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Committee Landcare
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Regional Outdoors Programme 2006

1. Purpose

To report on the Regional Outdoors Programme 2006.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

The Regional Outdoors Programme 2006 is the fifth in the series of annual summer event programmes run by Greater Wellington's Parks and Forests department.

The 2006 programme ran from 5 January to 2 April 2006, encompassing fifty-two events. Forty-four of these were implemented by Parks and Forests, while the other eight were run independently on Greater Wellington land with overview by the Parks and Forests staff.

We organised five events in conjunction with Upper Hutt City Council and Hutt City Council; the four *Kev the Wandering Kiwi* walks across the regional parks, and *Paws in the Park* at Tunnel Gully.

Five events ran in conjunction with four other Greater Wellington departments; Flood Protection (*The Great Gravel Grab*, *Rip Rap! River Trash Recycling Extravaganza*), Transport (*Bike the Trail*), Environment (*World Wetland Day Walk*) and Water Supply (*Kaitoke Water Walk*).

We implemented seventeen events involving volunteers (groups or individuals) and clubs, along with six new events which featured tutors offering the opportunity to learn new skills in the parks environment.

Four events were cancelled, due either to adverse weather (*Buggies & Backpacks*, *Model Aircraft Day* at QE Park and *Old Coach Road History Trail*), or low interest (*Rivendell Rock*).

4. Objectives

4.1 The Regional Outdoors Programme contributes to two LTCCP success factors:

- More people visiting the regional parks.
- More people taking positive action for a sustainable region.

4.1.1 More people visiting the regional parks.

By presenting a kaleidoscope of good value, engaging events with adequate information, public access and guidance, we aim to overcome the perceived barriers which stop people from visiting the parks and forests. These include having to think about how to get to a new place for a new activity, not being sure what gear to take, and having no one to go with.

Regional Outdoors Programme participants appreciate having new activities on offer, advice on what to bring, transport provided, the company of other participants and the expertise of the rangers, tutors and guides. Our booking officer plays an important role in public liaison.

Feedback from our participant surveys has indicated that around 40% of participants on average are new to a particular park or forest. This can vary widely across individual events.

4.1.2 More people taking positive action for a sustainable region.

Events provide the opportunity to showcase the work and skills of interest groups, volunteer organisations and individuals.

By working together on events we strengthen our relationship with people who contribute to the health of the region.

4.2 Ten new events this year highlighted new partnerships.

The Mountain Safety Council provided 6 volunteer instructors for *Go Bush! Mountain Safety Bushcraft Course* at Kaitoke.

In the inaugural Maori cultural event *Harakeke - Flax Weaving on the Coast*, we worked with flax weaving consultancy Te Kokiri along with 9 volunteer weaving tutors from several coastal iwi. Also on the Kapiti Coast, events involved local poets J.C.Sturm, Michael O'Leary, Karen Peterson Butterworth and Roma Potiki (*Poetry in the Park*); Kapiti Aero Modellers Club (*Model Aircraft Day*) and Stables on the Park (*Adopt a Pony*).

Recycling artists Annie Bourque and Billee Mutton worked at *Rip Rap!* on the Hutt River Trail, and photographer Alastair McAra at Kaitoke on *Outdoor Photography. Birds and Brunch* featured volunteer ornithologists Ian Anderson and Reg Cotter.

4.3 Our established partners are the mainstay of the programme.

In 2006 these included MIRO, Friends of the Fell Museum, The Dowse, the Friends of Maara Roa, Upper Hutt Dog Rescue, the Eastbourne Forest Rangers and the Friends of Belmont Regional Park. The Tenth Trust contributed to the launch of *Puke Ariki/Haywards Korokoro Traverse* and Te Atiawa ki Whakarongotai to *Harakeke - Flax Weaving on the Coast*.

Individual volunteers contributing this year comprise Bill Milne, Barbara Mitcalfe, Chris Horne, Reg Cotter, Ian Anderson, Tony Edwards and George Gibbs.

