



Marlborough Litter Project

Milestone 2 (Year 2) Report

March 2019

Prepared for Marlborough District Council

And


The Ministry for the Environment

By

Christine McNeil MA

Contents

Final Report	4
Introduction	4
Difficulties	5
Policy framework	5
The Local Government Act (2002)	6
The Waste Minimisation Act (2008).....	6
The Litter Act (1979).....	7
The Resource Management Act (1991).....	7
The Health Act (1956)	8
The Health and Safety at Work Act (2015).....	8
Marlborough District Council Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (WMMP) (2015-2021)	9
Marlborough District Council Long Term Plan (2018-28)	9
The Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading) Amendment Act (2008).....	10
Systems appraisal.....	10
Population management.....	11
Litter management programmes	12
Volunteer contribution	13
Consumerism.....	14
Economic policy in Aotearoa New Zealand.....	14
The waste hierarchy.....	15
Zero waste.....	16
Supermarkets	16
Fieldwork observations	17
Urban.....	17
Rural	18
Coastal/Marine.....	18
General trends and observations.....	19
Discussion.....	19
Recommendations	25
Recommendations for Government	25



Recommendations for MDC.....	26
Recommendations for the individual.....	26
Conclusion	26
References.....	28

Final Report

Introduction

This final milestone report concludes the Marlborough Litter Project. Whilst grant funding received from the Ministry for the Environment requires that outcome deliverables be met for any project, as a practitioner, by far the most beneficial aspect of this project is the capacity it has afforded for observation and critical reflection of embedded systems. For clarity, it has been very helpful to gain insight into ‘the way things work’ from the perspective of a local authority and the effects of that practice across Marlborough. Having an opportunity to take note of ‘the seasonal lifecycle’ of the region reveals the ways in which work as usual carries on. It has also been possible to witness the ways in which Marlborough both relies on and responds to visitor populations.

From an initial sense that Marlborough does not have an issue with litter, it soon becomes apparent that people are confronted with litter on a regular basis. Who holds responsibility for addressing the ‘litter problem’ can be contested. What cannot be contested is that human activity plays a major role in generating litter. Common forms of litter comprise usually hand-held items such as coffee cups, drinks bottles, food wrappings and cigarette ends. Other forms of litter come from local industry. Accepting that litter is unsightly, harmful to the environment and could largely be prevented, in what ways might it be possible for Marlborough to ‘think differently’?

The information contained herein is intended to be used for the purpose of reappraising service provision as it currently stands. The Waste Management and Minimisation Plan in its present format does not address litter. It is anticipated that going forward ‘matters relating to litter’ will be included. While MDC holds responsibility under legislation and therefore plays an integral role for managing waste across the region, an invitation should be extended across business and the public alike to contribute to this task. To that end, MDC would benefit from reaching across the region to listen to, support, and empower communities to effect the successful management of litter in Marlborough. As the governing body, it seems pertinent that a local litter strategy is seen to be enabled by MDC.

The structure of the report is noted as follows.

Difficulties encountered during the duration of the project are noted. A summary of the legislation that should be taken into account when managing waste is given. This background information allows the discussion to extend beyond interpretations currently employed to imagine a ‘new way forward’. The report continues to introduce

aspects of population control and management and the possibilities available to the population of Marlborough to access council systems. A brief summary of litter management education programmes is noted. The report moves on to discuss volunteer contribution and the economic landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand more broadly: this includes an outline of consumerism. Fieldwork is explained; the findings are given. A discussion (to be continued) is introduced; recommendations are suggested. The report concludes.

Difficulties

Somewhat surprising was the realisation that people across all participant sector groups at some point had an understanding that this project had an operational component to it. At times people were unimpressed that concerns that they had highlighted may not be addressed straight away. People revealed concerns regarding litter that they not addressed previously, either because they thought someone else would do it, they did not know who to contact, or they had resolved the problem themselves by picking up discarded litter. People in general seemed reluctant to self-identify as someone who complains, yet had intimate knowledge of what happens locally and voiced the frustrations that arise from the actions of others.

Other difficulties encountered during the project relate to accessing people. People at times did not respond to requests for meetings, gave inaccurate contact details, were busy with other matters, or, after expressing an initial interest in the project were unable to be reached again. Ultimately as the project moved along to meet other milestone requirements those opportunities were lost.

Policy framework

Local authorities have an obligation to comply with legislation. To situate this final milestone of the Marlborough Litter Project within a policy framework, the following explanations of Acts of Government, policies and plans serve to summarise the expectations of bureaucratic processes. Bureaucratic processes seek to implement and establish order into complex systems; to establish rules to administer their publics. Complex systems can be large organisations such as business corporations. For the purpose of this report, bureaucratic processes refer to the work of local and national governments, and companies external to Council that have been engaged for contract service provision. Unintended outcomes of the policy frameworks as they currently stand are noted.

The Local Government Act (2002)

Designed to assist local government to lead and administer communities, The Local Government Act (2002) (LGA) allows central government to allocate responsibility for the oversight of populations and infrastructure systems to local communities.

Communities participate in democratic processes through local body elections. With some exceptions, for example where a national standardised approach is required to ensure public safety, local governments have relative freedom to meet the needs of people in a way that responds to actual and perceived outcome goals, and aspirations of the region. Bureaucratic systems work slowly. Change within such systems may take some time to implement: anticipated outcomes may take longer.

Where central government devolves responsibility for population management to local government, albeit chains of communication remain open, central government removes itself from civic matters. The distancing effect of devolution works to render populations' silent and invisible to power; and government officials any ability to experience critique. Opportunities for publics to access systems of government are limited.

A common misunderstanding is that democratic decisions are made within such institutions. Democracy however only refers to the election process in and of itself. Once elected representatives take position, decision making is enacted on behalf of publics: decision making can be enabled or constrained. Decision making may appear to be arbitrary.

