

Implementation of Environmental Education Programmes in 2000-2001

1. Introduction

This report provides information on the work undertaken in 2000-01 to implement the educational programmes described in the Council's environmental education and communication strategy, "*A Better Environment*".

2. A call to Action – Developing New Brands

The central theme of *A Better Environment* is the notion of "action". This is the idea that the environment will only move towards a sustainable condition if people make a personal commitment and *act* to look after it. The Council can not do this alone. Expressed in a way that makes sense to people, this idea can be understood as "individuals can make a difference to the environment through everyday actions".

We have developed each of the programmes to reinforce this simple message. The way in which this has been done is explained in the relevant sections below. But in doing so, it quickly became apparent that the existing names for the programme - Learnwell, Business Bridges, and Community Environmental Care Programme - were not particularly exciting, had little resonance with their respective audiences, and did not communicate the action focus very well.

For each audience, therefore, the action theme and the way it is expressed and communicated has been market tested. If we want people to adopt these ideas and do things they are not doing now, then we must be able to compete with all the other calls on our audience's time and interest. This requires effective communication and strong and consistent branding (the set of messages that differentiates our product from our competitors in the market place over time) founded on good market research.

A number of logos and slogans have been tested with focus groups, as well as with those people and groups helping with the overall development of each programme. The upshot of this process is that three new names and their associated branding (or "look") have been identified. These are:

- *Take Action* – (for young people aged 8-12). This an action focused brand which expresses the totality of the programme for school children in two words. It includes an instruction to "do" something ("Take") as well as a description of what to do . The font used is kid-friendly, easy to read, and with the words superimposed over a globe showing New Zealand and the Pacific. This helps to identify what we are wanting the target audience to

take action for – the world. Young people have no difficulty conceiving of their actions helping the world generally and, indeed, identified strongly with another potential brand based around the notion of “Action Planet”.

The focus groups also told us that the overall style of the programme and resource material should be brightly coloured, with funky illustrations, and make use of photos of kids doing things and having fun. Interestingly, the children expressed strong interest in a range of mocked-up products that could be used to reinforce the brand and its message over time, e.g., balls, frisbees, caps, drink bottles, fridge magnets. The first Take Action programme has been called “Take Action for Water”, again saying for what the children should take action. It will be apparent that “Take Action” allows for the development of future programmes for other aspects of the natural environment which are planned for the next few years. The use of the Council logo on the resource material and web site is clear and on every page.

- *Take Charge* – (pollution solutions and environmental care for small business and industry). This is an action focused brand as well, with an emphasis on the value to the business of “taking charge” of the environmental risks and opportunities of the business. The product has been developed and is portrayed as a business management tool that will help business owners. The associated wording answers the question “what’s in it for me” for the target market.

The focus group told us that the colours and typeface used should be conservative, strong, and clear, yet friendly. The logo shows these words superimposed over a drawing of a cog or gear, in roughly the same position as the globe in the Take Action logo. The focus group also confirmed a view we had detected from our earlier work, that the programme will benefit from being seen as a Wellington Regional Council product. Hence the use of the Council logo in a prominent place on the front cover (and every page) of the resource material, and on the posters.

- *Take Care* – (support for people who want to look after the environment through community based activities). Again, the brand is an instruction and is action focused, although the target audience is usually already carrying out the action or keen to do so. However, the brand must also appeal to the unconverted as its purpose is to urge other non-active members of the community to get involved.

The focus group made it clear that the logo and words that communicated the brand must explain what we want people to take care of, i.e., the environment. At this stage the logo and associated wording to achieve this has not yet been devised. It will also be important to develop the brand so that it appeals to people and offers them something they want.

There is a clear family resemblance between these brands. However, we have made no attempt at this stage to develop an overarching family logo, slogan,

or “look”, nor to develop strap lines for the logos. The reason for this is that the Council as a whole is part way through a corporate communications strategy which is likely to produce a brand under which we will need to operate. Similarly, we have not sought to develop any brand for the other strand of the Department’s work to do with promoting more sustainable ways of living. The three action brands have been created at this stage because the timetable for the development of these programmes (and associated budgetary allocations) require this phase to be completed in this financial year.

