

BEFORE THE REGULATORY COMMITTEE OF WAIPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991 (Act)

AND

IN THE MATTER of an application to the Waipa District Council by Festival One Ltd for resource consent under section 88 of the Act to establish and operate an annual temporary event (Christian music festival) in the Rural Zone at 209 Whitehall Road, Karapiro

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF GRAHAM BURT
ON BEHALF OF THE APPLICANT**

(Applicant Evidence)

Dated: 27 AUGUST 2021

INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Graham Burt. I am a Director of Festival One Ltd, a registered charitable entity part of the Summer Festival Charitable Trust (CC51163). I am also President of Laidlaw College Inc and Chair of The Laidlaw College Foundation. I am a trustee of Wilberforce Foundation.

2. I have been a touring musician in NZ and around the world in days gone by, playing keyboards. I have been musical director for three Christmas Specials on TNVZ and have a song in the movie Devil's Advocate starring Al Pacino and Keanu Reeves. I sold the movie rights to Warner Bros for the Lonely Dog collection of art and sculpture. I have been a senior executive and strategic planner at various Advertising Agencies including Saatchi & Saatchi and Ogilvie.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

3. My evidence will cover:
 - (a) Background to the current application - history and experience of running music festivals;

 - (b) Why Hartford Farm is such a great location - size, topography, natural setting, distance from others, long driveway, permanent storage on site;

 - (c) Social and spiritual benefits of Festival;

 - (d) Relationship with, and approval from, Tangata Whenua; and

 - (e) Management of the event to address issues of concern raised in submissions, including track record of having successfully done this before.

BACKGROUND

4. Festival One Ltd has been in existence since May 2014. It has run 7 Festivals, one per year, occurring on the long weekend of Auckland Anniversary Weekend. Its genesis is simple. A charitable trust of which I am part was the single largest donor to an event called Parachute Music Festival, latterly held at

Mystery Creek. It had run for 24 years on the same long weekend. We clearly thought the event was important to be supporting it significantly. When the organisers suddenly decided to stop Parachute having essentially gotten tired and lost passion for it, we as a trust thought that the event itself, with a little modification was still a very necessary and worthwhile endeavour, and with Parachute's support, IP, and a lot of their crew, started Festival One.

5. Festival One would have been impossible without this continuity of institutional knowledge and volunteer base. Our core management team has members that have been doing this event, in its two forms, for over 25 years. This is invaluable for running an efficient, no surprises event. This depth of experience delivers in a variety of ways. For instance:

(a) We have outstanding audio monitoring systems in place, planned and run over the years by Lindsay Hannah. The system is so good that Mystery Creek used the Parachute audio data for their own successful Resource Consent application to Waipa District Council. Festival One has never once exceeded its permitted noise levels.

(b) Our rubbish systems are seamless, and we leave the site better than we found it.

(c) Our security expertise means that police presence had steadily diminished down to zero attendance other than occasional visits. When I asked why, I was told "we resource where it is needed". As we have contemplated the move to Hartford we have worked more closely with the local police team and they have attended festival over the last two years to gain a deeper insight into how we operate and enable them to advise us effectively. This will be ongoing.

(d) Our internal communications systems are multi-channel, split by management areas, and with clear layers of upward migration should it be necessary.

(e) Our toddlers and kids programmes, along with other specified areas that might have contact with children in their wider activities – e.g. photography and video teams - are all police vetted and we are stepping this up even more.

