



Photo Green Globe

## Kaikoura's Green Evolution

As sustainable growth becomes much more than a catchphrase for tourism destinations, Kaikoura District Council is one step ahead of the game in New Zealand.

Sustainability. It's the current buzz word, not only for tourism enterprises, but for most industries in New Zealand. The rush to be 'seen to be green' has left some businesses scrambling to implement measures that ensure they're not left behind.

Not so Kaikoura District Council, which has been developing its environmental policies since 2002. It's also the first community of people, residences and visitors to become Green Globe Certified.

Kaikoura is located in an extremely mountainous district on the east coast of the South Island. The town is shelved between the Seaward Kaikoura Range, which rises to a height of 2,600 metres, and the Pacific Ocean, which drops another 1,200 metres into the deep sea trench

known as the Kaikoura Canyon. The area is home to approximately 4,810 residents, but receives up to 1 million visitors per year, with an estimated yearly growth of 8-14 per cent per year.

For such a small town, this influx of tourists has meant careful planning around sustainable development to ensure the volumes of people do not overwhelm the services and infrastructure. Although tourism provides both economic and community benefits, the town is committed to ensuring these do not come at the expense of the natural or social environment.

Because of this dedication to sustainable development, Kaikoura has been making a name for itself both within New Zealand and overseas. Mayor Kevin Heays says their

emphasis on deliberate and sustainable growth as a community was "a vision we brought to reality back in 2002, one which would enhance our tourism industry and reputation around the world".

For Kaikoura, Green Globe involvement provided an umbrella under which the district's achievements could be branded to demonstrate commitment to the environment. And although this was an important aspect, the community understood that it had to deliver on the promise.

"The marketing angle of Green Globe has been one of the biggest things for our district," says Ian Challenger, General Manager of Innovative Waste Kaikoura.

"But there is more to it than just a brand – there are procedures that demonstrate ►

you are actually doing something rather than just saying you are doing it.”

The achievements have been considerable to date. The area was little more than a convenience stop as people drove along the winding coastal highway 20 years ago, but has experienced tremendous – and sustainable – growth in recent years.

According to Mayor Heays, it’s not only the area’s reputation that has been enhanced.

“The community buy-in has been amazing, as have been the economic effects for the tourism industry on which our district relies. I believe that for whole communities to be actively involved with Green Globe is a worthwhile strategy.

“Certainly, our Green Globe certification has had many flow-on effects that have reached all of us in the community in some way,” he says.

Some of these benefits have included the reduction of overheads and costs for businesses as new, efficient methods of waste reduction have been adopted. Since they were implemented in 1999, ‘Zero Waste’ to landfill and a recycling programme have achieved a reduction in waste of up to 62 per cent. Plans to introduce a kerbside organic collection for foodstuffs are expected to achieve a diversion of up to 90 per cent of waste away from landfill.

Kaikoura was the first community in New Zealand to achieve Milestone 3 for both corporate and community efforts in the Communities for Climate Protection Programme. Milestone 3 sets out action plans to reduce emissions, while the implementation of these plans will gain Milestone 4 for Kaikoura. This community effort has seen landowners throughout the district voluntarily nominate acres of land to be set aside under conservation covenants, such as the Queen Elizabeth II Covenant, allowing for the protection of this natural resource for future generations.

The district has also benefited immensely from coordinating volunteer conservation projects in conjunction with Innovative Waste Kaikoura, Te Runanga O Kaikoura, Environment Canterbury, and the Department of Conservation. A new programme, Trees for Travellers, enables tourists to purchase native trees and shrubs to help offset the carbon emissions of their travel. The trees are sourced and planted locally and anyone purchasing a tree can check on its growth through an online GPS link.

Kaikoura District Council has also developed a ‘Green Pack’, which is given out at the time of enquiry for any potential new developments. These packs contain a wide array of information on sustainability, and emphasise that applications submitted should utilise sustainable alternatives, such as solar advantage, rainwater reuse, planting of indigenous vegetation, and water conservation.

Nicole Sherriff, the Environmental Development Officer for the council, says the commercial sector in other communities can also adapt to this operating environment.

“Businesses should try to reduce their impacts through everyday actions,” she says. “It doesn’t take a lot of money or time; it just takes thinking outside the square.”

Done correctly, sustainability measures can mean not just a cleaner environment, but a healthier bottom line as well. Lynette Buurman, who manages local tourism business Encounter Kaikoura, knows being a Green Globe Certified company has added value to her operation.

“It’s a consciousness thing. You feel like you are doing all that you can. It has a very positive moral feeling that comes with all the changes you implement as a business. Green Globe also puts you in touch with a lot of people you wouldn’t always get to meet. Whether it is educational tour groups, research institutions, members of the media, or travellers from overseas, people are curious and interested in our involvement and always keen to learn more.”

For Kaikoura council, the ability to encourage growth whilst maintaining the resources needed for future generations has certainly seen not just their tourism industry benefit, but their entire community. ■

To find out more about the community of Kaikoura, visit [www.kaikoura.govt.nz](http://www.kaikoura.govt.nz)

Opposite page Sunset off the coast of Kaikoura.

Below Kaikoura is New Zealand’s first Green Globe Certified community.



Photo Rob Suisted