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# LETS Community NEWS © 2006

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## Canterbury Community Dollars

PLEBS is no more. At the AGM of 3 September, the membership agreed to rename the exchange, which will now be known as 'Canterbury Community Dollars' CCD. The change will take effect by 15 October. The account code will be CCDE (instead of PLEB).

As part of the revamp and revitalisation process, both the fee structure and the membership structure was changed. CCD members are now members for life, or until they decide balance their account and to relinquish their membership.

The monthly account fee has been replaced with a split system of a levy on transactions and a much smaller account fee. The committee will decide in the upcoming meeting how much that will be and will also have the option to regulate both levy and fee according to need.

CCD seems to be well on the way to recovery. For the first time in many years, the membership numbers have increased in comparison to last years AGM.

*Christoph Hensch*

## Thames Green Dollar Exchange

Thames Green Dollar Exchange is having a promotion month in October and we are looking for ideas that work. Please respond to 'thamesgreendollars@xtra.co.nz'.

*Maureen*

## Taranaki LETS

I'm looking ahead to the South Island regional conference. A great pity that the North Island is not having its own. We had a busy market in August. Our next market is October 28, as too many of us will be away from Taranaki when our September market was due to take place. The year has gone fast, only 2 markets now before Christmas!!

I have been reading a book, *The Permaculture Way - Practical steps to create a self-sustaining world* by Graham Bell. He has a write up about LETS in this book. He suggests that folk with large credits pay interest and hopefully this will stop them from holding on to their money. I don't know if I agree, as sometimes it is only these folk who are motivated enough to offer skills or products for sale that folk want!!! Also, some of these folk run a sustainable household, making it easy for them to produce and hard for them to spend as they have everything they

need.

What are your thoughts??? Should they think twice about being in LETS if they can only trade one way?? Without these motivated people, what is left in your system to trade??? These folk are also usually the volunteer workers in their system, can we do without them?? Would we then be penalizing the motivated workers??? The casual member in the one with nothing much to offer, sitting back and getting all the benefits!!!

Your thoughts please on how we get a well balanced system that works equally for all members!! Or am I dreaming?

I think some of the answers are in the type of community that we live in. All communities are made up of different sorts of folks. We cannot make the community what we want, but maybe we can become more involved in a community and learn how it wants to go forward. Listening to the people and all pull together to create a better understanding of each other and our community needs. Thanks

*Anne, Taranaki LETS*

## Wairarapa Green Dollar Exchange

A wet winter overwhelmed the Wairarapa but spring arrived with a rush to give impetus to a successful late August Market in Greytown followed immediately afterwards by our AGM in the appropriately named Green Man pub. Most of the ten stallholders stayed on to swell the AGM numbers thereby ensuring the election of Office holders for the next twelve months.

However, membership numbers have been slipping recently despite the energetic efforts of key personnel.

## Contents

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Canterbury Community Dollars.....	1
Thames Green Dollar Exchange.....	1
Taranaki LETS.....	1
Wairarapa Green Dollar Exchange.....	1
LETS South Island Regional Meeting .....	2
Spending & Saving .....	2
The Past of LETS.....	3
CES: Recommending a trading partner.....	4
Letters to the editor.....	4
Upcoming Events.....	4
Inter-trading Balances.....	4

With this in mind the Wairarapa Green Dollar Exchange is contemplating a re-launch late this year and is therefore currently pursuing applications to a number of Trusts to generate funds for a major promotion which, apart from focusing on the benefits of being a part of a complementary currency group, will also highlight the on-line opportunities that Exchange members can now enjoy. If all goes according to plan we should soon be looking forward to not only the full warmth of summer but a wholly revitalised Wairarapa Exchange.

*Hayden McGrail*

All of you are invited to contribute to this newsletter. If there isn't any news from your exchange we would love to hear from you. Please send contributions to <[cmhensch@gmx.net](mailto:cmhensch@gmx.net)> before the 14<sup>th</sup> of every month! Thanks!

The Editor

## **LETS South Island Regional Meeting**

**22-24 Sept, The Nook Guesthouse, Pohara, Golden Bay**

H.A.N.D.S has received 15 registrations, with representatives from TATS, MOSS, WINGS, Taranaki, WEST, PLEBS, and Wairarapa planning to attend. All meals will be prepared by H.A.N.D.S. members.

