

6. PLASTIC BAG FREE KAIKOURA

General Manager responsible:	General Manager City Environment DDI 941-8656
Officer responsible:	City Water and Waste Manager
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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to request funding support to implement New Zealand's first plastic bag free district in Kaikoura.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Through the Kaikoura Enhancement Trust funding support is sought from the Canterbury Waste Joint Committee to enable a plastic bag free district to be introduced in the Kaikoura District over the next six months. Implementing plastic bag free Kaikoura District will provide details and insights to enable other districts throughout New Zealand to implement a similar initiative.
3. The planned implementation involves:
 - purchasing cloth bags, to be distributed and sold as alternatives to plastic bags,
 - education and awareness throughout schools, the community and businesses,
 - encouraging business buy-in and support,
 - promotions of funding providers and the Kaikoura District.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

4. The 2006/07 budget has a contingency amount of \$10,000.

Cotton Bag production		
Design		\$500
10,000 cotton bags (including printing)		\$15,500
Project management		\$5,000
Total cost	\$21,000	\$2.10 per bag
Funding		
Funding acquired to date	Zero Waste Trust New Zealand	\$2,500
Coordination	Kaikoura District Council	\$5,000
Request for funding		\$13,500
Total		\$21,000

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee consider the request.

BACKGROUND

5. New Zealanders use over 22 million plastic bags each week. Each one of these bags ends up in a landfill and is estimated to take 500 years to break down. The average family accumulates 60 plastic bags in only four trips to the grocery store.
6. Encouraging a reduction in the use of plastic bags among visitors (approximately 1 million each year) and residents (approximately 3,500) within Kaikoura will result in a significant reduction in the wind distribution of rubbish and increased awareness of the environment and our community's desire to protect it. Introducing a plastic bag free district to Kaikoura will result in significant environmental, social and financial benefits.
7. Relative to Kaikoura's unique coastal location and the global marine environment, plastic bags cause over 100,000 marine animal deaths every year, when animals mistake the bags for food or become entangled in them. It is estimated that plastic bags account for up to 5% of waste landfilled in the district and a significant proportion of litter around the coast line is plastic. Linked to the Kaikoura communities goals to achieve zero waste to landfill, reducing and potentially removing the plastic waste stream is advantageous to achieving this goal.
8. The Kaikoura District holds cultural significance to the Maori community and removing hazards to marine creatures and the coastal environment will benefit the traditions and futures of the Kaikoura's indigenous communities.
9. Enabling and encouraging the community to be involved in such a programme will develop community pride and generate further environmental awareness and respect.
10. Research, undertaken by *Kiwi Plastic Bag Concern Group* in New Zealand has shown that 56% of plastic bags are considered unnecessary by the users. Surveys of 400 individuals in New Zealand, calculated that 90% believed introducing a levy would reduce the number of plastic bags used in New Zealand.
11. In Pak & Save supermarkets, plastic bags are provided at a cost, one third of the number of bags are used per dollar spent, as compared to other supermarkets providing plastic bags 'free of charge'.

OPTIONS

12. Following research and implementation of similar programmes carried out globally the following is considered to be the most effective implementation method for the Kaikoura District:
 - (a) Distribute free cotton bags to Kaikoura households - to facilitate the uptake and use of re-usable cotton bags distribute two free cotton bags to each household (approximately 2,200 households : 4,400 bags). This approach was successfully implemented with the Coles Bay programme and resulted in strong community support and participation in the programme.
 - (b) Awareness – an educational campaign involving businesses, schools and the community would be undertaken. The awareness programme would involve:
 - Plastic bag free day: advertise and promote one Saturday as a plastic bag free day. For customers who require plastic bag a levy would be charged and funds donated to a designated charitable cause,
 - School collection: encourage local schools to collect plastic bags for one week – stock pile all bags to visually reinforce the numbers of bags used locally in one week.
 - Business involvement: work with local businesses to encourage staff training, promotions of alternative bags use, reductions in use of plastic bags. Implementation of the plastic bag free district would need to be realistic and achievable for local businesses to participate.

- (c) Plastic bag levy - businesses would be encouraged to charge a levy for plastic bags. The funds raised could be allocated to the production of additional cotton bags, or donated to waste minimisation and/or conservation activities. This approach was successfully implemented with both the Ireland and Taiwan programmes and resulted in significant reductions in use of plastic bags.
- (d) Revenue raised through sales of cotton bags would provide for the ongoing production of varied cloth bag sizes, corn starch and paper bag options.

PREFERRED OPTION

13. As outlined above.

ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS

The Preferred Option

	Benefits (current and future)	Costs (current and future)
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community ownership • Cohesion of local businesses through participation • Promotions of Kaikoura's action towards reducing environmental impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated with plastic bag levy • Associated with purchasing cloth bags
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of local environment and marine features • Reducing environmental contamination 	
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant global impact- through reduced consumption of plastic bags • Local impact reducing wind strewn rubbish • Well being of marine creatures 	
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual businesses would save money through reduced purchasing of plastic bags. • Revenue for businesses and program could be generated through sales of cotton bags. • Revenue is expected to provide for production of additional cotton bags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial outlay to purchase cotton bags • Minimal administrative costs for each business associated with plastic bag levy/tax at the end of each financial year. • Cost for businesses to purchase cloth bags would be in addition to purchasing plastic bags.
<p>Extent to which community outcomes are achieved: This plastic bag free district proposal aligns with the Kaikoura community outcome to reduce environmental impact as outlined in the LTCCP. The proposal also contributes to Council's commitment to the international Green Globe program, Zero Waste and Communities for Climate Protection Program.</p> <p>Impact on Council's capacity and responsibilities: The program will be coordinated by Council officers and funds managed by the charitable trust, the Kaikoura Enhancement Trust. The program will impact positively on the Council's responsibilities to achieve reductions in environmental impacts, reduce waste to landfill and involve the community.</p> <p>Effects on Maori: The program would benefit the local Maori community through the reduction of litter in marine and terrestrial areas.</p>		

Consistency with existing Council policies:

Promoting a reduction in the use of plastic bags aligns with many of the Kaikoura community's goals and commitments, including Green Globe, achieving Zero Waste to landfill, and ensuring the wellbeing of the coastal environment. It is expected that a reduction in the use of plastic bags would result in a significant decline in the amount of litter and wind blown rubbish. Such an initiative would also reflect positively on Kaikoura's image as a proactive tourism destination intent on ensuring the wellbeing of the environment.

Views and preferences of persons affected or likely to have an interest:

Over the last six months discussions have taken place with numerous local businesses regarding their support of the plastic bag free district initiative. Such businesses have included: Dolphin Encounter, Harnetts Butchery, Four Square Supermarket, R&R Sport and Innovative Waste Kaikoura. Similarly, conversations with members of the community, both rural and urban residents and schools highlight strong support for such an initiative that would enhance the environment and promote the district positively while reducing the environmental impact.

The local schools involved in the Enviro Schools program have acknowledged support for such an initiative as exemplified through the interactive 'Crafty Cray webquest' located on councils website.

Other relevant matters:

Plastic Bag Free Programs originated in Tasmania Australia and have extended globally over the last five years. Destinations such as Ireland and Taiwan have achieved significant reductions (up to 90%) in the use of plastic bags by introducing a levy, others such as Bangladesh and South Africa have introduced legislation to reduce the use of plastic bags. Introducing a program that facilitates consumer choice will generate positive support and buy-in.

Kaikoura is well known internationally as an environmentally aware community and the opportunity to implement a trial Plastic Bag Free program throughout the District would result in experiences and understanding relevant to districts throughout the Canterbury region and more widely throughout New Zealand.