



Chairman's Annual Report December 2024 AGM

HBFFCT's mission is to promote, inspire and celebrate profitable farming systems that enrich the environment and the community.

I am pleased to report on the trusts many achievements during the year while acknowledging the **Hawkes Bay Regional Council** initial funding and our core sponsors including **Port of Napier**, **Hastings District Council**, **Populous People** and **BM Accounting**.

Community engagement

In 2024 we had monthly workshops at LandWISE to review the Carbon Positive project. We also held two farmer workshops hosted by Becks Smith (The Whole Story and Quorum Sense) who with Paul Smith demonstrated and discussed healthy soils and how to carry out visual assessments of soil health.

These events were hosted and supported by **TukiTuki LandCare**, **Between Two Rivers** and **Ahuriri Tributaries Catchment Group**.

Our relationship with Catchment Groups throughout Hawkes Bay has strengthened during the year with four of our current trustees also serving on executives of catchment groups.

The major event was our second **Healthy Soils Healthy Profits** workshop which was well attended.

A Matauranga Maori workshop day was hosted with LandWISE and AgriSeaNZ where we discussed the traditional knowledge that can be used guide us toward sustainable land management in our agricultural systems.

Following the conclusion of our comms contract with Belford Communication our communications, social media, webpage content and regular newsletters were brought inhouse in conjunction with People & People and our subscribers and followers continue to increase.

Adding a donations button to our website and calling for donations has resulted in additional funding support from followers.

Projects

Carbon Positive. LandWISE

During 2024 the Carbon Positive project has developed into a significant demonstration trial as the Tomato crop grew and the cover crops were established.

Weekly field walks are well attended and create plenty of discussion. The monthly field days have been attended by up to 30 industry people.

Two significant management changes will be made by Heinz to their tomato growing operation for the 2024/25 season as a direct result of learning from our Carbon Positive 2024 tomato crop trial which included reducing the use of some chemical classes and changes to row width so they can implement mechanical weeding to also reduce chemical use. This means the trial is already informing changes that can reduce the use of herbicides and fungicides and thereby improve the health of the soil and farm ecosystem.

Land for Life.

The HBRC and The Nature Conservancy have developed this project with 12 pilot farms.

The project reviews land use on each pastoral hill country farm and identifies areas best suited to intensive pasture production or Silvopasture with poplars and willows or retirement from pasture and indigenous tree planting or commercial forestry- exotic planting. The funding model demonstrates reasonable returns from the revised pastoral farming system combined with carbon income through the ETS from the trees.

The Trust have expressed interest in partnering in the next stage of this project where 100 more farms will be included in the project that has had \$995K MPI funding announced this week.

As a partner in Land for Life the Trust can bring an added focus on soil health and soil carbon measurements and soil health improvement methods (using regenerative farming principles) to the farmers involved in the project.

Farming for Carbon on pastoral farms.

We have promoted this project with farmers, Industry bodies, CRIs and meat processors with widespread interest but no substantial funding has yet become available. This project idea closely resembles and will likely be superseded by the Land for Life pilot studies. A small soil health project has been outlined and offered to some of the B2R sub-catchments who have funds for such special projects. This project is being discussed with farmers in the catchment and has yet to be confirmed.

Board Structure and Governance.

The trust adopted a new meeting regime to streamline our governance. We now have bimonthly in person board meetings held at the HBRC offices in Napier. Our 3 sub committees and as required the whole board meet by Zoom on the alternate months.

Tom Belford, one of our foundation Trustees stepped down from his role as a trustee in August. Tom was on the HBRC at the instigation of the HBFFCT and Toms commitment to the Trusts establishment and operational success is recognised.

Di Roadley joined the board as the HBRC appointed trustee. We welcome Di's knowledge and experience to our governance team.

Scott Lawson's three-year term as a trustee ends in 2024 and the Trustee Appointments Committee have recommended acceptance of Scott's request for reappointment for a further term.

Funding

We continue to build relationships with our current sponsors and seek additional funding support using outlines and strategy developed in conjunction with Craig Ireson.

This work has yet to yield new funding in a tough financial environment but we continue to work with potential funders.

Strategic Plan.

With several new trustees on board during 2022 and 2023 we reviewed our Strategic Plan early in 2024.

We established 2 pillars to work with.

Strategic Pillar #1: Promote resilient farming practices including better use of technology, genetics, energy & strategic nutrition.

Desired outcome: Productivity that minimizes input and environmental footprint

Strategic Pillar #2: Champion the growth of soil carbon

Trust Management

The trust contracted France & Co to manage its projects and business for 3 years.

The board has reviewed the general management position implemented early in 2024 and up for review in December 24. The challenging funding environment for trust operational and projects funding were considered. The general manager contract will come to an end with a transition plan in place and the trust is currently seeking to contract an Administrator role.

I wish to recognise the effort Dave has put into our work especially with getting the Carbon Positive project started and exploring various options for a pastoral farming project.

2025

We look forward to finalising plans for the Land for Life project with HBRC and TNC early in the new year.

We also plan to have an administration contractor in place early in the year with Dave France continuing in a transition role until the next Carbon positive milestone has been completed in February.

I would like to thank the Trustees for their continued support and governance of our work during 2024.

Phil Schofield

Chair

HB Future Farming Charitable Trust.