

PIPING TOGETHER FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

INVERCARGILL city's two pipe bands merge next week (September 14), taking a step forward into what looks to be a bright future.

The Southern City Highland Pipe Band and Invercargill Caledonian Pipe Band will be no longer but in its place is a brighter shinier version – The ILT City of Invercargill Highland Band.

There is a long history of both bands in Southland.

The Invercargill Caledonian Pipe Band was formed about 120 years ago and the Southern City Highland Pipe Band 30 years ago.

Separately they have led parades, entertained crowds and performed around the world but it is hoped the blending of the two bands will take them even further into the future.

The reason for the merger is the need to take piping and drumming from the depleted state it was in last year, to a strong band which will hopefully gain both higher national and international recognition.

Spokesman Calder Grey said the merger means it will take the present situation of two bands to form three bands. It is hoped a fourth will also be created in the future.

“At present we have a (national) grade two and grade four bands.

“We hope next year to have grade one or two, grade three and grade four as well as a juvenile band.”

And they're not stopping there - the ultimate aim is to perform at the Edinburgh Tattoo in Scotland.

Obviously a new band requires a new uniform and new equipment, so the ILT Foundation and Invercargill Licensing Trust have come to the parade with grants of \$50,000 and \$20,000 respectively.

This has enabled the drummers and pipers (who wear different tartans) to have their material imported from Scotland and made up into exquisite new kilts, as well as making sure these talented musicians are playing on the best equipment possible.

ILT Foundation and Invercargill Licensing Trust chairman Alan Dennis said it was great to see such a Southland icon not only evolving but making big plans for its future.

“We can see these people are not only enthusiastic about retaining these traditions but also have vision for the future.

“The ILT Foundation and Invercargill Licensing Trust know this enthusiasm will not only get the best from the present performers but will also encourage others to join the bands. We totally support the great work and foresight these people have.”

The merger will be made official at a ceremony when the crests of the previous bands will be piped into the band hall followed by speeches and an afternoon tea. It was hoped the ceremony would take place in September, Mr Grey said.