

16. RUBBISH FREE PARKS

Officer responsible Parks and Waterways Manager	Author Kelly Hansen, DDI 941 8688, Barry Samson, DDI 941 7550
Corporate Plan Output: Regional Parks	

The purpose of this report is to seek comments from Community Boards to report to the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee regarding the Rubbish Free Parks proposal.

CONTEXT

In August 2000, the Council recognised the opportunity for Christchurch City to become an international leader in sustainability and become a showcase example of a good place to live. The Council committed to leading a process to build a sustainable Christchurch. Rubbish Free Parks will support the sustainable Christchurch image, set the benchmark for other waste reduction projects and will contribute to achieving the Council's strategic objectives.

Rubbish Free Parks is a concept that has been successfully implemented in other parts of the country and overseas. It is an accepted practice that can now be applied in Christchurch.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rubbish Free Parks involves people taking responsibility for their own rubbish by taking it away for recycling, rather than leaving it in a park where it ends up in the landfill. It will increase people's awareness of their impact on the environment and encourage them to reduce, reuse, and recycle. The benefits of the project include environmental education and awareness, reduced maintenance costs, and clean parks without unsightly rubbish and associated problems. Similar "pack it in, pack it out" projects operate successfully in Auckland Regional Parks, the Department of Conservation estate, and in Park Victoria in Melbourne. Rubbish Free Parks is another small step towards a sustainable Christchurch.

1. Relevant Current Policy

The concept meets the Council's strategic goals as follows.

- (a) Strategic Objective C. Environmental Sustainability
C4. Promoting efficient use of physical resources, an increase in recycling and material recovery, and a reduction of waste.

This is reflected in the Waste Management Plan's vision (as amended by the Council on 28 June 2001) which is:

"That the whole community will manage solid waste in ways that:

- avoid irreversible damage to the physical environment
- minimise the adverse effects of solid waste management generally
- use waste as a resource

The Plan also sets a target to reduce the overall waste stream to residual disposal by "65% minimum, 100% maximum by 2020" using 1994 as the base year and taking account of Real Costs.

- (b) Corporate Environmental Policy Statement
- Promote environmental care through the Council's influence over others.
 - Be committed to the internationally recognised waste management practise of source reduction, reuse, recycling, resource recovery and environmentally safe residue disposal.
 - Education and Public Awareness – The Council will promote an awareness within the community of environmental matters as they affect the City.
 - Open Spaces and Planting – The Council will manage and maintain the open spaces of the City in ways that enhance amenity, avoid adverse effects and minimise maintenance requirements.
- (c) The Council also has a responsibility under *The New Zealand Waste Strategy* to ensure, by December 2005, "that procedures for waste minimisation have been addressed for all facilities and assets they manage....".

2. Description Of The Proposal

The aims of the Rubbish Free Parks project are to:

- Increase awareness of environmental issues,
- Develop a more sensitive attitude towards the environment,
- Provide clean, unspoilt areas by reducing the negative effect of rubbish in our natural and wild regional parks,
- Reduce associated problems of rubbish including visual impact, hygiene, smell, wasps and flies, dogs and rats.

The Council sends a strong message to the community encouraging recycling at home. This only goes half way. The process for recycling waste exists and yet we encourage landfill waste by placing rubbish bins in parks. Experience shows that rubbish often attracts more rubbish but when bins are removed people take their rubbish away. Rubbish Free Parks promotes the concept of “reduce, reuse, recycle” with responsibility beginning at home. The proposal involves removing rubbish bins from some of our regional parks and educating people to take responsibility for their own rubbish instead of always expecting others to clean up after them.

Participants can feel good that they are doing something to help the environment and also that better use is being made of Council resources. They will be contributing to sustainability, social responsibility and keeping our parks clean.