The Waste Minimisation Act (2008)

As the title suggests, the Waste Minimisation Act (2008) (WMA) seeks to reduce the production and disposal of waste to 'reduce the environmental harm of waste and provide economic, social and cultural benefits for New Zealand' (Ministry for the Environment, n.d). In broad terms this anticipated outcome is currently informed by the establishment of financial penalties for disposal to landfill; a requirement that all waste going to landfill is reported on; that producers of products that may harm the environment establish government approved systems to mitigate that harm; that product stewardship systems are recognised; emphasis is placed on the obligations of local authorities to promote waste minimisation. The Act also requires that a body of suitably experienced and qualified persons liaise with the Minister of the Environment on all matters relating to waste.

While the sentiment contained within the WMA is admirable, it is somewhat contradictory. The reduction of waste going to landfill cannot be achieved by local

populations alone. The WMA would benefit from being supported by complementary legislation that steers business to meet compulsory product stewardship requirements, seeks to implement a unified approach to recycling across the country, and develops onshore recycling capabilities.

The Litter Act (1979)

The Litter Act (1979) makes provision for the active control and reduction of littering within Aotearoa New Zealand. The Act describes actions that are deemed to be intentional and unintentional instances of littering, categories of material that can be identified as litter, areas of open space that may be included within the remit of the Act, and the types of authority granted to councils and individuals who work for councils to enforce the expectations of the Act. With an amendment to the Act in 1985, Keep New Zealand Beautiful Incorporated was given primary responsibility for promoting litter control.

The combination of punitive measures and education programmes to combat littering is yet to achieve the anticipated outcome of the Act. Over time other groups and charity organisations have grown exponentially in an endeavour to 'solve' the litter problem. An amendment to the Act which increases the financial penalty from \$100 to \$400 may not induce any long-term solution to littering.

The Resource Management Act (1991)

The Resource Management Act (1991) is primarily concerned with appropriate and effective use of natural resources, and looking after the environment. Within this remit, regional councils, territorial authorities and unitary authorities have responsibility for managing local environmental matters. The broad scope of expectation covers monitoring air, water and soil quality; operational activities to maintain physical amenity, public spaces and expected routine activity, such as refuse collection; and managing the way land is used. Within the remit of the Act, local authorities are expected to communicate what appropriate resource use is, the mechanisms in place to protect the environment, and the ways in which the public can raise concerns should they have them (An everyday guide: Getting in on the Act, n.d).

The broad remit of the RMA may not marry with local populations' idea of resource management. Responsibilities left to local governments would benefit from central government oversight and direction. An application to meet the interest of business may be persuasive yet adequate resource may not be locally available to allow for effective monitoring and enforcement if required.

The Health Act (1956)

Part 2 of the Health Act (1956) refers to the obligations and duties of the local authority to look after the health and wellbeing of the public. To ‘improve, promote, and protect public health’ (Part 2, Powers and duties of local authorities, n.d) an expectation exists that local authorities will maintain community water standards, appoint environmental health personnel, inspect and accredit premises that sell food and beverages, and communicate with the local medical officer with concerns for public health (for example, health emergencies in respect of communicable diseases) when required.

The scope and intention of a public health philosophy has changed since 1956. While any local authority must comply with the requirements of the Act in respect of water quality, oversight of food hygiene across suppliers, and the monitoring of alcohol retail outlets, an additional route to litter mitigation may be served by working with Public Health departments more generally.

The New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act (2000) reorganised the ways in which public funding was made available to communities. Part 3, Section 23(1)(a) points to the function of District Health Boards and says part of their remit is ‘to actively investigate, facilitate, sponsor and develop co-operative and collaborative arrangements with persons in the health and disability sector *or in any other sector* to improve, promote and protect the health of people...’(emphasis added). It may be possible that local authorities could share funding with health providers to safeguard public health and to reduce public littering. A recent example of this type of collaboration is noted in Hanmer Springs (Dangerfield, November 6, 2018).

The Health and Safety at Work Act (2015)

Intended both for employees and contract service providers, the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015) seeks to protect people from harmful or hazardous situations when they go to work. Based on the principles of harm identification and minimisation, the Act accepts that a transparent, safety focused work environment should include contribution from everyone in the workplace. Using a forward thinking methodology, ‘individuals or organisations’ are obligated to anticipate potential for harm across the work environment, and to initiate processes that will reduce any likelihood for accidental injury (WorkSafe; Introduction to the Health and safety at Work Act 2105-special guide, n.d).

MDC contracts all litter service provision to external companies. It is anticipated that those companies have adequate processes in place to establish and maintain oversight

of the welfare of the workers. Collecting waste, recycling and litter can be unpleasant and tiring work. Observations carried out during the report timeframe reveal that waste bins are at times over capacity, and that households that receive refuse and recycling at the kerbside use the service to full effect. While seasonal variations are accounted for in the contract document, there is a notable increase in litter, refuse and recycling in peak season and after public holiday days when two collection rounds may be serviced on the same day.

Marlborough District Council Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (WMMP) (2015-2021)

With an intention to 'promote effective and efficient waste management and minimisation within the Marlborough region' MDC is 'committed to the vision of reducing the amount of waste that is sent to landfill through a combination of waste reduction and reuse in conjunction with increasing the rates of material diversion' (Waste management and reduction plan, pp. 3 & 4). The origins of waste are cited as residential, kerbside and industrial.

The WMMP in consultation with the public anticipates both functional and aspirational outcomes for the region. Within the current policy framework that it is bound by, achievement outcomes cannot be realised. It is anticipated that this report will be used to inform the WMMP going forward.

Marlborough District Council Long Term Plan (2018-28)

The Long Term Plan (LTP) tells the community about the types of services and activities that council is involved with, and provides an explanation of how public money is spent. The LTP is informed by the requirements of the LGA. The LTP is updated every three years. Invitations to make a submission to the LTP are prefaced by the requirement of the LGA to

- Enable democratic local decision making and action
- Meet the current and future needs of communities for good quality infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost effective for most households and businesses

Decision making within organisations that serve the public it seems work to balance what is desired with what is possible. It has been suggested that democracy ceases to be in effect when elected representatives become 'part of the organisation'. That is because attention is drawn to the needs of the institution and managing finances. A directive within the act to focus on being 'cost effective' can be interpreted as 'no new

spending'; existing resources may still be used creatively or collaboratively to achieve desired outcomes.

The Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading) Amendment Act (2008)

Initiated to reduce harmful emissions into the atmosphere, the Act signals the willingness of Aotearoa New Zealand to meet international climate control obligations as stipulated by the United Nations and the Kyoto Protocol. 'The largest proportion of greenhouse gas emissions are from agriculture (46%) and the energy sector (44%), which includes transport' (Overview of the Emissions Trading Scheme, n.d). It is believed that shifting responsibility to those industries that cause so-called greenhouse gas emissions is the right thing to do. In practical terms businesses can plant trees, and/or buy into an exchange mechanism whereby carbon credits may be purchased to offset industry emissions. It is anticipated that the Act will encourage changes to be made to the way we generate power and use technology.

If MDC chooses to, consideration could be given to reducing harmful emissions across the region. Achievement of this outcome can be enabled by reorganising current practice. Conversations that have begun inside the building can be used to effect change in practical ways. A meaningful and tangible outcome can be realised with the help of local people.

Systems appraisal

Litter management forms part of core service provision. If attention is to be drawn to reducing littering the provision of that service should be considered as part of a wider network. Considering litter management as part of the network of systems provides an opportunity to 'see' the ways in which 'departments think' in relation to that service provision. It is also possible to gain insight of the ways in which people interact with and use available facilities. It has previously been established that three departments in MDC hold responsibility for litter management: Reserves, Roads, and Solid Waste.

Marlborough District Council is a large complex organisation. Complex organisations comprise systems of departments connected by a common overall purpose, often advanced as bureaucratic in character (Weber 1930, Bauman 1989). For Weber, the generally accepted requirements of bureaucratic organisations are that the organisation has an official capacity; authority and rules; and an established way of doing things (Mulder, 2017). Information should exist within the system to make the system self-sustaining irrespective of personnel. People are brought into be part of the

system on the understanding that they will fulfil the obligations of the role they undertake (Weber, 1930).

Benefits and drawbacks of bureaucratic processes are suggested as being embedded in the way departments are conceived and ordered. While departments may be skilful at dealing with issues directly related to their area of expertise; problem resolution for issues common to several departments may be able to be shifted, the solution ultimately never achieved as the problem circulates and is passed between departments (Rockman, n.d). Senge (1990) argues that any organisational system has capacity to self-adjust, reorganise and change. Organisations that hold responsibility for administering *and* interacting with the public occupy an interesting space.

The benefit of this project to MDC is that a non-departmental perspective has been used to inform the conclusions. By having an ability to observe, discuss and think about the 'component parts' of litter service provision, and to see the ways in which people undertake usual activities a space has been opened up to think about things differently. Should it be accepted, enabling a shift in the ways that Council is able to think, communicate and interact has a potential to benefit the region beyond litter service provision.

Population management

Foucault (1991) argues that governments manage populations through a variety of techniques. Those techniques seek to instil the types of characteristics that make people amenable to the messages that governments send. Governing bodies encourage the public to participate effectively in society by establishing and embedding programmes and rules to steer people toward self-management. The legislative and policy framework previously summarised provides an example of such encouragement. Foucault argues that governments manage populations through a variety of techniques. Those techniques seek to instil the types of characteristics that make people amenable to the messages that governments send. Foucault writes about the forms of power by which it becomes possible to regulate the population.

Foucault introduced the concept of governmentality (1991). Governmentality is defined as 'the administrative structures of the state, the patterns of self-government of individuals and the regulatory principles of modern society' (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 2006, p.172). The systems that the state puts in place embed practices within the population about how things should be done. Foucault advanced the idea that society is regulated by discourses that produce knowledge about people. Discourses are 'ways of knowing' that order and hold influence to shape the social world.

Accessing regulatory system can happen in an official or unofficial capacity. As is common to other councils, MDC uses a 10 year plan to organise its workload. The plan comprises 'business as usual' activities. Every three years the plan is revised and the public is officially invited to make submission to council about matters arising pertinent to local issues. Topics can be many and varied. Submissions to the LTP are currently being accepted. Communication in writing has to be planned, considered and persuasive. Moments of unofficial communication may occur throughout the working day as publics turn up in person, email, or telephone council staff. These types of interactions are likely to be functional as a problem is identified and a resolution sought.

Litter management programmes

Litter management programmes were first conceived in the United States in the 1950s (Keep America Beautiful, n.d), and in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1960s (Be a Tidy Kiwi, n.d). In the years since then regions, councils, private companies, and not-for-profit organisations across the world continue to try to find new ways to solve the same problem. A similar pattern emerges: authority bodies call for change, funding is advanced or sought to support an anti-litter initiative, fresh slogans are conceived in order that the populace takes notice and stops littering. The common narrative supporting campaigns is that there is too much litter and people are to blame because they are not putting their litter in the bin. It seems that over time nothing has changed. Criticisms continue to swirl at the level of the individual. However, if it seems that nothing has changed, that is because nothing has changed at the level of society.

Anecdotal discourse infers that education programmes for children work from 'the bottom up'. The child is introduced to pro-environmental concepts, given the language to express that circumstance, and it is anticipated that the information from school is brought into the home environment to be shared with significant others within the family network. In this way it may be thought that educational material can reach into the public realm and permeate into collective thinking and effect personal action. Consequently, the public are invited to 'belong' to common ways of thinking and acting.

Schools occupy a 'potential space' for imparting knowledge to children. Bureaucratic practices within schools expect that school personnel will give primary attention to behaviour management and administration. Children who have knowledge of 'how schools work' will fare better than those who do not. Teachers are encouraged to assess the potential for any student to learn: embedded systems expect that each child will come to school 'ready to learn', be equipped with the tools to participate, and do

so in a way that does not disrupt the classroom atmosphere. Differentiated learning enabled by classroom and school systems exist in order that each child, irrespective of perceived ability is aware of the content of educational material (McNeil, 2016). In other words, teachers are expected to use professional judgement to assess student learning capabilities; this assessment informs what knowledge becomes available to the child. Furthermore, students are more likely to progress with learning opportunities if they behave. By conforming to the systems within which they work, teachers are unwittingly drawn into managing the population. Consequently, aspects of curriculum material may not be available to all students.

