

Reflections on the Chathams

A. Preamble

This Discussion Paper reflects the thoughts and recommendations of Peter Kenyon (Director, Bank of I.D.E.A.S.) and Matthew Gould (former Manager, Streetlife Economic Development Program, Victoria) following their visit to the Chatham Islands (16th – 19th July, 2006). Given the brief nature of their visit, this Discussion Paper does not in any way claim to provide a definitive action plan for the residents of the Chathams, but seeks to contribute to ongoing community discussion and debate about potential '*windows of opportunity*' to enhance social, economic and cultural development.

The current and future challenges of the Chathams are immense, especially in regard to infrastructure, transport, population size and the declining economics of fishing and agriculture. The reality is that there is no simple '*silver bullet*' which will instantly overcome such challenges. Equally, any waiting for '*the cavalry*' from Wellington to create long term solutions is also not a reality. There is simply a need for Chatham Islanders to collaboratively rebuild from '*the inside out*', to take responsibility for their own destiny and to focus on the many unique assets and comparative advantages that could provide useful practical starting points for community and economic renewal. Above all, Chatham Islanders will need to invest their own resources and efforts in their future, and to be creative and more effective in the use of local resources.

One leaves the Chathams impressed by the level of passion that residents feel for their community and unique lifestyle, and their determination to retain and enhance their unique '*Chatham way of life*'. Such attitudes and the obvious presence of enthusiastic local leaders will be fundamental to community survival and revival.

Tourism and the arts are two obvious industry sectors with underutilised capacity, and untapped growth potential. However, they are industries that will need to be developed in ways that does not disrupt established lifestyle patterns.

*'Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice.
It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved'.
(William Jennings Bryan)*

B. Challenges

Like many remote island communities, the Chatham Islands are confronted by a host of current challenges, namely –

- small and declining population
- infrastructure needs
 - construction of port breakwater
 - development of alternative power generation
 - strengthening and lengthening of airport runway
 - broadband access
 - sealing of key roads
 - more housing
 - improved waste management
 - visitor facilities
- declining fishing resource
- retention of the “Chatham way of life”
- declining agricultural returns
- high cost of living (estimated to be 30% above New Zealand levels)
- high construction costs (estimated to be 30% above New Zealand costs)
- high travel costs
- high energy costs (electricity is four times higher than in New Zealand)
- under achieving tourism industry -
 - limited tourism infrastructure (signage, toilets etc)
 - seasonal nature
 - low level of tourist visibility in New Zealand
 - limited tourist information
 - high travel costs
 - lack of clear marketing brand
 - limited bed space
 - limited calendar of special events
 - lack of dedicated tourism development resources
 - narrow tourism focus
 - staff shortages
 - a level of local antagonism/fear re tourism
- governance – so many structures for a small population
- limited post primary education options
- limited shopping options
- business service gaps
- limited business workspaces
- lack of public transport

C. Assets

The Chatham Islands is certainly an asset rich community –

- strong community identity
- local leadership
- strong community desire to build economic sustainability
- high income levels
- lifestyle -
 - yesteryear feel – ‘the way it used to be in New Zealand’
 - village atmosphere and nature
 - child safety
 - authentic experiences
 - outdoor and water and recreation options
- high level of tourism appeal (with the growing demand for authentic cultural and wilderness experiences)
 - mystique
 - landscapes
 - perception of ‘life on the edge’
 - unique birdlife and flora
 - first place to see sunrise
 - seafood
 - unique cultures
 - fishing
 - maritime heritage
 - nostalgia appeal
 - empty unspoilt beaches
- long established agricultural industry
- strong fishing industry
- emerging arts industry
- number of groups committed to sustainable development- Council, Enterprise Trust, Visitor Industry Group, Community Focus Trust, Dept of Conservation, Chatham Island Visitor Industry Group, Horotehi Moriori Trust, Ngati Mutunga o Wharekauri Iwi Trust, Te Ruranga o Wharekauri Rekohu Inc.
- heritage assets -
 - cultures
 - physical sites
 - Kopingo marae
 - maritime heritage and culture

D. Windows of Opportunity

The writers of this Discussion Paper want to propose 12 areas where change and innovation could enhance community and economic development. They are based upon certain fundamental beliefs, namely –

- meaningful and lasting change always originates from within a community, and local residents are the best source for community vision, idea generation and project implementation;
- communities have never been built by dwelling on their deficiencies. There is a need to focus on the resources, capacities, strengths and aspirations of a community and its residents, instead of dwelling on the needs, deficiencies and problems;
- meaningful change begins with a positive and optimistic community mindset and passionate and diversified leadership;
- a healthy economy requires a healthy community, and vice versa;
- healthy communities are characterised by diverse and inclusive participation by residents from all ages, genders and cultures; and
- strong local economies are characterised by business diversity, high level of local ownership, continuous innovation and openness to alternative economic activity.

