



## *Evidence Snapshot*

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# Promoting Physical Activity at the Local Government Level: Case Studies

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**NUTRITION  
ACTION**

Ngā Takawaenga Hāpai Kai Hauora



*'Projects that make a difference to physical activity opportunities might be quite small'*  
*Community Recreation Advisor, Wellington City Council*

Newtown health worker and mum of basketball-mad teenage boys decided the local basketball court was not safe. There was no fence and the kids were constantly chasing their balls down the bank and onto the road below. The court was near a council housing complex and many of the local kids were not involved in formal sport activities. The kids liked going to the court, it was close to where they lived and they could make as much noise as they liked without bothering any neighbours.

The first approach, on the mayor's advice, was to the Parks, Sport and Recreation manager at Wellington City Council (WCC). However, upgrading the court was not deemed to be a priority and there was no budget to fund any work on it.

The community recreation advisor for WCC then became involved. Her first action was to find out whether there were other accessible basketball courts in Newtown that would be suitable for the kids. The only courts were at a local primary school and weren't a satisfactory solution for a whole range of valid reasons.

An approach to the Newtown Residents Association proved to be an important step. It not only provided community support and made it possible to seek funding through a community grant but members of the Association gave very practical support. One member, an architect, provided plans for the work. After the first grant application was unsuccessful, WCC reconsidered the upgrade of the court as a community development project. Changing the focus to one of social development meant funding could come from a community fund and building the new fence was approved.

The court was built in time for the Newtown Festival and with support from several local businesses the court was opened with good publicity. Another local initiative, a Street Ball programme at the nearby city housing complex, was able to get the support from the ASB Sports Centre which provided balls to be given away to the kids at the opening.

The fence made all the difference. The local kids took to the court with enthusiasm; it is now well used and provides both social and physical benefits for a group of kids who have limited choices.

One potential problem in the ongoing success of the court was the potential for conflict between the basketball players and skateboarders who also used the court. The Residents Association talked with the skateboarders and there are now plans to meet their request for a low fence to stop their boards disappearing down the hill. This will allow them to share the space and avoid conflict with the basketballers.



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The local kids took to the court with  
enthusiasm.***

## The success factors for this project include:

- when the first approaches to council were unsuccessful, they didn't give up
- community involvement, through the Newtown Residents Association, provided the community support and involvement criteria needed for success in applying for funding
- working with the Residents Association gave the project extra weight, a 'lone ranger' approach may not have been so successful
- working with the Residents Association provided access to expertise and resources
- taking a social development approach meant the fence could be regarded as a community development project and opened up alternative funding options
- linking in with the Street Ball programme, a City Housing project, extended the benefit of the programme
- the timing of the project meant it could be opened during the festival and provided publicity so the community knows it exists and it is now well used
- at relatively little cost there is a new community asset providing social and physical benefits for local kids.



*Newtown basketball court after the high fence was installed.*

## Key learnings

- Projects that make a difference to physical activity opportunities might be quite small.
- Don't try and go it alone – join forces with other like-minded groups.
- Get community support and look for ways to use community expertise.
- Don't give up at your first rebuttal.
- If one part of the council isn't able to help, try another.
- Be creative, look for another focus, another way into funding options.



*Newtown basketball court before the high fence was installed.*

***At relatively little cost there is a new community asset providing social and physical benefits for local kids.***

*'The initial idea might come from one of your partners and may not be about promoting physical activity'*  
Health Promoter, Community Public Health

When Rosie McGrath wrote up the story of the success of the West Coastal Pathway for the ANA newsletter back in 2013, her title 'Good things take time and commitment' was shorthand for perseverance, community co-operation and a lot of hard work.

The idea for the pathway came from a local policeman in 2005. He saw a need for a safer commuter route for cyclists and walkers which was away from the busy state highway. Fewer people were cycling and walking because they didn't feel safe.

There was health input right from the beginning of the project with a small team from the local police, sports trust, public health unit and district health board funding and planning working together. Already existing positive working relationships, developed through other projects, ensured health was not left out. The whole group was aware of the health, safety, community and economic benefits of cycling. In addition, improving walking and cycling infrastructure fitted with each of the initial group members' work objectives. This group came up with a potential route for a cycling and walking pathway, promoted the idea and canvassed support from the community, the district council, DOC and local tourism and business representatives.

Rosie McGrath, health promoter with the local public health unit, took on the important role of secretary of the group. This meant she was always very busy but, importantly, was also always central to what was going on.

The West Coast Walking and Cycling Strategy was being developed at the same time which meant there were lots of conversations about the pathway in the media and support for it developed through the consultation process. This proved to be a good way for the Greymouth group to make connections with other councils on the West Coast and active transport advocates.

