

Report 08.523
Date 15 July 2008
File PK/02/02/03

Committee Parks, Forests and Utilities
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Parks' Marketing and Design report 2007/08

1. Purpose

To update the Committee on the Parks' Marketing and Design activities for the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008.

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

As identified in the Annual Plan 2007/08, the purpose of Parks' Marketing and Design is to promote community use of the regional parks network. The budget of \$155,734 and allowed for the planning, promotion and implementation of a regional outdoor programme. We are also to involve local communities in the management of the parks.

By 30 June 2016 the goal is to attract 750,000 visitors per annum to the parks with the customer satisfaction levels exceeding 80 percent.

While the Regional Outdoors Programme is the highlight of our promotional calendar, there are numerous other activities undertaken by Marketing and Design, including:

- Development and implementation of other events, e.g., Arbor Day, corporate and community planting days
- Publication and distribution of brochures and maintenance of the web site content.
- Development of information and interpretation signage
- Liaison with parks' "Friends" and other community groups
- Landscape and recreation planning

- Park visitor research
- Representing Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) Parks on relevant networks, e.g., Wellington Regional Recreation Initiatives Group (WRRIG) and in partnerships with other agencies
- Working with Communications to publicise activities and developments

4. Comment

4.1 Introduction

During the year ended 30 June 2008 the marketing plan was implemented at a cost of \$189,396 or \$33,662 over budget. This is mainly because of more staff time being allocated to events and other marketing activities during the period.

Based on vehicle and pedestrian counts in the parks, there were an estimated 820,016 visits during the year, a 25 percent increase over 2006/07. This does not include visits to East Harbour Regional Park - estimates for that park will be included in the 2008/09 report.

This year saw the fourth of our annual telephone surveys ($n=500$) of regional residents. Key results included:

- Awareness of the regional parks remains at 86 percent (the same as last year), with people being aware of an average of just over three regional parks.
- 57 percent of the regional population (or 268,071 people) visited at least one of the regional parks in the past 12 months. This is a significant increase over last year's figure of 51 percent, a proportion that had remained static since these surveys began in 2004.
- 91 percent of visitors are quite (23 percent) or very (68 percent) satisfied with their experience. This is almost identical to 2007.

4.2 Events

Comprising 57 events, the Regional Outdoors Programme ran from 29 December to 19 April. Attendance at GWRC led events was 4,724, up 21 percent from 2007. Average attendances increased from 95 to 98 at our events and many enthusiastic comments were received from participants.

Much of the GWRC budget is spent on media to promote the Regional Outdoors Programme, including newspaper and radio advertising, and "overprints" of the *Elements* insert for mailing to people on our contacts list.

Other events during the year have included two major Arbor Day celebrations, the monthly Lion Foundation buggy walks, and numerous community and corporate planting days.

4.3 Promotional material

Our "suite" of 11 brochures forms the basis of our promotional literature.

Four of these were updated and reprinted during the year. These are stocked in GWRC brochure stands at visitor information centres and libraries throughout the Region. Staff members of those locations generally reorder supplies from our publications team. We support this by periodically contacting the sites to check stocks and delivering brochures as required.

We also published the first *Regional Parks Report*, which was sent to around 450 key people around the Region. These included regional and territorial authority councillors, heads of relevant agencies and community groups on our database.

Once again we advertised in the *Official Wellington Visitors Guide*, 180,000 copies of which are produced and distributed by Positively Wellington Tourism (PWT). The theme of *Urban Nature* is one of Wellington's big selling points and PWT's marketing team counts the regional parks as a significant component of this offering. Kaitoke Regional Park is an important destination for the various operators running the popular *Lord of the Rings* tours.

Web site updates are ongoing, with a focus on the quality and timeliness of the information. Many of our external site visitors are looking for information on the regional parks.

4.4 Signage

Staff completed seven new signs for the Marines' interpretation display on Whareroa Road at Queen Elizabeth Park. These replaced and updated the signs produced in 1993 for the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Marines' time at Paekakariki. A seventh sign, overlaying today's landscape with drawings of the original camp layouts, gives visitors a better idea of the historic camp's location.

The second major interpretation project of the year was the completion of writing, the design and construction of the Heritage Trail at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park. Given the sensitive nature of the subject, we commissioned Kapiti historian Chris MacLean to develop the text of the signs, basing the work on accredited research and working closely with ourselves and iwi. The end result is a trail that tells an intriguing story, increases people's knowledge of local history and why Battle Hill has its name, and is the preferred activity for visitors to the park. Since its launch in March, it has attracted plenty of positive feedback from the general public, schools and other interest groups.

We also worked with the Rimutaka Forest Park Trust to develop two signs for the Wainuiomata Recreation Area. These encourage people to leash their dogs on the tracks near the boundary with the recently established kiwi release area. Funded by the New Zealand Community Trust, these signs have been remarked on by other groups, e.g., Mainland Island Restoration Operation (MIRO), which is considering something similar to promote the newly released black robins in East Harbour Regional Park.

4.5 Friends group liaison

Ongoing relationships continue with the Friends of Queen Elizabeth and

Belmont Regional Parks, Friends of Maara Roa, and ARAC. Staff members attend monthly meetings, encourage the groups' involvement with parks projects and events, facilitate guest speakers on topics of interest and their progress towards a self-sustaining entity and ideally able to source external funding. Highlights this year include co-ordination with the Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park on development and support for the Queen Elizabeth Park cycling plan and the Friends of Maara Roa's excellent progress with their restoration project and associated profile.

4.6 Landscape and recreation planning

Officers spent considerable time from July to December in developing a landscape plan for Whareroa Farm, with the possibility in mind that GWRC would take on its management. Since the Department of Conservation (DoC) decided during the year to retain management over the property, we have passed that material to their Kapiti area office.

Our fixed term Landscape Architect resigned at the end of December 2007. It was not until May this year that we were able to bring on a full time replacement.

4.7 Park visitor research

In addition to the regular community telephone survey, we also ran a visit counting exercise at East Harbour Regional Park. At the same time we conducted visitor satisfaction surveys in the park. Generally, feedback was very positive, although there remains room to improve usage from the Wainuiomata entrances of the park.

This is the first time that counters have been installed at the park to estimate visitation on an ongoing basis. Monthly counts will be officially calibrated and reported from 1 July 2008.

4.8 Regional collaboration

Finalising and securing endorsement of *At the Heart* – the regional physical activity plan - was the focus of the WRRIG this year. With the vision of enhancing community well-being, we are working towards removing barriers and creating an environment that encourages people to lead more physically active lives. *At the Heart* was endorsed by all the governance arms of the partner organisations and has been adopted as one of four projects by the Regional Social Development Forum. GWRC Transport is now represented on the Lead Group, along with GWRC Parks.

We continue to foster productive relationships with other territorial authorities, Sport Wellington Region, the Parks Forum and the New Zealand Recreation Association.

4.9 Communications

Media releases and newsletter contributions were produced throughout the year, with the assistance of Corporate Communications. Centred mainly on the

Regional Outdoors Programme, these are also project based, e.g., completion of the new Marines panels, the Lakes Block circuit in East Harbour Regional Park. Almost all of this material was picked up by local media.

Other articles on the regional parks have featured in special-interest magazines, e.g., *Hutt Alive*, *Explore* (New Zealand Motor Caravan magazine).

5. Communication

The principal achievements outlined in this report will be included in the second *Regional Parks Report* to be published in October 2008. The target audience includes key volunteer groups and individuals, other territorial authorities and partner agencies on our mailing list.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

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

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