Volunteer contribution

Volunteer contribution cannot be underestimated both in terms of hours given and benefit to the economy. 'Not-for profit organisations contribute \$6 billion worth of time and skills to our GDP every year. The value of volunteer's labour alone contributes \$3.5 billion to our GDP' (Goodhew, 2016). These figures refer only to people who are associated with organisations and give time regularly. They do not include the time, skills or resource contributed through acts of 'goodwill', for example for community clean-up activities undertaken by groups or, indeed by individuals who pick up litter as a matter of course.

There are many reasons suggested for volunteer contribution. Volunteering is advanced as being to be good for general wellbeing; people can make friends, learn new skills, and make a difference to their cause of choice. Other benefits are presented as being more intrinsic to the character of the person; people become committed to specific issues, raise public awareness of those issues and stay involved with organisations for the long-term (Adams, 2017).

In the 'State of volunteering Report', volunteering New Zealand caution that volunteer contribution is experiencing challenges (McCormack, 2018). Over time long-term volunteering is giving way to ad-hoc volunteering; it is suggested that people do not have time to commit to the types of regular contribution that organisations once enjoyed. While organisations welcome volunteers, lack of resource can mean that volunteers may not receive induction, training, or supervision. In addition, the demographic and expectation of volunteer labour is changing. The report comments that volunteers are not celebrated for the commitment they make, or that volunteer contribution receives enough recognition.

Preventing litter from getting into the wider environment is an ongoing challenge. Over the term of this project many people have helped clean up our region. Some

prefer to make an individual contribution; others align with a business, group or community philosophy. There is no shortage of litter to be picked up. It could be argued that the act of picking up litter has become a mechanism through which people and businesses are able to demonstrate positive characteristics and project a sense of community. Litter is a valuable commodity in this sense.

Consumerism

The linear model of resource depletion, production, waste disposal (including transfer of waste off-shore), and pollution are currently debated in the public realm (Sustainability for all, n.d). It is accepted that consumerism contributes to littering. News articles abound with stories of pristine environments being overwhelmed with plastic and packaging: plastics in the ocean, micro plastics on the beach, litter everywhere (Mamidipudi, 2018; Woolf, 2018, United Nations Environment Programme, 2018).

The economy is supported by consumerism. Advertising reaches the populace on television, on the radio, through personal communications devices: physical promotional material is delivered to the home environment. The community is awash with information about product availability. Price reductions in the form of department store, and supermarket sales are promoted as a matter of course. All types of goods are advertised. The frequency of price reduction events from well-known stores is staggering.

The advertising industry has very firmly rooted itself in the perpetuation of the capitalist cycle where goods seem to be made at an ever increasing rate and have to be sold in ever increasing volumes. Advertisers work to find new and innovative ways to reach target audiences. Techniques of advertising work to make goods appealing to the public. The way goods are produced is seldom advertised; mass production methods are not publicly recognised. Yet, business seems able generally to avoid any association with litter. Narratives about littering tend to fall very firmly in the realm of the individual.

Economic policy in Aotearoa New Zealand

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) (n.d) states that ‘as a trade dependent economy, geographically distant from export markets, New Zealand is a firm supporter of free and open trade. We have one of the most open market economies in the world’. Accepting that Aotearoa New Zealand does require to have good international business relationships, exception could be taken to the sentiment

that 'with a population of only 4.8 million people we lack the scale to produce at affordable prices the *diverse high quality goods we import*' (emphasis added).

A paradox exists within the aforementioned statement in relation to the availability of goods in any community. I do not suggest that 'high quality goods' are not available. In Marlborough large shed type stores rely on rapid turnover and throughput of price adjusted seasonal and staple goods. Visit any such store and pallet loads of competitively priced or sale goods are positioned at the front of the store. Customers cannot fail to notice the latest promotion and be convinced that a purchase is necessary. It may be that people are already partly persuaded before entering the store because of the exposure to the seemingly ever-present promotional material.

The waste hierarchy

The waste hierarchy has at its foundation the principle of harm reduction according to the Community Recycling Network Aotearoa (The Waste Hierarchy, n.d). A sustainable waste management system, it is suggested should comprise of five elements of ordering waste. The first three principles of reduce, reuse, recycle, are familiar because that message is aimed at the level of the household. Steps four (recover energy), and five (residual disposal) are aimed at business and encompass the 'cradle to grave principle' in which it is anticipated that all waste product should be handled responsibly, effectively and with minimal adverse effect to the environment.

Functional yet aspirational in outlook, the expectation and assumption held within the waste hierarchy accepts that all products should have an end of life management plan. In theory the premise works. It makes sense that an 'end of life' protocol for waste should be achieved.

The concept of recycling is not new. People have for centuries made alternative use of products when the initial use of the item was exhausted (Grabaiowski, n.d).

Recycling in its contemporary guise was introduced in the 1970s to combat the unintended consequences of mass production and consumerism. Recycling this time was introduced at the level of society, specifically into the economic system. Products such as tins, cans, plastics and paper products became a commodity to buy and sell; a whole industry sector has since developed to support product retrieval and exchange.

Commonly advanced as a positive action, for example to prevent materials going to landfill, provide employment, and to decrease the need to deplete natural resources, the inclusion of recycling into the economic system also presents difficulties for populations. Companies who trade in waste product (recycling) have to find a market willing to take the product they wish to sell.

For many years now, waste product has been shipped to developing countries for processing. While some jurisdictions congratulate themselves for participating in recycling activities, the messier and more hazardous 'end' of recycling has been taking place in other countries. The prices gained for recycling go up and down: it is an inconsistent form of revenue. With developing countries now saying that they do not want other peoples' waste anymore, the recycling problem returns to the country of origin. Consequently recycling opportunities can be reduced because there is nowhere to send the product (Westervelt, 2016).

Zero waste

Keen environmentalists advocate for a 'zero waste' attitude. The Zero Waste Network (n.d) wants to 'guide people in changing their lifestyles and practices to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use'.

