

Strategic Review recommendations 2004

- Cap ticket sales to reduce numbers in town as well as the Festival site
- Improve festival site layout for space to relax
- Move campers off the beach into campsites
- Ban Glass from central business area
- Employ security staff to monitor glass ban
- Close streets in central business area for pedestrian safety
- Provide more toilets and rubbish bins
- Restrict bonfires to ocean strip of beach
- Process of continuing improvements

“NOT BIGGER JUST BETTER”



We had the data and the recommendations.

Council employed Sue to coordinate the suggested changes downtown and to develop a marketing and advertising programme to signal those changes to the festival hungry public.

Duties included tendering for contracts to:

Provide and service 50 portaloos downtown and beach

Provide and service waste management systems (100 rubbish drums, 8 rubbish skips), street cleaning

Provide 24 hour security cover in CBD

Arrange street closures

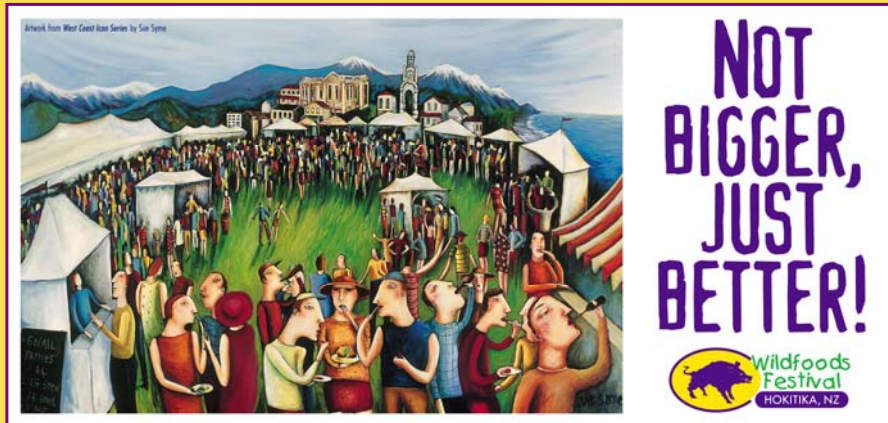
Develop Risk Management plan

Herd itinerant hawkers into festival markets

Assist community groups to set up campsites

Coordinate marketing, advertising and communication strategies

Wildfoods Festival Marketing Strategy 2004



We distributed 12,000 postcards to all ticket buyers and South island University students. We delivered a strong message, softly worded to retain our reputation for generous West Coast hospitality while asking for respect for our town, beach and rate payers.

2004 Festival site

- Tickets sales capped at 19,000
- All tickets pre-sold
- Better festival site layout a success
- Less congestion, queues, waste
- Highly successful day and evening dance



We nervously tested the effect of the recommendations, fully aware that reaction might be a backlash. So much 'freedom' enjoyed in the past had been restricted and expectations may have been impossible to satisfy. We felt we had to risk more, in order to gain more.

However, we basked in the glory of doing the right thing and we were congratulated by everyone involved for taking that risk which paid off handsomely.



Happy campers

- Community groups set up special Festival campsites
- Increased safety for young campers
- Adequate sanitation
- Protection from possibility of adverse weather
- Important community fundraisers



Approximately 1000 campers in each of 6 campsites were booked in advance of the festival weekend

Up to \$10,000 turnover for each those community groups who then had the financial security to invest in their projects by developing toilets, hot showers, catering facilities for the future.

Safety downtown improved

- Bylaw adopted to ban glass from CBD
- Hotels served alcohol in plastic cups
- Off-licencees sold products in non-glass containers
- Security staff employed
- No glass on streets or beach



Still mountains of trash to be swept off the streets each morning by Council staff but very little contained glass.

We felt that we had taken ownership of our town and environment back and that our visitors were showing us the respect that we deserved

What happened in 2005? *The learning continues*

- Festival site events a huge success again
- Downtown Glass and liquor need more control
- Underage drinkers bring glass & alcohol from out of town
- Festival weekend hijacked by free loaders taking advantage of free party
- Party Drug sellers turned up in droves
- Local community disappointed losing patience

We need to do more!



Despite the planned ticket sales cap and less profits to stallholders and ourselves, the festival was again a huge success.

However, an unexpected trend developed at the festival site, with many young (over 18) patrons were filling up on alcohol rather than wildfood.

