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Media Release

## Pre-dawn ceremony marks start to three-house social housing build

A pre-dawn ceremony last Thursday marked the start of the building of three four-bedroom homes by the Marlborough Sustainable Housing Trust.

Chair Bev James says the Hutcheson St project which began in 2019 will see three families currently in transitional housing living in modern, energy-efficient homes by this time next year.

“There was such a buzz at the site as the blessing by iwi took place. It’s very satisfying to see work getting underway on the site. As a small trust with no staff, we’ve worked a long time to bring this together to help meet some of our community’s desperate housing needs.

“There’s really no housing like this available like this in Blenheim. Most social housing new builds are 1-2 bedroom units whereas our homes have 4 double bedrooms.

”The trustees were very clear that our houses should look no different to good quality family homes in the community, were fully accessible, provided suitable amenity for a large family and helped address power poverty. At the same time, we wanted them to be secure, warm and future-proofed for changes in the way we live.”

Each new home has photo-voltaic panels on its roof feeding in electricity to reduce power bills, good living spaces including outdoor patios and are designed for access by anyone.

Mayor Nadine Taylor attended the ceremony in which three mauri stones were laid in a pit on the site before Mike Greer Homes commenced the build. She says the homes will help fill a real gap.

“All credit to the Marlborough Sustainable Housing Trust for this initiative. We have such demand for accommodation in our region and that’s most acutely felt by those on lower incomes. It’s wonderful to see this get underway and know three local families will soon be able to get into affordable modern, warm homes.”

The homes will be let to larger families on income-related rents. A \$1.8m community loan from the Rata Foundation provided cornerstone funding for the project which will be repaid from the rents and subsidies provided by the Ministry for Housing and Urban Development. The homes will be managed by the Christchurch Methodist Mission.

The Marlborough Sustainable Housing Trust already provides one other affordable rental property in Blenheim as well as two funded under a shared ownership model.

Bev James says if anyone has capital available to support a good cause, the Trust would be delighted to show them the Hutcheson St site and outline how further such developments can be brought together with sufficient funding.

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**Photo.** Mayor Nadine Taylor with Marlborough Sustainable Housing Trust chair Bev James at the Hutcheson St site where three new social housing homes are underway