In principle the philosophy of zero waste would appear to have merit. There are those however who point to some difficulties with the concept because it is perceived to be aimed at a niche demographic. Anecdotally, the zero waste aspiration is criticised for being time consuming or complicated. Favoured niche products that have minimal recyclable packaging can be expensive to purchase; searching for such product or shopping sustainably is deemed to be time consuming and not compatible with a busy lifestyle. Less expensive goods often come with more packaging: this circumstance may disadvantage those on a budget; larger families who buy bulk products are similarly left to dispose of extra packaging. It is only possible to recycle particular types of packaging or product if the service opportunity is available locally.

Supermarkets

MDC began discussions with supermarkets across the region to reduce the amount of plastic bags they were using. It may be debated whether or not plastic bags are single use items. A survey conducted by MDC at the time suggested that there were many other ways in which a plastic bag could be put to work: respondents generally pointed to opportunities for containment across recreational, social and everyday activities.

While store personnel were agreeable in principle only that a trial to mitigate the use of plastic bags could be initiated, they were unable to proceed without the express authority of the parent company. It later transpired that Countdown enacted company policy to ban the use of plastic bags in their stores. The ban was progressively rolled out across the country. New World has also stopped dispensing plastic shopping bags.

It is now commonplace for supermarkets to offer cardboard boxes to customers for shopping containment.

Supermarkets also became involved in a soft plastic recycling project. The opportunity to recycle soft plastic bags seemed to be well received. Initially, containers for the deposit of the bags were placed prominently at the front of participating supermarkets. Over time the containers were moved away from the front of the store to more discrete locations inside the store. It is now not possible to recycle soft plastic bags because the scheme has been suspended.

Fieldwork observations

Commonly used in academic disciplines such as anthropology and sociology, fieldwork observations give the researcher opportunities to look at every-day life in communities. By observing 'what usually happens', it becomes possible to gain insight and understanding of the things that people do and the ways in which people interact. Participation in fieldwork accepts that the researcher must adopt a position of being an 'outsider'. To carry out fieldwork successfully the researcher must 'forget' what they know about their own community, observe dispassionately and document observations in the absence of bias or prior knowledge (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2006).

The significance of using fieldwork for the Marlborough Litter Project is that it is a fresh way to consider what happens when people engage in usual activities. It has been possible to capture data from a broad range of everyday situations. Data gained from fieldwork can then be used to inform thinking and provoke types of questioning that may not have otherwise been apparent.

Visits to locations around the district were planned to carry out observations at different times of day, in different weather conditions, and during low and peak season months. In addition, observations were undertaken at organised events, public places, and recreational spaces. A summary of the findings from fieldwork observations are organised into the following categories – urban, rural, and coastal.

Urban

Key findings

- Blenheim town centre and Picton Foreshore are generously supplied with litter and recycling bins
- Public ashtray facilities at bin locations are not available; they have been offered for use in Picton but declined

- Litter on the ground is still apparent in locations with litter bins
- Sweepings from the front of small business locations are oftentimes discarded into the street
- Supermarket, fast food and large store car parks accumulate litter; the schedule of litter picking varies across locations; litter bins have been removed at some supermarket locations, while existing litter bins are not readily visible at others. The most observed type of litter is receipts, cigarette ends, food wrapping, sweet wrappers and plastic garment hooks.
- Single use drinks bottles, cans and food packaging (plastic and paper) litter main thoroughfares in Blenheim
- Contents of MDC recycling containers can spill into the streetscape
- Free newspapers and promotional fliers in the streetscape
- Windy weather conditions enable the transport of litter across locations
- Commercial waste litters main entry and egress routes in Blenheim
- Building industry waste escaping from open topped skips contributes to litter in the environment

Rural

Key findings

- Fast food and single use drinks containers (soft drinks, coffee cups and alcohol bottles) visible on road verges
- Drivers observed discarding food wrapping from vehicle
- Fast food litter left on open landscape grassed areas on SH1 at entry to Blenheim
- Litter visible at meeting points such as the Wairau Diversion, Botham's Bend and Wairau River access at Spring Creek
- Plastic wrapping from industry
- Toilet paper residue from port-a-loo transportation
- Glass and aluminium drinks containers visible within communal areas in smaller townships

Coastal/Marine

Key findings

- Personal items left from visits to beach – clothing, footwear
- Fast food wrapping
- General food wrapping
- Drinks containers

- Fishing line and rope
- Parts of fish and shellfish
- Cigarette ends
- Plastic household product containers
- Micro plastics
- Toilet paper

General trends and observations

Key findings

- People were less likely to litter if they had prepared food and brought it in household containers
- People were less likely to litter when someone took responsibility for tidying up or for prompting tidying up
- People are less likely to remove litter when an area is generally unkempt
- People are less likely to remove litter when their actions cannot be seen
- Where public events are hosted in street locations recyclable material may be disposed of in the nearest litter bin
- Litter management across organised events may differ in the level of public supervision
- Eating while driving was commonly observed
- Rubbish escaping from cars is generally not picked up

Discussion

A discussion now follows: it is informed by a sentiment to 'think differently'. The discussion offers critical analysis about the topics included in the report to date.

What more can be written about litter? Around the world, litter has been the subject of public debate for over 60 years! Over time campaigns have been developed, slogans imagined, education programmes implemented, and community clean-ups organised. Litter has been categorised, littering habits have been studied, legislation has been amended to increase penalties for those who litter and yet, as a global people we are no further forward. There is litter everywhere – on the street, in the community, on the land (visible), in the land (buried), and in the sea. Litter has been moved across the region, across the country, and across the world.

I suggest here this circumstance has arisen because we have been looking at the wrong things. The overwhelming imperative of the economic model has been allowed to dominate public discourse, and governments over time have not had the political will

to change it. Natural resource depletion is reaching its peak. Developing countries are overwhelmed by other peoples' rubbish. Mass production of 'stuff' continues unabated. Compulsory product stewardship has yet to be achieved. It is necessary to make these types of bold statements because it expresses the incredulity with which this circumstance should be appraised.

So what can be done at a local level? The success, or otherwise of the Marlborough Litter Project, rests on accepting and acting upon the sentiment of 'thinking differently'. Marlborough District Council has the capacity to make a difference: it must however lead from the front. An inclusion of strategic aiming points for the WMMP should inform the way forward. It is the aim of this report to infuse that message through other departments.

