

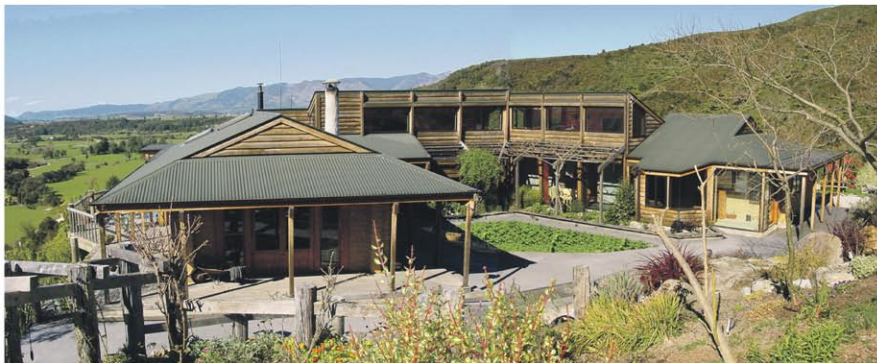
# Homes with Mother Nature in mind



There's much more to sustainable building than simply putting some solar panels on your roof. At Ecotect, it's all about living in the safest and healthiest home possible – not just for your sake but also the planet's.

Ecotect director Mark Fielding, of Nelson, has been interested in building energy efficient, ecologically sustainable homes since he started his own business in 1982. But back then, building "green homes" was an unheard of concept.

Luckily for Mark, times have changed, with Ecotect now focusing exclusively on designing affordable eco homes or renovations and energy efficient retrofits.



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#### Comfortable eco homes

Mark says there is a growing interest in building 'eco' homes, with increasing numbers of people recognising the huge benefits of living in safer, healthier environments.

"People are now wanting something that is safer and less toxic, as well as a home that is energy efficient and also locally produced. Building sustainable homes makes very good sense, whichever way you look at it".

Almost all energy Ecotect uses is sourced from the sun, yet solar energy is quite under utilised in our homes. While solar water heating is well known, sunshine as a primary energy source for heating is not widely used, and yet it's free.

Low angle winter sunlight through north glazing provides as much as 1kWh of energy per square metre. Multiply your total north glazing area by six hours of effective sunshine and your home has probably received in excess of 100kWh of free energy, that's about \$25 worth per day!

A well-insulated building will slow heat loss, but you can also store free heat, making it available for later use, therefore saving the need for purchased energy.

Thermal mass, as insulated concrete floors and masonry walls, store captured solar energy in the same way old night-store heaters used electricity to heat concrete blocks which radiated heat long after being turned off.

Mark says a passive solar home is dryer and healthier and offers improved comfort with nothing to do but open and close the drapes.

Ecotect carefully selects building materials that are non toxic and, as much as possible, harmful-chemical free. This is not an easy task in our age of timber treatment and manufactured wood-based products. However, regulations are easing as authorities recognise the need for less toxicity in our environment, helped by recent scientific studies that show less toxic methods can still be 'fit for purpose'.

Specifying locally produced building materials and components whenever possible helps reduce carbon emissions and dependence on oil, while also supporting New Zealand industries and workforce - a "no brainer" in Mark's view.

Ecotect promotes a range of eco building materials, including 100 percent wool insulation, surface-coloured exposed concrete floors, and natural or recycled cladding products and finishes. Mark is a particular fan of abobe or mud brick, which he says has virtually no environmental "down side" and has health benefits as a bonus.

#### Earth friendly

Sustainable eco homes are not only good for the families who live in them, they're also great for the planet, something Mark feels strongly about.

"What can I say? I'm a Greenie - I have to do my bit," he says.

"We can't save the world on our own but we can at least each make a difference. I try to make a difference through my work and lifestyle choices, like using and promoting composting toilets, for example."

Making that difference is quite simple - it's all about selecting locally made, non-toxic building materials.

Mark sees a certain irony in houses built with toxic materials, as he points out the NZ Building Act itself describes its purpose as providing for buildings that are safe and not detrimental to the health and wellbeing of people who use them.

"We need to use local materials to keep our own people employed. It makes no sense to me to ship all our raw materials offshore for other countries to make into 'stuff' to ship

back to us, using up fossil fuels and adding to pollution all along the way at the same time," Mark says.

"There are huge benefits to the environment in using less energy, more local materials, more natural materials while raising the consciousness of people so they follow through in their own lives, perhaps with home gardening and recycling."

Ecotect has received many awards in recent years for its innovative sustainable designs from Architectural Designers New Zealand, Master Builders' Association and other organisations.

#### Ecotect Limited

Moving soon to our new home office at:  
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**SUSTAINABLE BUILDING**

Sustainable building, green building or eco building is simply using resources (materials, energy, water and air) in smarter, more efficient ways so we can build homes that are affordable, warmer, healthier, cheaper to run and better for the environment and future generations.

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