- (f) And on and on. It is hard to compress this depth of experience into a few words. In short, this depth of institutional knowledge and constant refinement and iteration results in us have been able to run a trouble-free event year after year. This is a highly skilled and knowledgeable team.
6. We decided to make three changes to ethos of Parachute. Firstly, we wanted Festival One to be more family friendly, and not dominated by heaving masses of teenagers. We have kept the numbers smaller. Parachute peaked at 22,000. We do not want to get anywhere near there, and you can see our application is for a maximum of 10,000 guests. This is to retain a family friendly feel where children can roam relatively “free range”.
 7. Secondly we concentrated on a specific design aspect of the Festival - both in promotion and on-site set design - making the festival rustic and homely. This is instrumental in setting a family friendly tone. We use the design of the on-site layout to intermingle things - camping is scattered through the areas, and provided a lot more spaces for stopping and chilling.
 8. Thirdly we wanted to increase the opportunity for spiritual reflection and stillness. It is fascinating how at a festival that everyone imagines is busy and frenetic there can still be genuine stillness. The whole site stops for lunch and dinner to retain the rhythms of the day, and to give those who wander around the chance to return to base and fall in a heap. This peaks with the use of our amazing self-designed huge fire grills to BBQ two tons of donated quality sirloin on Saturday night and give it away, with some salad greens, for free! There’s nothing that brings people together in a good way like a free feed! Conversations start. New people are met. The site slows down, the sun sets with everyone sitting around and eating, enjoying each other’s company and reconnecting with the world around them. At this point we are more whanau than festival! We also provide contemplative and spiritual places - a chapel, a sanctuary - where those overwhelmed can find a place to pause and reflect. It will be awesome to be able to curate such spaces where the creation is already wonderfully vibrant and pleasant and where we just decorate it - if at all!

WHY HARTFORD FARM?

9. As you can see from the above, Festival One is not the typical stereotype

Festival that most people imagine. We are drug and alcohol free, family friendly, inter-generational, and with a strong emphasis on catering for those with disabilities. In other words, a living, breathing representation of what it would look like if a whole lot of the churches in New Zealand got together for a great big celebration. Camping together looks more like a series of family holiday set ups. At the *One Arena*, the biggest stage, sure there is a mosh pit at the front with teenagers singing and jumping around, but many of their parents are further back in collapsible chairs and having just as much fun. Their toddlers are at the Toddlers Programme, their children are at the Kids Programme, and after we all stop for lunch and re-group, the seminars will kick off and the young fry will hit the skate park, the climbing wall, and the giant jenga until they get too hot and need water. At this point we lost about a third of the Parachute Festival guests who got in their cars and left the shadeless industrial wasteland of Mystery Creek to go somewhere, anywhere, and cool down. Babies and toddlers were crying with heat. Each year we lost about 10 families on the first afternoon largely from their babies not being able to handle the heat and find shade.

10. This is where the ethos of Mystery Creek and Festival One parts company. Mystery Creek is essentially a renter of flat land to as many Fieldays vendors as possible. As a result, in our time, they have continued the process of contouring the land to be completely flat, removing a pond and plantings, chopping down all the large trees that provided shade apart from those around the historic village, and steadily removing buildings. This meets their objective of maximum rentable real estate. This has made the Mystery Creek site hotter, with far less shade, and as our team describe it “an industrial wasteland”. A park it is not!
11. Our build team work themselves to exhaustion converting the space to be the beautiful, peaceful place that Festival One is known to be. However, we simply cannot overcome the heat. As a consequence, we had been looking to buy a property, a farm, for around 4 years. We’ve reviewed around 26 different options, none of them quite right or working out. When the Gardiner family offered us the use of Hartford Farm it blew our minds. Having done so many reviews we quickly realised that it ticked all the boxes and here we are.

BENEFITS/DIFFERENCES

12. Hartford Farm has a long drive in. This is perfect for traffic control. We have used

Mystery Creek's long drive to successfully avoid ever having any queues on the road and will be able to do the same at Hartford Farm. Our team is skilled at both planning and on the fly adjustment as needed. The long drive in also means that Festival is largely hidden from view from the road and so creates minimal impact.

13. Hartford Farm has less impacted neighbours than Mystery Creek, with forestry owned by the Gardiner Family Trust to the west, a quarry to the north and the other neighbours tucked away behind folds of land or trees. This is important also from a sound point of view as is clear in Lindsay Hannah's report and evidence.
14. As regards size, the flat useable land is virtually the same size as Mystery Creek. That takes many people by surprise and is again one of Hartford Farm's attractions for us. Where Mystery Creek looks like a vast flat area, Hartford Farm, at the same size looks considerably smaller because it is a series of beautiful fingers, punctuated by Significant Natural Areas with beautiful vegetation, and surrounded by forestry and the creek.
15. A topographical feature that we were not expecting is the natural amphitheatre that allows us to install a temporary stage and point it at a gently rising grassy bank, with tall gum trees to the east. What is currently a silage pit will become, with a little imagination, a fancy entrance way.
16. Having a site of our own also means that we can have permanent storage on site in the yard and in the proposed shed. We have designed all our set-up to be flat packed and stored in containers. We will have considerably less truck movements being able to store on site.

