

## The NOW Home is officially opened!



Over 100 invitees attended the official opening of the NOW Home on Friday 12 August at 3pm. Luckily the afternoon was sunny and warm as people gathered for afternoon tea at the marquee. Representatives from local and central government, industry, industry associations and media were invited to see the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Helen Clark officially open the Home.

After a welcome and blessing by local Kaumatua, Poata Northcroft, a waiata was sung by all in response. Andrew Reding, Chairman of Beacon Pathway, declared himself a capitalist suggesting that sustainability is not simply an ethical obligation but makes commercial sense for business. He acknowledged the vision of the Beacon consortium and welcomed guests and dignitaries. The Prime Minister gave an informative and insightful speech covering key aspects of sustainability in the built environment from a central government perspective, Beacon's roles and activities, and the need for her own villa to be sustainably retrofitted! Councillor Penny Hulse, representing Waitakere City Council, talked of the role of local government in promoting the sustainability of the residential built environment. Andrew and Penny both thanked the many people who have over the last several years made the NOW Home a reality including the design team, the collaboration team, Beacon board members, and General Manager Nick Collins.

After the speeches, the group made its way over to the NOW Home, where the Prime Minister cut the red ribbon into the property. Nick Collins then conducted the Prime Minister and her party on a tour of the Home, and she took the opportunity to meet the new tenants. Further tours around the house by groups of attendees were led by Chris Kane, Karen Bayne, Roman Jaques, Kimball Fink-Jensen, Katja Leitz, and Greg Burn. The house was furnished for the occasion, and both house and garden looked great. Displays by Beacon and shareholders were set up inside the house, and a Powerpoint display in the master bedroom showed pages from the NOW Home website.



Rt. Hon. Helen Clark cuts the ribbon to open the NOW Home

Both TV One and TV3 came out for media interviews during the day and both channels ran news features on the home in the evening and late night news. The event was covered by a variety of media including the New Zealand Herald, Local Government magazine, various industry magazines and local Waitakere media. Beacon hired a professional photographer, Craig Robertson, to take internal and external shots of the Now Home as well as cover the opening.

Overall it was a relaxed and enjoyable occasion – and a great way for the Beacon team to celebrate reaching this milestone.

## Blessing the NOW Home

At 6am on Friday 12 August, the morning of the NOW Home opening, a small group of colleagues from Waitakere and Beacon gathered in the rain for the traditional Maori blessing of the Home. Led by Warahi Paki (Manager Maori Issues, Waitakere City Council), and in conjunction with Waitakere kaumātua, Poata Northcroft and Mihi Te Huia, the group made its way to and through the house. The kaumātua led a series of karakia (prayers) followed by waiata, to support the rituals of powhiri in which the tangata whenua endowed the host of the NOW Home with words of welcome and support. This also allowed the tangata whenua to embellish words of support and comfort to those who were in attendance on a cold wet morning.

Warahi explained the great significance of the site to early Māori. The NOW Home is located on the banks of the Whau Creek, which was the route used to take waka between the Waitemata and Manukau Harbours. The waka were paddled as far as possible upstream before being dragged over ground and down into the neighbouring harbour.

Councillor Penny Hulse (Waitakere City Council) spoke of the Council's commitment to sustainability and recognised the vision and commitment of the Beacon Pathway team. Nick Collins, Beacon General Manager, traced the development and progress of the NOW Home from the seed of an idea originating in work done five years ago by Scion (formerly Forest Research).



At the dawn blessing. From left: Megan Howell (Waitakere City Council), Warahi Paki (Waitakere City Council), Robyn Scherer (Scion), Ann Smith (Landcare Research), Dai Bindoff (Waitakere City Council), Kaumatua Poata Northcroft.

## What's next?

### The next NOW Home

After all this work, you might think the team would be taking a rest, but no! ... planning for the next NOW Home is already underway.