We also found that some stallholders selling a combination of food and alcohol, were running out of food early in the day and making their money on the alcohol side of their business.

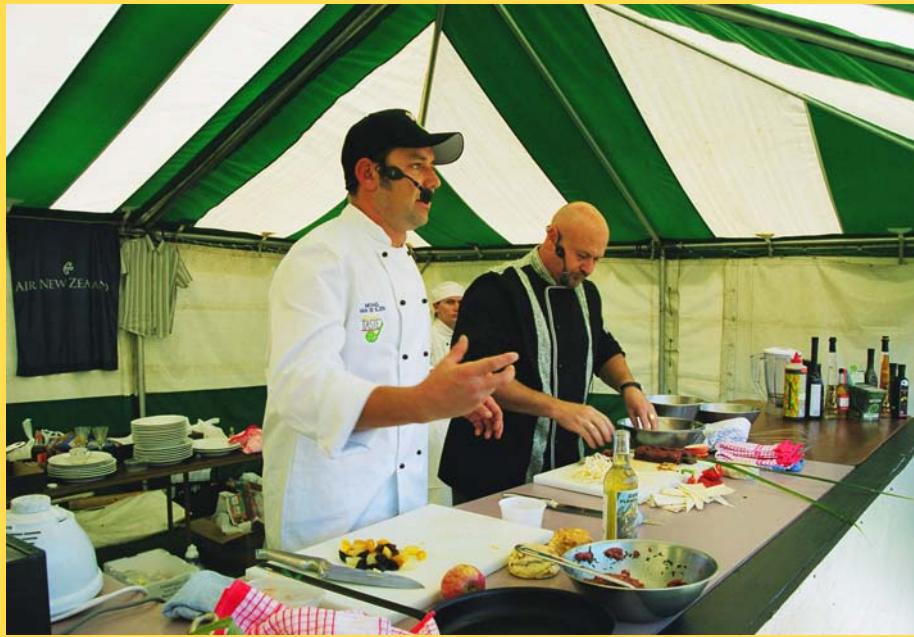
For all actions, there are equal and opposite reactions!

Well not, exactly equal, but we found that despite the same marketing and effort, our visitors to downtown Hokitika were less prepared to heed our glass ban and freedom camping bylaws.

We had somehow attracted a different, younger and more defiant crowd.

Since many of them didn't buy festival tickets, they had not been among our advertising audience and there was more ignorance of our rules-the general consensus among some was that the \$25 festival ticket could buy lots of alcohol, so why waste money?

As a result we had a return to disorderly behaviour of all sorts, fuelled by alcohol.



Call for Liquor Ban

- Recommendations from Police to ban liquor in public places
- Hokitika locals call for greater control
- Emergency services warn of alcohol abuse
- Youth workers concerned at under age drinking



Admittedly the West Coast has a certain drinking culture and reputation, stemming from the Gold Rushes of the 19th century.

Although this is much more perception these days than reality, the unthinkable was inevitable.



Response to proposed Liquor ban:

- Local opinion largely in favour of the ban
- Businesses welcomed it
- Hoteliers felt threatened by it
- Media interest high
- Advance ticket sales slowed

*Council proceeded with recommendation
to ban liquor in public places*



The Westland District Liquor Bans bylaw 2005 made the consumption of liquor in all public places an offence and gave the Police the power of arrest

Exemptions allowed for the transport of unopened liquor from Off licence premises to private residences, and also to the festival campsites which were under the control of their organisers.

The Liquor Ban process

- Focus meetings with Hoteliers (June 2005)
- Decision to ban liquor in public places by Wildfoods Festival committee (July 2005)
- Recommendation to Westland District Council (August 2005)
- Public notification (September 2005)
- Liquor Ban adopted (October 2005)



We followed due process and managed to put the ban in place in good time for its implementation to be planned for the 2006 festival.

The Westland District Liquor Bans Bylaw 2005

- Adoption was straight forward
- By following the public consultation process, we knew it had the general acceptance of the community
- From Council perspective it was not expensive nor difficult
- Concerns were expressed over enforcement



2006 Changes to Festival site

- Alcohol stalls cut from 22 to 10 at Festival
- No high-octane shooters
- Foodstalls opened at 10.00am, alcohol stalls at 11.00am
- Mature entertainment package chosen
- Stricter gatekeeping
- Advance marketing of the above

We are getting it right!