Throughout the Discussion paper the term ‘Task Team’ is used. Task Team is simply a group of enthusiastic locals, usually 6 – 10 in number, who come together for a defined research, planning and / or implementation purpose over a defined period of time (usually less than six months).

1. Creation of a Chatham Futures Task Team

Although our visit to the Chatham Islands was very brief, it did allow interaction and conversation with a wide range of individuals and groups. The visit highlighted that there is a significant number of residents interested in developing and implementing options that enable the Chathams to be proactive about change, current challenges and future opportunities. In particular, there were a significant number of younger women who shared their enthusiasm, ideas and creativity for building a positive future.

While the Chathams has benefited from a number of excellent economic studies containing a wealth of development ideas (e.g. *Cooperation and Commitment: The Chatham Islands Economic Review, 2002* and *Chatham Islands Visitor Group Marketing Research*), there is a need for a local Task Team to formulate a practical ‘bottom up’ community development action plan.

Recommendation 1

*A Task Team be constituted and entrusted to research, explore and formulate a reader-friendly Action Plan for community and economic renewal. An excellent example of such a local designed Plan from the Queensland community of Monto has been forwarded to Chatham Community Focus- ‘**Progress Monto: for the sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental enhancement of the monto shire and its community**’. Monto, like the Chathams has faced continuous local economic change over the last decade. Such a Task Team should be constituted for a maximum four month period.*

Recommendation 2

This Task Team is given a \$10,000 budget to support their efforts, and enable the purchase of appropriate technical help, if and when required.

2. Healthy Community and Economic Development

During the series of meetings organised for the authors of this Discussion Paper, there was animated discussion around a series of checklist discussion documents that illustrated the characteristics of a healthy community and economy - in particular – ‘*What does a healthy community look like ?*’ and ‘*Twenty clues to creating and maintaining a vibrant community*’ . (Attached as appendices to this Discussion Paper)

Recommendation 3

Utilising these documents , the Chatham Futures Task Team instigate a series of resident and special interest focus groups to assess current community performance , and to identify actions and initiatives which could enhance community sustainability and positive community behaviours. Such checklists also lend themselves to dissemination through newspaper, newsletters and email.

3. Governance Change

For a community of just over 700 residents, the Chatham Islands appears to be over serviced with development groups. Some amalgamation of efforts would create improved synergy and better resource utilisation.

Recommendation 4

Chatham residents examine whether there are smarter and more effective ways to organise and utilise development funds and structures. In particular, the merits of an amalgamation of roles and resources between the Chatham Islands Enterprise Trust and the Chatham Island Council should be explored.

4. Tourism Development

Tourism is the world’s fastest growing and largest industry, and in New Zealand now rivals agriculture as the biggest job creator and export earner. The tourism appeal of the Chatham Islands is one of the world’s best kept secrets. The Chathams has such low visibility in terms of New Zealand tourism product opportunities. There is no brochure , no central website , no reference in major national tourism publications (eg ‘*Lonely Planet Guide to New Zealand*’) and no mention in significant national tourism products like ‘*The Great New Zealand Maritime Heritage Trail.*’

Yet as summarised above in the Assets Section, and documented in the excellent publication ‘*Chatham Island Visitor Group Marketing Research*’, the Chatham Islands has amazing tourism appeal – for those lucky enough to stumble into a Chatham Island visit.

Recommendation 5

Funding be sought for the appointment of a full time Tourism Development Officer, mandated to develop a serious tourism industry in the Chatham Islands. Key roles of such an appointment would be to implement the essential basics –

- *Production and dissemination of an attractive brochure*
- *Development of a central website*
- *Support for the development of a new tourism product*
- *Organisation of famils for key tourism journalists, relevant tourism marketing personnel etc*
- *Organisation of promotional stories in key national and international newspapers and journals*

- *Development of tourism code of conduct and relevant training for local operators*
- *Participation in key national tourism development and planning events*
- *Establishment of Chatham displays and posters in critical places of influence*
- *Assessment and upgrading of local tourism signage*
- *Organisation of a calendar of Chatham special events.*

Recommendation 6

A Task Team Project be established to build upon the Islands unique maritime heritage including –

- *Creation of a local maritime heritage trail around the Chathams;*
- *Registration of key sites for inclusion in **The Great New Zealand Maritime Heritage Trail**; and*
- *Invitation to David Wilson, Chairman of New Zealand Heritage Tourism to visit the Island to both conduct his ‘Life in the Past Lane’ workshops and to help with interpretation.*

Recommendation 7

A Task Team be formed to design and implement the promotion of the Chathams as a conference / meeting destination, especially given the facilities now possible through the Kopinga Marae.