Beacon has been working with Housing New Zealand to build a NOW Home in Fordlands, Rotorua. Other opportunities under evaluation include a home completely off the grid, and a home focused on the challenges of water shortages.

### Monitoring the NOW Home

Once the tenants are in the NOW Home the monitoring phase will commence. The challenge has been to gather the data on the performance of the house remotely. Because the NOW Home is designed as a real-world home, the intrusion of visible monitoring systems or people would be unacceptable as these would undermine the occupants' enjoyment of the NOW Home. This challenge has been met by BRANZ which has 30 years of experience in collecting data in real-world situations. Using cutting edge technology, the NOW Home monitoring system provides remotely accessible data, removing the need for regular data collection visits.

Data is being collected in the following areas:

- Space heating, including ventilation losses and efficiency of heating appliances.
- Indoor comfort, including air quality, humidity and air temperature.
- Mould risk, including occupants' behaviour and humidity.
- Lighting, including effectiveness and natural light.
- Water, including water end use for each tap and use of rainwater.
- Hot water, including usage, proportion heated by solar water heater, and heat loss in storage.
- Water quality
- Noise

For more information, visit the NOW Home website

[www.nowhome.co.nz](http://www.nowhome.co.nz)

## NOW Home has a family

It is not enough to design and build an affordable, sustainable house. The NOW Home researchers also need to see how well the design concept actually works when lived in by people going about their day to day lives.

So Beacon began the search for tenants to live in the home for two years during which time water and energy consumption, indoor temperature and air quality, and exterior wall moisture content will be monitored remotely.

Glover Real Estate, who will provide their property management services gratis for the two years, managed the tenancy selection process. They ran advertisements in the Weekend Herald and the Western Leader, and Waitakere City Council featured the search for tenants in their newsletter. Glovers received 240 responses in a single week.

Glovers then had the unenviable task of screening and interviewing prospective candidates. Applicants were narrowed down to 4 sets of tenants, who were interviewed in person by Beacon General Manager Nick Collins and Michelle Kaczor, Project Manager. Making the decision between the interviewees was very difficult, with such a high level of interest and understanding in the applicants.

The NOW Home tenants are Hayley and Joe Blair, a married couple with two young children aged 3 and 4. The Blairs heard about the NOW Home in an article in the Waitakere City Council newsletter and were excited about the concept being tested. With a strict budget in order to save for their own home, the anticipated low running costs of the NOW Home are very attractive. They already used long life and low energy light bulbs in their current house, having done the cost-benefit figures showing the savings. Another feature of interest for the family is the warmth and dryness of the house even on cold days. Both children suffer from asthma, and the warm, dry temperatures and reduced carpet areas are likely to have health benefits for the family. Hayley and Joe also admired the open plan feel and lightness of the living areas.

Our new NOW Home family was at the official opening ceremony on 12 August and met the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Helen Clark. The children already see it as 'their' house – one of the children was overheard at the opening asking "Mummy, why are all those people waiting to go into our house?"

Beacon will do everything it can to ensure life for the Blairs goes on as usual. Tours of the Home will be available to the public – but as virtual tours on the NOW Home website ([www.nowhome.co.nz](http://www.nowhome.co.nz))

We are thrilled to welcome Joe, Hayley, and their children to the house and hope they will be very comfortable living there.

The Blair family at the NOW Home opening



## Waitakere City open days attract hundreds

The public viewing of the NOW Home organised by Waitakere City Council was very successful. It is estimated that, over the weekend of the 20th and 21st of August, between 700 and 1000 people visited the NOW Home. People were generally very impressed, and quite often surprised at what could be achieved on a budget of \$180,000. People were very receptive to the fact that the house had a very 'normal' appearance and 'mainstream' appeal. Many visitors were pleased to hear that the house will be closely monitored over the next two years, and will watch the NOW Home website to see how this progresses. Waitakere City Council undertook a visitor survey, and these results will soon be compiled and distributed.