



Celebrating new ideas

2008 New Zealand Post Group
Local Government Excellence Awards

Project Submission Template

Name of Project

Coromandel Peninsula Blueprint

Name of entering council/s

Councils: Thames-Coromandel District Council and Environment Waikato

Other partners: Hauraki Whaanui and the Department of Conservation

Category

Joined Up Local Government

1. The Rationale for the Project and Expected Benefits

The Coromandel Peninsula is simply stunning. Its natural environment attracts thousands of tourists each year and provides a home for passionate individuals who together, form diverse and vibrant communities.

In the past fifteen years, the peninsula has undergone a period of rapid growth, culminating in a summer season which sees 140,000 people pour into the district for a summer break. Long-term planning projections indicate that growth is likely to continue. Planning and statutory authorities need to be well informed if they are to make the best possible long-term decisions.

It is also clear that no planning organisation can – or should – work in isolation. While organisations like Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC), Environment Waikato (EW), Hauraki Whaanui and the Department of Conservation (DoC) are separate, by working together they are far more likely to achieve their aims.

Nor do the roles of each agency stand in isolation. For example, a third of Coromandel land is managed by DoC while land, rivers, harbour and coastal planning is jointly shared between TCDC and EW.

Agencies need to work together if they are to meet community expectations, avoid ‘consultation fatigue’, ensure sustainable solutions and align plans. In simple terms, that’s why the Coromandel Peninsula Blueprint project was developed. It aims to help different organisations with a significant stake in the peninsula to clearly understand community aspirations so that a 50-year *integrated plan* can be developed. This plan – the Blueprint – will help manage development in a way which protects and enhances the special character of the Coromandel Peninsula for future generations.

The Blueprint project will help different agencies agree long-term planning goals that will shape and influence their own plans well into the future; including 10-year plans (LTCCPs), District Plans, Regional Plans and Regional Policy Statement, and DoC’s Conservation Management Strategy. Local Iwi were particularly keen on this approach.

But there were also other benefits from the Blueprint project. They included:

- *economic benefits.*

It is estimated that over \$35,000 was saved because of a combined consultative approach. There was also a significant sharing of costly resources between agencies (GIS mapping, sharing of mailouts to ratepayers, sharing of specialist staff skills) etc. The project enables those involved to collate a huge amount of information held across all the agencies in one place so that in the future all agencies (and others) can access it.

- *time benefits*

Blueprint allows each agency to progress a number of key projects simultaneously. It provided a ‘one-stop shop’ forum for stakeholders to engage with the different agencies at one time. The project, because of its scope, gained significant political buy-in from time-poor individuals.

- *relationship benefits*

While each agency already has a relationship with the other, Blueprint significantly strengthened all relationships, at a number of different levels. It provided key players – including politicians – with a greater understanding of the long-term issues facing the district, and the need for a co-ordinated response.

2. Linkage to Councils’ Strategic Direction

For both TCDC and EW, ‘planning for the future’ is a key strategic outcome. It is a key strategic issue for DoC in its Crown role, and for Maori in terms of kaitiakitanga.

For TCDC and EW, there are clear strategic outcomes in their 10-Year Plans which relate directly to the Blueprint project. TCDC has already agreed with its community that it needs to understand the growth pressures facing the district and influence and guide future development of the District.

TCDC's vision and mission both reflect a strong desire for the peninsula to develop in a way that embraces its spirit and natural beauty. EW's mission is working with communities to develop ways of living that will sustain our region for generations to come.

Regional and District community outcomes all strongly link to what the Coromandel Peninsula Blueprint is trying to achieve.

In addition, TCDC has a rolling review of its District Plan underway and EW is starting to review its Regional Policy Statement. DoC is developing a Waikato Conservation Management Strategy. Hauraki Whaanui is involved in, or will be involved in, each of these projects.

Given that, there were real “work” outcomes to which this project is aligned. The Blueprint project will feed almost directly into many of these processes, avoiding the need for repeat consultation, and saving significant time and resource.

3. Project Planning

The Blueprint project is an integrated planning process aimed at ‘joining up’ our processes and outcomes. Our four partners believe that:

- we can't plan for the water unless we know what's happening on the land, and vice versa
- communities don't exist in isolation
- agencies and Maori with statutory responsibilities for land and water must work together, and
- local, district, regional and national objectives are important.

We've had to think outside the square in putting this into practice – it hasn't been done before.

A detailed and budgeted project plan with outcomes, timeframes and management goals covering:

- how the technical work would be carried out,
 - how political input and guidance would be managed,
 - how communications would be developed and delivered,
- was agreed by a technical team made up of a variety of skill sets.