3. **Take Action (Learnwell)**

3.1 **Performance Indicator**

The performance indicator for this programme in the Annual Plan reads:

“An environmental trail will be developed and tested to the Stage 2 level, as described in the *Learnwell* Implementation Plan, to the satisfaction of Council and within budget”.

The Learnwell Implementation Plan was put before the Committee in June of last year. It divided the project up into four stages and established a suite of performance targets for each stage. Stage 1 (Programme Development) was to be completed by December 2000 and included such aspects as:

- Developing (and reporting on) ideas for the water trail with a focus group of teachers;
- Doing an assessment of the best way to enable students to learn about water conservation (what was called at that point “Adopt-a-tap”);
- Identifying a set of “base sites” with good quality streams and vegetation where most of the trail day will occur, most often in a regional park;
- Identifying “menu sites”; usually on polluted streams close to schools where students can explore the differences caused by human impacts;
- Assessing the risks associated with all of these sites and the programme generally and putting procedures in place to deal with these risks;
- Establishing a Steering Group for the programme at Divisional Manager level;
- Investigating how the programme can be used to communicate with the wider community about the Council, pollution prevention and water conservation; and
- Setting a timetable for any works needed to provide for the running of the water trail on Council lands.

All of these tasks were completed according to this programme. Stage 2 of the development of the programme (Water Trail Pilot) is to be completed by 30 June 2001. It includes:

- Piloting the water trail with 5-10 schools

- Preparing a draft of the resource that teachers can use to deliver the programme;
- Designing the “mobile facility” or environmental bus to aid the delivery of the programme to schools;
- Developing the “adopt-a-stream” programme and resources;
- Designing a way by which the success or failure of the Learnwell programme can be assessed;
- Designing a web site to deliver the programme; and
- Completing the first stage of infrastructural development, as set by the timetable established during stage one.

3.2 Implementation

‘Take Action for Water’ has come a long way from the initial idea in the environmental education strategy to show young people the difference between a clean, pristine stream and one polluted by storm water or runoff. Nevertheless, this simple comparison remains at the heart of the programme that has been developed, and all schools who undertake the programme will do this. What has been added is a comprehensive educational package to enable young people to understand the importance of water to all life, and learn how to look after it in their daily lives.

Along with the focus group of teachers, we have developed “Take Action for Water” as a 4 to 6 week teaching programme aimed at 8-12 year olds. The programme is based in the science part of the National Curriculum but is flexible enough to be adapted to other curriculum areas. The focus of the unit is taking action, with all of the learning, including the trail day, leading to students doing something to help their local waterway (through preventing pollution or stream restoration) or to reduce their water use. The action focus is there so that the students can learn that it is not hard to look after water and anyone can do it.

Take Action for Water has been designed as a comprehensive programme to be undertaken over a number of weeks, because we recognise that a one-off “trail day” would be unlikely to produce the kind of interest that might lead to future behavioural patterns. The action focus, with its concentration on behaviour, reinforces this. With our current staff resources, the more we choose to concentrate on a comprehensive approach, the fewer classes we can offer the guided programme to. A balance has to be struck, and the programme, aims to get the balance right by providing good depth of programme to a good spread of the target audience. Most of the programme is delivered by the students’ classroom teacher using the resources we have developed. However, we will visit each classroom three times while students are involved, as well as taking the field trip. On this basis, we estimate around 60 – 90 classes will be able to do Take Action for Water each year.

The indicators for the second stage of the programme’s development have been met in the following ways:

1. *Piloting the trail with up to 10 schools.*

This has been exceeded. Not only the trail, but the whole teaching unit has been tested with schools from around the Region: Wellington, Otaki, Porirua, Waiwhetu, Upper Hutt, Wainuiomata, and Wilton. The experience has been evaluated and changes made where necessary. This meets the Stage 3 indicator for this part of the programme.

2. *Preparing a draft set of resources for schools to use.*

This has been exceeded. The final resource kit, including a 65 page book, posters, leaflets, “critter” identification cards, and other materials to be used on the trail have either been completed or purchased. This meets the Stage 3 indicator for this part of the programme.

