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**CAWTHRON MARLBOROUGH
ENVIRONMENT
AWARDS
2023**

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JUDGES' REPORT

COMMUNITY INNOVATION

ENVIROHUB MARLBOROUGH

INTERVIEWED

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JUDGES

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INTRODUCTION

Envirohub Marlborough has a long-term vision: “Ā mātau moemoeā – a community focused on sustainability, working together to enhance and protect our Marlborough environment”. Its aim is to bring together a range of environmental initiatives under one broad umbrella, strengthen relationships and build robust, durable, mutual support networks.

This approach makes better use of scarce resources, avoids duplication and builds collaboration among groups seeking to support local communities to protect and promote local ecosystems and environments.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Envirohub Marlborough operates from The Picton Environment Centre, a shared premises with Picton Dawn Chorus and Kaipupu Wildlife Sanctuary in Auckland Street, Picton.

Each organization is independent with its own board structure and strategic goals. The hub allows them to retain their unique identities while increasing efficiencies through sharing office space, printers, storage space and providing a venue for engagement with the public.

Envirohub Marlborough is part of the broader network Environment Hubs Aotearoa, a growing collective of 15-20 groups. These organisations share similar goals of action on climate change and biodiversity and have banded together to create a larger, more effective collective voice.

Funding comes from Ministry for the Environment, based on agreed criteria and distributed to Environment Hubs across the country. Envirohub Marlborough has attracted funding and is actively engaged with sharing knowledge and experience, access to funding streams and core critical organizational requirements such as recruitment policies, health and safety, insurance and auditing processes.

There is a clear understanding of the need for good leadership and good governance and great thought has been put into the governance structure. Envirohub has a Board of Trustees and a General Manager responsible for the Hub's strategic priorities.

Envirohub Marlborough operates in four key areas – Conservation Kids NZ, Sustainable Communities, Zero Waste Events and Marine Conservation. Each programme has a paid co-ordinator to ensure continuity and focus. This means things happen in a timely manner. These roles, combined with well briefed and managed volunteers have been very effective. Key projects are:



1. **Conservation Kids NZ** – whānau is central to this project, which aims to have an inspiring and fun monthly family event on the calendar. These activities are about “educating and inspiring young minds to take action for conservation”.

The current focus is the Save our Species Programme. The benefits of this type of engagement are multi-layered. It provides a learning experience for young people and builds collaboration between like-minded organisations, communicating their activities and supporting their endeavours. Each activity aims to have an outdoor component and is accompanied by relevant information and activities. Other species-specific sessions have been held at Kaipupu Sanctuary, Koru Wildlife Centre and the Pekapeka Project in Te Hoiere.

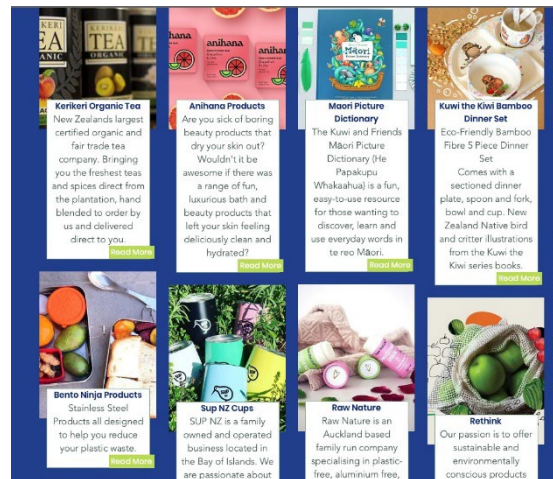
2. **Zero Waste Events** “focuses on normalizing and making zero waste methods accepted and accessible in our community”. The ultimate goal is to make all events in Marlborough zero waste.

Central to this is the new Zero Waste Dishwashing Trailer which was launched at the 2022 Marina to Marina race on the Picton foreshore, a zero-waste event. Stocked with items such as reusable cups, cutlery and plates, it reduces and ideally totally eliminates, the need for single use serve ware. Advertised as a zero-waste event, people are encouraged to bring their own picnic sets and water bottle. The trailer is particularly good for the event organisers and vendors as they don't have to do anything - it's staffed with

volunteers; there is no need to purchase disposable plates and utensils, and there are no disposal fees. There are even buckets for food waste.

