



# 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Bluegreens Forum

The Bluegreens is the National Party's Policy Advisory Group on Environmental issues

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BLUEGREENS CO-CHAIRS - Matt Paul & Grant McCallum



The Bluegreens held their annual Bluegreens Forum at Methven this year. This was another fantastic Bluegreens event, attended by 19 National Party MPs – including Prime Minister Christopher Luxon – and more than 170 attendees in total. It was great that so many of our senior Ministers attended, backing up Leader Christopher Luxon’s positivity.

The vibe was fantastic over both the Saturday (including our Saturday night dinner) and the Sunday Fieldday, hosted by National Party Board



member, **Sir Graeme Harrison**. What a fantastic host he was to the 83 attendees on the Sunday at his Pudding Hill Lodge (part of Mt Alford Station).

We really appreciated the attendance of **Party President Sylvia Wood** as well as her fellow Board Members.

Unfortunately, our Bluegreens Co-Chair Chris Severne was not able to make it to this year’s forum but his contribution over the last 8 years was noted. Chris had previously indicated to our Bluegreens Executive of his intention to step down as Co-Chair, and it was agreed that Matt Paul (also from the Northern Region) would step up. We welcome Matt to this role and I am sure that his commitment to the Co-Chair role will be well-founded and appreciated.

## KEYNOTE – RIGHT HON CHRISTOPHER LUXON



The Prime Minister thanked by the outgoing Co-Chair Chris Severne for his service. He announced the appointment of Matt Paul as the new Co-Chair, who joins Grant McCallum who chairs the Parliamentary sector of the Bluegreens.

Christopher confirmed his long-standing support of the Bluegreens, **noting our commitment to practical and pragmatic environmentalism being legendary.**

Luxon said that he makes no apology for focusing on growth, recognising that if we want improved environmental outcomes then we need to have a strong economy to fund this. He said that *“smart capital makes smart decisions on where to invest and our country depends on this.”*

Christopher stated that *“We must protect our natural environment – without saying NO. We have to be much smarter than that. It is about the economy and the environment, and we need both.”* He said that the last Labour Government weaponised the edict to say No. We have to do better than that.

Christopher said that New Zealand will plant both native trees & forestry on unproductive government land. In the Q&A session he noted that New Zealand is now in the top 5 countries globally for renewable energy (currently we are 85% renewable). He said that he doesn’t buy into the argument that it is either about the economy or the environment, saying Australia is now 25-30% wealthier than us, and Ireland has double our net wealth.

**“We must do better!”**

## March 2025 Newsletter

visit our WEBSITE:

[national.org.nz/bluegreens](http://national.org.nz/bluegreens)



## BLUEGREENS CO-CHAIR – GRANT McCALLUM MP



Grant opened the Forum, passionately advocating for the Bluegreens Vision – which he said has remained in place since Hon Nick Smith, Hon Simon Upton & the late Sir Rob Fenwick founded in Wellington in 1998.

Grant said “The Founders were determined to show that Environmental issues are too important to be left to the fringe

of politics and should be a mainstream issue for all Kiwis. That New Zealand’s environment and our national heritage, our soils and oceans, and the imagery that surrounds our biodiversity and wilderness, hold the key to our nation’s future prosperity. I call that Nature’s Capital.”

National has a proud legacy in the Environmental space. It includes:

- Taking New Zealand from generating 65% to 85% renewable energy.
- Established the Land and Water forum to strengthen monitoring, compliance and enforcement. Meaning we achieved more to improve water quality by collaboration under the Key Government, than Labour and the Greens did with their confrontational approach.
- Established Predator Free 2050, Battle for our birds and War on weeds.
- Established 5 of NZ’s 13 National Parks.
- Created 11 new marine reserves.
- Developed and funded a threatened species strategy to ensure our native species flourish.
- Funded a kiwi recovery programme whose aim is to have 100,000 wild kiwis by 2030.
- Helped tackle kauri dieback with funding of close to 22 million dollars for research to turn the tide on this devastating disease.
- Set up the Environmental Protection Authority in 2009.
- Led the formation of the Global Research Alliance for Methane reduction in 2009.
- Ratified the Paris Accord in 2016.

Grant posed the question – “So what is next?” He said that “the ultimate challenge is to achieve sustainability. In 1987 the United Nations Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as, “Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

## BLUEGREENS CO-CHAIR – MATT PAUL



Matt Paul replaces Chris Severne as the Party Co-Chair. Chris has spent eight years in the role and his contribution was acknowledged by Matt.