By 2008 the group had achieved its goal of getting the Grey District Council formally on board. By setting itself up as a charitable incorporated society, called the West Coastal Pathway (WCP) Society, the group was able to qualify for funding from Development West Coast for a design and scoping study.

This scoping study indicated the pathway met the criteria to qualify for NZTA funding, but a change in transport policy occurred before the funding could be secured. This meant the group had to find other funding options.

This slowed progress but the WCP group didn't give up. It ran a competition for a logo and fundraising activities.

It submitted to the district and regional council plans and the regional transport strategy and continued to take as many opportunities as possible to promote the idea and the benefits it would bring to the community in order to keep the idea alive.

None of the project was an easy ride. There was opposition from vocal people in the community, some local council members had to be convinced the idea had merit, there were land ownership problems and environmental issues to be worked around and sorted. A formal relationship with the Grey District Council and DOC helped facilitate a way through the environmental and land ownership difficulties.

There were lots of submissions to write and the group encouraged supportive members of the public to also submit. Public meetings to discuss the vision and process were also used to garner support in the community.

It wasn't till 2010, five years after the original idea was mooted, when the Ministry of Tourism Cycleway Project was started that the idea really gained traction. Both Grey and Westland District Councils together proposed a much longer pathway – from Greymouth to Ross. The local WCP group continued to work to get the first Greymouth section of the pathway constructed. The first 800 metres of the path near Greymouth was a great boost and once opened was well used by locals. Interest in walking and cycling increased and sales of bikes in the area went up.

The WCP, in partnership with local business interests and interested community groups, continues to promote the care and use of the pathway. Community use and support for the pathway is high. There are many daily users and it is regularly used for community walking and running events.

The whole 122 kilometres of the path between Greymouth and Ross is almost completed and is proving to be an asset for the whole community.

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### The factors that made this project a success were:

- a clear purpose and goal that were written down
- working with the council and getting the vision written into planning documents and staff work plans
- the involvement of many people, from many different organisations
- a very supportive councillor who championed the cause
- the many different ways used to sell the idea to the council and the community
- community support, especially when construction started, which helped council and others see its value
- using the different skills and strengths of the group members to their fullest advantage
- supporting other community groups to develop projects involving the pathway
- gathering evidence to support benefits of the project and using it to sell the idea, especially to nay-sayers
- building team relationships and working together collaboratively
- sharing the responsibilities and not dumping everything on council
- celebrating and sharing the successes e.g. a National Walking and Cycling Award, awarded to the WCP group was presented to the council where it is proudly on display in the foyer.

### Key learnings

- The initial idea might come from one of your partners and may not be about promoting physical activity.
- It can take a very long time to make progress.
- You may need to work with people you have never thought of working with before - the list for this project includes councils, DOC, sports trusts, local businesses, schools, ACC, landscapers and planners, police, Development West Coast, Guardians of the Paroa Trust (an environmental group), Active West Coast, Community Corrections, Lions and many individual community members.
- It is sometimes surprising where support will come from. Use whatever support you can.
- Relationships can be developed in a multitude of ways - some may be formal and others may develop by the snowball effect, use every opportunity to gather support and encourage collaboration.
- Report positive community support to the decision makers.
- Use submission processes and get others to also make submissions to add to the voice.
- Find other people to champion your cause.
- Use fun ways to garner support and keep a high profile on a project when progress lags.
- Use local media to promote your idea and get support.



*Initial stages of construction of the West Coast Pathway*



*Healthy activity on the West Coast Pathway after completion*

***The initial idea might come from one of your partners and may not be about promoting physical activity.***

*'Cycling has now become normalised within the community'*  
Cycle Trail Coordinator, Far North District Council



Ngā Haerenga is a government funded project to build a network of cycle trails throughout New Zealand. Once constructed, Pou Herenga Tai – Twin Coastal Cycle Trail in Northland will be an 84 kilometre track spanning from Opua in the Bay of Islands across to Horeke in the Hokianga Harbour. This case study focuses on a segment of the intended route – Kaikohe to Okaihau.

The old rail corridor from Kaikohe to Okaihau has been transformed into a unique cycleway with facilities built for mountain bike activities adjacent to the trail. These include a pump track, a maze of wooden structures, a raised narrow track and a three kilometre mountain bike track. Along the mountain bike track there are two wānanga (learning) spaces and the track is set in native forest which has a flourishing birdlife and spectacular glow worms visible on night rides.

