28th Annual Bluegreens Forum

The Bluegreens is the National Party's Special Interests Group on Environmental issues

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Autumn 2026

New Zealand's environment is at the core of our quality of life, our national identity, and our competitive advantage. We enjoy some of the most pristine and accessible natural beauty in the world

BLUEGREENS CO-CHAIRS

GRANT MCCALLUM & MATT PAUL

The Bluegreens held their annual Bluegreens Forum at St Patrick's College, Wellington this year. This was another fantastic Bluegreens event, attended by several National Party MPs – including Prime Minister Christopher Luxon – and around 140 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, hosted by Christopher Luxon at Premier House no less) and two Sunday Fieldays – one to visit Mātiu/Somes Island via the Electric East/West Ferry; and a guided "walking tour" to look at some of Wellington's iconic "Greenstar Buildings".

Both options were well attended and we had great feedback, not only for another outstanding Forum, but also for both Sunday field trips.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER HON NICOLA WILLIS

Our finance minister set the scene for Hon Chris Bishop's keynote RMA Reform discussion. She noted that environmental protection is at the heart of the National Party. Sustainable development of our environment is about ensuring that we encourage core National Party values – such as limited government, individual freedom and encouraging personal responsibility and encourage competitive enterprises.

Nicola stated that this has been our history for more than 90 years and little has changed in National's core philosophy. National has always understood that the choice between the environment and economy is a false one. You must have a strong economy if you are to be able to fund a science-based sustainably strong environment.

Earlier national governments laid down much of our environmental legislative framework, and while there continues to be nay-sayer predictions for endangered wildlife, National's commitment to protecting our national parks will ensure that this protection is preserved.

The second national government passed world leading marine protection, creating the framework for the marine quota system, with outstanding results. That continues today and the fourth National government, the Bolger government, passed the 1989 Resource Management Act, a truly visionary piece of

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legislation – that was compromised by local government bureaucrats, whose risk-averse approach to environmental sustainability, has led to the need to totally rewrite the legislation to ensure it is once again fit for purpose.

Nicola said that this is one of the most important things we will do as a government. It's a credible part of our long-term plan to drive a higher level of standards and increased prosperity. "*Some people will disagree with us, but it's now proven beyond doubt that consenting issues are the root cause of our housing crisis*."

The RMA has also made it difficult and expensive to build infrastructure for energy resilience and has tied farmers and growers up in excessive retape. It has failed the environment.

The new planning system will radically change how we build houses and infrastructure. We'll leave farmers to get on to do what they do best, with confidence that they need a sustainable environment to ensure their industry is successful going forward.

She said "Policy reliant on ideology risks genuine outcomes. We also have to streamline the planning process. We have a multitude of costly regional plans that don't integrate between regions. Many of these plans take a decade to make operative, at a phenomenal cost to ratepayers.

"There is so much opportunity for making efficiency and effectiveness gain, and we are determined to support Minister Bishop to accomplish this, before the 2026 election. It makes no sense to take a decade to extend the port."

"We have to do better – and we will"

KEYNOTE – RIGHT HON CHRISTOPHER LUXON

Our National Party Leader thanked the Bluegreens Executive for their commitment to ensure that our environment remain front and centre in our vision for a sustainable and growing New Zealand economy.

He used his Bluegreens 2026 leadership address to frame National's environmental approach as pragmatic, growth-focused and grounded in delivery rather than ideology.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY GO TOGETHER

Luxon rejected the idea that New Zealand must choose between emissions reduction and economic growth. He argued the country's abundant renewable energy base gives it a competitive advantage — positioning New Zealand as a low-emissions economy capable of attracting investment while meeting its climate commitments.

He pointed to record levels of renewable generation coming online, progress toward net-zero by 2050, and reforms designed to accelerate approvals for wind, solar, geothermal and hydro projects.

FIXING THE SYSTEM TO DELIVER

A central theme was removing bottlenecks. Luxon defended fast-track consenting and wider resource management reform, arguing New Zealand can no longer afford decade-long delays for infrastructure, energy or environmental projects.

