

# New Zealand east coast forestry committed to strengthening industry resilience in region

## New technology adding value to raw material, revolutionising building practices

IN this second part of our interview with Philip Hope, chief executive of the Eastland Wood Council (EWC), he talks further about the issues facing the New Zealand forest industry on the East Coast (Tairāwhiti).

Mr Hope says the EWC is committed to improving the resilience of forestry in the region.

“Our members engage with and support parties that come forward with ideas for alternative uses of wood in Tairāwhiti,” he said.

“What we know is that at least 40% of logs harvested in New Zealand are used to meet domestic supply. But less than 10% of wood harvested in Tairāwhiti is processed locally for domestic use.

Why so little? It’s because there simply isn’t the demand – even when we include the timber mills located in Gisborne, Wairoa and Ruatoria.

Mr Hope says history shows us that a number of primary industry processors have left the region – a reflection of Tairāwhiti’s relatively remote location, issues of scale, and an imbalance between local and international demand.

**“VOLUMES NOT HUGE BUT THERE IS A GROWTH PLAN”**



1/ Recently installed mobile harbour cranes at Eastland Port.



2 Philip Hope... the council supports parties with ideas for alternative uses of wood in the region.

But he is encouraged by the opening last year in Gisborne of Wood Engineering Technology’s world-first plant, which produces laminated engineered wood planks that are 40% stronger than equivalent standard structural timber.

The new plant is the result of collaboration between regional leadership [Trust Tairāwhiti], private enterprise and government. “

It’s a good example of how industry in our region can add value to the raw material and revolutionise building practices,” Mr Hope said.

“While the volumes are not huge, there is a well-documented growth plan.”

Mr Hope adds that the

industry, which is transitioning from fossil fuels to wood chip, because customers don’t want to buy products that have coal involved in the production process.”

He notes that the recent infrastructure developments at Eastland Port (new mobile cranes and

the twin-berth project) now see the region in an improved position to respond to new opportunities – one being coastal shipping.

Mr Hope says EWC members are focused primarily on production forestry that can be sustainably harvested – but they acknowledge there are areas in Tairāwhiti that should be in permanent cover to combat soil erosion, reduce sediment loads and improve water quality.

“However, permanent carbon farming should not occur at the expense of sustainable production forestry ... which is an efficient means of sequestering carbon, while also bringing important economic and social benefits to our region,” he says.

He adds that the carbon-only market provides an opportunity to accelerate afforestation under defined conditions – but this should not include productive land. EWC is collaborating with other regional stakeholders

### ACROSS THE DITCH



With MICHAEL SMITH

forest industry has, for some time, been investigating new initiatives that support biodiversity goals – for example, fast pyrolysis, gasification, wood pellet manufacture and wood chipping.

“Tairāwhiti’s harvest residues could be used to run boilers, but we have no demand for process heat! By contrast, the bio-energy market in Otago and Southland is booming. One example is the dairy

# Woodworkers compete in Maker of the Year Awards

THE Maker of the Year Awards, which opened this week, encourage talented and innovative woodworkers from Australia, New Zealand and around the world to compete for a prize pool of \$23,000.

The awards, again sponsored by woodworking tools and machinery specialist Carbatec, will be showcased in the Australian Wood Review magazine in December.

A world category last year introduced a new perspective with a fifth of entries from the UK, USA, Europe and Asia.

Prizes this year include \$10,000 cash and \$10,000 in Carbatec gift vouchers.

Overall Maker of the Year winner in 2021 was the Bunyjul Occasional Table made from jarrah and rock maple by William Bayliss who joined Queanbeyan-based Dunstone Design as a teenager.

Carbatec has been a trusted



**William Bayliss with his winning Bunyjul occasional table in the 2021 Maker of the Year Awards.**

brand for woodworking enthusiasts and professionals across Australia and New Zealand since 1987. Co-sponsors include WoodSolutions and the American Hardwood Export Council.

The award entries close on September 5 and winners will be announced in December.

Contact Australian Wood Review on (02) 9281 2333.

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to finalise a position on permanent carbon farming. This extends to land use change, and is intended to inform policy settings.

Mr Hope acknowledges that EWC members and forestry industry stakeholders have faced significant challenges during the past year, which saw a 4% drop in export volumes.

But there is cause for optimism. After a longer-than-usual summer break for many contractors and crews, most have recommenced operations. There has been a small lift in log prices ... and with the smaller woodlot

owners restarting harvest operations, export volumes are on the increase.

“Right now, the biggest uncertainty is the impact of Covid as rates creep up in our community,” Mr Hope said.

“While the forest industry is working in accordance with robust protocols, the supply chain remains at risk – primarily from community transmission, which could happen at any time.

“Covid has the potential to see up to 30% of our workforce unwell and at home for a period of time. EWC’s key health message to the forestry workforce and their families is to remain vigilant and adhere to the guidelines.”

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