There are numerous groups and individuals working to make a change across the region. A change in narrative and perspective is necessary. I have heard many times that people are tired of picking up litter left by others; that people who litter are different to the rest of society – young, lazy, thoughtless, uneducated, or not 'from here'. I cannot contest what others say about picking up litter, but the litter observations have revealed that people from all population demographics and walks of life litter. Local people litter and visitor populations litter.

It cannot not be denied that local authorities try to shape and manage the population. Acts of Government assist them to do so. It seems to date that there has not been a coordinated plan to manage litter. Staffs seem to have used professional judgement to assess the need or otherwise for litter bin placement. Where a perception has existed that a litter bin is not being used properly it will likely be removed. Conversely, if more litter bins have been needed for a particular location additional resource has been made available. Expertise external to MDC, brought in to assist with town beautification endeavours has also made a contribution to litter bin placement. The ability of MDC to sustain service provision ebbs and flows over time as attention becomes drawn to arising operational matters: budgetary constraints have to be met.

In what ways might it be possible to encourage people to do things differently? Unarticulated in the report thus far, yet swirling around the litter debate is the concept of socialisation. Socialisation is the process by which people are introduced to their social group; the time in which the values, social skills, and thought processes of the larger collective are embedded. It is the process through which we learn to be responsible, independent, and meet the expectations of our society more broadly (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, p.163).

I suggest here that MDC become involved in a resocialisation process: the ambition contained within that sentiment is that a recalibration of 'what we do' is spread across the region: to people, communities, and business. This not merely an education initiative; rather it is a holistic resetting of the things that are becoming increasingly important.

The process is to be informed by the overall policy framework that shapes the WMMP. Taken in isolation these legislative texts speak only to the subject matter they address. Read as a suite of guidance principles, the collective messaging is able to be revealed. Supported by the Mission Statement of the organisation, that 'we invest in Marlborough's future, our people, quality lifestyle and outstanding natural environment' (Marlborough District Council, Long Term Plan 2018-28), key concepts that already support the organisation can be demonstrated in practical terms.

The key concepts of 'thinking differently' are: *minimisation; safety; wellbeing; duty of care; custodianship.*

Some anxieties are evident within the litter management sphere. These concerns are generally located around the potential for misuse of resources as they currently stand. It was noted in Milestone One of this project that while information exists and can be accessed from council systems, the 'thinking' that informs each department involved with litter service provision is different. The consequence of this circumstance is that there are competing narratives about what the 'right thing to do' is.

Some personnel say that people should deal with litter (and rubbish) themselves and agree with the notion of 'pack in pack out'. Other personnel say that it is acceptable to leave larger volumes of contained litter beside the litter bin. Other still say that systems for publics should be easy to use but voice concerns about the potential for over provision of service such that people have a level of expectation that MDC cannot meet.

It surely would be of benefit to change the narrative: it seems reasonable that the public should be *invited* to help. Extending an invitation works to situate MDC in a favourable position because social convention accepts that in making an invitation, preparatory work has taken place beforehand to anticipate the needs of others. Reciprocity is expected: the relationship has to work both ways. The possibilities open to MDC if they choose to work together with the public are endless. I do not suggest that this does not happen in some format already. However, the type of 'working together' I have been privy to during the term of this report has largely been functional and focused on problem resolution.

Embedding the systems that support a recalibration of thinking will take considerable work. Should MDC accept this proposal, it is likely unable to be achieved with current staff alone. It was suggested in the Milestone One report that MDC would benefit greatly from having additional resource to undertake this endeavour. To that end MDC should give consideration to employing an additional person who holds suitable knowledge, skills, and experience. This person will have the capability to work collaboratively with staff, the public, and business. Particular job specifications are yet to be determined.

A change in narrative and perspective would go some way to assist with anticipating the needs of communities: it would also embed new principles to work by that have a potential to foster goodwill and appreciation. It is evident that community members have long memories. Interactions with MDC over time can be recalled. At times this can manifest in negative perceptions of the work that council does. Informed by a different sensibility, the establishment of a fresh narrative has the potential to enable a different way forward.

Milestone Two of the Marlborough Litter Project saw the development of an education plan. The principle underpinning the plan was to empower communities: to access 'what local communities know already' to effect change, and to share that knowledge across the region. The reciprocal sentiment from MDC would be to facilitate and enable change.

And so matters turn to what may be done in a practical way to enable that change to happen. Narratives about the ways in which individuals and households can contribute to lessening their impact on the planet are common in public discourse. While the philosophy of zero waste may be persuasive, in and of itself, it has already been claimed here that zero waste is a flawed concept. It surely must be incorrect to suggest that from within the system as it currently stands, the personal selection and management of purchasing choices can make a difference to the production of waste more generally.

Perhaps it is more favourable to begin by considering the ways in which litter may be adequately contained. Inviting the public to help reduce litter may be assisted by reorganising refuse and recycling services. Mention has already been made of the types of conditions that refuse and litter service workers experience. Public place recycling in small amounts is prohibitively expensive to service. It is therefore suggested that bulk recycling stations be established at suitable locations, for example at supermarkets, places of high employment, or recreational areas. The principle has been proven for rural communities.

The reason for locating recycling facilities in these locations is that people would not have to make additional journeys; facilities would be available at usual destination points. If recycling facilities were to become available at supermarkets it would be possible to discard packaging before it came into the domestic realm. For visitors, particularly those who travel into the Marlborough Sounds, having an opportunity to 'leave' excess packaging onshore reduces any potential for litter getting into a pristine environment, and limits the amount of baggage having to be transported over water.

Recycling opportunities in urban centres could be limited by product type, for example glass, paper and cardboard. The collection of plastic and cans could remain with the household. To prevent product displacement into the streetscape clear plastic bags may be issued for containment purposes. In the current climate, the introduction of more plastic will surely be unpopular but I emphasise that this circumstance is anticipated to be for the short term only.