He framed the Government's reforms as restoring common sense — speeding up approvals while maintaining environmental protections — so the country can build what it needs.

ENERGY SECURITY AS NATIONAL SECURITY

Luxon emphasised the need for firm energy to back up renewables in dry years. He defended investment in LNG import capability as a practical step to reduce reliance on coal, stabilise prices and support industry while the renewable build-out continues.

"Reliable and affordable energy, he said, underpins jobs, regional development and long-term prosperity."

Stewardship with realism

Appealing directly to the Bluegreens audience, Luxon argued that conservation and stewardship are core centre-right values.

But he was clear that environmental protection must be funded by a strong economy — and that efficiency, partnership with business, and disciplined government are key to achieving both.

National's 2026 Campaign - Protecting Oceans

Luxon stated that National will campaign on "banning commercial fishing in the from two HPAs in the Hauraki Gulf and to review seafloor trawling in the Hauraki Gulf".

Why this matters

Luxon positioned National's environmental platform as one of "results over rhetoric" — accelerating renewables, reforming planning laws, strengthening energy security, and pairing environmental responsibility with economic growth ahead of the next election.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER – HON CHRIS BISHOP

Energy Security, Faster Renewables & Backing Growth

At the Bluegreens 2026 Forum, Chris Bishop outlined the Government's case for sweeping Resource Management reform — arguing the current system is too slow, too complex, and too costly to deliver either environmental protection or economic development.

Ending the RMA era

Bishop was blunt: the Resource Management Act has failed on both fronts. It has produced soaring compliance costs, decade-long consent delays, and overlapping jurisdiction between councils and central agencies — while environmental outcomes have not improved.

He framed reform not as deregulation, but as **replacement**: a simpler, more rules-based system designed to provide certainty, speed up approvals, and clearly separate environmental limits from development rules.

Two new laws, clearer purpose

The proposed framework would replace the RMA with two core statutes:

- **Natural Environment Act** — focused on setting environmental limits and protecting ecosystems.
- **Planning Act** — governing land use and urban development, with clearer, nationally consistent rules.

The aim is to reduce plan duplication across councils, standardise zoning, and prevent local variation from stalling nationally significant projects.

Faster approvals, fewer veto points

Bishop defended fast-track consenting for major infrastructure, renewable energy, housing and transport projects. He argued New Zealand cannot spend 8–10 years debating projects like wind farms or basic infrastructure.

A key reform theme was reducing opportunities for procedural delay while still preserving genuine environmental safeguards.

Infrastructure, housing and climate alignment

He positioned RMA reform as essential to:

- Scale renewable energy generation
- Enable housing supply in high-growth areas
- Deliver transport and water infrastructure
- Support regional economic development

Without reform, he said, New Zealand risks under-investment, high power prices, constrained housing supply, and missed climate targets.

Certainty for business and communities

Bishop stressed that investors, councils and communities all need clarity. A rules-based system with national standards would reduce litigation, lower compliance costs, and restore confidence to build.

Why this matters

National is signalling that RMA replacement is central to its growth strategy — aiming to pair environmental protection with faster infrastructure delivery, more housing, and stronger renewable investment.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER – HON TAMA POTAKA

Growth, Pragmatism and Environmental Realism

Tama delivered a speech centred on pragmatic environmentalism, economic growth, and the role of Māori enterprise in New Zealand's future prosperity.

His core message was clear: environmental protection and economic development are not opposing forces — but neither can environmental policy ignore economic reality. He argues that better environmental outcomes depend on a system that actually works.

Conservation as an economic engine

Tama said the Department of Conservation is being pushed to become more strategic, customer-focused, innovative and commercially disciplined to manage roughly 30% of New Zealand's landmass sustainably. A key plank is modernising the Conservation Act and streamlining concessions, which he described as clogged by outdated plans and slow processing. He claimed the backlog of pending concessions has been cut substantially

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(from about 1,300 to around 500), but said structural reform is needed to stop queues rebuilding.