The Far North District Council (FNDC) embarked on a collaborative journey with Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Kaikohe under the leadership of Tumuaki Marea Timoko, to develop these mountain bike skills and activity facilities adjacent to the Kaikohe / Okaihau cycleway. This innovative relationship was fostered by Adrienne Tari (cycle trail co-ordinator), and contributed to the success of the initiative. It was intended the trail be used as a way of connecting students to their environment and mātauranga Māori (traditional knowledge). Physical activity was a positive by-product of the initiative.

The cycleway track is still a work in progress. Construction has been funded through central government and the build overseen by the Far North District Council. Other stakeholders are diverse and include Northland District Health Board (funder), Te Hau Ora o Kaikohe (Māori Health Provider), local kaumātua and kuia, Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Kaikohe, Te Hauāuru Takiwā, Rangihāmama Omapere Trust, Taitokerau Forests Management Limited and the Department of Corrections. Once construction is complete a governance group will be appointed to manage the cycleway. They will work alongside local business operators to raise funds and continue to look for future opportunities to use, promote and enhance the trail. They will also manage cycleway maintenance.

There are four areas adjacent to the cycleway which have been engineered to challenge specific physical attributes such as strength, skill, balance and confidence. An innovative Māori concept of using a kaitiaki was effective in engaging the community. The inspiration and knowledge woven in each aspect derives from the kaitiaki (guardian), te wheke (octopus), pertinent to the local tangata whenua. Further developments will search for a more appropriate land based kaitiaki with connections to the rohe.

This is the first cycle track constructed which is based on an indigenous concept of learning. Dr Ihirangi Heke facilitated the connection with the iwi, sharing the appropriate knowledge with the bike track engineers who had the capacity to build the cycleway.



*Kelly Yakas and her tamariki riding the Kaikohe -Okaihau cycleway. Photo Greg Lever*

The local kura runs a special programme using the cycleway. The programme, Te Manawa Ora, teaches the principles of hauora through mountain biking and this local cycleway is vital to its success. Te Manawa Ora is targeted at senior wharekura students and encourages whānau engagement. As well as teaching physical activity, weather patterns, the significance of the natural environment the programme identifies certain atua related to learning in the environment, connects students with tūpuna and uses local knowledge. The programme is based on Māori concepts and traditions.

The track is frequently used by students, staff and whānau of the kura and the local community now join in on rides and special events. School staff also use the track for their own personal development.

Future plans are to coordinate with the Far North District Council to construct a track from Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Kaikohe directly to the cycleway. The plan is to use traditional pathways such as ridges and riverbeds, as travelled by the ancestors.

The Far North District Council anticipates an increase in both local and international visitors to rural inland towns of Northland once the whole trail is completed. They hope the consultation process with local iwi and the development of the similar recreational tracks for local communities and will be replicated throughout Aotearoa. The track currently crosses land that may be returned to the original owner as a part of Waitangi Land claims. The Far North District Council holds a 20 year lease for the rail corridor with KiwiRail. Regardless of who owns the land the council will negotiate with KiwiRail and/or land owners to preserve the cycleway.

***The track is frequently used by students, staff and whānau of the kura and the local community now join in on rides and special events.***

## Key outcomes for the community:

- cycling has become normalised within the community
- the trail allows the community and visitors to connect to adjacent inland communities by bike
- a free family-friendly amenity is available to the local community
- an economic tool, e.g. to promote tourism, is new to the community.

## Key outcomes for Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Kaikohe

- Mountain biking has become a motivational driving force for the kura to retain their senior male students to National Education Certificate (NCEA) Level 3 and University Entrance.
- The holistic hauora approach of Te Manawa Ora, has given students increased courage, pride and confidence.
- Students have discovered the practical benefits of cycling - as a quick means of transport, a way to maintain fitness, as a support for other physical activities and a way to provide action learning.
- In 2011-2012, the kura was successful in gaining a grant from Tai Tamariki Funding Scheme under the umbrella of Hauora Ngāti Hine. The main objective was to engage boys to stay at the kura to gain a qualification no lower than NCEA Level 2. The class of students identified in 2011, were then in year eight. In 2014 the whole class, including the boys, achieved NCEA Level 1. Now in 2015, some are already on the way to achieving NCEA Level 2.

- Students are learning bicycle maintenance and long term care of their own, and kura, equipment and property.
- Students, staff and whānau are now participating in mountain biking events around the country.
- As part of the Matariki celebrations, the kura has established an annual Twilight Ride to engage the whole kura community.

## Key factors and learning points that lead to success included:

- The track construction process was an ambitious commitment that required perseverance and resilience.
- It was necessary to build trusting relationships with landowners throughout the process. Negotiation to find mutually beneficial solutions was necessary throughout the project.



*Tamati Rakena riding the mountain bike track.  
Photo: Greg Lever*



*Kaikohe-Okaihau Section Opening - at Okaihau tunnel.  
Photo: Peter de Graaf*

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