After Friday night dinner, delegates will share reports and discuss LETS-related issues, and a member of the Golden Bay Biofuels Group will give a short presentation.

After breakfast on Saturday morning, guests can opt for a one-hour work bee to reduce accommodation expenses.

The H.A.N.D.S Spring market is from 12-3 on Saturday at the Community Gardens, with stalls, music, food, raffle, and workshops: yurts,

aromatherapy, and seedsaving. Following the market and til dusk, there's a community Spring Equinox celebration and shared meal, with the LETS gathering contribution prepared by a H.A.N.D.S. member. Saturday night at The Nook includes more discussion and a skit written by Murray and performed by the H.A.N.D.S. committee and other members, not to be missed! After breakfast Sunday, there's a panel discussion with active H.A.N.D.S. members and a site visit to one or two members who sell produce from their properties for HANDS. The LETS gathering concludes with lunch on Sunday followed immediately by the Living Economies AGM.

H.A.N.D.S. looks forward to greeting and hosting our visitors.

*Joanna Piekarski*

## **Spending & Saving**

Local Exchange & Trading Systems are designed for robust trading amongst members. Spending by members is the key to LETS. Members are encouraged to spend even before earning, to stimulate active trading throughout the system. Of course a fundamental responsibility of LETS members is the intention to earn to keep their accounts balanced.

Saving Green Dollars is not part of how this system works best. However, there is a second type of local trading system where saving is fundamental. This is TIME BANKING, which while separate from LETS is complementary and mutually supportive. In TIME BANKING, hours of work are traded, with one hour of service equalling one hour saved.

A core value of TIME BANKING is "co-production" where both server and served are equal partners in the transaction. Co-production occurs not only on the level of personal trade but also in the partnership relationships developed as services are provided to participants. Reciprocity is fostered through the recipient's intent to later earn and bank a purchased hour.

This introduction is not intended to explain TIME BANKING, but to open dialogue about how two mutuality-based trading systems can complement each other. I see a sharing of LETS and TIME

BANKING to meet the needs of people in a more comprehensive complementary community trading system where both spending and saving are encouraged in a cooperative local economy of abundance.

To learn more, read *No More Throw-Away People: The Co-Production Imperative* by Edgar Cahn, the creator of TIME BANKING.

by Ro, H.A.N.D.S. member

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## The Past of LETS

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Last month I wrote about the Future of LETS. In order to understand the future, we might also have to turn around for once and look back at the history of LETS in New Zealand.

The idea of LETS migrated from Vancouver Island in Canada to London UK, and in 1984 it was brought to NZ by Vivian Hutchinson and David James. It was in 1986 when the first Green Dollar system on NZ soil was finally established in Whangarei. A major television report on this scheme by TVNZ helped greatly to spread the idea around the country.

All this happened during the times of Rogernomics and Ruthanasia, when both economic and social policy were put on their heads and aligned with neo-liberal ideology. The result of those policy changes, in combination with the 1987 stockmarket crash, was a jump in unemployment, increased poverty and hardship, and the experience of lower standards of living as well as quality of life by many. At that time LETS seemed to be a logical solution to the lack of New Zealand dollars amongst the poor in the communities.

There was a broad section of people, with a diversity of value systems and beliefs, who joined in setting up LETS. There was an extensive involvement of Christians and of church organisations in establishing systems. The idea of an alternative economy of course also appealed to many alternative minded people living 'alternative lifestyles' in 'alternative communities'. Other initiators of green dollar schemes were within movements and institutions committed to alleviating the plight of the unemployed. Another body of philosophy which motivated initiators was the ideas of social credit and monetary/financial reform. A characteristic common across all beliefs or motivations amongst green dollar initiators was the high number of women.

At this time Green Dollars were a saver for many, with thousands, if not millions of G\$ being traded through out the country in up to 60 systems. (There doesn't seem to be a definite number known, as some closed down before others started, and some never really went into proper operation.)

The reaction of government to this emerging new community economy wasn't clear-cut either. While the Department of Internal Affairs DIA seemed to mainly support it, the Department of Social Welfare DSW/WINZ took a much more controversial approach, often requiring beneficiaries to declare their G\$ incomes, deducting them from their benefit payments. On one hand government spent grant money on administering and supporting G\$ schemes, on the other hand it discouraged people to participate in it.