3. *Designing the environmental bus to support the programme*

Achieved in part. The make of vehicle has been determined and contracts let for the concept design, which will be completed by the end of this month. As a project such as this is new to us, we underestimated the length of time that the design process would take. The process has several phases and will take several months to work through, however, the purpose is to ensure that the product which is eventually constructed meets our needs exactly. The final date for the commissioning of the vehicle has not been affected.

4. *Develop “adopt-a-stream” programme and resources*

When the Learnwell programme was first described in the environmental education strategy, a subsidiary programme called “adopt-a-stream” was proposed to encourage the students to act on what they had learned. This idea was carried forward into the Learnwell Implementation Plan, with the relevant ‘indicator’ being the one listed at the head of this paragraph. In addition, in the Department’s Operating Plan, this was split off as a separate programme with its own budget and performance indicator, which reads:

“A programme of environmental care or monitoring for schools will be established to the satisfaction of the Environment Committee and within budget”.

As Take Action for Water has been developed, the notion of students helping the environment by “adopting” a stream has been drawn into the programme to become its prime rationale. For primary and intermediate schools, therefore, adopt-a-stream as a separate programme no longer exists. However, we have produced a separate and more detailed resource booklet for primary/intermediate schools

that take up stream restoration as their way of taking action. This will be available on the web site as well.

A Better Environment also sought the opportunity for secondary schools to get involved in stream monitoring and restoration, and a programme to achieve this has been created. Schools which wish to do this will be offered a package called “Stream Sense” which has been developed by Environment Waikato with funding from the Sustainable Management Fund. The necessary teaching resources for this programme and related equipment have been purchased, and the idea floated with a number of schools involved in the Trees for Survival programme. Upper Hutt College will begin using “Stream Sense” in the new financial year.

5. *Design a way of evaluating the success of Take Action for Water.*

This is in its final stages and will be completed by June 30th.

6. *Design a Web Site*

This has been exceeded. The design of the web site has been completed and it is now being constructed. There are 239 primary and intermediate schools in the Region and, as indicated above, we will not be able to offer the guided programme to all of them. Nevertheless, almost all will be able to access Take Action for Water in its entirety when the web site is operational. The site has been designed to allow any classroom teacher to undertake the unit unaided (we will provide the scientific resources used on the trail day) and to enable those who have done action projects to show off and discuss their achievements. The site also provides fun interactive games and extension activities about water and how we use it for any child who logs on. The site is directly linked to the existing Council web site and appears to be part of it, though it has a more child-friendly and fun appearance, using the same artwork as is found throughout the rest of the programme.

7. *Complete stage one of infrastructure according to the timetable.*

Most of the infrastructure needed to run Take Action for Water on Council land already exists. However, it has been necessary to upgrade some tracks (to ensure wheel chair access for disabled children at Tunnel Gully) and cut some new tracks to give access to the right combination of bush and clean running streams (at Wainuiomata and Belmont). Minor changes have been made to a building at Wainuiomata to provide shelter and a place for lunch, and some other small changes made at Battle Hill and Kaitoke. These changes have been made mostly by Landcare staff or contractors and we expect them to be completed by the end of June.

Unfortunately, the addition to the Stratton Street wool shed, comprising a lean-to shelter and teaching/storage area, have not yet been completed as planned. This is expected to be completed in September, well before the launch of the programme in February next year. Most Wellington City and Lower Hutt schools will use the Stratton Street entrance to the park for their water trail, so a purpose built room at this site is needed. It is the largest item of infrastructure to be constructed.

3.3 **Next Year**

Although excellent progress has been made this year, there is still a lot to do before our scheduled launch date in February next year. Key tasks yet to be done are:

- Continue consultation with tangata whenua and prepare further maori components of the programme;
- Complete an introductory kit for promoting Take Action for Water and getting students interested in action projects. This is intended to include a short video;
- Scope likely uptake, undertake a capability analysis, and promote and market the programme (two schools have already asked to be involved!);
- Complete the web site;
- Complete the design and construction of the environmental bus (programmed for completion in June 2002);
- Complete any resources needed to ensure the message goes home with the children;
- Finalise additional resource material for schools just wanting to undertake stream monitoring, and for water conservation and pollution prevention action projects;
- Complete phase 2 of infrastructural works – primarily signage and some possible wetland restoration and boardwalks at Stratton Street car park;
- Test and finalise the operation of the trail day with a Masterton school to ensure the programme can be delivered effectively in the Wairarapa; and
- Devise a way of delivering the programme to rural schools.