SPIRITUAL

17. However, ticking the logistical boxes, whilst very necessary, is not the main thing. We have been looking for a place that allows our guests to more readily connect with nature, with what we call creation. A place where we can curate an event that allows for the still points, the lying on your back and gazing at stars type of occasions. Yes, you can do that at home, but it is more impactful, for whatever reason at the beach, or in a beautiful piece of nature. Hartford Farm, which when we first looked at it was a completely run down, blackberry

infested, unfenced, disused runoff, has with a lot of care and investment from its owners become a truly beautiful place. My team cannot wait to get there and “decorate” the place! We have 7 kilometres of festoons that will be strung in the kanuka. Bunting on bamboo poles waving in the breeze. We are looking forward to decorating rather constructing, and having a place that we can call home and improve year on year, to enable our guests to have a deeply moving spiritual time.

18. When I asked Mark Gardiner why he was offering us this place he said very simply, “I have multiple farms and I farm them for maximum output. I want Hartford Farm to be farm park that is dedicated to the glory of God.” At this point the farm was a total mess, but we could see his vision, and the family have been progressively achieving it. We are looking forward to being part of furthering that dream by bringing thousands of largely city folk to an actual farm and giving them an experience that is a curated blend of a stunning piece of property and the festival vibe described above, celebrating our faith as Christians embedded in the creation of the Creator.

19. An allegory if I may. I am the President of Laidlaw College, New Zealand’s largest theological college. When the Christchurch earthquake occurred, I was instantly concerned for our staff and students at the Christchurch campus. Thankfully they were all safe. The next day as aftershocks arrived and the horror of the CTV building continued to unfold, I wondered what I would most be looking for if I was in Christchurch. I rang Victoria the Anglican Bishop and a few other friends and suggested that they organise churches to the north, south, east and west where people who needed time out could go, sit in a sacred space and find peace. Be offered a cup of tea and biscuit, a chat if they wanted, or just be left in silence. I then used my contacts in the media to get the message out. It was well used. Hartford Farm is a beautiful property that offers us the opportunity to curate a temporary sacred space, working with the outstanding bone structure that is already there.

SOCIAL

20. Saying you are an inter-generational, drug and alcohol free event is one thing. Being that is another. When endeavouring to create a defined difference to other festivals, two things kept coming to mind. Extravagant generosity and taking care of those who struggle.

21. The extravagant generosity appears in many ways. One is the barbequing and giving away of 2 tonnes of export quality sirloin and salad on Saturday night. It is much harder to be a “yahoo” when you are being the recipient of extravagant generosity. A story I love is of one of the cook team, a huge Argentinian guy, sweating away in the heat of the fires and using meat hooks to turn the whole sirloins. Close the front of the queue, and behind this guy’s back, were couple of young boys talking up a huge game. “How much do you want?” “Oh I dunno, a big slice.” “Mate, I think I’m good for a whole one.” “No way!” “Yeah, I’d do a whole one no sweat!” Whereupon, without a word the huge cook hooked a fully cooked whole sirloin, turned and without any expression dumped into their surprised hands. That story has become Festival One legend. Extravagant generosity.

22. We have also concentrated on caring exquisitely for those with disabilities. The Soul Lounge is a space dedicated to those with mental and physical disabilities. Last festival there were 62 who attended - severe autism, vision impaired and blind, deaf, wheelchair bound, severe medical complications. We provide fridges for medicines, a sensory deprivation space for those who need deep time out, bean bags to get out of wheelchairs, charging stations for mobility devices, 4 hospital beds for those who need deep care in between forays into the festival, dedicated, elevated space next to the sound desks for wheelchairs and any others from Soul Lounge, roped off areas when we are running the huge Ceilidh so there is a safe space to participate, often two or three steps behind everyone else but huge fun anyway. It’s unbelievable to see the joy in this community as their wheelchairs and mobility scooters, lack of vision or timidity, prove no barrier to throwing themselves into wild Irish dancing along with everyone else.