Recommendation 8

Building upon the ‘Chatham Island Visitor Group Marketing Research’ Report, a Task Team be assembled to research and develop new tourism related initiatives to broaden the visitor profile of the Islands, including –

- *the potential of attracting the Free Independent Traveller (FIT)*
- *creation of heritage and marine parks*
- *increasing the range of water based tourism recreation options*
- *promotion of surfing*
- *whale watching.*

Recommendation 9

*Initiatives be issued to Wally Stone, Chairman of New Zealand Tourism and Chief Executive of Kaikoura Whale Watch to visit the Chathams and offer suggestion regarding greater inclusion of the Chathams in New Zealand’s marketing strategy. **‘100% pure campaign’**. Wally’s involvement in local economic development regarding the Whale Watch initiative would also be invaluable to advise on new and diversified tourism product.*

Recommendation 10

Resources be committed to upgrading the Chatham Airport as the ‘front door’ of the visitor industry including –

- *strengthening and lengthening of runway to broaden aircraft usage*
- *upgrading terminal facilities*
- *upgrading of tourism welcome and information.*

Recommendation 11

Implement the ‘Chatham Islands Visitor Group Marketing Research’ recommendation – ‘develop a strategy for protecting marine values to give international prominence to the outstanding marine and maritime environment of the Chatham Islands’. (p38)

Recommendation 12

Undertake an audit and subsequent upgrade of road signage and visitor interpretation boards at places of tourism value.

5. Development of the Emerging Chatham Arts Industry

A number of Chatham residents have developed and are marketing their expertise in variety of arts and crafts. Development support is required to enable this group, individually and collectively, to become a significant industry sector based on the Chathams, but servicing a national New Zealand market.

Recommendation 13

That a Task Team of Chatham residents with interest and skills in the arts and crafts sector be formed to explore opinions for the development of the Chathams Arts and Crafts Industry, including community workshop, gallery spaces, Arts Trail, collective marketing and professional development. In terms of models, suggest Task Team examine the success story of the Fine Woodcraft Industry in the South West of Western Australia, following large scale closure of timber milling in that region.

6. Development of a Distinctive Chatham Island Brand

King Island, Australia has demonstrated over the last 25 years of the value of developing a distinctive 'King Island' brand related to their boutique dairy products and their flourishing art industry. In a similar way, Hyden farmers have implemented a successful cooperative marketing strategy based upon their grain fed prime beef production. The Chathams need to explore a similar initiative in terms of their niche export industry sectors.

Recommendation 14

A Task Team be constituted to explore the creation of a Chatham Islands brand, with an initiative focus on high quality agricultural, arts and crafts and value added products.

7. Organic Production

Internationally, the demand for organic products is growing dramatically, and this niche market is achieving very high returns. Recently, two Caribbean Islands were purchased by the huge British Salisbury Grocery group to expand production of this organic production range. In terms of a niche market area, organic production could be an exciting possibility for the Chathams.

Recommendation 15

That a Task Team be constituted to research organic production possibilities, and its application to the Chathams.

8. Housing

Availability of, and construction costs of housing is an obvious development challenge. Staff accommodation will continue to be a major factor limiting the expansion of Island industries.

Recommendation 16

The current Housing Committee explore prefabricated housing options in New Zealand and community housing option, and undertake an audit of current unused / underutilized housing and workplace possibilities.

9. Telecentre Model

Around the globe, many remote and island communities in countries like Norway, Canada, Australia have utilised the establishment of local telecentres as both a means to develop information and communication technology (including improved internet access, computer

training and computer business supports etc) and as a one stop shop local economic development centre. The model now occurring in over 100 small and remote communities in Western Australia is worth examining. (<http://www.telecentres.wa.gov.au/home/>)

Recommendation 17

A Task Team be assembled to examine the value of and steps to introducing the telecentre model to the Chatham Islands.

10. Business Development Services

The value of a local community business support service has been demonstrated throughout Australia and New Zealand (see the Business Enterprise Centre Model in Western Australia www.sbdc.com.au and www.beca.org.au). Currently this service on the Chathams is sub contracted to an agency in New Zealand. The wisdom of utilising this finance to attract a part time service attached to a Chatham Islands organisation needs exploring.

Recommendation 18

That current funds for business development services be utilised locally through the creation of a local community business support service attached to an Island development agency.

