



preserving an ISLAND



Opposite below: A seal watches visitors with interest. Left: Shags group together on the island. Above: Inside the abandoned Dog Island lighthouse keepers home.

There are so many opportunities for the island, it is predator free, it has rich historic and cultural relevance to Southland and it deserves to be protected and enhanced."

The project is still in its infancy yet has attracted interest from many, including patron of the island Marcus Lush, who is passionate about protecting the significant infrastructure and stories in the

south. Prime Minister John Key has also congratulated the trust on their initiative and local National MP Sarah Dowie has been quick to roll up her sleeves and get involved, holding the position of Deputy Chair of the Trust.

"I jumped at the opportunity to be involved, preserving the history and restoring the infrastructure is so

important. The island offers some wonderful opportunities for eco-tourism and for specialist interest groups seeking lighthouse history and genuine experiences of New Zealand sites of historical importance. If carefully managed, there is potential to develop some really unique eco-tourism opportunities," Sarah said. ■

WORDS CARLA FORBES PHOTOS GRAHAM DAINTY

For centuries Dog Island has been a vital component of survival in the Foveaux Strait; Māori have occupied the island as a place of habitation, kai moana gathering and stone tool making. European history on the island is also significant with the establishment of the lighthouse 150 years ago which provided a pathway of safety for sea vessels entering the eastern side of the strait. Until 1989 the island was home to permanent lighthouse keepers, before its eventual automation. Today the island, located five kilometres southeast of Bluff, is on the verge of becoming one of

Southland's key tourist attractions and the Dog Island Motu Piu Charitable Trust has been set up to work on the restoration, protection and public education of the project.

The key objective of the trust is kaitiaki (guardianship) of the land, heritage and environment of Dog Island Motu Piu. With such a rich history, preservation is fundamental and the trust is commissioning reports and collecting information on the archaeological and historical relevance to assist in safeguarding the island. As the island is uniquely predator free its ecological potential is also being explored for opportunities as a refuge for endangered species.

Nine independent Southland business leaders have been appointed to the trust which is a first of its kind in New Zealand since the Department of Conservation restructure, which emphasises relationships between the public and private sectors.

Trust Chair Dean Addie says the trust's protection focus will remain at the heart of all potential projects for the island. Before any restoration takes place, the trustees are working collectively as custodians of the island and focusing on research,

history and opportunities. "We are moving strategically and carefully in order to do the best by the island, the environment and Southland. Being a caretaker of an island is a real privilege and we take this important role very seriously," Dean said.

The island's unique position as a potential environmental sanctuary may also be an excellent opportunity to assist school children and educational groups to learn about the environment and their role in its protection.

"Dog Island Motu Piu presents an opportunity to give back to the Southland community in a really meaningful way.

Trustees of Dog Island Trust

- Chair:** Dean Addie
- Deputy Chair:** Sarah Dowie
Carla Forbes
Peter Ridsdale
Alister Rance
Estelle Leask
John Roderique
Raymond Hector
- Secretary:** Gloria Harris
- Treasurer:** Brad MacDonald
- Patron:** Marcus Lush