23. We have been privileged to recently receive not only the category award but the overall award for the People’s Choice Disability Access Awards, presented by the Honourable Carmel Sepuloni. We are thrilled that our efforts are not only serving the disability community but being recognised.

24. Aside from the huge benefit this is to the disabled community - to have a multi-day residential festival that is safe enough for them to attend - there is an unexpected benefit for the festival as a whole. It’s harder to be a “yahoo” when you are constantly bumping into people whose circumstances are far more

complicated than your own. What in fact happens is that everyone helps everyone else.

25. We are not aware of a multi-day residential event that is quite like this anywhere else in New Zealand. We believe it is modelling a version of society that is increasingly important, especially in these more challenging COVID times. This has immeasurable and lasting social impact.

TANGATA WHENUA

26. We are blessed to enjoy a very close relationship with Ngāti Hauā. One of our board members is Ngāti Hauā as is our Festival One Kaumātua. We have held meetings and times of prayer on Rukumoana Marae. Wiremu Tāmihana, founder of the Marae, lived by the principles of Te Whakapono, Te Ture, Te Aroho. Be steadfast in faith in God, uphold the rule of law, show love and compassion to all.
27. It is an incredibly deep privilege to have been gifted this relationship. Sonny and Pam Karena have travelled with us throughout our journey towards Hartford Farm. They have welcomed us onto Hartford Farm, given us their blessing and invited us, on behalf of their ancestor, to continue the work. It was a privilege to have Sonny along with Paul Samuels to escort us to a wider meeting of Tainui around matters of resource consent, and for Sonny to introduce us in part by making it clear that we had come to Tainui first, before approaching Council. We are delighted to have their blessing. Every festival a team from Ngāti Hauā arrive on the Thursday night and run a powhiri for our 700 volunteers, blessing us, inviting us onto their whenua, and asking us to carry on the mission of their ancestor for the duration of the Festival. This year at our opening event on the Friday night we were thrilled to have Ngāti Hauā provide a powhiri for the whole of Festival One, a deeply moving experience for everyone as we became inserted into this long tradition of Christian service. On Monday evening, as Festival One ends and only pack down crew remain, we get together again for a poroporoaki, report back, tell stories, give thanks to God and hand back the temporary gift of the use of the whenua. Again, a deeply spiritual time for us all.
28. We provide, through various means free festival passes for a number of Ngāti Hauā youth and young adults. We recognised a need to provided camping equipment as well and now supply a number of tents, mattresses, stretchers

and sleeping bags, making it easier to stay overnight. Ngāti Hauā send us a big group of their youth on Monday and Tuesday to help us with pack down when we are at our lowest ebb.

MANAGEMENT OF THE EVENT

29. We have a highly skilled and knowledgeable team. We have run a large event without incident for 7 years. We are skilled all the micro tasks that build a large event, rubbish, traffic control, people movement, security, COVID tracking, first aid, catering, water supply, sanitation and onwards. We will leave no rubbish behind. Our Health & Safety consultants, All About People, were also hired to be H&S for the America's Cup, a complex mix of onshore and offshore needs. Their iterative processes form a central part of our working and management. We already have a set of processes in place whereby we provide neighbours with advance information about the festival, a contact phone number dedicated to them, and a process for reviewing after each festival. This is standard procedure for us. We are dedicated to running an event that while it is of size, is of minimal impact. Any areas to improve we welcome.
30. Having said that, the reality is that I guarantee we will do a better job year two at Hartford Farm than year one. And year three better than year two. While we will consider every eventuality, something will surprise us. We have a skilled and adaptable team that will handle those, and it will not surprise us again.
31. We look forward to being on Hartford Farm and introducing people to its beauty and providing them with a time of fun and refreshment.

Dated this 27th day of August 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long, sweeping tail that curves upwards and to the right.

Graham Burt