4.4 We continue to strengthen our relationships with territorial authorities

We cooperated with territorial authorities on four *Kev the Wandering Kiwi* walks, *Paws in the Park*, and *Bike the Trail*. The idea for *Kev the Kiwi* walks was conceived as part of the Hutt Valley's *Active Communities* project, funded until recently by SPARC and promoting Hutt City Council events in our parks.

The table below shows the distribution of events across the various cities or districts.

Territorial Authority	Regional parks/forests in city/district	Number of events
Upper Hutt City Council	4	17
Hutt City Council	4	14
Kapiti Coast District Council	2	8
Porirua City Council	3	9

4.5 Other GW departments found several events in the programme were effective opportunities for educating the public about Greater Wellington's role.

Flood Protection's *RIP RAP! River Trash Recycling Extravaganza* drew 20 participants, *The Great Gravel Grab* drew 200 vehicles, Transport's *Bike the Trail* 1040 cyclists, and *Kaitoke Water Walk* showcased Wellington's regional Water Supply for 40 visitors.

4.6 Getting more people more active more often:

The national objective relating to improved physical and mental health entails "getting more people more active more often".

Events with a special focus such as *Paws in the Park* (dogs), *Harakeke – Flax Weaving on the Coast* and *Return to Rivendell* (dance) featured a short to

medium walk as part of the schedule, to encourage integrating exercise into our everyday activities

4.7 The programme also fulfils a number of other objectives:

- A higher positive profile for Greater Wellington, both with the region's residents and nationwide.
- The opportunity for Parks & Forests rangers and support staff, along with volunteer staff from other GW departments, to work together in face to face contact with park visitors.
- Developing links with local activity focused businesses to promote recreation in the parks and forests.

5. Implementation

5.1 Programme development

Programme development started in July 2005, with a particular emphasis on featuring new activities and engaging new partners to freshen the programme and appeal to a wider demographic.

5.2 Innovations this year included:

5.2.1 A fresh look at the concept of recreation in our parks

- We trialled a new approach to attract not only more visitors, but different categories of visitors engaged in a variety of activities.
- We expanded the notion of recreation to encompass visitor enjoyment of cultural and low-key exercise activities in the parks environment, as a complement to the walking and cycling events.

5.2.2 Booking Officer based in Wellington

This year the Regional Outdoors Programme Booking Officer was based in Wellington at the Regional Council Centre handling booking made by email, phone, via the website and in person. This streamlined liaison with the Events and Promotions Adviser and the Marketing and Design team, and facilitated interface with the public. The Booking Officer also attended several events.

5.2.3 Full-time Events and Promotions Advisor

The Events and Promotions Advisor moved from part-time to full-time work from 31 January, enhancing the programme delivery.

5.2.4 Sponsorship

- *Dwights Canvas* agreed to sponsor 50 spot prizes of three daypacks, a tramping pack and discount vouchers for use on 15 walking events. Visitors were encouraged to participate in a quiz relating to the specific park, and we allocated prizes via the quiz draw.

- The Wellington and Kapiti branches of the *Cancer Society* sponsored the use of three shade tents, thirty shade umbrellas and sunblock pump pot stands across the seven regional parks and forests, also donating 5 litres of sunblock and sachets for longer walks.
- *Ace Education* art educational supplies in Lower Hutt sponsored \$500 worth of art supplies as prizes for *Rip Rap! River Trash Recycling Extravaganza*.
- *Dymocks Booksellers* promoted four flax weaving books at a discount price to coincide with *Harakeke – Flax Weaving on the Coast*.
- *Cafe L’Affare* sponsored coffee for our Queen Elizabeth Park *Birds and Brunch* event
- *Pak ‘n’ Save Coastlands* sponsored orange juice for the Kapiti events *Birds and Brunch* and *Poetry in the Park*.

5.2.5 Focus on sun sense

In accordance with the Cancer Society’s recommendation, we actively encouraged sun-smart behaviour by promoting the use of sunhats, and providing sponsored sunblock, shade tents and sun umbrellas where possible.