Coincidental to possible changes to waste and recycling changes, MDC and anticipated focus groups are encouraged to lobby central government to implement product stewardship schemes across product type and manufacturer. Manufacturer involvement would displace the burden of financial contribution for waste and litter services away from the public and return it to business. Over time, it should be possible that all recycling (packaging) product be dealt with by the producer. Monies saved by MDC can be used for other related projects, or indeed used to reduce the burden to the ratepayer.

Refuse and recycling services could be extended further into the region. Smaller communities may welcome the feeling of inclusion that this type of service provision gives. Placement of bulk recycling opportunities across the district would undoubtedly assist visitor populations. Conversations within MDC at the moment are focused on the ways in which human activity adversely impacts the environment. Calculations may be able to be made to assess the effect of reducing individual car journeys to local waste transfer stations in favour of using one refuse vehicle.

Volunteer contribution cannot be underestimated. It is anticipated that volunteers will continue to be needed well into the foreseeable future. The merits and demerits of volunteering have already been highlighted. Earlier in the report litter was advanced as a valuable commodity because litter picking could be employed as a mechanism through which positive characteristics are shown. An alternative proposition could be that picking up litter is 'pointless busy work'. Volunteers who pick up litter undoubtedly have other skills they might be willing to share.

Volunteers have voiced their frustrations. Common issues of concern relate to administration, volunteer recruitment, and recognition. Oftentimes the organisation of events fall to one person, volunteer numbers can be inconsistent, and at times there can be an absence of 'official' recognition after an event has completed. MDC does contribute to litter disposal costs but this may not be widely known. If volunteer labour is to be embraced then MDC could contribute in other ways. I do not suggest that volunteer contribution be organised by staff; rather resource could be made available in order that volunteers can coordinate themselves.

In practice this may manifest as the provision of a desk and a computer, and moral support. Oversight of volunteer coordination could fall to the person yet to be employed. The act of bringing in volunteers to coordinate all things related to litter puts MDC in a favourable position to lift the status and prominence of volunteering in general. This also has the potential to locate and disperse volunteers throughout the region, particularly for areas that might previously have experienced difficulty.

The skill-set of volunteers could also be used for alternative but related projects. Observations reveal that there are locations where people regularly gather. Litter tends to accumulate in these locations time and again. It is suggested that enhancing the physical amenity of such sites can improve the way people use public spaces. Volunteer contribution could be called for to make use of other product removed from waste streams, such as wood or metal to make benches or tables. Encouraging people who use those spaces to become involved in such projects has every potential to effect positive outcomes.

The inclusion of business in this venture is very important. Where business product is encountered in the natural environment, the sentiments of resignation and intolerance are expressed. Active attention to this circumstance could work to enhance community relations. Changes in supermarket practice have also been noted. Commercial waste is now being diverted through the domestic waste stream; the disposal of plastic lined hessian and other material bags will have to be addressed. Where supermarkets were first to the table with ceasing to use single use plastic bags, other forms of litter continue to be generated.

The theme of this report has been advanced as 'thinking differently'. Underpinned by the principles of minimisation; safety; wellbeing; duty of care; and custodianship, alternative possibilities become available to MDC in order to effect sustainable change. However, responsibility should not rest with MDC alone. The findings held within this report signals a call to people across Marlborough work together to meet those

outcome expectations as well. With a region wide approach the possibilities for change are boundless.

Recommendations

As is usual with report such as these, the following recommendations are given in the spirit that it is hoped they are received. This report, albeit it is informed by critiquing systems, should not be read as criticisms of personnel within systems. An ability to look at things through a different lens is often only able to be achieved by someone who does not 'belong' to the organisation. That is because we are not bound by the objectives and outcome expectations of the organisation. This does not mean that observations contained within this report have not at some time or other been noted by staff; it merely points to a circumstance in which people who write reports such as these experience certain freedoms that may not be available to others.

A series of recommendations for central government, Marlborough District Council, and residents now follows.

Recommendations for Government

If tourism is to continue to be a mainstay of the economy a visitor's tax should be enabled from which monies go to support communities with infrastructure over the busy summer months.

Think carefully about the ways in which the Waste Minimisation Fund resource is allocated. Monies spent on behaviour change or education programmes may be of marginal value and have limited long term effect.

Make decisions that demonstrate a willingness to change societal processes and be firm with expressing expectations from those new processes.

It is inappropriate to situate fault at the level of the individual when policies and Acts of Government would do well to be revised to include business in litter mitigation.

Introduce a compulsory product stewardship requirement for all manufacturers supported by legislation that allows time for in-company adjustments to product research and development.

Make decisions on the types of product that are appropriate for mass advertising.

If recycling is to continue establish further on-shore plastics processing operations.

Recommendations for MDC

Lobby for compulsory product stewardship requirement for all manufacturers in order that the economic burden to the ratepayer is reduced.

Any potential for alternative solution making may be hampered by current ways of working- recalibrate internal systems by 'thinking differently' about litter across departments.

Explore the possibility of similar litter service provision for towns and townships across the district, which could potentially extend to refuse and recycling collection.

Critically reflect on the contribution of advertising, sales techniques and the offloading of supermarket waste into the domestic stream, for example promotional fliers and cardboard box displacement in lieu of single use plastic bag ban.

Advertise and support community clean up events: actively recognise volunteer labour contribution. Consider providing administration resources for volunteers.

Establish a 'litter centric' focus group to empower people to advocate for their communities.

Consider employing an additional resource for the Solid Waste Department to work across stakeholder groups to inspire and coordinate litter reduction across the district.

Recommendations for the individual


Become aware of the issues in your local area and speak up.

Read the report, think about the contents and consider where possibilities to 'think differently' about litter might happen in your environment.

Conclusion

Where the Marlborough Litter Project began with an endeavour to locate unintended consequences in litter service delivery, the unintended consequences of employing the same types of litter mitigation strategies over time have also been uncovered, alongside the predictable consequences of the economic imperative and a seeming reluctance of government to intervene.

The duration off this report has allowed for observations and conversations about litter to inform a possible new way forward for Marlborough. It now lies to the management and governors to decide what that might be. Whether this report is to be helpful or instrumental in that new direction is yet to be achieved. Marlborough



District Council holds immense capacity for change. Legislation as it currently stands may dull any potential for different outcomes to be anticipated.

