

Huntly Community Board, proposal for dealing with graffiti January 2020, prepared by David Whyte

Note: The use of the word graffiti to be taken synonymous with tagging, where possible tagging will be used to describe this. Where large, planned, art like murals are painted with the owner of the walls permission, the term graffiti art is used.

Obviously Huntly is not the first, nor will it be the last, community to deal with tagging. Hastings Council commissioned a report, part of which was reviewing what was known about tagging from studies and other council areas. They stated that (emphasis mine):

Tagging and graffiti vandalism is widely recognised by non-graffiti vandals (the wider community) as a negative aspect within neighbourhoods. The wider community relate graffiti vandalism to crime, disorder and neighbourhood deterioration, (among other negative perceptions). Those who tag have a different view and use graffiti vandalism as a form of expression, a way to become part of environments in which they feel excluded, and a form of contributing to a particular community they identify with.

These opposing views between graffiti vandal offenders and the wider community are developed and maintained by both parties. The wider community are often unable to understand or empathise with graffiti culture, and graffiti vandal offenders maintain their identity through a behaviour which is viewed by the majority of the non-tagging community as antisocial. This perception of antisocial behaviour is in itself one of the core reasons for the act of tagging itself, rebellion

The report went on to discuss strategies that had worked, or not, in other areas “It appears the most successful approaches involve:

- A coordinated prevention and treatment approach
- Rapid removal of graffiti vandalism (less than 24hours since it was placed)
- The use of professional murals to deter tagging
- Incorporating graffiti resistant urban design features and surfaces into public spaces

The least effective strategies included:

- Additional surveillance (may act as an additional challenge for graffiti vandal offenders)
- Additional police enforcement (tagging is comparatively a low priority for the police, is difficult to capture and prosecute individuals, and has very low consequences for individuals)”

Thus the Huntly Community Board (HCB) would seek to copy the above four successful parts of tagging control.

1) Co-ordinated preventative and treatment + 2) Rapid removal <24 hours.

The current system is that if it is on private property / not council property it is the responsibility of the land owner / lease holder. And if it is on council property then a CRM is raised.

The report tabled in the last meeting, showed that in summary WDC contractors are not painting out graffiti at all. To re-cap that report, 3 CRM's 5 locations, time since CRM raised without any action, 8 weeks – 18 weeks. Since that report, The team leader for roading directly asked the contractors directly to paint out one of these areas of graffiti ‘ASAP’. That was the week before Christmas, and in the first week of February it still has not happened.

So we can conclude that WDC systems for dealing with graffiti are totally ineffective and until further notice should be considered non-operational until proven otherwise.

Therefore how does the HCB setup an alternative system. Red has been working hard on this. So far:

Paint. Obviously paint is critical for painting out graffiti. Also paint the same, or as close to the same colour as the rest of the wall would be highly preferable, otherwise you end up with a mishmash of colours which can look ugly.

Red has talked to the local business man, Justin Marns (Mahon?). Justin is prepared to mix up paint to the appropriate shade/colour match and do this at cost (cost+?) and to undertake painting at a discounted rate.

Paint for painting over, is also available at the waste transfer station. This is paint that is dropped off at this location for disposal. Members of HCB may want to give this to members of the public who lack the money to buy paint, but would like their fence / local environment graffiti free.

Red has also talked Darrell who owns the buildings on SH1 north of the mainstreet / just before Sweetmans. Darrell has agreed to donate paint which enables graffiti to be washed off with water (is that true?)

Payment. Business appreciate the desire for a tag free environment. However they have more pressing issues to deal with, than the hassle of sourcing paint and equipment, doing the job and then needing to do it regularly. Thus if we can provide a solution that is inexpensive, and simple, it is highly likely to be appreciated.

All of the shop owners (the business owners, or building owners?) approached to date have agreed that they would be prepared to pay a donation / part cost to have their walls painted out. A tiered approach of \$100/\$50/\$30 for first, second and thereafter could be levied.

There is the opportunity to use discretionary fund to run a trial. To move the project forward a \$1000 for a pilot, would create some action, and also give details on how far \$1000 goes. If the board thinks that the \$1000 was a worthwhile investment, then WDC could be approached to fund this service.

Moving forward propose the following

Approve \$1 000 for a pilot trial to see how far this lists / how much graffiti gets painted out.

Challenges that need to be worked through:

- How does the painter be informed. If it is through council job number, do we allow council surfaces to be painted by the local business folk? Or should this be only non council surfaces
- Issue of H & S, given the vast volume of paperwork required to become a council contractor, how do we make sure this pilot program side steps this?
- How do we deal with train tracks, given the H & S issues around this? (ie brown painted fence along side train tracks at northern part of town).
- How do we get donations / part payments from business owners? Should this go direct to the painter?
- What reporting / paperwork do we require from the painter to release the funds? Ie number of tags removed?
- What would be consider a success for this pilot?
- And no doubt some other challenges not listed in this document.

Some thing to consider is making this trial small in geographical location ie mainstreet area, or main thoroughfares or some other geographical limitations.

3) Murals. There are already folks in the Huntly community who have the skill set to design and implement street art / graffiti art murals. Furthermore they also have the relational connections that enable community buy in, and through this, almost eliminate tagging on these murals. Another advantage is that through this community engagement hopefully the tagging fraternity will have a level of buy in, and thus hopefully reduce their needs for tagging.

The main bottle neck for these folks is cash. Spray paint is expensive, and a large colourful mural needs both the colours and the volume of paint.

It would be wise of the HCB to have a policy around these murals. So a suggested policy is outlined below:

Guidelines for murals funded by the Huntly Community Board

- Permission (written?) must be obtained from the owner of the wall / structure
- Focus should be on highly visible areas that are regularly tagged
- No offensive murals or ones that have: gang signs/words, swearing, objectionable images or other such things
- All spray cans must be accounted for at the end of the project, this includes empty can so they can be disposed off appropriately.
- Development of ideas as well as implementation should be done as much as possible with the local community and local youth

Moving forward propose the following

Accept these guidelines as Huntly Community Boards guidelines for mural creation.

Approve \$1 000 for a pilot trial to see how how many murals are created, and if the murals reduce graffiti offending on these surfaces.

4) Graffiti resistant design. This is the one that HCB has less direct control over, since WDC or local business / building owners employee designers. These designers may or many not be, experts in designing for minimization of tagging. Hence HCB will attempt to ask questions of any designs that will be consulted upon / in the public space, if they have considered tagging and tagging minimization as part of the design.

There are many resources online about graffiti resistant design. A theme that runs through some of these is the usage of plants to reduce tagging. For example covering of the wall with a thin creeper, thin so it can't be used to climb up. Planting thorny plants in front of access points, or planting fast growing plants to cover the walls.

Another theme is lighting, and effective lighting. It is noted that the gardening lighting that was installed in the main-street is no longer functioning (two out of all the garden lights are in operation).