We learnt that some festival goers were investing limited financial resources to alcohol rather than wild food so we balloted out all stallholders planning to sell high-octane shots.

We gave festival goers a head start to explore the foods and festival site a good hour before the alcohol stalls were allowed to open.

Entertainment was light hearted and as diverse as the Westport Highland Pipe Band to the Topp Twins and their look alike competition.

We advertised in media whose audience was mature and self contained-Motor Carvanners to attract our ideal demographic group

Changes to downtown

- Alcohol ban in all public places
- Off-licence purchases double bagged and customers informed of bylaw
- Security and Police presence to check bags at street closure
- Low key entertainment downtown for more mature audience
- No Beer tent at beach
- No free beach concerts
- Advance marketing of the above



We limited the street party and enhanced the festival!



Enforcement of the liquor ban was a challenge, but in most cases our visitors arrived on foot to the CBD without a bottle or can in each hand

We hoped to 'put off' underage drinkers by not providing the type of free entertainment that attracts that group

We sent our message far and wide but did not target the younger demographic group other than to give prior warning to the Universities that the liquor ban would be in place.

Implementation

Some confusion as to the alcohol ban status between Festival site, Hotels and public places by the public

- needs clarification via marketing
- Signage needs to be bold and strategically placed
- Enforcement issues need to be resolved



We still had a lot to learn.

We researched the experience of other towns and events which had adopted liquor bans, so we realised that the first year would probably be the most difficult.

The media focussed on our new liquor ban which led to the misconception that the whole town and festival was 'dry'

Our signage was prominent and ubiquitous, but never the less became targets for vandals who didn't share the concept and much of it was damaged 2 nights before the festival, leaving no time or resources for replacement.

Debrief meetings

- Festival attracted lower attendees, ideal crowd size despite less profit
- Very positive feedback from emergency services, Police and youth workers
- Business leaders support clean town and less disorderly behaviour



We had at least 8,000 less attendees at the festival compared to 3 years ago so less profits. However when we looked back at the years when this sized crowd was the norm, we are satisfied that these numbers are actually our optimum and that bigger is not necessarily better.

Did it work?

- The Liquor Ban bylaw was partially successful in the first year of implementation
- Broken glass on the beach indicated room for improvement
- Overall Council was very happy with the outcome
- More enforcement required
- Within a couple of years we expect to see the full benefits



To summarise:

We know from other Councils' experience that our most difficult year is over.

As was quoted at the debrief by Sgt Andrew Lynch NZ Police "2006 was a vast improvement in alcohol related incidents. 2007 will be even better and 2008 will be fantastic"

Westland District Council working together with other agencies in our small community was the road to success.

Everyone plays a part and although public consultation gives room for extreme views, the process is robust enough to reach the right decisions.

Aspiring to achieve results for the greater good is rewarding and once the momentum gains speed and strength, the road becomes easier to travel.

The next steps

- Continual innovation at the festival site
- Develop relationship with Hoteliers for cooperation and cost-sharing
- Apply selective marketing to attract more mature age groups

Continual improvement with focus on food and family



We cannot afford to sit on our laurels.

We have taken what we believed to be big steps at a measured pace.

We seem to have regained control of a potentially damaging situation regarding alcohol excess and underage partying at our festival.

We can now build on this solid base to enhance the Festival experience for an older age group by coordinating add-on events and more non-alcohol activities in Hokitika during this weekend to maximise the economic and tourism potential to our District.

Hot tips from Westland District Council

- Seek the best advice available in terms of strategic planning
- Take the advice and work to the plan
- Have the courage to push for change
- Prove to the community that they are being listened to
- Keep the community informed of progress
- Identify the key performance indicators correctly!



As a Council,

We didn't invent the wheel because we didn't have to.

We listened to our community and looked reality in the eye.

We sought advice and invested in professional help when we needed it.

We used due processes for good decision making which gave us the confidence to implement strategies which had the potential to be unpopular

We have regained the support of our community, Police and Youth agencies for taking a stand against the destructive effects of alcohol in excess

Thank you for this opportunity!

The Westland District Council appreciates the opportunity for recognition and encouragement that the Safer Communities Conference has given us today.

We have also learned that in forming successful partnerships, the results are greater than the sum of the individual parts.