This year’s forum was another great event, with the event’s record attendance illustrating that the natural environment and its sustainable management is important to all New Zealanders.

The Bluegreens forum is a unique event, where National Party members, National MP’s and Ministers, green business, Environmental NGO’s, media and the general public are welcomed for a day of collaboration, sharing of ideas, and the



### OUR BLUEGREEN PRINCIPLES

The Bluegreens are a group of passionate members and supporters who care deeply about our natural environment and we’re guided by the following principles:

- Sustainability must be at the heart of everything we do.
- We’re practical environmentalists, putting results before ideology.
- Our economy depends on our environment, and our ability to care for our environment depends on the success of our economy.
- A scientific and evidence-based approach is essential to quality environmental decision-making.
- People respond best to change when engaged and given incentives. We work with communities and businesses, not against them.
- New Zealanders have a unique birthright to access and enjoy our natural environment.

Our Bluegreen approach takes a long-term view that by making smart, strategic decisions today we can leave our environment in a healthier state for future generations.

presentation of green policy to decision makers. National MP’s and Ministers were asked a number of tough questions throughout the day, ensuring the views of party members and environmental NGO’s were heard.

One of the Bluegreen’s guiding principles is ‘practical environmentalism’, with this principle reinforced during the Forum by both the Prime Minister and Minister for Conservation Tama Potaka, announcing an additional \$4.5m of funding over three years for the QEII Charitable trust, to support the protection of privately owned native bush via covenants. Such funding helps support farmers who are passionate about their land and Ngahere, ensuring it is protected for future generations.

Methven was a great venue for the Bluegreens Forum, with a visit to the town a first for many Forum attendees. The Bluegreen’s Executive wishes to extend its thanks to our hosts at the Mt Hutt Memorial Hall, which put on amazing food all day, with the on-site crew doing a great job at hosting our attendees. A big thanks to Grant McCallum and Dr Hamish Campbell for organising a great line up of speakers and to Sir Graeme Harrison and his family for their generous hospitality.



## HON TAMA POTAKA



Tama announced that \$30 million from the Tourism Visitors Levy is to go into Wilding Pine destruction. He also said that \$1 million would go to Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari (the 47km fenced wildlife reserve). Tama then introduced the Prime Minister.

## SESSION ONE - GENE EDITING & BIOTECHNOLOGY

Dr Hamish Campbell, Ilam MP



This session was chaired by Hamish who noted that the proposed legislative change was not a “free for all”, but a very targeted response to ensure that New Zealand was no longer being left behind in seeking a strong economy, based on good science evidence.

### Professor Peter Dearden



A former molecular biologist with a background in cancer and viruses, emphasizing the potential of gene technologies in New Zealand. Peter was an extremely entertaining presenter, with a serious message. He discussed the use of genetic modification to improve pest control, particularly targeting invasive wasps. highlights his unique

combination of experience in GE and biotechnology, emphasizing the potential benefits for New Zealand. He discusses the current government's commitment to modernizing regulations around gene technologies to streamline the development of life-saving medical treatments and improve agricultural productivity.

Professor Dearden stated that *“Biology is hard and controversial to change. We have a perception that changing genomes via mutation is an issue, but it happens in nature on a daily basis – whether it be enjoying sunlight or even just drinking coffee.”* He noted that technologies are becoming very precise, through the use of gene editing. He highlighted the challenges of current pest control methods and the potential of gene drives to reduce wasp populations by 98%. He concluded *“Science and innovation are essential for addressing the likes of climate change.”*

**Dr. William Rolleston**, chair of Genomics Aotearoa,



underscored the global demand for better food quality and reduced environmental impact, advocating for the passage of the gene technology bill to enable life-saving treatments and agricultural advancements. This Bill is currently making its way before Parliament, and we mustn't lose this opportunity to improve medical outcomes as well as controlling many

of our nation's pests. He said: *“Trust is hard fought for and easily lost. We mustn't let misinformation distort the scientific evidence.”* He said he hoped that the Select Committee would “fact check” all statements on the issue – submissions need to be credible. He said: *“Gene Editing is not a silver bullet, but an essential tool to improve environmental outcomes.”*

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER – RIGHT HON SIMON UPTON



Parliament Commissioner for the Environment and former National Government Minister, Simon Upton opened by stating that it wasn't his role (as Commissioner) to tell MPs how to deal with environmental legislation, but he did say that *“the scale of environmental tradeoffs is not for the faint-hearted.”* He said that progress is being made at the

local level but with the current 8 million people on this planet, making progress in preventing environmental degradation is limited. He said *“We need to balance environmental outcomes with economic growth, recognising that to ensure a great environment we have to have a strong economy to pay for it. Technology will help with this in specific areas.”* Simon noted that New Zealand has no control in the outcomes on climate issues and that is why we so easily “kick the can down the road”. He questioned the decision to plant trees rather than reduce emissions.