5.2.6 Introduction of compostable event supplies

This summer we trialled the use of compostable cups and goblets on events where refreshments were served. This is in line with Greater Wellington’s environmental objectives, and generated a positive response, encouraging us to ‘walk the talk’ on future events, both as part of our winter planting programme and summer Regional Outdoors Programme.

Extensive photocoverage of events

High-quality action photocoverage focusing on visitors participating in our events showcases the character of each of our unique regional parks. Our photography is a valuable marketing tool which we intend to develop further.

6. Promotion

6.1 Budget

The programme had a budget of \$ 21,000, which was applied to advertising, other promotional materials and event supplies. The budget excluded the cost of Greater Wellington staff time.

Concentrating our promotions in late December and early January generated high awareness and bookings for events throughout the programme.

6.2 Low cost activities

Traditionally the events are free or entail a token charge to cover expenses.

This year direct external costs were charged to participants. These included bus transport, portaloos, artists, tuition and catering. Although this meant some price increases for attendees and charges for some new events, this had no adverse effects on attendance levels.

Partner businesses, artists and tutors were approached and agreed to provide services at a lower rate than usual.

6.3 Printed A3 Programme

- The new-look A3 colour liftout, published in Greater Wellington's December 2005 *Elements*, featured extensive photography of 8 different events from the 2005 Regional Outdoors Programme and drew the eye outdoors.
- Targeting families and youth and offering some gentler, more contemplative recreational options such as buggy walks, poetry, outdoor photography and flax weaving, this year's programme reached out to a wider audience.
- The wide spectrum of knowledge and skill-focused events ran parallel to the more strenuous off-track walks (Upper- and Lower Gollans Valley Off-Track Adventures, Ridge Track Adventure, Giant Rata Journey *and the* Battle Hill Heli-Tramp).
- The lift-out's front page summary channelled the reader to a variety of recreational categories, also providing more detailed information on what to bring.
- The four-page A3 liftout was distributed to the 80,000 households in the Wellington region. 8,000 extra copies of the liftout were distributed to Visitor Information Centres, libraries, retailers, pools, recreation centres, hotels and youth hostels.
- Members of our c. 1,000 strong Parks & Forests database received a copy in advance of the general mailout. This included those who had asked to join the database after participating in the programme in previous years.

6.4 Print media

Initial press releases in December launching the programme resulted in many events being published in the event listings section of local newspapers for the duration of the programme.

A large "monthly calendar" public notice was placed in the *Wellingtonian*, *Capital Times*, *Kapi-Mana News* and *Hutt News* in January. This was followed up with further advertising in *Capital Times*, *Kapi-Mana News* and the *Kapiti Observer* in mid-February.

Feature listings in the Hutt City *Summer Scene* brochure, Jasons' *What's On* and the Wellington City *Feeling Great* brochures boosted attendance.

6.5 Radio advertising

The Radio Network promoted the Regional Outdoors Programme and referred people to the events calendar on the GW website. We also sent weekly updates

to the Newstalk ZB Community Noticeboard, The Breeze community noticeboard and Classic Hits community noticeboard.

6.6 Press releases

Specific press releases highlighted in detail features of star events. In this way we generated at least 34 press articles and numerous radio mentions for the events - a significant level of publicity for Greater Wellington.

6.7 Website

All events were listed on the Events page of the Greater Wellington website.

7. Attendance

As a result we saw the highest attendance levels ever, often attracting people who were both new to the parks and drawn to new events. **Attachment 1** tables the attendance for the 2006 Programme.

ROP Attendance – Key Result Areas	2005 (Jan to Mar)	2006 (Jan to Mar)
Events run by GW (excluding cancellations)	37	44
Events run by other agencies in the parks & forests (exc cancellations)	6	5
Participants at GW events	2,448	3,449
Average participation at GW events	66	78
Total programme participants	12,648	

7.1 High attendance rate

The high attendance rate enabled us to deliver an enjoyable experience to a wide range of people.

As bookings opened, many people booked themselves into multiple events within hours. Waiting lists overflowed for the guided walks, flax weaving, horse riding, mountain biking, heli-tramp and four wheel drive trips.

