

## Marlborough Environment Awards Judges' Feedback, Innovation/Efficiency

### Sound environmental management is good business



**Entrant name and location** Marlborough Heating and Plumbing;  
Energy Solutions, PO Box 5140  
Springlands, Blenheim

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**Owner/Person interviewed** Nikki and Rob Marshall

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**Description** An interesting mix of technical advice and expertise on heating, plumbing and energy efficiency issues from Marlborough Heating and Plumbing (mainly run by Rob), and crusading on energy efficiency, environmental issues and related subjects by Energy Solutions (mainly run by Nikki).

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**Judges** Lynda Neame, Ian Shapcott and Janet Steggle, 14.1.2009

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**Award(s) considered for** Innovation and efficiency

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### Overall impression

Both Rob and Nikki are clearly passionate about providing customers with the most energy efficient answer both for new building projects and for retro-fitting in older houses. One of their aims is for both companies to be amongst the most eco-friendly in the Top of the South.

Nikki, in particular, has a very strong belief in the issues, and is very much involved in trying to get the message out to people in Marlborough that using energy efficiently is of benefit in many ways including financially, environmentally and by providing a better standard of living. She is also keen to stress the national benefits to New Zealand of better use of energy.



## **Background**

### **TECHNICAL ASPECTS**

Marlborough Plumbing and Heating provides various products:-

- solar water heating
- hot water cylinder jackets
- central heating systems
- plumbing design and fit for new builds
- plumbing repairs and improvement for older houses
- hot water cylinders which incorporate "future-proofing"
- advice on grants for solar heating

Energy Solutions also provides a range of products:-

- roof insulation of various types with different environmental and technical specifications
- underfloor insulation
- low water usage showers
- water tanks
- home energy audits
- advice on energy usage in the home
- Home Energy Rating Scheme capability

## Positives

Rob and Nikki clearly know a lot about all that they sell, and are happy to discuss the products in detail with customers. For example, they sell roof insulation made from wool, which is very eco-friendly in its manufacture and absorbs pollutants such as those emanating from wood, but needs further treatment to meet building code fire-resistance. An alternative product is made from polyester, recycled plastic, which needs no further treatment but does not have all the positive aspects of the wool product. Both products are made in a range of R values to meet the customers' needs and Rob and Nikki's advice (the R value is a measure of the insulating capability of a material).

Currently most of their business comes direct from customers rather than from architects; many customers know exactly what they want, and are delighted to find that Rob and Nikki can provide it. Much of the business for central heating and insulation currently comes from British and European immigrants who are used to living in warm and comfortable homes. However, Rob and Nikki have recently noticed that more architects are approaching them early in a project's design, and asking for their input and advice on energy efficiency, heating and plumbing.

## CRUSADING ASPECTS

Nikki has been the driving force behind Energy Solutions. Her belief in, and knowledge of, the subject and her determination are admirable, and she is very obviously passionate about trying to inform Marlburians about energy efficiency and related issues. Some of the things that she has done to achieve this are:-

- sending a member of staff on a nationally-approved training course for the Home Energy Rating System
- giving out information about grants that are available from the Government for solar heating and insulation
- trying to bring these issues to the attention of Marlborough District Council and other local organisations
- keeping in close touch with developments via the internet
- attending conferences and courses both in NZ and overseas
- writing articles for the local paper and keeping in touch with the paper on the issues
- local and national publicity through the "Green Crusader" (a Superman type of character dressed in green) which was featured in national plumbing magazines.

Rob and Nikki are trying to bring architects and trades-people into these aspects of design by:-

- organising seminars for architects
- organising separate seminars for builders
- discussing energy efficiency with local estate agents to try to make it an important factor in house marketing
- the use of home energy audits in selling and buying houses

They emphasise that they are looking at the whole picture of energy efficiency in Marlborough, and include issues such as -

- climate change
- the health benefits from warmer, drier homes
- reducing energy consumption and so minimising the need for building additional power generation in NZ
- reducing the use of water in the home

### **Comment**

Rob and Nikki admit that they have been constantly pushing against closed doors on these issues in Marlborough, and are saddened at the low level of support for the issues here and at the lack of knowledge and interest amongst many Marlburians. They do not know why this should be so and are hoping for a change in attitude in the near future.

### **Suggestion**

Possibly getting involved with the Council, with local builders and with governmental agencies such as the EECA will help Rob and Nikki gain traction for their ideas in Marlborough. As energy prices will probably increase substantially in the future, the economics of efficient use of energy will finally become obvious to people everywhere. I know Nikki feels despondent about not being able to influence Marlborough - perhaps publicity from entering the Awards will be of great benefit to them - let's hope so!