



18 May, 2009

**'SECRET AGENTS' STORM NEW ECO-RECORD AND PLANT A 22,400-TREE FOREST IN A DAY ON MOTUIHE ISLAND**

A spy-style movement for social change scored a huge success on Saturday with a mammoth tree-planting rally on Auckland's Motuihe Island, setting a new national record.

Stepping out from behind its veil of secrecy, The N.O (The Nikolai Organisation) teamed up with the Department of Conservation and the Motuihe Trust to muster 350 'agents' with the aim of creating a forest from scratch in just a day.

The target for the day was 10,000 trees but astonishingly, The N.O 'agents' planted 22,400 trees in just a matter of hours.

Motuihe Trust Chairman John Laurence said: "Our target is to plant 55,000 trees this winter, from seeds collected and grown by Motuihe volunteers. Saturday's amazing achievement means we've planted 40 per cent of our 2009 planting programme in one day - that's a fantastic way to start the season.

"The N.O's effort in breaking the national record shows everyone can be involved in restoring and enhancing New Zealand's natural biodiversity. We're particularly delighted as the tree-planting rally comes shortly after the release of 14 young Kiwi from Kapiti Island, off the lower North Island, onto Motuihe only last month, so it's been a very productive few weeks."

The N.O, which has captured the imagination of young urban New Zealanders, is rapidly becoming a homegrown social networking success story. It aims to bring about positive change on a grand scale. The N.O. is a covert organisation which provides social benefits to its 4000+ members - combining escapism and networking with the aim of positively shaking up the existing order. The Motuihe mission is the largest altruistic initiative The N.O has attempted to date.

Hadleigh Averill, whose company The Agent C is helping co-ordinate The N.O, explained: "We're here to see big ideas take shape and have fun. Our members bring great energy, imagination and commitment to everything they do. They're a terrific Kiwi 'can-do' resource which we're harnessing for this project.

"We saw an opportunity here to help a great cause, and set a record which we did emphatically - the previous record was around 5,500 trees planted on Motutapu Island in 1996 by 219 volunteers."

**Media information: Claire McKay, Dialogue PR: 021 869 974**



**Note to editors:**

**The Motuihe Trust**

Motuihe has held a special place in the lives of generations of Aucklanders. Its stunning beaches and sheltered bays, set in a rural context only 15km from downtown Auckland, has made it a popular day trip for private boat owners and visitors arriving by ferry.

The Motuihe Trust was formed in the year 2000 by a group of people with links to organisations in the Auckland Region involved in environmental education, outdoor recreational pursuits, boating, and conservation. Its mission is to:

*"... restore, enhance and protect the indigenous flora and fauna and the significant Maori and historic sites of Motuihe Island in consultation with stakeholders. Members of the community will be provided with opportunities to participate in the restoration and maintenance of Motuihe Island. The Trust will promote the island as a visitor destination for interpreted conservation, heritage and educational experience, and will undertake commercial arrangements on the Island, which support the Trust vision, to ensure the ongoing financial viability of the island."*

Motuihe will continue to be a recreation reserve administered by the Department of Conservation for all New Zealanders. However, it is anticipated that the enthusiastic involvement of the Motuihe Trust in partnership with the Department of Conservation, iwi and the wider community, will enhance the traditional recreational appeal of Motuihe whilst restoring its biodiversity and bringing its cultural and historical heritage to life.



## **The N.O**

The N.O (The Nikolai Organisation) is a covert organisation which provides social benefits to its members. Combining escapism and networking with the aim of bringing about positive social change, it has become something of a homegrown social networking success story. The Motuihe mission is the largest altruistic initiative The N.O has attempted to date.

The N.O evolved from a hugely successful 2007 social networking campaign, sponsored by Smirnoff, which became a huge hit with New Zealanders, taking on a life of its own.

It began with a viral campaign to attract secret agents to an espionage organisation started by elusive Russian aristocrat Nikolai. Within months more than 3,000 New Zealanders were undertaking a wide range of secret missions. Their aim was to gather points and win a coveted place at an elite agent underworld gathering.

All agents were tasked with executing covert spy-like missions, some of which saw Nikolai's emblem appear in many high profile places. Beamed onto the walls of Parliament Buildings, placed over the heads of statues and shone from the rooftops of the Auckland CBD, the emblem was carried onto the streets of New Zealand in a staggering array of enterprising and imaginative exploits.

The espionage organisation was driven via a website, with continuous contact maintained with agents through SMS, secret mail drops, chalk messages on pavements and a variety of other communication methods.

Smirnoff was never identified during the campaign, until the final event, but many secret agents rose to the intellectual challenge and worked out the link.

Lion Nathan, which markets Smirnoff in New Zealand, was astounded at how passionate followers became with the underworld concept and the imagination and determination they showed in achieving their missions.

Many members lobbied for the fun to continue after the campaign was over - hence the birth of The N.O. The goodwill and energy of members continues to be harnessed in an evolving way, with the focus in 2009 being to rally together agents and new recruits to create positive change.

[www.theno.org.nz](http://www.theno.org.nz)