



THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Te Tari Taiwhenua

Community Outcomes Processes

At the Interface e-bulletin May 2008

Welcome to the latest edition of *At the Interface* – bringing you news, issues and events around local and central government working together for community outcomes.

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Project Twin Streams, Waitakere

Suzanne Sinclair, Northern Region Relationship Manager and Project Twin Streams



Project Twin Streams
working together for healthy streams and strong communities

Project Twin Streams is a nine year project, revitalising 56km of stream banks in Waitakere (New Zealand).

Although the focus is on streambank restoration, the vision of the project is much wider – it aims to build a sustainable catchment, tying in environmental, economic, social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing.

The vision of the project is to create a network of clean, fish-filled streams and bush-lined corridors, linked together by a network of paths and cycleways.

It is an innovative partnership between Waitakere City Council and local communities which involves weed removal, extensive re-planting with native trees and shrubs and on-going maintenance. The project also involves purchasing and relocating houses which were located within the river flood plain.

Waitakere City Council receives funding from the Auckland Regional Holdings (a division of ARC) to undertake Project Twin Streams.

The project aims to achieve better stormwater management, minimise the risk of flooding, improve water quality in streams and harbours, help restore the natural environment, offset carbon emissions and help create different ways to live, work, play and travel.

As a community-based project, community groups take 'ownership' of a section of stream, under the guidance of a community coordinator contracted to the project.

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Engaging the community

One of the key strategies for engaging the community is the series of community planting days, which are held over the May-September planting season. These events are a fun, educational way of capturing community interest.

Creative engagement is another important way of getting groups, particularly schools, involved in the project. This is done through painting, sculpture, music, mosaics, language, collage...a number of fantastic pieces are being produced each year, such as

- a fabulous 10 metre long concrete eel sculpture made from recycled materials and carrying the message 'healthy eels need healthy streams'
- a giant kokopu fish covered in messages written by children at a Matariki planting day
- a magical musical production carrying environmental messages
- a wonderful book put together by Flanshaw School in Te Atatu, full of children's art together with their thoughts and vision on how they are making a difference.

Since Project Twin Streams began in 2003, a total of 333,949 trees have been planted by the 13,000+ volunteers actively involved in the project. In 2007 alone, 111,124 plants were planted.

The project has now widened to include a Sustainable Homes/Sustainable Living demonstration project. This initiative, also delivered by the community, aims to assist householders to provide practical solutions to enable households to become more sustainable.

More information

<http://www.projecttwinstreams.org.nz>

<http://www.waitakere.govt.nz>

<http://www.sustainableauckland.govt.nz>

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It Takes Two to Tango - 2008 Community Outcomes Workshop

Over 260 people from 91 different central and local government, and community agencies attended the 2008 Interface Facilitation Team's annual workshop in Wellington. This year's topic was

It Takes Two to Tango: Aligning central and local government strategies around community outcomes.

The annual workshop is an opportunity for central and local government people to get together and listen to thought-provoking speakers, take part in interactive sessions, and make connections beyond their own organisations.

Feedback has been encouraging – here's what a few people thought

"Engaging, skilled and knowledgeable presenters. Fantastic!"

"Excellent interactive sessions, well run and very clear"

"Fantastic forum, excellent for encouraging collaboration, goes a long way toward increasing awareness of other organisations and building relationships - may we have many more opportunities like this"

“Explicit linkages to national strategies and good examples of how to make this happen at a local level”

Inspirational speakers

Minister of Local Government Nanaia Mahuta set the scene for the day. She referred to her own experience to encourage delegates to work hard and keep connected to achieve community outcomes.

‘Relationships as the cornerstone of collaboration’ was the theme of keynote speaker Geoff Mavromatis. Geoff’s ideas are drawn from extensive experience in New Zealand and overseas. He highlighted why investing in and valuing relationships is so important for organisations to achieve shared goals.

Shenagh Gleisner (Chief Executive of The Ministry of Women’s Affairs) motivated delegates by talking about the importance of leadership to influence outcomes across boundaries.

Bill Bayfield (Chief Executive of Environment Bay of Plenty) was humorous and informative in reminding the audience of the value of local and central government working together. Communication and making the effort to understand the way each other works is vital.

Interactive sessions

The annual workshop is a unique networking opportunity. It is a great chance to meet new people, exchange ideas with professional colleagues, and to stay in touch. Everyone can immediately put into practice the relationship building ideas and concepts learned on the day.

Issues, case studies and concepts about collaboration were discussed in a range of interactive workshops.

The ten sessions covered

- collaborative experiences, in New Zealand and overseas
- opportunities for building central and local government cooperation
- increasing understanding between central and local government of processes for working together
- tools and resources for collaboration.

Many of the sessions presented case studies of effective and successful relationships happening between local and central government, which are delivering on community outcomes.

The lively discussion showed the enthusiasm that exists for learning from experience and working together.

Themes

A key theme in all workshops was the importance of investing time and commitment to building relationships.

This means respecting different ways of doing things, and being prepared to have on-going contact, even though the benefits might not show until you’re a long way down the track. It is easier to maintain existing relationships than to re-establish old ones. Relationships are assets - they are valuable to organisations and to individuals, with returns for community outcomes that outweigh the costs.