A major theme was new funding tools

Tama Potaka backed charging where it's fair and feasible — including access/parking fees at high-demand iconic sites used heavily by international visitors — so revenue can be recycled into tracks, toilets, pest control and protection. He also highlighted private-sector partnerships through procurement (including a telecom deal delivering taxpayer value and conservation support) and floated small "opt-in" donation mechanisms to grow public contributions.

He emphasised prioritisation: the full cost of maintaining all biodiversity at an ideal standard is far beyond current budgets, so investment must target the highest-value outcomes, alongside long-term predator and ungulate control and active ecosystem management.

Oceans: tighten Hauraki Gulf protections

On oceans, Potaka aligned with tightening Hauraki Gulf protections by removing commercial fishing exemptions in high-protection areas and reviewing controversial trawl provisions, framing the Gulf as a national asset and Auckland's "playground" that must be protected consistently.

A Centre-Right Environmental Identity

Importantly for the Bluegreens audience, Potaka reinforced that conservation has deep roots in the centre-right tradition — stewardship, responsibility, and legacy. He positioned National's environmental approach as grounded in realism rather than activism.

Cutting "jurisdictional overreach"

In Q&A, he criticised bureaucratic overlap — citing regional councils adding conditions on top of DOC approvals — arguing it slows projects and undermines regional delivery.

Why this matters

National is signalling an environment platform built around delivery, user-pays conservation funding, and less red tape — pairing stewardship with economic realism.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER – HON SIMON WATTS

ENERGY & RM REFORM

Simon set out the Government's energy and resource management reform agenda as central to both emissions reduction and economic growth — rejecting what he called the "false choice" between sustainability and prosperity.

A RENEWABLES BOOM - FASTER THAN BEFORE

Simon said New Zealand is on track for net zero by 2050 (potentially earlier), highlighting that emissions are at their lowest levels in recent years and that around 99% of electricity generation is renewable in peak periods. He argued that more renewable generation has been commissioned under the current Government than in the previous decade.

THE MESSAGE WAS CLEAR

The Government is saying "yes" to wind, solar, geothermal and hydro, and will soon introduce a regulatory framework to enable offshore wind for the first time — unlocking billions in potential investment and large-scale generation.

He also outlined changes to make rooftop solar and batteries easier and more viable, including:

- Removing building consent requirements for most rooftop solar installations
- Requiring power retailers to offer fair buy-back rates
- Exempting income tax on revenue from selling excess solar back to the grid

He signalled further work to reduce upfront cost barriers for households.

FIXING THE DRY-YEAR PROBLEM

A major focus is on energy security. Simon Watts warned that New Zealand's hydro-dependent system is vulnerable in dry years, and that domestic gas shortages have forced greater reliance on coal.

To address this, the Government is progressing LNG import infrastructure to ensure sufficient backup fuel when lakes are low and the sun isn't shining. He argued that importing gas would reduce coal use, stabilise electricity prices, and underwrite further renewable investment.

ENERGY AS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Drawing on National's history of major hydro projects, Simon framed abundant, reliable, affordable energy as a strategic national advantage. Countries that secure energy supply, he said, will win economically in coming decades.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The Government is positioning pragmatic energy reform — combining accelerated renewables, dry-year security through LNG, and RMA streamlining — as the foundation for both emissions reduction and long-term economic growth.

SESSION ONE – THE EMERGING BLUEGREN ECONOMY

CHAIR – KARLEEN REEVE, BLUEGREENS EXECUTIVE

1. **AGRISEA - CLARE BRADLEY, CEO**
   This Seaweed company has been operating for 30 years, producing bio-stimulants that improve soil health and animal welfare. They export to Italy, Australia and USA.

   "We knew if we couldn't grow thru volume, so we would have to grow through value."

2. **PLASTOIL – PAUL WILTON, DIRECTOR**
   National needs policies that will win the vote of housewives. If you want to win the middle ground than you need to consider recycling to protect plastics going to waste. Currently only 10% of plastic is recycled within New Zealand. We need a fully circular system.