3.4 **Other Related Work**

Jo Campbell has also been working with a group of educationalists to promote the uptake of environmental education in schools, in other words by “training the trainers”. This will continue, as it provides ultimately the best way to ensure the Take Action for Water programme is taken up by teachers. By far the biggest impediment is a fear on the part of teachers that they do not know enough about the natural environment to teach it. This aspect of Jo’s work is probably the best way by which this obstruction to more environmental education can be broken down.

4. **Adopt-A-Stream**

As discussed above, there is a performance indicator in the Department's Operating Plan which has been met through 'Take Action for Water', 'Stream Sense', and the completion of some related resources for schools.

5. **Take Charge**

5.1 **Performance Indicator**

The performance indicator for this programme in the Annual Plan reads:

“Together with the Resource Investigations Department, the *Business Bridges* programme will be established to the satisfaction of the Council and within budget.”

5.2 **Implementation**

Take Charge, the pollution prevention programme for small to medium sized businesses, has been established. The programme has been developed, tested with a number of operating businesses and industry representatives, and the resource material written. Printing will be completed by the end of the month. Take Charge has been positioned as a tool for businesses to use to take charge of their environmental issues – from stormwater management to drainage, materials storage, maintenance, inspections, and spills. It also offers advice for sites which are contaminated and businesses unsure of how to handle their air discharges.

The service which the Council will provide is a full site inspection, with problems identified, and solutions in the form of advice, information, and good practice reminders (posters). The benefits to the business are:

- Control of the pollution potential of the business
- Reduced liability
- Peace of mind
- Public recognition of the businesses efforts by the Council
- Possible marketing advantages;
- Possible reduced costs; and the
- Knowledge that the owner has done his/her bit for the environment.

5.3 **Next Year**

Take Charge will be implemented in the new financial year. How the programme is to be promoted has yet to be determined but it is most likely that a problem area (one with a record of pollution incidents) will be identified and the programme commenced there. A pamphlet explaining the benefits of Take Charge has been prepared but a more complete promotional exercise will be

needed to raise awareness of the methodology and how businesses can access it.

Next year will also see the development of additional modules to do with waste, energy use and cleaner production. These will have a narrower audience, and will need in part to be specific to particular industries.

6. **Take Care**

6.1 **Performance Indicator**

The performance indicator for this programme in the Annual Plan reads:

“Together with the Resource Policy Department, five care groups will be established and assisted in providing local environmental care, to the satisfaction of the Council and within budget”.

6.2 **Implementation**

Take Care commenced at the start of 2001 with 15 community based environmental care groups. While the performance indicator and budget allowed for five groups, the actual support asked for by the groups allowed for a larger number to be approved. Their main focus has been stream restoration, but wetlands, dunes, estuaries, and coastal (penguin) habitat are all being actively worked on. The groups and their projects are described in Report 01.40 to the Committee (February 2001) and, more recently in my Manager’s report of May 2001.

Since then, the groups have all made good progress, and worked hard to use the resources available to them. Council officers have been building relationships with the groups, gaining their trust, and learning to proceed at the pace which suits each group. A number of groups have held planting days recently and more are being carried out in June.

At the same time, we have procured some equipment for use by all the groups and are making minor modifications at the Upper Hutt Depot to allow for the storage of materials like compost, and mulch. The groups have common needs, as well as individual needs, and we have devised a set of resources (“how to” guides etc) that we will prepare for them in the new financial year.

A number of the groups have joined the Wellington Region Ecological Restoration Network which my staff have established along with the Department of Conservation. There have been a number of training and networking events held where the groups have been able to share their skills and experiences.

6.3 **Next Year**

The next round of applications will be called for in July, and we are confident the number of groups will grow, although not by as much as in the initial round. We will put additional effort next year into building the capacity of the groups to (ultimately) exist without Council support, principally by obtaining wider community buy-in.