Other themes to emerge

- working together requires good leadership, with the right people engaging at the right

levels

- communication is vital – clarifying roles, knowing what other agencies want, and what they can and can't do is important
- building strong internal relationships makes it easier to have strong external relationships
- it might 'take two to tango', but in reality there are many agencies with common goals – and lots of opportunities to build relationships
- many groups and agencies are already building and maintaining successful relationships, for the benefit of community outcomes.

The Interface Facilitation Team would like to thank all participants and presenters, who made 'It Takes Two to Tango' such a successful and engaging event. See you next year!

More information

<http://www.localcentral.govt.nz.govt.nz>

Email: tom.cato@dia.govt.nz

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Chris Game New Zealand Visit - March 2008

Rosalind Barry, Lower North Region Relationship Manager

Chris Game came to New Zealand to see the cricket. While New Zealand lost the series, we gained by hearing Chris talk about local government in the United Kingdom.

Chris Game is an honorary senior lecturer for the Institute of Local Government Studies, at Birmingham University. He says his specialty is "almost anything to do with the politics of sub-central government, especially in the United Kingdom, but also comparatively".

Game gave a presentation on recent developments in British local government. He discussed elections, electoral behaviour and electoral systems, political parties and political leadership, councillors and councilor roles, the political management of local authorities, member-officer relations and central-local government relations.

Urban renewal in Birmingham

Birmingham is England's biggest city outside London. It is multi-ethnic, with a population over one million. It is the largest manufacturing and engineering centre in England, but it also has the highest unemployment rate (5.7%) among large cities in the United Kingdom.

Game highlighted the role of the local authority in [economic development and urban renewal in Birmingham](#). The city's [economic strategy](#) aims to build on Birmingham's renaissance and to secure a strong and sustainable local economy, through partnership with a wide range of other organisations in the public, private, voluntary and community sector.

Successful collaborations are resulting in some very significant developments in the urban renewal of Birmingham. These projects have created jobs, increased tourism, and initiated the development of a world class conference centre - before it became the fashion!

Birmingham also wanted an iconic building and they certainly got one - [it is made of millions of metal buttons](#).

Warning against amalgamation

Game argues against 'bigger is better'. There is a significant push in the United Kingdom to amalgamate local authorities and markedly reduce their numbers. This will increase the populations the councils serve. The drivers around amalgamation are mainly political, for

supposed 'efficiency' gains.

But Game cautions that the more local government moves away from communities knowing their local council, the less meaningful councils will become to communities, and the less people will participate in council work. This is contrary to effective local democracy.

Additionally there is a move away from elected mayors, to mayors appointed by councillors. Game believes that mayors have considerable influence in national politics because they represent large numbers of constituents. With elected mayors councils have a greater chance of participating in national politics as an equal partner but with appointed mayors councils could be dominated by central government.

Game is concerned that New Zealand is following the British model. In his opinion, The Netherlands, Scandinavia and Denmark have better models for supporting local democracy and local participation.

Monitoring performance

Chris Game questioned the validity of performance indicators used to monitor English councils. Game challenged what was measured, and how useful these audits are to really improving local government practices and outcomes for communities. Local authorities are rated 'poor' to 'excellent'; this one descriptor is considered inadequate.

Game noted that in 2005 a number of 'poor performing' councils were identified in the United Kingdom, yet in 2006 there were no longer any 'poor performing' councils. What did this really mean in practical terms? Did this mean the councils knew how to tick the boxes to comply with the audit requirements? Or did it mean they were achieving better outcomes for their communities?

More information

[UK sub-central government: Some recent developments \(presentation by Chris Game\)](http://www.inlogov.bham.ac.uk/staff/Game.shtml)
<http://www.inlogov.bham.ac.uk/staff/Game.shtml>

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NZSSES Short Course on Sustainable Indicators

30 May, Auckland

The New Zealand Society for Sustainable Engineering and Science have announced the next in the 2008 series of one-day short courses and forums.

Registrations are open - email Vicky at vicky@nzsses.org.nz now for booking and enquiries.

Sustainable Indicators, Friday 30 May, AUT Conference Centre, 585 Great South Road, Penrose, Auckland. 9.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m. Presenter: Dr David Kettle.

For more information, download the programme from <http://www.nzsses.auckland.ac.nz/forums/index.htm#indicators>

This course is about sustainability indicators and frameworks. There is a growing awareness of the need to measure and monitor our 'quality of life', both in the present and into the future. The aim of the course is to provide participants a good working knowledge of the current state of indicators work throughout New Zealand and how this compares to other international work. Participants will debate their own views on indicator measures against the existing council's community outcomes and other national and international indicator programmes.

This course is particularly relevant to Local Government, practising engineers, planners, architects, developers, business and community groups.

\$295 including GST for members (NZSSES, IPENZ and RSNZ), \$375 including GST for non-members. Special full-time student rates available on application.

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Contact us

At the Interface is the newsletter of the Department of Internal Affairs Interface Facilitation Team.

If you have any feedback, questions, or items that you would like to include in At the Interface, please contact tom.cato@dia.govt.nz.

Relationship Managers

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