7.2 Favourable weather

Favourable weather throughout the programme facilitated a consistently successful series of events. This meant a record low of only 4 out of 52 events had to be cancelled.

7.3 Booked events

This year we offered a higher proportion of booked events than before. This facilitated event management.

Creating bookings for the track launch events *Puke Ariki Haywards Korokoro Traverse* and *World Wetland Day Walk* gave these a special focus and attracted significant numbers. Booking participants on skill-based events ensured manageable numbers for tutors.

The advantages of taking bookings need to be balanced with our visitors' freedom to decide on the day to attend events.

Popular established events attracted an excellent response. Guided walks in the East Harbour, Kaitoke, Belmont and Queen Elizabeth Regional Parks, Belmont's *Puke Ariki Haywards Korokoro Traverse* (40) and the *Rimutaka Rail Trail* (96) attracted mainly older age groups. Youth and males took more interest in the *Akatarawa Forests' Back Country 4WD Akatarawa* (60), *Karapoti Classic* (1,130) and *The Big Coast* (540)

Battle Hill's *Haveago Horseriding* for children (20) and *4WD Sunset Tours* (60) continue to be among the first to be booked up in the programme.

8. Feedback

8.1 Visitor feedback surveys

As in 2005, our visitor survey feedback form was distributed to participants, usually at the conclusion of an event, to fill out on the basis of one form per group.

This enables us to seek ways of improving both the programme content and how the events are run. We surveyed only new events, those involving transport where we had a captive audience, and those which had been changed or required improvement.

Events run in the parks by independent organisations, such as *The Big Coast*, *Karapoti Classic* or the *Pauatahanui Country Festival*, were not surveyed. Compared with our in-house events these attract a large number of people under the age of 50.

As in the past we received excellent survey feedback from participants regarding the organisation, interpretation, environment and facilities. We have also received many unsolicited phone calls, letters and emails from happy participants – to a significantly higher level than in previous years.

According to the surveys, the top three sources of information about events remain the *Elements* liftout, community newspapers and word of mouth.

Attachment 2 tables a selection of participants' comments on both booked and unbooked events.

9. For the future

The fresh approach to our 2006 programme has been successful and we plan to consolidate this next year.

However, we are finding that the programme is getting to the point where it is consuming a lot of staff time to plan and run. With that in mind we plan to cap the number of events to ensure that all aspects of our marketing programme receive due attention.

Therefore, for the 2007 Regional Outdoors Programme we plan to make the following improvements:

- Restrict the number of events to make the programme less resource hungry. Cap the budget at \$20,000.
- Review and refine the programme to keep it fresh and appealing with a balance of physical, environmental, and cultural, family and youth-friendly recreation.
- Continue to seek ways of broadening the programme's appeal for families, youth and other age groups, offering alternative outdoor experiences to a wider demographic audience.
- Consult earlier with volunteer groups and businesses to establish and strengthen relationships, and to encourage these to take a proactive role in planning, delivering and participating in events.
- Continue relationships with Territorial Authorities and jointly develop larger events that showcase our region.
- Continue to operate the booking officer role from the RCC to ease the pressure on Upper Hutt and optimise communication among those involved in the day to day organisation of the programme.
- Survey only new or modified events or events requiring improvement.
- Building on the programme's award-winning profile, continue to develop commercial sponsorship meeting our criteria. This will enable us to cut costs.
- Apply to the Cancer Society for funding towards the purchase of a new shade tent for events to replace the current worn *Ezi-Up* tents.
- Develop and implement a Parks and Forests temporary signage system for events featuring Parks branding.

10. Communication

Two articles have been published in the April 2006 edition of *Elements*; (*Volunteers make summer programme a success* and *Participants keen to master new skills*).

A press release highlighting the success of the 2006 Regional Outdoors Programme will be developed and released to the media.

11. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

Report approved by:

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Attachment 1: Regional Outdoors Programme 2006 events attendance survey

Attachment 2: Selection of participant feedback – Regional Outdoors Programme 2006