The team is jointly led by EW and TCDC with strong support from chief executives. It met regularly and also made use of sub-project teams to allow work to be progressed more quickly.

Key milestone phases were scoped; a research phase, an “issues and options” phase, a consultation phase; and then finalising a blueprint plan. Timeframes were set for each phase.

The research phase included:

- Preparing a district and trends profile and identifying 10 distinct work areas
- Collating and comparing community aspirations of local, district and Hauraki Whaanui communities as well as statutory resource management objectives

The issues and options phase included:

- identifying key issues upon which consultation would take place, and
- formulating four ‘possible futures’ for people to provide feedback on.

Community consultation has been completed on the options, and the feedback will be analysed by September 2008. This has been achieved on time and on budget. The next stage is to develop a ‘preferred future’ for the Coromandel Peninsula and canvass it with the community and stakeholders.

4. Project Management

An **integrated technical staff team** which meets fortnightly, drives the project. It is made up of senior representatives from all four project partners and includes a range of expertise.

An agenda is developed prior to each meeting and at every team meeting, an action schedule is produced. This is monitored at each subsequent meeting.

Since not all team members have access to video conferencing facilities, the team relies heavily on email, and on making best use of meeting dates. External facilitators are used where appropriate.

Each technical team member is responsible for keeping their agency/group informed. For example, TCDC and EW staff report to their senior management and elected members at least quarterly.

A **Political Steering Group** for the project was set up with representatives from all four partners. This is chaired by the Mayor of TCDC and meets at least every 3 months.

The project's technical team reports to the Political Steering Group. Recommendations from this group go back to respective councils for formal decision-making.

5. Relationship Management and Communication with Stakeholders

A communication specialist was involved in developing a comprehensive communications and consultation plan. Along with developing strategies for other stakeholders, the plan included a feedback process developed specifically for 11 local Iwi, as well as a strong emphasis on engaging with young people.

From the beginning, communication with stakeholders was a focus of the project. This was done through developing and utilising a wide range of tools and techniques including:

- regular technical team meetings and briefings
- strong communication with the Political Steering Group
- workshops and targeted briefings e.g. for infrastructure providers
- wanaanga
- regular committee reports
- a dedicated website (www.coroblueprint.govt.nz) with an on-line feedback form,
- a specifically developed Bebo youth forum site,
- a direct mail campaign to ratepayers (important because 50 per cent of TCDC ratepayers live out of the district)
- competitions to encourage participation,
- a targeted media strategy
- use of ratepayer newsletters; useful in capturing holiday makers.
- targeted radio and print advertising,
- Hauraki Whaanui open days
- community information days
- utilisation of a Blueprint caravan around the district
- regular e-mail updates to key stakeholders.

The Blueprint is also about demonstrating that the project is relevant – that the partners had heard and incorporated local community aspirations as well as other objectives, and that a genuine commitment had been made.

We began preparing the community six months before consultation on the 'possible futures' began in April 2008. Key spokespeople were appointed and everyone contributed. A number of key stakeholders were bought on board early. For example, local radio station Coromandel FM did a series of interviews with project members.

This was no 'pie-in-the-sky' consultation process. In order to engage people as much as possible, and to make the process 'real', we developed a picture of four specific "possible futures" to comment on – Business As Usual; Two Major Centres, Four Major Centres and Dispersed Villages (see appendices for consultation document).

Involvement of Hauraki Maori was key to managing relationships and involvement with local Maori. The technical team appointees and the Political Steering Group kaumatua were integral communication links with their communities.

As a result there was much community discussion about the Blueprint which was exactly what we wanted. Some of it was supportive; some not. There were letters to the editor, newspaper articles and feedback forms flooding in. There was a high community awareness of the project with the public talking about Blueprint in shops and at local events.

More than 2000 feedback forms were received during the consultation process in April/May 2008; a return of around 8 per cent of TCDC households. More than 150 people attended six community information days. Detailed feedback was gained from key infrastructure providers including Transit NZ, PowerCo and Land Transport NZ.

