

Report 99.120

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Report to the Policy and Finance Committee
from Dr Jane Bradbury, Divisional Manager, Environment and Andrew Annakin,
Divisional Manager, Landcare

Environment Education Initiative

1. Purpose

To provide the Council with some background information on the Council's proposed education initiative so that it may consider a proposal for providing some resources for this purpose in the 1999/2000 annual plan.

2. Environment Committee's resolution

At the Environment Committee's meeting on 1 March 1999, there was a discussion on the Council's proposed environment education initiative. One of the specified priorities for the Environment Division and for the Landcare Division is to progress this initiative.

At that meeting the Committee resolved to recommend:

That the Committee recommends to the Policy and Finance Committee the provision of an additional \$100,000 in the 1999-2000 Annual Plan for the development of Council's environment education initiative and that this be subject of a further report from officers.

3. Background to Initiative

The background to the environment education initiative is as follows.

On 8 September 1997, Cr Ian Buchanan and Cr Ernie Gates provided a report to the Policy and Finance Committee (Report 97.356) entitled *Promoting Environmental Management: A Suggestion for a New Regional Council Initiative*. A copy of this paper is attached. The proposal was to develop an integrated environmental education programme for all schools in the Region "with a view to improving understanding of sustainable environment management and influencing

the behaviour of the future generation". The idea was, using Council lands, the WRC was strongly placed to combine "the theory of the classroom with the real adventure of education outdoors" to bring environmental management alive.

Cr Buchanan's and Cr Gate's paper also recognised that schools were not the only means of improving understanding of environmental management. "*We (the WRC) are also strongly placed to initiate a wider community education initiative to complement and reinforce any schools based programme.*"

Staff were asked to develop the concept further, although the possible magnitude of the venture and the need for a step by step process was recognised. Staff were to report back by December 1997.

The task of developing the idea further was given to the Divisional Manager, Environment (Jane Bradbury) and the Divisional Manager, Landcare (Andrew Annakin).

Consequently, on 5 December, a second report entitled *Environment Education Programme* was presented to the Policy and Finance Committee (Report 97.489, copy attached). The essence of this report is contained under heading "3 – Progress". "*Our major conclusion is that it is a complex subject which requires careful background research and consideration if the Council is to develop a programme which is effective and a good use of resources. We consider that a fair bit of work needs to be done before we can even think about cost estimates. Fundamentally, without losing the excitement of the original idea, it is important that we do it right*".

So, both Divisional Managers recognised that we needed to think carefully if we were going to be effective and provide value for the ratepayer's dollar.

Under heading "4 -What next?" we signalled our intention to employ someone on short-term contract to carry out the necessary background work. We intended to report our findings to Council in June 1998.

4. **Current position and thinking**

Unfortunately, a short-term contract worker was not employed and we did not manage to report back to Council in June 1998. However, a lot of thinking and discussions went on between this Council's staff and with staff in other Councils. We personally visited Auckland Regional Council, Environment Waikato and Hawkes Bay Regional Council to see what they were doing and to make an assessment whether we concurred with their approaches. We have also collected a lot of relevant material, especially the environment education strategies of other Regional Council's – one of which, Southland Regional Council, won a top environmental award.

Using this material, two draft strategies were prepared, the latest dated September 1998.

In the development of our strategy, our thinking has matured, resulting in more emphasis being on the *wider community education initiative*.

Our objectives for environment education are to improve environmental management in the Region with a spin-off that the community becomes more aware of this Council's work. We feel that the focus should be more on "***Selling by doing***" rather than "*selling by telling*" and that there are countless opportunities to involve the community in our work and to educate businesses on a face to face basis about good environmental management. Undoubtedly, we already do this to some extent, eg Friends of the Waikanae River and pollution response. But the reality of the situation is that staff are generally too busy doing their core work to spend time on community involvement. Neither do they have the expertise to prepare the necessary material and work effectively with the different groups. Whilst they are keen to try – they need support if they are to be cost effective. Our draft strategy at the moment, therefore, is three pronged and carefully targets three groups:

- Resource users/businesses (*Building Business Bridges*)
- The community (*Community Connection*)
- School children. (*LearnWell*)

This strategy will be presented to Council in May 1999.

5. **Other Regional Councils**

A survey of environment education in other regional councils is attached. Councillors will see that we are quite a way behind in this work – although we do have the benefit of learning from their experience.

6. **Resourcing**

Councillors will see that most other regional councils employ, at the very least, an environment education co-ordinator or facilitator. At present this Council does not employ anyone with this responsibility. The discussion at the last meeting of the Environment Committee was to provide for \$100,000 in the Environment Division's budget to employ an environment education co-ordinator/facilitator to begin to advance this work. Such an appointment will, of course, be dependant on the Council accepting and adopting the strategy. The position will be located with the Manager, Environment Co-ordination.

7. **Recommendation**

That Council provides an additional \$100,000 in the 1999/2000 annual plan to employ an environment education co-ordinator to develop the Council's environment education initiative.

Report prepared by

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Attachment.