

6. THE CHRISTCHURCH OUTDOOR ADVENTURE AND EDUCATION CENTRE

Officer responsible Leisure Manager	Author Alistair Graham and Alan Direen
Corporate Plan Output: Queen Elizabeth II Park	

The purpose of this report is to outline and consider a proposal received from Mr John Horan and Mr Wayne Cooper who seek Council support for the establishment of an Outdoor Adventure and Education Centre in Christchurch.

The proponents of the proposal have previously addressed the Parks and Recreation Committee at which time they were requested to present a formal proposal to the Council. It is their intention that the centre will operate as a Charitable Trust. The proposal seeks \$200,000 as interim financial support and assistance from the Christchurch City Council to enable the funding of three salaries for 12 months. This would provide sufficient time for the staff to secure capital and revenue donors, develop marketing material and create the necessary infrastructure.

The vision for the centre is to establish a children and youth outdoor adventure and education centre within Christchurch City. The prime focus of the centre will be to make available to all youth, the opportunity for complete development, physically, psychologically and socially. The project will bring into the city and make available to all young people, the benefits and experience offered by Outward Bound type concepts at a cost affordable to the total population.”

The proposal is based upon the philosophy that “individuals are usually more capable (mentally, emotionally & physically) than they perceive themselves to be. If given the opportunity to challenge themselves in a supportive atmosphere, they can discover this excellence. Once excellence is discovered it allows the individual to blossom in a well-rounded, complete manner and beneficially affects all that they attempt.

Such a centre could give children and youth of all ages the chance to develop physical and social confidence and skills not always available within the normal education system. Programmes would be developed through a series of levels incorporating aspects of the primary, intermediate and secondary school education curricula.”

The proposal outlines the following objectives for the centre:

“To give all youth the opportunity to benefit from the programmes traditionally run by centres such as The Outward Bound School and the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre.

To provide all Canterbury schools with the opportunity (instructors, equipment, facilities and necessary planning) to promote and conduct effective and safe Education outside the Classroom (EOTC) programmes.

Teach students the skills in foundation outdoor pursuit subjects including:

- Abseiling
- Rock climbing
- White water kayaking
- Sea kayaking

Tramping
Bushcraft
Mountaineering
Bushcraft and bush survival
Personal development courses
Confidence courses

To teach students social skills such as:

Social communication
Leadership
Problem solving
Initiative training
Decision-making
Conflict resolution
Goal setting
Self-confidence, self esteem
Team work
Specific courses designed to better prepare youth for the growing complexities of the world today.

To provide a centrally located outdoor adventure and education centre that is economical and accessible to all within the community.”

The proposal identifies “all children and youth in the Canterbury region (and extended regions of the South Island), regardless of age, sex, race, physical ability or financial well being”, as the primary target market for the centre.

The proposers “believe that the children and youth of Canterbury are not being provided access to the vital areas of self-development that a centre such as this would provide.

There is also evidence of increasing youth problems within the city including crime; drug, alcohol and solvent abuse and even increased suicide rates with few effective programmes designed to combat this. Many existing programmes in place are directed at the symptoms of the problem and not the core issues. It is the intention of this centre to give our youth the life skills needed to cope with these pressures and to tackle core issues.

The centre is for all children and youth and not aimed specially at those considered ‘youth at risk’”.

In addition, courses could be developed for:

Youth Organisations and Social Services
Learning Institutions
The Justice Department and Police
Community Groups
Foreign Students.

The proposal details financial projections for the centre through to 31 March 2002. Income projections have been prepared assuming the trust will operate five course activities (water, rock climbing, bush orienteering, confidence and personal development). A corporate subsidy of 50 cents for each \$1 paid by school students has been projected on the basis of determining the level of funding required for the centre to approach a breakeven position.

The proposers believe that “one of the greatest assets of the centre will be to provide a pool of resources for the education system to expand the opportunities offered for students and schools to participate in EOTC programmes”.

They believe that “the education system cannot offer to all students many essential life skills in the area of communication, social understanding, tolerance, leadership and outdoor education. Social problems such as low self-esteem, low confidence levels, stress and social tolerance are particularly relevant for students from low socio-economic areas and explains why some schools experience more problems than others. They believe their proposal to be “a unique concept to develop such a centre in a city.”

Location Options

The centre would require purpose-built indoor and outdoor facilities in order to provide all year training. The proponents of the funding proposal are open to suggestions from the Council as to the possible location of the centre, within the city.

The Curletts Road Reserve and Ferrymead Wetlands Reserve are seen as possible options for the centre whilst Wigram Air Base and Queen Elizabeth II Park are their preferred options. The proposal identifies some existing QEII Park buildings as available for use. Aside from publicly accessible pools and gymnasiums, Park management is unaware of existing buildings that would be available at this time.

The proposal indicates that the Redemptorist Monastery in Bower Avenue would be an ideal location as an accommodation base for the centre. The Charitable Trust may wish to consider the Monastery as an ideal base for centre itself.

Funding

The proposal suggests levels of funding required for building provision, upgrades or new outdoor activity areas and for equipment, vehicles etc.

Estimated funding required is in the region of \$12m to \$15m. International, national and local corporate funding will be pursued. Lotteries Board and local authority funding will also be required. The trust would specifically request the Christchurch City Council for \$2m in funding over the next two years. In addition, the trust would also seek Council provision of land and assistance to purchase the Redemptorist Centre in Bower Avenue.

Review

Philosophically and educationally the proposal appears to have some merit. Youth training of this type may well deal with concerns of a societal nature. Whose role it is to fill these gaps in society should be subject to rigorous debate.

While QEII Park is the favoured option for the location, this activity does not fit with the current recreational and sporting mix and would absorb space currently used for other activities. Some of this land has existing leases.

It is not for the Council to become involved in sourcing locations, rather the proposers should be in dialogue, seeking opportunities at Wigram, Ferrymead, or elsewhere.

Discussion should also take place with Christchurch Polytechnic and the College of Education who already provide leadership courses, in this field.

The project is ambitious and expensive and, like Cobham Outward Bound School, would require extensive long-term funding.

The Council, whilst admiring the initiative of the proposers, should decline any involvement at this time, but welcome further dialogue should extensive business plans and more detailed financial projections be provided.

Recommendation: That Christchurch City Council decline to support the Christchurch Outdoor Adventure and Education Centre.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.