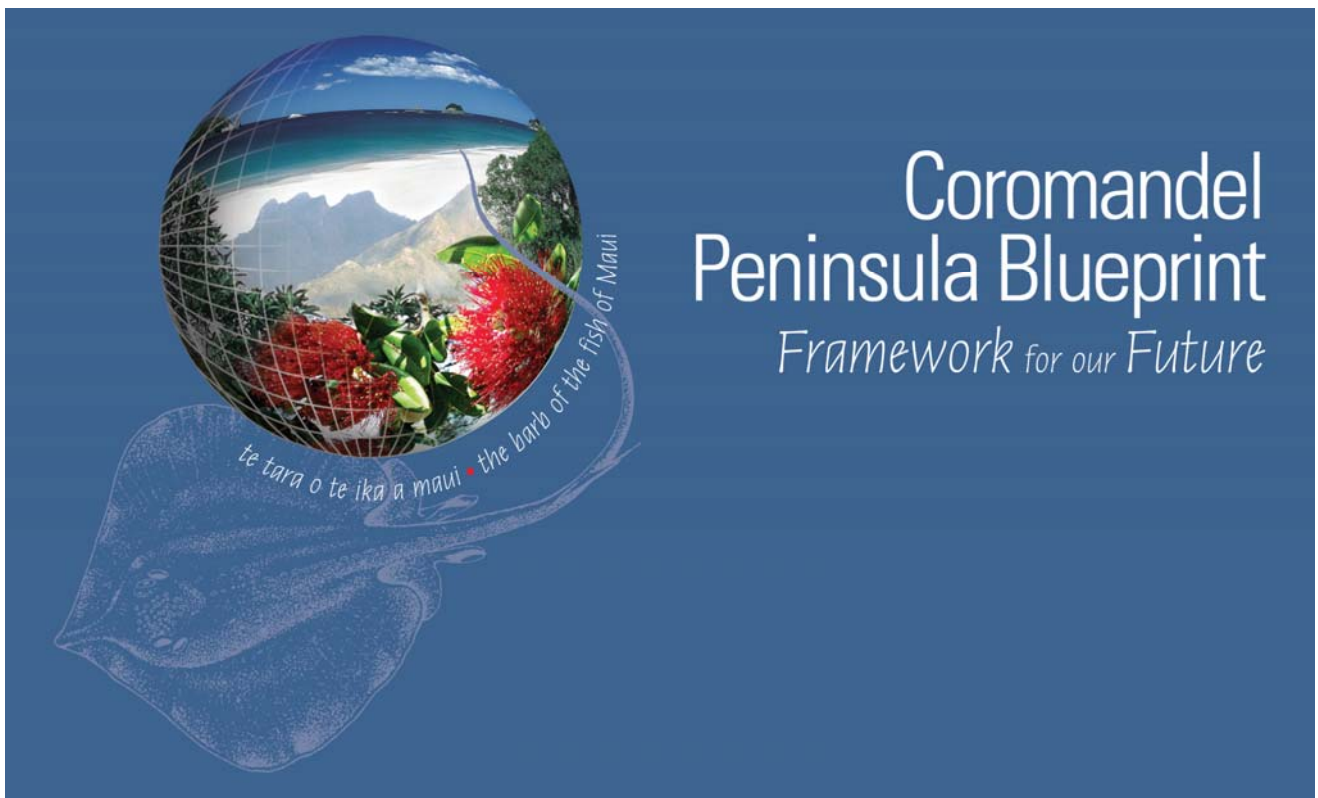
A recent NRB survey of TCDC ratepayers noted specific comments. When asked about TCDC, people said they liked:

- "consulting on the Blueprint. It gives us some say in the district".
- "being sent Blueprint. It's a good idea to get feedback from non-resident ratepayers about long term plans."

Nearly 150 children and teenagers gave their feedback via a competition in which they were asked to describe what they loved about living on the Coromandel and what they might do to make it better (see appendices). They expressed their views with photos, drawings, poetry and even DVD presentations.

Several schools were invited to get involved so children could have their say and a Bebo site was set up. Some schools sent in feedback efforts as part of classroom exercises.

6. Innovation and Originality



This project wasn't about us or about any one agency – it was about the future, and a different way of doing things. We wanted an aspirational 'look' for the project. We decided *not* to include individual logos in any project promotional material – something which doesn't often happen in local government!

Our logo represents what the project was all about. It features a globe/crystal ball, Coromandel scenes, a sting ray and the words Te Tara o Te Ika a Maui. This reflects Maori legend which refers to the North Island as te ika a Maui with Maui's fish a stingray. This branding was used extensively in all promotional material. It helped to profile the project and positioned Coromandel Blueprint as 'special' and 'important'.

Blueprint's very own Bebo site

The Blueprint Bebo social networking webpage aimed to get young people talking about Blueprint and what it meant for them. The Bebo site can be accessed by any Bebo member and is moderated by project staff. It generated a lot of youth discussion and questions, all of which fed into the consultation process.

Time travelling

It's hard to think 50 years in the future. But it's easy to remember the past. To help, the project team seconded a 1970s retro caravan (see appendices) which we branded and took around to all community information days. The caravan displayed historical photos and a DVD that the team produced in association with the NZ Film Archive (cost \$325) showing the district 50 years ago. We invited people to step into the caravan to view the DVD, step back in time – and then start to think about the future. It worked. More than 170 people talked directly to the team and engaged in the project.