11. Community Database and Skills Audit

The Chathams is 'still home' to many people, not only those permanent residing. Given the existence of an extensive Chathams 'Diaspora', maintaining links is essential. Awareness of their interests and connections, and a regular monitoring of the skills, passions and experiences of locals needs to be a priority development activity.

Recommendation 19

Create a database of local residents and those with a Chatham connection that have migrated. This data base needs to be supported through the creation of a 'Skills and Passion Audit', and utilised through regular communications. (e.g. newsletter, annual letter from Mayor and CEO of Council and Enterprise Trust).

12. Education Initiative

Many Australians schools with the support of their local communities have adopted the C.R.E.A.T.E. (Creating Rural Entrepreneurial Attitudes Through Education) Initiative to support the development of enterprising attitudes and behaviours of their students. Its framework focuses on the themes –

- understanding change in rural communities
- knowing my strengths
- understanding what it means to be an enterprising person, business and community
- exploring my community as a place of opportunity
- tasting and testing the enterprise option.

(www.bankofideas.com.au/create)

A similar initiative could be useful with Chatham schools.

Recommendation 20

The C.R.E.A.T.E. Initiative be used as a resource to develop a local project to support the development of local youth enterprising attitudes and behaviours.

E. Thanks

Many thanks for the wonderful hospitality and insights promoted to us during our visit. It was a major learning experience in our lives. Particular thanks to Toni Day of the Chathams Community Focus Trust for organising and supporting the visit, and a stimulating itinerary.

The Chathams is certainly no ordinary place!

"WHAT DOES A HEALTHY COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?"

(According to Bruce Adams of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change, USA)

HEALTHY	UNHEALTHY
optimism	cynicism
focus on unification	focus on division
"We're in this together"	"Not in my backyard"
solving problems	solution wars
reconciliation	hold grudges
consensus building	polarization
broad public interests	narrow interests
interdependence	parochialism
collaboration	confrontation
win-win solutions	win-lose solutions
tolerance and respect	mean-spiritedness
trust	questioning motives
patience	frustration
politics of substance	politics of personality
empowered citizens	apathetic citizens
diversity	exclusion
citizenship	selfishness
challenge ideas	challenge people
problem solvers	blockers and blamers
individual responsibility	me-first
listening	attacking
healers	dividers
community discussions	zinger one-liners
focus on future	redebate the past
sharing power	hoarding power
renewal	gridlock
"We can do it"	"Nothing works"

Attachment 2

20 Clues to Creating and Maintaining a Vibrant Community

1. A group of **local passionate community builders** who provide leadership and are committed to spending their time, energy and other resources it will take to make positive local development a reality.
2. A **positive 'can - do' community mindset** that focuses on optimism, belief, expectation, hope, 'we are in it together', and 'the glass is half full not half empty'.
3. Continuous renewal and development of **local leadership**, especially young people and women.
4. A **shared community vision** of the future, coupled with widespread resident participation and support.
5. A willingness to **embrace change, seek smarter ways, experiment, make changes, welcome alternative thinking, take risks and invest in the future.**
6. **Opportunity obsession** - that never ending search for new and appropriate ideas, development options and possibilities and a smart consumption of outside resources.
7. Recognition of **healthy and sustainable community behaviours** such as inclusive community participation, consensus decision making, win-win solutions, collaboration and continuous stewardship of resources.
8. **Mapping and identification of the assets, capacities, skills and passions** of the community and its residents.
9. A focus on **youth development** and their active meaningful participation in the community.
10. **Welcoming and integration of newcomers** into the community.
11. The continual recruitment, involvement, development and recognition of **volunteers.**
12. Evidence of **community pride and confidence** in terms of physical presentation and local investment.
13. Recognition of the importance of **local business vitality** through actions of appreciation and support.
14. A **practical development agenda** which includes bite size and medium to long term initiatives, and continuously evolves through regular consultation and participatory planning initiatives.
15. A **local development organisation** responsible for facilitation, coordination and management of local economic and social development.
16. The identification and promotion of a **clear and unique marketable identity** based on the community's point(s) of difference.
17. **Forging of partnerships with neighbouring communities** for collaborative action and shared learning.
18. Strong belief in, and support for **lifelong local education opportunities.**
19. Presence of a **positive local newspaper**, matched by the ability of local people to utilise all forms of the media effectively.
20. A **positive and proactive local government council** which takes seriously its leadership role in building a healthy and strong community, and is viewed as a 'facilitator' rather than 'regulator'.

(Based on work undertaken by Bank of I.D.E.A.S. with 1000 rural communities throughout Australia and overseas over the last 15 years)