



caring about you & your environment

Report 00.675

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Report to Environment Committee
from Geoff Skene, Manager, Environment Co-ordination

Environmental Education Initiative : The Community Connections Care Group Programme

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of how the Community Connections Care Group Programme will be implemented.

2. Background

The Community Connections Care Group Programme is part of the Council's environmental education and communication initiative. The broad parameters of the programme have been laid down in *A Better Environment: An Education/Communication Strategy* and funding for the programme provided through the Long Term Financial Strategy. Staff have been working out the details of the programme and it is now ready to commence.

In anticipation of this, the Council has already been working with care groups on the Waitohu Stream and at Riversdale and Castlepoint. This has provided useful lessons in setting up and running these groups. In addition, there are also community planning initiatives underway in Pauatahanui and Waiwhetu. These could evolve into care groups in due course.

3. How the Care Group Programme will be Implemented

A detailed outline of how the programme will be implemented is appended to this committee paper (Attachment 1). In brief, the main points are:

(1) Purpose of the programme

The purpose of the care group programme is to promote the community's ability to look after and learn about the environment. This will be done by working in

partnership with groups to undertake projects and activities that benefit the environment.

The programme should not only contribute to improving the environment, but also help people acquire new skills, raise awareness of environmental issues, build community pride and cohesion, and assist communities to take more responsibility for their local environment. The programme will also raise the Council's profile in various communities.

(2) Who is the programme aimed at?

The programme is aimed squarely at groups in order to foster community action and change. The Council will welcome applications from any group, including community groups, iwi, and environmental care groups. We will also give advice to individuals who want to form a group on how to do so and what they would need to do to be eligible for funding.

(3) Will the Council initiate care groups or respond to requests for support?

As indicated in *A Better Environment*, groups in the programme can be either initiated by the Council (to deal with a particular environmental problem which we have identified or which is on our land) or join the programme by applying to the Council funding. This year there are funds available to support three groups of the first type (including one for the wetlands in Queen Elizabeth Park, and one on the Waikanae River, with the remaining funds likely to be shared between two groups on the Wairarapa coast) and five groups of the second type.

Funds for the latter groups will be made available through an open process where applications are called for and assessed against relevant criteria. In future years, this mixed system will continue so that we retain the flexibility to respond to new environmental issues as they arise.

(4) How much money is available for each group?

Groups are entitled to funds over a four year period: \$5,000 in year one, \$10,000 in year two, and \$2,000 in each of years three and four. However, some groups may not seek this amount, so it may be possible to fund more than the number of groups we have allowed for.

(5) What kinds of projects will be supported?

The fund will support projects or activities which contribute to the sustainable management or enhancement of the environment. *A Better Environment* states that the programme should concentrate on water initially because this is an area of Council expertise. For the first three years, therefore, we propose the fund should support projects relating to freshwater and the coast (i.e. rivers and streams and their margins, wetlands, lakes, estuaries, dunes, and coastal water). These ecosystems have been identified in our state of the environment report, *Measuring Up*, as priority ecosystems needing enhanced management.

Of course, for many of these areas, their enhancement or protection will necessitate the re-vegetation of surrounding land or bush. However, it is not intended that this programme focus specifically on the protection of native bush in its first three years.

Other mechanisms are being put in place to provide for this (see Report 00.634 in this Order Paper)

Other aspects of what may or may not be funded are outlined in the Attachment.

(6) When will the programme commence?

We propose calling for applications for the contestable funding in mid September. Applications will close in mid November. We will assess the applications and determine which projects will be supported by the end of December. Funding for the year will commence in January 2001.

The care groups for which funds have already been determined will commence at various times according to their project timetables.

4. Cost of the Care Group Programme

The Community Connections Care Group Programme is being delivered by three Divisions of the Council: Environment, Landcare, and Wairarapa. In the Environment Division, the budget is split between the Resource Policy Department (staff from which will provide the groups with day-to-day support and guidance), and the Environment Co-ordination Department (providing more general assistance of an educational nature to the groups).

Community Connections Care Group Programme			
Department	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Resource Policy	\$89,000	\$169,000	\$139,000
Environment Co-ordination	\$15,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
TOTAL	\$104,000	\$182,000	\$52,000

The Resource Policy Department figures *include* the funds transferred to the other Divisions to support their groups (i.e. funds to be spent on group activities) but not the staff time allocated to care group activities by those Divisions. In the case of the Wairarapa Division, staff assistance for care groups will be met from the relevant public liaison budget of the Operations Department, and will depend on the needs of the groups.

The Landcare Division will provide assistance to care groups through the newly approved Volunteers Co-ordinator position and the park and forest rangers, for groups based on Council's lands. The approximate cost of the Volunteers Co-ordinator's time for care groups over the first three years ranges from \$7,000 in 2000-01 to \$17,000 in 2002-03 as more care groups are established. Existing Flood Protection staff will co-ordinate the care groups based in the river environments.

5. Communications

The availability of the contestable funds and the call for applications will be made known through the Public Notices column of relevant regional newspapers. The October edition of *Elements* will feature the programme and be a useful reminder to groups to get their applications in. We are in the process of producing a brochure outlining the care group scheme and how to apply.

Marketing and promotional aspects of the programme for both groups and the Council are also being developed at present. We will report back to the Committee on these aspects in due course.

6. Recommendation

That the report be received and the contents noted.

Report prepared by:

Approved by:

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Attachments: 1