The parks to be promoted as rubbish free are:

- The Groynes
- Bottle Lake Forest Park
- Port Hills Reserves
- Halswell Quarry Park
- Seafield Park
- Travis Wetland
- Spencer Park
- Styx Mill Conservation Reserve
- Taylors Mistake

Information and education will be vital to achieving the goals of this project. Success of the policy will depend on park visitors not wanting to pollute the natural environment as much as on Council endorsement of the policy. It is proposed to promote the concept through the following ways:

- Media – The Press and Community Newspapers
- City Scene and Our Environment
- Large banners at the entrances to regional parks
- Signage within the parks
- Using a branding iron to mark park furniture with a rubbish free symbol
- Environmental education programmes
- Information included in park brochures re the rubbish free status of the park

It will also be necessary to ensure that the parks are maintained rubbish free by engaging a contractor to pick up any rubbish that is discarded in the park. The existing contracts for emptying rubbish bins will be cancelled and cleaning of the park grounds will be increased.

It is intended to go rubbish free over the coming summer beginning in November. During the first year of implementation the focus will be on educating park visitors and raising awareness of the issue. The following year is likely to have a focus on enforcement until rubbish removal becomes accepted standard practice.

3. Issues For Consideration

(a) Costs

Implementation of Rubbish Free Parks can be funded within existing budgets. Money currently budgeted for bin emptying contracts will be reallocated to promoting the rubbish free concept, educating park users, and engaging a contractor to pick up any rubbish that is discarded in the parks. It is expected that the cost of Rubbish Free Parks will reduce over time and level out after 2 –3 years as it becomes accepted practice. Long term savings can be utilised in more proactive ways such as environmental education programmes.

(b) **Experience Elsewhere**

The Rubbish Free concept is working successfully in other parts of the country and overseas. The Department of Conservation (DoC) decided to remove rubbish bins from 'road ends', camp grounds, and picnic areas in the late 1980's. There was general disbelief among DoC employees that such a concept would work. However, the amount of rubbish in national parks has dropped dramatically. The same issue was faced by the Auckland Regional Council in the mid 1990's and yet the rubbish free concept was successfully carried out.

(c) **Public Reaction**

Initially an unfavourable response to the concept can be expected from the public. In Auckland there was some adverse reaction in the first few months – negative letters to the editor and the odd comment on talk back radio. However, this was offset by outlining the need for the policy, the sustainability aspect, and it was in keeping with the recycling message strongly advocated in the environmental education programmes. By the following summer, surveys indicated that the policy was the right one and it was supported by over 95% of respondents.

Taylor's Mistake will require special attention due to the diverse uses of the site. Negotiation with the local community will be required before implementation of the project can occur to resolve the issue of large amounts of rubbish being dumped in the existing rubbish bins by visitors and bach owners.

CONCLUSION

With good communication and education Rubbish Free Parks will raise environmental awareness and reduce maintenance costs in our regional parks. The concept is a practical application of Sustainable Christchurch.

THE NATURAL STEP

Condition:	Meets condition ✓ ✓ -x	How it helps meet condition:
The natural step		
Reduce non-renewable resource use	✓	The project will encourage minimal waste and this will be reinforced through education programmes and publicity campaigns. People will have to take more responsibility for their own waste and not rely on others to remove their rubbish for them.
Eliminate emission of harmful substances	✓	The project promotes a more sensitive approach to dealing with waste, i.e. recycling.
Protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystems	✓	The project aims to keep rubbish out of natural environments and treat it elsewhere. It will prevent rubbish and waste causing adverse affects in parks. Take nothing but photos and leave nothing but footprints
People needs met fairly and efficiently	Na	Na - see people step + economic step
The people step		
Basic needs met	x	
Full potential developed	✓	Through education, the project will increase people's awareness of their impact on the environment and encourage them to take responsibility for their own actions.
Social capital enhanced	✓	Develops sense of ownership and responsibility for the natural environment.
Culture and identity protected	✓	Develops respect for natural heritage.
Governance and participatory democracy strengthened	✓	People looking after their own parks.
The economic step		
Effective and efficient use of all resources	✓	Project can be implemented within existing budgets, long term savings to be made in maintenance. Benefits to be gained from education, flow-on effects, e.g. People see how to reduce rubbish in parks and may think about how they can reduce rubbish in the workplace.
Job rich local economy	x	
Financial sustainability	✓	Reduced maintenance costs

Recommendation: That the Rubbish Free project in the Council's regional parks be supported.

Chairman's

Recommendation: I am doubtful about changing Christchurch people's psychology to make this proposal work. However, since we have a problem of rubbish in our parks, some aspects of the proposal could be trialled in some parks.