   "We mustn't just 'greenwash,' We need to build infrastructure today. We need better rules; better delivery; and build regionally to ensure that we deliver real progress."

3. **TERNARY KINETIC – SEAN MOLLOY, CEO & CO-FOUNDER**
   Ternary has raised $40m in seed funding. This has enabled the development of electricity to move as a liquid -it has 10x the energy compared to a battery. Once it has been expended, it is re-used as renewable energy – which is much cheaper than diesel.

   Ternary is seeking government funding support for the first hub, demonstrating the technology.

PITCH A POLICY

CHAIR – ANDREW VON DADELSZEN, BLUEGREENS TREASURER

1. **ECO CHOICE AOTEAROA – LAURA GEMMELL, CEO**

Eco Choice Aotearoa has been the country's official ecolabel for more than 30 years. Founded by the Ministry for the Environment, the ecolabel only certifies products and services which are environmentally preferable, safe and fit-for-purpose.

Laura explained how voluntary environmental labelling can boost exports.

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2. TOMRA – Chris Gingell, VP Public Affairs

Chris explained how the Container Return Scheme (CRS) is operating very successfully in South Australia & Tasmania – saying that it would also be very good for New Zealand. He made a very strong policy case for the Bluegreens to think about.

3. WASTEMINZ – Nic Quilty, CE

Nic Quilty championed "driving impact through collaboration". She said that WasteMINZ is the largest representative body of New Zealand's waste, resource recovery and contaminated land sectors. "We work towards ongoing and positive development of our industry through strengthening relationships, collaboration, knowledge sharing and championing the implementation of good practice standards" she said.

SESSION TWO – Enabling NZ Clean Tech Industries

Chair – Mat Paul, Bluegreens Co-Chair

1. Cropsy Tech – Ali Alomari, CEO & Co-Founder

Viticulture is a $2 billion industry but is in decline. Cropsy uses Ai to monitor and manage vines in real time. Scanners analyse each vine. Last season 10% of all vines across New Zealand (43,000 Ha) were scanned. This innovative high-tech solution offers growers cost effective management of their crop.

2. Zethos – Critical minerals innovation – Morgan Doling, BDM

Zethos is a New Zealand-based cleantech company focused on innovating the extraction and refining of critical minerals - including nickel, zinc, copper, cobalt & manganese. All have a huge supply delivery problem. The company aims to achieve "critical mineral abundance" through sustainable, technology-led, and low-carbon methods.

SESSION THREE – Community Partnering with Nature

Chair – Kate Ellmers, Bluegreens Executive

QEII TRUST – Brent Mountford, Alan Livingston & Dan Coup

Celebrating 50 years in action and 5,500ha coveted. QEII Trust generally subsidises fencing up to 50% of the cost, and for that the bush is legally protected in perpetuity. The Trust also helps with ongoing audit and management advice.

PITCH A POLICY

Chair Grant McCalum, Bluegreens Co-Chair

1. REWIRING AOTEAROA – Mike Casey

Mike opened by saying that "This is the Electric Election."

He advocated for Energy Impact Loans, saying those who take it up will save $2,000 per year – being property contingent. He also highlighted the Ratepayers Assistance Scheme – At $7m it equals a 5x return over 10 years.

Mike presented former Bluegreens Chair, Hon Scott Simpson, with an award he called "The most Electric National MP."

Hon Dr Nick Smith (Mayor of Nelson and one of the Bluegreens Founders) was invited to the stage to expand on the Ratepayers Assistance Scheme. Nick noted that the Green Party went down a Solar Subsidy Scheme and this has left a debt of more than $100 million.

2. CORINA JORDAN – NZ Fish & Game & Game Animal Council CEO

Corina noted a 20% growth in female hunters & anglers, saying overseas hunters are generally NZ's highest spending tourists. She stated that 350,000 animal are harvested every year – and anglers spend $139m pa on licences. Hunters spend over $300m pa on their licences.