Simon noted that the Covid pandemic cost New Zealand \$70 billion. He talked about the cost of \$80 million to reduce nitrogen going into Lake Taupo, bring a 20% improvement/ He said the problem with growth is that future generations generally pay for it.

Simon stated that road user pricing is a fantastic decision by this government. He is amazed that farmers would prefer to pay for emission on their farm, when it is much cheaper to pay for it at the processing plant. He noted that trying to know everything before you do anything is a huge risk.

Simon has been continually calling for bringing environmental data up to scratch, saying getting information will cost money but will save money in the medium to longer term. Good science is needed for good decision making and it will also be time efficient. He said that after 7 years this is his #1 gripe.

Simon said “one shop” doesn't fit everywhere, particularly when we look at land-use change. *“Every patch is different, and centralization is only fine to a very limited extent. We need a community-by-community approach to improving environmental outcomes.”*

## SESSION TWO – RMA REFORM



**Hon Nicola Willis**, as well as being Minister of Finance, is also Minister of Economic Growth. She commented that Yale University scores countries on their Environmental Health, noting that wealthy countries do a better job for the environment. New Zealand rates as 33 out of the top 100 countries for “adaption to climate challenges”. She said that investing into the

environment isn't an either / or situation. She said "We lose sight of that at our peril".

Nicola emphasized that New Zealand's biggest chance for Climate Change adaptation will come from our farmers, and they will do it best if they do it voluntarily and economically. If we want to send a message to our trade consumers, we need to show that we are serious about climate change adaptation and mitigation. She said that no matter what we do climate change is here to stay and trade access will require that we have sound adaptation and mitigation policies.

"Good intentions are not enough."



### Hon Chris Bishop

opened by saying "Some will say that slow or no growth is okay – I feel sorry for these people. We need to go for growth. We need to dismantle our culture that says No. We have to learn to say Yes and find a better way." Bish noted that we have a once in a generation opportunity to rebuild the RMA.

Last year we made changes to reverse some of Labour's disastrous changes to the RMA. We introduced

Fast Track – and he said he was very proud of this. However, he said it is like taking a Panadol - a short-term fix but not a long-term solution.

Bish said he wants just one regulatory plan per region. He said he has just received the "Blueprint Report" from the Advisory Panel but wouldn't be making any announcements on this today. He said that he is aiming for greater standardization – noting that in Canterbury alone they have 228 separate zones, which is plainly crazy and very inefficient and ineffective for those needing to comply within that region. He also said there are 75 different biodiversity models used across New Zealand, again complicating unnecessarily. Chris is looking to narrow the scope of the RMA – saying RM decisions shouldn't allow anti-competitive behavior. He said Supermarkets are on notice that we can no longer afford anti-competitive behavior in RMA planning. "We will replace the RMA with 2 separate Acts."

"We want vegetable growers to be a permitted activity."



**Hon Penny Simmonds** noted that impacts of changes already made have impacted our Primary Sector. However, urban areas also need to be acknowledged as equally responsible for improved environmental outcomes – saying that it does not lie solely with farmers.

We have paused the requirement for Farm environmental Plans until we

have better environmental standards and data. We are confident that farmers who see an improving farm viability will increasingly understand and agree to improving environmental outcomes. Most farmers understand the concept of "guardianship" and want to see environmental improvement for future generations.

Penny complimented Catchment Groups, who are leading the charge for improved environmental outcomes.

**Q&A** 1) DairyNZ CEO, Tracey Brown said farmers need certainty – we need cross-Party for both climate change and water.

2) Chris Bishop stated that RM Reform will also look at Local Government structures – Regional Councils, TLAs and Unitary Councils – He said the key is to make good Public Law.