At around 1994/95, LETS seems to have been at it's strongest, and then started into a slow but steady decline. Several reasons are cited for this development:

- at that time, unemployment figures started gradually to decrease. People had much less time to participate in G\$ trading.
- Many exchanges run into software problems. The initial software was too limited in functionality or in the number of accounts it allowed opening. Some exchanges reverted to manual accounts, others invested in writing and developing their own software. In many cases account information was lost and/or the transition from one system to the next wasn't done properly. Not all exchanges kept accurate records of trading.
- Even though national conferences were held regularly, no national umbrella body ever emerged. This resulted in a lack of a strong voice that might have been able to influence national policy decisions, etc.

The social-liberal policies by the Labour Party government since 1999 have reversed many previous social policy changes, however the economic changes are still very much untouched. This results in a situation where homeownership is declining and the gap between the rich and the poor is further increasing (just to name two of many effects).

Some of the LETS have survived to the present day. The one that has most successfully done that is H.A.N.D.S. in Golden Bay. It has been mentioned that LETS very much depends on people having time to be engaged in an alternative economy cycle - being

unemployed – either by circumstance imposed, or by choice. Might it be that the success of H.A.N.D.S. is due to the alternative lifestyle culture that has been able to survive in Golden Bay, due to its geographic isolation and strong local identity?

We will be visiting Golden Bay for the 2006 South Island Regional Meeting. There we hope to find some answers to their success.

*Christoph Hensch*

*A lot of the information cited above was found in "Helping ourselves: New Zealand's Green Dollar Exchanges", an ANZAC Fellowship Report by Mark Jackson (La Trobe University, Bendigo, Vic. Australia), 1993.*

All of you are invited to contribute to this newsletter. If there isn't any news from your exchange we would love to hear from you. Please send contributions to <[cmhensch@gmx.net](mailto:cmhensch@gmx.net)> before the 14<sup>th</sup> of every month! Thanks!

The Editor

## **CES: Recommending a trading partner**

Are you happy with a particular trade? Do you want to know if others before you have been happy? There is a way of giving feedback about a particular trader.

How does one go about it?

1. On the main menu page after login, go to the top bar where it says 'Members'
2. Click on it and then choose the member from the menu that comes up.
3. On the 'Members Details' screen, go to the option 'View Recommendations' in the bottom part
4. There you see the recommendation other have given, and there is a button 'Give Recommendation'. Click on it and fire away!

## **Letters to the editor**

### **The Future of LETS:**

The question seems to be like a stuck record - 'how to get new members'. From my long experience in many things, IF YOU LOOK AFTER YOUR EXISTING MEMBERS PROPERLY, it will grow without any fuss and bother. This seems to me to be the same as a family looking after each other and then it attracts others, and when you are secure you are more likely to embrace others. Unless this is addressed, a group becomes like a dysfunctional family.

Barbara McPhillips

## **Upcoming Events**

22-24 Sept: S.I. Regional Meeting, Golden Bay

23 Sept: HANDS market

11 Oct: Canterbury Community Dollar Market at Waltham School, Chch

28 Oct: Taranaki LETS market

*(If you like to have your events listed, please inform the editor of the NEWS.)*

## **Inter-trading Balances**

All inter-trading balances are now available online on CES. Please consult the 'Group Balance' report.

### Exchanges that need to buy (as of 14 September):

WEST Westcoast:	+2,421.90 (y)
TATS Timaru:	+2,348.40 (y)
WAIS Wairarapa:	+2,198.40 (y)
MOSS Motueka:	+1,802.45 (y)
TSCT Taranaki LETS:	+1,712.30 (n)
IBES Invercargill:	+764.71 (y)
WINGS Blenheim:	+288.75 (y)

### Exchanges that need to sell (as of 14 September):

Thames GDE:	-4,074.90 (n)
REBS Wanganui:	-2,969.99 (y)
PLEBS Christchurch:	-896.95 (y)
H.A.N.D.S. Golden Bay:	-933.45 (y)
WTE Wellington:	-350.90 --

### Exchanges that haven't traded (as of 14 September):

WEBS Wanaka	(y)
NZCE NZ Community Exchange	--

*(y' and 'n' refers to who has paid yearly sub to LCNZ)*