SESSION FOUR – Rural & Business Sustainability

Chair – Andrew von Dadelszen, Bluegreens Treasurer

1. SUSTAINABLE BUSINES COUNCIL – Mike Burrell, CEO

Mike noted that the SBC exists to mobilise New Zealand's most ambitious businesses to build a thriving and sustainable future for all. He said that SBC has

3 main pillars – including "Leadership in Sustainability";" Action on Climate & Nature" and "Thriving People".

2. BEEF & LAMB NZ – KATE ACLAND, CHAIR

Kate noted that Beef 7 Lamb NZ is the farmer-funded industry organisation representing New Zealand's sheep and beef farmers. Kate said that her sector was leading New Zealand's economic recovery, and she looked forward to continue strong engagement at a political level.

BLUEGREENS SATURDAY NIGHT DINNER

More than 100 Forum attendees enjoyed a wonderful evening, hosted by National Party Leader, Christopher Luxon.

SUNDAY FIELD TRIPS

1. MĀTIU/SOMES ISLAND

22 attendees were hosted by Department of Conservation staff to a visit to the historically significant Somes Island. We gained insights into the time when the island was used as a quarantine island and, during World War II it was the home for 400 German prisoners of war.
A feature of this trip was the ride out to Somes Island on New Zealand's first fully electric ferry, operated by East/West Ferries.

2. "GREEN BUILDING" WALKING TOUR

Another 22 attendees opted to do a walking tour of Wellington's "Green Buildings". This was also a particularly interesting and enlightening visit.

Sunday's Green Building Tour was hosted by Andrew Eagles of the New Zealand Green Building Council. He showcased how thoughtful design can reduce environmental impact while creating better spaces for people.

The group visited three impressive projects. BNZ Place demonstrates how energy-efficient design, natural light, and modern ventilation systems can support both sustainability and occupant wellbeing.

The new Parliamentary Services Building highlights innovative engineering, including engineered wooden beams, movable XFrame timber walls, recycled steel, and green concrete. With the careful relocation of a mature pōhutukawa tree.

Finally, the restored Stewart Dawson Building shows how heritage buildings can be modernised to meet high sustainability standards.

Together these projects demonstrate that Wellington can combine sustainability, heritage, and earthquake resilience to create a greener city.

THANKS

The Bluegreens Executive recognises and acknowledges the huge workload undertaken by our HQ Events & Regional Co-ordinator **Maree Brookes** – who worked tirelessly to ensure that everything went smoothly for this Wellington Bluegreens Forum.

BLUEGREENS INAUGURAL AGM 2026

– STRONG FINANCES, CLEAR FOCUS

The Bluegreens has been established as a Special Interest Group of the National Party (formers a Policy Advisory Group) and hence the need foe an inaugural AGM - which was held online on 20 February 2026, with a full quorum present.

The past year was reviewed as productive and positive. Highlights included a successful 2025 annual forum at Methven, a well-supported field day, and strong grassroots engagement — particularly around marine and recreational fishing issues. The focus now shifts firmly to ensuring Bluegreens values are visible and influential as we head into an election year.

Financially, Bluegreens is in a strong position. This gives the group both stability and flexibility. The meeting supported maintaining prudent reserves for future Bluegreens initiatives.

Leadership for 2026 was confirmed:

- Grant McCallum MP – Caucus Co-Chair
- Matt Paul – Party Co-Chair
- Andrew von Dadelszen – Treasurer/Secretary

Looking ahead, priorities include stronger follow-up from forums to turn ideas into practical policy, refreshed Bluegreens visibility, and continued advocacy for pragmatic, science-based environmental solutions that support economic growth.

Bluegreens remains focused on practical stewardship — protecting our environment while building a stronger economy.

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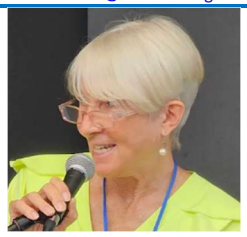

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