## SESSION THREE – EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES



### Dr Ojas Mahapatra

– Fabrum

(Hydrogen options & solutions)

Ojas said that the hydrogen energy transition offers a genuine option for a world that wants and needs to decarbonise. He said payload and distance support hydrogen as an option, and "Green Hydrogen" is the holy grail.



### Stuart McKenzie

– Arc Active (Low cost/Long-life Energy storage)

Stuart noted that Australia power 3.5 million homes with solar energy (of a total of 10 million homes). Their primary mover is to save money rather than decarbonisation. He said their biggest risk is battery fires. He noted that financing conversion was more widespread in Australia where Funds Management totals A\$4.7trillion – versus New Zealand at NZ\$0.3 trillion.



### Mike Casey

– Rewiring Aotearoa

This Otago Cherry Farmer returns to his second Bluegreens Forum presentation, saying we need to electrify New Zealand's energy services. He said that half of your power cost comes from generation (17 cents/kwh) and 18 cents from transmission costs. He commended Simeon Brown for bringing the cost down significantly. Mike stated that Electrify NZ are very good operators but it is all about "the big end of town". He said that there are 2 million homes in New Zealand and if 80% of homes embraced solar, that would account for 40% of our electricity demand. He also said that if 25,000 farms embraced solar, we would save \$15 million of power and reduce gross emissions by 25%. He commended the Ratepayers Assistance Scheme – saying that it needs to be legislated. He also stated that the EECA Act needs changing now – and not in 2026.



## SESSION FOUR – AOTEAROA CYCLE



**Vicki Watson, CEO of Aotearoa Cycle**

She noted that one of the 1998 Bluegreens Founder, the late Sir Rob Fenwick was also the founder of her organisation. She referred her organisation as being a “Leadership Group” that works with both private and public organisations.



**Simon Limmer, Guardian & CEO of Indevin Group**

Simon stated that the Bay of Plenty region has been chosen to act as a pilot case study to determine the impacts of Climate Change on future GDP growth. He said that this is a “World First” project (named the Natural Capital Regional Resilience) is designed to

help the Bay of Plenty adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change and the degradation of nature by helping the region to understand its vulnerabilities (and opportunities) while showing where further action and support is needed.

This workstream is a New Zealand first attempt to take a systems approach to understanding the links between nature and society in a particular region, and then what climate change will do to that region. and noted that with climate change there is a strong projection of increased risk for the likes of the kiwifruit industry. He noted that kiwifruit, due the reduction in frost days which are needed for bud set, could well have to move further inland (to the likes of Rotorua), with more tropical fruit replacing kiwifruit along the Bay of Plenty coastline. When asked about the timelines for adaptation due to climate change, he said that the research was thinking in terms of a 10, 20 & 30 year view.

Simon also highlighted the issues New Zealand exporters face in getting export cut-through, because of the tyranny of distance. He talked about the need to co-operate with Australia to develop “green shipping corridors”.



**David Carter, BECA Chair & Meridian Director**

David addressed the issue of protecting New Zealand’s competitive advantage, by learning the lessons from the Covid pandemic. He said the world has moved on and now has moved towards an increasing require-

ment for Climate adaptation and mitigation disclosure reporting. David said that 60% of global GDP is now subject to Climate Change and ESG disclosure reporting. 80% of New Zealand exports now require such reporting. The EU free trade agreement insists on this reporting and highlights why green shipping is really important.



**Izzy Fenwick, Founder of Futureful**

& daughter of Sir Rob Fenwick  
Izzy talked about her late father’s strong involvement with the Bluegreens, noting that the Bluegreens Vision has not altered in 27 years. She stated that 75% of the New Zealand economy relies on nature, and we now need a “nature’s growth

strategy”. She said that nature is an asset, and she encouraged us to imagine what could be achieved with a policy of growth for nature. She stated that, like infrastructure, nature’s resilience takes time to build and it can’t fall solely on central government. She said real lasting change will require a partnership approach if we are to be successful.

**“We mustn’t just talk about a sustainable future – we have to start today to finance nature’s sustainability”**

In the Q&A Simon Limmer told us that the group hasn’t got its head around the Project findings yet but agree that there will be opportunities and Zespri is looking at this from a point of varieties selection, that can withstand any expected change.

