



Media Release
6 May 2021

New initiatives to address record building consents

Selwyn District Council is launching two innovative industry partnership programmes to keep up with record numbers of building consent applications.

The level of building consent applications has risen steeply in the past year, with record numbers of applications in February 2021 outstripped again in March as the district's rapid growth shows no signs of slowing.

March saw a massive 372 building consent applications submitted, and 264 in April.

This huge number of consents, along with a national shortage of building consent officers has created a backlog for the Council in processing consents, meaning average consent times are now over the 20 working day statutory timeframe. Demand for inspections is also exceeding the number of inspectors currently available.

The Council has hired three new consent staff and has been also working hard with the industry and with the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment on other ways to best manage the volume of consents.

This week the Council has met with industry professionals to launch a professional partnership programme which will help speed up some consents. Professionals, such as designers, builders, developers or building companies, will be able to apply to become Council's partners if they meet the criteria. Once they join the programme they will be able to have their consents fast-tracked as long as they meet, and continue to meet, certain criteria.

Council Building Manager Vanessa Mitchell says the new programme will place reliance on the skills and experience of Licenced Building Practitioners, standardise how information is presented and allow the Council to focus on higher risk elements of a building consent, such as site specific matters and weather tightness.

"We want to work with the industry, using the skills that are out there, with the people we know are already doing things right. It will reduce red tape where possible, speeding up the process while still allowing us to focus on risk areas of the consent, and continuing to support population growth in Selwyn."

The Council has also put together and is funding a training package to help train new building consent officers on the job.

The Council will hire six new trainee staff in July and support them through an intensive 28-week in-work training programme to bring them to a productive level quickly. Following this they will receive ongoing support to achieve a relevant qualification that is required for staff carrying out technical functions.

The proposal has been well received, with 28 applications for the six positions, including students and builders looking to retrain.

Mrs Mitchell says this training programme will have long-term benefits for the industry and the district, and the aim is to make it a regular pathway for people into work.

“There’s a national shortage of building consent officers, so we are positioning ourselves to support people into work and help our community.

Very few Councils have the capacity to run this sort of initiative, but we know as the fastest growing district in the country we need to be innovative and think differently to ensure we’re meeting the growth and keep serving our community well.”

In the meantime the Council is continuing to encourage people to be patient and plan ahead, allowing extra time when they apply for a building consent and throughout their build as supply chain issues are emerging.

For more information on the new initiatives and building consent process visit www.selwyn.govt.nz/buildingconsent.

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