

Working with community to develop the Waiuku Trails

[00:13] - Mathew Glanfield

Auckland Council's always looking for a balance and realises that's about working with and engaging communities to form and maintain and to deliver assets while also managing obligations, you know, making sure that people are safe and making sure that methods are best practice.

So it's always a balance of finding that tipping point in terms of melding those two elements together. That's really the key of how Council's trying to approach working with communities.

Underpinning that is also Council trying to systemise, trying to form a series of procedures that make it repeatable. I mean, every community project is different, so if we can as we go, we learn and form this pack, then that's going to help us get better at delivering community projects and working with communities.

[01:04]

Auckland Council knows that, you know, we all want to create an Auckland that's safe and stable, and a big part of that is having communities feel like they belong, and communities looking after each other, and communities having a sense of ownership or guardianship of the areas.

Council also realises that there's a really great skills base within the community, that the community is full of people like you and I who have different careers; there's builders and engineers and different skill sets.

And so if the council can tap into those skills, then that's a fantastic thing as well to assist with the creation of assets.

[01:41]

The Waiuku Trails Project was formed by a committee that was set up, the Waiuku Trails Group, and they had lobbied the local board for funding to develop and extend the existing trails network that sort of moves around Waiuku.

So they lobbied the board and they received a chunk of funding over the last couple of years to extend that network.

The Waiuku Trails Project also forms an element of the broader Greenways plan for Waiuku, which is all about connected communities. So connecting communities physically via networks of pathways and trails to form a safer community.

[02:21]

There are three elements, really, that make up Council's approach to community projects.

The first one is definitely trust, and that has to be deep trust. It comes both ways. It's really between stakeholders and partners. So the community group having trust in Council and having trust with contractors and different parties that might be delivering a project with the community.

For Waiuku project, we spent quite a bit of time evolving trust and that started with a cup of tea, bringing the contractors out to Waiuku, actually meeting in a very old Waiuku museum. And we had two and a half, three hours of just talking about different parts of the project and getting to know each other.

And although I probably didn't realise it at the time, on reflection, that was a key tipping point or key success point for the community group, for the community chair and for the community stakeholders to really feel like they were in safe hands and they were going to be allowed to deliver this project.

[03:20]

The second key element to the council's approach is about empowerment.

You can have trust and once you're forming that deep trust, that's really positive. But empowerment is about truly, you know, putting the community group in the centre of the project. And it's not veneer empowerment, it's true empowerment.

With this project, we spent quite a bit of time looking at roles and responsibilities, and we used the toolset to do that. And that was a real learning journey for everyone, because what may have seemed like a really simple task early on in the project, once we talked through those tasks and work streams, people understood the complexity of them and that enabled us to define roles and responsibilities.

So from a community perspective, what the community members could deliver responsibly or safely and then what we would need to bring in a different professional parties to assist with within the project, so there was a blend of different skills needed.

That process really enabled us to empower the community to define what they truly could deliver hands on, absolutely, and in other areas where they were possibly involved in and engaged in but weren't ultimately responsible for, and they were very clear what their role was at those different points.

[04:38]

And the last kind of key element really about the approach is having a clear and defined vision.

When we began the project, we found that there was a vision, but it still did need to evolve. And the vision continuing to evolve through most of the project.

As we built a vision, there was a lot of conversation about what the project was delivering and how that linked back to the vision of the community group that had been formed, the vision that the

broader community had, the group represented, mana whenua's vision, the local board's vision and Council's vision.

So all of that stuff's pretty important to kind of boil down to "we're doing this project for these reasons, and here's the vision".

Where it became really important was where there was conflict, you know, we had nine members of the community group and that's definitely the upper end of a number of members, and there was contention at times.

So when there was contention, we could pull back to the vision and unpack the vision and use that as a tool to really break down and get collaboration and consensus on challenging issues.

[05:39] - Barry Gibbon

The Coordination Committee, our role is basically to work with the local contractors, the local suppliers, the local businesses and the local groups like the Business Association, the Lions, the Rotary, and basically draw whatever resources we can in so that we get the maximum bang for our buck.

Using local contractors means that they take pride in their work and they are seen by the local community doing it. So that rubs off into future work for them. So win-win for everybody.

[06:08]

This project came about with the local crowd called the Mudlarks. They cleared all the mangroves and that made people aware of the amenities that we have in the community.

The idea of the project is to link up all of parts of the reserves and that so that people can utilise them. We have two representative on the committee representing the iwi. One is an elder and the other one is the lady that takes the role of environmentalist.

We are very aware of the historic importance of this area to the local iwi, and at all times we are working with them and with Auckland Council to make sure that we are in compliance.

It's about health. It's about getting people to exercise. It's about allowing the community to use the reserves that they own, and also that we're spending money on maintaining but not being used.

Really, a project like this is only possible with the support of a lot of people. The Council, obviously, for funding, the local community for donating and supporting, the volunteers for doing the work, and for the community for basically allowing us to use their reserves.

[07:18]

I think it's proved to the local community that volunteers can do a lot of stuff. I think a lot of people historically have sat back and wanted the council to do it.

This has allowed us to lead and to show what we're able to do. And every year you get more and more support, more and more people wanting to help, more and more people saying that they'll chip in.

From that point of view, I think it's brought the community together. And I think longer term, when it's all finished, it'll be a great asset to the tourists and the visitors to Waiuku, and all the families.

[07:51] - Mathew Glanfield

With community pride has also come a greater level of community involvement.

So we've had a couple of planting days around the trails network itself that we formed since the trails were completed. And in each one of those trails days, we've had 70 plus members of the community turn up. So there's just been this massive showing of support.

[08:14] - Barry Gibbon

If you talk to the people that live around here, especially on long weekends, it's absolutely amazing.

And with the water in and the boat going and the canoes going, it's a great place to come and spend some time and just get some fresh air and get your steps up for the day.