## SESSION FIVE – CONSERVATION



**Hon Tama Potaka, Minister for Conservation** was introduced by Catherine Wedd, who chaired this session.

Tama opened, noting that “*within DOC the key issue is that we are slow to get out there and actually do things.*” We need to get more activation of revenue, noting that the DOC estate accounts for 30% of New Zealand’s land mass (8m hectares) and yet this just produces \$50 million in revenue.

Tama noted that DOC owns 950 huts, but they don’t have to be “gold plated”. He is looking to get DOC onto a solid financial footing. Furthermore, DOC doesn’t have to own everything. He stated that the new International Tourism Levy is capturing 60% of our visitors (Australian visitors currently don’t pay anything) and is a welcome new source of funding going towards sustainable conservation.



Q& A: The first question was around decentralisation of DOC staff, asking for employment of local rangers to be more visible in the community.

Bluegreens Founder, previous Cabinet Minister and now Mayor of Nelson, **Hon Dr Nick Smith** asked about the current government’s strategy around tourism. Tama responded by advocating for a seasonal charge around tourism.

## PITCH A POLICY



**1. WAYNE LANGFORD – President, NZ Federated Farmers**

Wayne asked for a more co-ordinated national approach – especially for freshwater. He said key elements include:

- 1) Funding and resources;
- 2) Catchment & community groups;
- 3) Farm Environment Plans; and
- 4) Better and scientifically robust data.

Wayne stated that under Labour conservation and the environment received a lot of money, but it wasn’t well focused and had no measurable outcomes. He stated that it is essential that we get better data in order to manage our water better.



**2. PROFESSOR JOHN HEARNSHAW – Dark Sky**

Professor Hearnshaw advocated that New Zealand needs a national law to prevent light pollution, arguing that light pollution is harmful to human health.

## SUNDAY FIELD TRIP TO MT ALFORD STATION



80+ attendees were hosted by National Party Board Member Sir Graeme Harrison's Mt Alford Station, close to Methven. This field trip both excellent and highly informative. Sir Graeme showed us (at Pudding Hill Lodge) what genuine conservation meant to him and then followed up by arranging for his Catchment Group friends to drive us over his property to see "conservation in action". The low mist coming off Mount Hutt made for demanding driving but we got high up on the Station, with great views of Sir Graeme's passionate work for conservation seen by all.



### 3. CORINA JORDAN – Fish & Game

Carina opened by commending the Minister for his announcement regarding increased funding for the QEII Trust, Her pitch was around "Wetlands & wetlands habitat". She said we need to prioritise both protection and restoration of wetlands to ensure ongoing guardianship – noting that New Zealand has lost 90% of our wetlands across all of New Zealand.



### 4. NICOLA TOKI – CE, Forest & Bird

Nicola noted that Forest & Bird is one of New Zealand's oldest charities. She also said that it is very easy to knock the Department of Conservation, but their staff are incredibly dedicated. She thanked the Bluegreens for continuing to invite the key NGOs to this annual forum, saying we need to keep talking. She said that, while Forest & Bird disagrees with the "Fast Track" approach, it is important to keep talking. She thanked Luxon for his commitment to acknowledging and sharing the views of the NGO sector and noted that the five Bluegreens Principals are still highly valued and mustn't be forgotten this time round.

## DINNER SPEAKER



### JIM LYNCH "THE END OF EXTINCTION" – Founder of Zealandia NZ

Jim gave an entertaining evening presentation to 105 attendees, advocating for the building of large pest-exclusion fenced sanctuaries across New Zealand, that will deliver huge biodiversity, social and economic gains for the region involved. His ambition is to build a blueprint to end forever the threat of extinction which constantly hangs over our forest birds. He said that Introduced predators (rodents, mustelids, cats) and browsers (deer, goats and possums) eat our fauna and degrade their habitat to the extent that, in any particular unmanaged forest, 99% of the vertebrate fauna will be exotic pests and the forest structure will be severely damaged, leaving little sustenance for the tiny remnant of surviving indigenous fauna. Jim is advocating for partnership funding to facilitate a collaborative approach ensures that funders, central government and local communities buy in to this proposition. He stated that there are already excellent examples of this working effectively in New Zealand today, and we need to expand on this if we are to be Predator-Free by 2050.


















## THANKS

The Bluegreens Executive recognised and acknowledges the work undertaken by our Regional Co-ordinator **Maree Brookes** – who worked tirelessly to ensure that everything went smoothly for the Methven Forum.



# YOUR BLUEGREENS EXECUTIVE

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