We took the caravan to the Whangamata Beach Hop in April 2008 (a major event attracting around 70,000 people) to promote the project and encourage people to get involved. A photo of three staff dressed in 1950's costumes outside the caravan featured in *NZ Hot Rod* magazine's special Beach Hop edition. It read... "*These darlings are from the Thames-Coromandel District Council and are doing a road show about the future of the Coromandel - where will we be in 50 years time? Great to see they got into the theme*". It was fantastic publicity, and allowed us to connect with people who may not have engaged with us otherwise.

7. Evaluation Framework

We set ourselves a number of measurable targets for the project, including:

- receiving a high number of feedback forms (over 2,000 received)
- aimed for five community open days (did six)
- holding seven waananga with Iwi
- measuring and analysing media coverage beyond limited paid advertising
- measuring the number of Bebo hits (almost 250)
- ensuring political representation at open days (achieved each time)
- meeting directly with key stakeholders (met with Transit, PowerCo, Land Transport NZ, Federated Farmers and many other local groups)
- measuring feedback – positive or otherwise – from service and infrastructure providers
- informally measuring the level of community awareness and understanding of the project
- measuring the understanding and support of the project from politicians and senior executives

In addition, we measured progress on a fortnightly basis from action points agreed at each team meeting. If we were concerned about 'slippage', we re-prioritised work accordingly.

8. Category Specific Criteria – Joined-up Local Government

None of the partners in this project could have done on their own what the Blueprint project has already achieved. By working together, we were able to combine resources and specialist skills as well as utilise specific strengths of participating agencies. We were able to gain buy in from politicians across the board who recognised the advantages both to the district and to their own constituents, as well as engage with key stakeholders.

Joined-up Outcomes

Blueprint is about joining up what each agency does separately into one project. It allowed us to achieve some very specific outcomes. They include:

- defining a process for aligning district and regional statutory documents
- integrated catchment management
- developing a single process to help meet different statutory requirements
- offering a single pathway for people and stakeholders to talk to all four partners at once
- providing a vehicle for infrastructure and service providers to access and input into a co-ordinated future strategy

- the sharing of ideas, experience, skills and perspectives of all four partners,
- highlighting community awareness of issues facing the district and how different activities impact on others, and
- ensuring cost-effectiveness through avoiding duplication of work programmes and sharing resources
- finding a unique way of doing things beyond what we have to do.

Community Buy-In

Blueprint was only possible through a collaborative, committed and relevant approach from all parties. Members of the public who attended community information days and wanaanga had the opportunity to speak to representatives from TCDC, EW, Hauraki Whaanui and DoC – in one place, at one time. We were there together – as a team - working alongside each other but representing different agencies.

We had a lot of feedback, including from young people who traditionally do not engage in these types of processes. It was important that people could see a real intention by the partners to engage with them.

Hauraki Whaanui representatives have shown strong commitment and involvement in informing Hauraki Whaanui and seeking advice and guidance whether it be through community information days or council workshops. They led the Iwi consultation and promoted Hauraki Whaanui aspirations to the Political Steering Group.

DoC used the Blueprint to help in developing a draft Waikato Conservation Management Strategy (CMS). It used a Blueprint hui to promote its CMS process to Iwi.

A major newspaper feature on the Blueprint project was written by the business editor of the daily *Waikato Times* for its 'Business Insight' publication – prompted by the Blueprint team. In researching the feature, the journalist spoke to a range of stakeholders including PowerCo, local business people and local developers about the project (see appendices).

PowerCo's eastern region planning manager, Neville Goodwin said the following.

"It gives everybody the same map to follow and from an infrastructure point of view, that's important," Goodwin said.

"It's a little ad-hoc at the moment and we tend to be reactive, because we are waiting for growth to occur, rather than proactive. If you spend millions of dollars in infrastructure and growth occurs somewhere else, that is just a waste of effort."

Goodwin said the company would benefit from more Blueprint schemes across the region. "They are like gold to us."

Resourcing and Efficiencies

TCDC and EW could not have achieved the project individually using just their own resources. Both benefited enormously. For example, the Hauraki Whaanui members led consultation with Iwi, with both councils sharing the cost. By pooling resources, staff and funding, we were able to achieve a great deal on a very limited budget for a project of this size and scale.

With the issues and options phase and community consultation now complete, the project has already demonstrated and achieved joined-up government. This is now an embedded value of the project. It is no longer an aspiration, but a demonstrated reality.