The Marlborough Litter Project began with an appraisal of litter service provision in different contexts across the region. An education plan was developed in order that communities ‘can speak truth to power’. This final report concludes the series with a suggestion that ‘thinking differently’ can empower the region to tackle litter mitigation as part of an overall philosophy: a recalibration of expectations informed by duty of care and custodianship for people and place. This report concludes with the sentiment advanced by Benjamin Franklin:

Tell me and I forget.

Teach me and I may remember.

Involve me and I learn.

References

Abercrombie, N., Hill, S., Turner, B (2006). *Dictionary of sociology*, Penguin Books: London.

Adams, D. (2017, June 19). 7 reasons you should become a volunteer. *Stuff*. Retrieved from <https://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/comment/93732112/dave-adams-7-reasons-you-should-become-a-volunteer>

Be a tidy Kiwi (n.d). *Be a tidy Kiwi*. Retrieved from <https://beatidykiwi.nz>

Bauman, Z. 1989. *Modernity and the holocaust*. Polity Press: London.

Community Recycling Network Aotearoa (n.d). *The waste hierarchy*. Retrieved from <https://www.zerowaste.co.nz/assets/the-waste-hierarchy.pdf>

Controller and Auditor General, Part 4: *Overview of the Emissions Trading Scheme*. Retrieved from <https://oag.govt.nz/2011/emissions-trading-schem/part4.htm>

Foucault, M. (1991). Governmentality. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller (Eds), *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality*, (pp.87-104). London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Goodhew, J. (2016, June 20). *Volunteer sector worth billions for New Zealand*. Retrieved from <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/volunteer-sector-worth-billions-new-zealand>

Grabianowski, E. (n.d). *How recycling works*. Retrieved from <https://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/green-science/recycling1.htm>

Hickland, A. (2012, April 19). *Don't eat at the wheel, drivers warned*. Retrieved from <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/wairarapa-times-age-news/articlecfm?c-id=1503414&objectid=11060555>

Keep Australia Beautiful (n.d). *Helping to reduce litter and promoting sustainable communities for over 45 years*. Retrieved from <https://kab.org.au>

Mamidipudi, A. (2018, August 26). *The bane of consumerism*. Retrieved from <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/waste/the-bane-of-consumerism-61460>

Marlborough District Council 2018-28 Long Term Plan Consultation Document, *Investing in Marlborough*. Retrieved from https://www.marlborough.govt.nz/repository/libraries/id:1w1mps0ir17q9sgxanfa/hierarchy/Documents/Your%20Council/2018-28%20LTP/2018_LTP_CD.pdf

Marlborough District Council, *Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (WMMP) 2015-2021*. Retrieved from https://www.marlborough.govt.nz/repositiry/libraries/id.1w1mps0ir17q9sgxanf9/hierarchy/Documents/Services/Waste_Management_and_Minimisation_Plan_2015_to_2011.pdf

McNeil, C. (2016). *An exploration of teacher engagement practices with families of primary aged students categorised as at risk of educational underachievement* (Masters' thesis). Retrieved from https://mro.massey.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10179/11432/02_whole.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

Ministry for the Environment (n.d.). *About the waste minimisation act*. Retrieved from www.mfe.govt.nz/waste/waste-strategy-and-legislation/waste-minimisation-act

Ministry for the Environment (n.d.), *Legal framework for waste*. Retrieved from www.mfe.govt.nz/waste-strategy-and-legislation/legal-framework-waste

Ministry for the Environment (n.d.). *The resource management act: getting on with the act*. Retrieved from www.mfe.govt.nz/node/1638

Ministry of Health (n.d). *Legislation*. Retrieved from <https://www.health.govt.nz/nz-health-statistics/access-and-use/legislation>

Mulder, P. (2017). *Bureaucratic theory by Max Weber*. Retrieved from <https://toolshero.com/management/bureaucratic-theory-weber/>

New Zealand Foreign Affairs & Trade (n.d), *New Zealand trade policy*. Retrieved from <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/trade/nz-trade-policy/>

New Zealand Transport Agency (n.d). *Driver distraction*. Retrieved <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/safety/driver-distraction/>

Rockman, B. (n.d). *Bureaucracy*, *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Retrieved <https://www.britannica.com/topic/bureaucracy>

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organisation*. New York: Doubleday/Currency.

Stylianou, G. (2015, September 14). Police crack down on distracted drivers. *Stuff*. Retrieved from <https://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/72022837/null>

Sustainability for all (n.d). *Consumer society and the environmental impact on the planet*. Retrieved from <https://www.activesustainability.com/sustainable-development/consumer-society-environmental-impact-planet/>

The Health Act (1956). Retrieved from www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1956/0065/121.0/DLM305840.html

The Litter Act (1979) (Reprint as at March 2017). Retrieved from www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1979/0041/latest/whole.html

United Nations Environment Programme, (2018, May 18). *Picking up litter: Pointless exercise or powerful tool in the battle to beat plastic solution*. Retrieved from <https://www.unenv.org/news-and-stories/story/picking-litter-pointless-exercise-or-powful-tool-battle-beat-plastic>

Weber, M. 1930. *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Westervelt, A. (2016, February 8). *Is it time to rethink recycling?* Retrieved from <https://enesia.com/features/is-it-tome-to-rethink-recycling/>

Woolf, L. (2018, September 20). Litter by little: New Zealand's 'unhealthy culture' for plastic is increasing- and so is litter. *Stuff*. Retrieved from <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/10702783/litter-by-little-new-zealands-unhealthy-ulture-of-plastic-is-increasing-and-so-is-litter>

WorkSafe, Managing health and safety: Introduction to the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 special guide (n.d). Retrieved from <https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/getting-started/introduction-hswa-special-guide/>

Volunteering New Zealand, 2018. State of volunteering in New Zealand 2017. Wellington, New Zealand. Retrieved from https://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/VNZ_SoV-Report_FINAL.pdf

Zero Waste Network (n.d). *Why zero waste?* Retrieved from <https://zerowaste.co.nz/why-zero-waste/>