The dishwashing trailer was developed with the help of several sponsors but there are on-going costs. Envirohub is seeking additional sponsorship to run the trailer and are currently talking to Council about possibilities. Minimal fees are a reality to create a sustainable not-for-profit business model. They are now in discussions with wine and food festival organisers, school fair coordinators, Earth Day and the Mussel Festival. This will broaden their reach and spread their message across Marlborough.

- Sustainable Communities** – The ethos of this initiative is to support the community to become more self-sufficient, both individually and collectively. The shop, run on the premises, aims to “provide earth-friendly affordable sustainable retail through our social enterprise”, much of it locally sourced. The shop is a platform to raise money for all three environmental organisations that share the premises. Other programmes under this initiative include Future Living Skills workshops and classes alongside Council and the establishment of the Waitohi/Picton Community Garden.



The idea behind this garden was to develop a relaxing, shared communal place where producing food is secondary and where people could share knowledge and build relationships. The research and groundwork into this initiative has been completed with visits to both the Blenheim and Havelock community gardens, resulting in a comprehensive plan with wild foraging places, growing areas along with hammock space and innovative seating. Overall people’s wellbeing is at the heart of the plan with a focus on mental health and giving back to the community.

- Marine Conservation** – The focus here is a litter intelligence project which already has a well-developed process and kits that can be sent out to groups wishing to do beach and river clean-ups. Corporate funding, or a joint funding venture, are being explored to support this initiative further and look at a paid co-ordinator role based at the Hub. A recent event involved a group of young people with little experience of boats and the sea visiting Lochmara. Another event fostered the relationship with the Marlborough Youth Trust when some of the youth borrowed kits to do a beach clean.

THE JUDGES WERE IMPRESSED BY:

- Envirohub Marlborough being well connected with Environment Hubs Aotearoa and making good use of their resources and networks, saving considerable costs while ensuring the organisation is professionally run.
- GM Ailie Suzuki has an excellent overview of the three organisations and their activities at Auckland Street, efficiently collaborating and sharing ideas so they are able to integrate activities, including the sale of sustainable products.
- The four areas of focus mean the Hub is responsible for a wide range of activities with great potential for further development. There are lots of ideas developing and thorough research, investigation and planning is integral to the work, such as the plan for the community garden.

- The Zero Waste Dishwashing Trailer is an impressive initiative. It is a pragmatic and workable approach to making events Zero Waste. It works for the environment at many levels – reducing waste, composting food, potentially training volunteers, spreads the message and potentially could earn significant revenue and be a platform for other initiatives.

PROBLEMS AND HOW THEY HAVE BEEN TACKLED

Envirohub is conscious of eco-anxiety in the community and wants to develop some proactive solutions; to be part of the change. Like so many similar organisations, it is aware of the need to build capacity and to expand and develop the volunteer base. Whānau events and linking up with other organisations for fun, innovative activities are starting to build an ethos of intergenerational environmental awareness.

SUMMARY

Envirohub is working effectively to achieve its vision with a range of targeted initiatives to engage the community and get environmental messages across in palatable and positive ways. Core to this is changing fundamental behaviour and expectations at events. The Zero Waste Dishwashing Trailer is a very effective and public initiative, which has attracted much attention.

The Hub has a well-articulated vision and strategic plan and is methodically working to identify what the community wants and needs now. It is constantly exploring new initiatives in collaboration with other local organisations and is acutely aware of the need to work together for the planet.

SUGGESTIONS

- The Zero Waste Trailer has so much potential that a growth plan will be necessary for the next 5-10 years. Currently there is only one trailer but it is worth exploring how to get a small fleet and staff it. It would be useful to look at natural growth and keeping it manageable and build a social enterprise that then funds the organisation. This initiative is also consciously looking at the long-term skills you need to run this – organizational skills, customer service, etc. This is yet another opportunity to spread the message and develop skills in others through work experience opportunities.
- Under the umbrella of Conservation Kids NZ, it could be useful to formally build a relationship with Mistletoe Bay; a wonderful resource for activities for children who have little experience of the bush and sea. Mistletoe Bay's resources, such as the laboratory with microscopes, provides broad scope for environmental activities.
- Other areas of useful relationship-building to broaden the pool of volunteers could include consolidating with Marlborough Youth Trust and engaging educationally with NMIT – hospitality, planting, etc.
- Ongoing engagement and interaction with Waikawa Marae and iwi is important. This is long term but so much of Te Ao Māori aligns with the Hub's aspirations. It is evident that past conversations about the community garden have started the process of engagement and these conversations need to continue.