statement Visioning** 2003: Collective community visioning process to define the future objectives of the Project Port Lyttelton group.

- **Discover Lyttelton Walking Map** 2004: Development of a walking map featuring historic and little known public walkways. Done in a fun snakes and ladders style, the map aims to encourage walking and recreation, honour the history of Lyttelton and foster a pride in our town. This map won a Transport award.

- **Community Angel** 2005: In the lead up to the launch of the Time Bank, PL employed a Community Angel to open people to the idea of receiving. The free service was advertised as ‘an extra pair of hands’ and she helped with child care, light house work and gardening and visited elderly residents in the community.

- **Imagine Lyttelton Harbour Basin** July 2007: Facilitated by world renowned community engagement specialist Bliss Browne this workshop was attended by over 60 people from around the Harbour Basin. The aim of the workshop was to learn what themes and values were important to people as an ongoing conversation with the community. What emerged was summarised and published on the Project Lyttelton website and in the Lyttelton News. The workshop was run using Appreciative Inquiry methods and the information gathered during this process continues to be referred to when new projects are mooted.

- **Energy Open Space Event** August 2008: Facilitated by Margaret Jefferies, and attended by around 80 people from around the Harbour Basin to discuss what needed to happen for the Harbour Basin to become more energy resilient. Two projects emerged from this event. The plan to build a community biodigester, which PL decided to champion, and a community wind turbine proposal which formed an independent group.
Energy Survey: An energy survey was sent round households in Lyttelton to determine quantity and type of energy use. Several initiatives evolved from this including a collective bulk buying scheme for wool insulation.

Waste Minimisation: Green waste was collected from Lyttelton restaurants for a fee and composted on land in Lyttelton. This project has ceased with the implementation of the council bin system.

Pathways To Community: Mosaic path project. A community workshop was held to design and create a mosaic path for the community garden glasshouse that captured the essence of the Lyttelton Community. Participants were taken through a facilitated process to identify what the community meant to them, and then proceeded to translate that into a design on 104 pavers. The pavers were completed individually over an 18 month period and were then laid in place in the glasshouse with a great team effort.

Ellerslie International Flower Show Display Garden: A volunteer team sought to raise the public profile of home food production and healthy soil through a partnership of the Lyttelton Community Garden and Canterbury Soil and Health. With collaborative design drawn up by local landscape architect Liz Briggs and an amazing effort from the PL gardeners, local artists, engineers and handymen, PL’s entry “Dig This” in the 2009 competition won a bronze award.

Ongoing projects

Lyttelton News: Lyttelton News is a monthly supplement in The Akaroa Mail. The first edition appeared in September 2004. It features articles about what is happening in the community, in-depth interviews, seeding possibilities for new projects and commentaries on significant issues. The paper was started to encourage clear communication channels within the community. All content is written by volunteers and the edition with the Lyttelton supplement is delivered by Time Bank members.

Summer Street Party: A one day Summer Festival with bands, stalls and buskers, held in London Street. The first festival was held in February 2005 and it has run each year since.

Festival of Lights: A mid-winter festival where activities are held over a week or more. It features shows, exhibitions, special
tours and a masquerade ball and culminates with an evening street party with food, stalls and live entertainment. The first festival was held in June 2005 and it has run each year since.

- **Festival of Walking**: A new festival with plans for bi-annual autumn and spring events. Guided walks are held for all levels of age, fitness and level of enthusiasm based on Harbour Basin themes and including Quail Island and historic tours. The first Festival was held over Easter 2009.

- **Farmers Market**: With increasing concern over rising oil prices and economic uncertainty PL considers the re-localisation of food production to be a key factor in building resilient communities. The farmers' market was set up in September 2005 to support growing and buying local produce.

- **PL Website**: The PL website gives PL a dynamic online presence. The community is able to be kept informed on latest developments and projects while the festivals have their own promotional pages. The website provides links to the Time Bank software and highlights upcoming educational opportunities in the community. There are online copies of the Lyttelton News and web pages for the garden initiatives. There are plans to offer community development resources for purchase and to increase opportunities for information sharing and participation.

- **PL Newsletter**: This is sent out electronically each week to those who elect to be on the PL data base. Contact office@lyttelton.net.nz if you want to be on that list.

- **Lyttelton Time Bank**: Lyttelton Time Bank is a skill trading system that uses time instead of money as a unit of measurement. People offer skills they are willing to share, and request help where they need other skills to get jobs done. Time Bank is enriching our community through neighbours meeting each other, people feeling confident helping each other and the growing awareness that we as a community are full of resources that can be shared. This scheme is a pilot and the dedication of its core team Margaret Jefferies, Chris Twemlow, Julie Lee, Jacinda Gilligan and Vilma Loader has enabled it to blossom - attracting national attention.

- **Lyttelton Community Garden**: The Lyttelton community garden is a place where people communally grow food. It works on a sweat equity basis - do some work, take some food. Everyone is welcome and many gardening sessions end with a shared meal.

- **Grow Local Garden**: The Grow Local initiative is an organic garden project based at Opawa. It is partially run on a community supported agriculture model. Two gardeners, Bettina
Evans and Toshi Shibata, are employed part-time by PL and they grow a range of crops to supply restaurant demand and provide a community vegetable box system during the spring/summer. Box recipients are also required to “pay” for their boxes with a time component as well as cash.

- **The Portal**: The Portal is PL’s base and a community building. Adjacent to the community garden, it is a communal space to gather, share food and hold meetings and workshops. There are plans to develop the building to be an alternative energy model.

- **Lyttelton Community Van**: A community van collected from Christchurch City Council and driven by a volunteer makes a weekly trip to shops and appointments for those who have difficulty using public transport.

- **Lyttelton Development Project**: Rod Lawrence was appointed in a community-led economic development role to look at opportunities for linking some of the locally driven initiatives to tourism and visitor activities. Rod has also played an active part in the managing and promotion of the festivals, in particular the Festival of Walking.

- **Local Life-Long Learning**: A number of education courses are being run locally. PL is operating as an umbrella for the funding and supporting, promoting and overseeing the co-ordinator.

- **Biodigester**: PL has a working team looking at the development of a biodigester on the community garden site. The digester would use green waste to create biogas which would then be used as an energy and heat source for the building and glasshouse.

Masked characters on the main stage, at the Lyttelton Festival of Lights.
Contact Project Lyttelton

PL’s office is based at The Portal and is run by Sue-Ellen Sandilands as administrator.

Sue-Ellen is the first port of call for all enquiries. Warm, friendly and resourceful Sue-Ellen is able to answer questions, connect people and resources, keep the community space functioning beautifully, manage paperwork from a multitude of activities, help streamline the running of the farmers market and festivals and potter in the garden.

She also makes great kai.

Please feel most welcome to contact her.

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Project Lyttelton also would like to acknowledge the ongoing support and sponsorship of the following: