

A Strategic Plan for Kea Conservation -Strategic Aim 3



Community kea engagement plan

A collaboration between the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Kea Conservation Trust (KCT)

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1 Vision and Mission

The overall Vision and Mission of the Strategic Plan for Kea Conservation is;

Vision: A healthy and secure future for kea

Mission: To secure a thriving kea population in the wilds of New Zealand's South Island – Te Wai Pounamu - and a well-managed global captive population that may be appreciated by, and inspire all who encounter them.

2 Purpose and scope of this document

The Community Engagement Plan has been developed to enable delivery of Aim 3 of the Strategic Plan for Kea Conservation which states “public perceptions awareness of and interactions with kea are proactively and positively directed”. Generally speaking, the Community Engagement Plan aims therefore to a) facilitate development of a freely available engaging, accurate and up to date public information resource on kea, b) support communities living with kea and c) increase community collaboration and involvement in kea conservation efforts.

This document outlines the background, justification, methods and projects needed to achieve these aims under section 4 - Proposed Outcomes;

1. Increase positive perceptions of kea and reduce conflict
2. Utilise the captive population for effective advocacy
3. Increase education opportunities and support research initiatives
4. Facilitate formation of community led kea conservation initiatives

3 Background

Kea are often attracted to sites of human activity. Historically this has resulted in serious conflict with a resulting kea cull lasting over 100 years. Today the perception of kea as relatively common, destructive and a nuisance still persists in some areas and kea conflict situations and persecution continue, albeit to a lesser (reported) degree. In addition to this, the kea range is extensive resulting in practical issues related to their ongoing monitoring and management. In order to reduce conflict situations and increase positive public perception and behaviour within kea habitat, as well as to increase scope and level of involvement in kea conservation initiatives, a programme which facilitates local community buy in is imperative.

Community-based conservation (CMC) emerged in the 1980's. It is a conservation model which seeks to increase the success of local conservation initiatives by reconnecting people with their local biodiversity (Brockington, 2002). The success of CMC is varied with failures being attributed to improper implementation (particularly top down management and unclear responsibilities) (Songorwa 1999; Murphree 2002) or tension between desired conservation and community development objectives (Redford and Sanderson 2000). However it is generally agreed that an integrated view of humans and nature is necessary for sustainable conservation (Kates et al 2001; Gunderson and Holling 2002 from Berkes, 2004).

4 Proposed Outcomes

4.1 Increase positive perceptions of kea and reduce conflict

Increasing positive perception and awareness of kea is the first step in decreasing conflict and increasing understanding and interest in community involvement in kea conservation initiatives. As such we propose to develop a marketing plan for kea to increase knowledge and empathy for the species and support ongoing community conflict resolution initiatives South Island wide. Promotion of the species and conservation initiatives would be via a range of media; local and international news articles (TV and newspaper), Kea Conservation Trust (KCT) and other organisations Facebook pages, blogs, websites, newsletters, articles etc and events (such as the KCT's annual winter Advocacy Tour and additional school and community talks), and cover a range of topics and themes core to kea conservation objectives. The aim will be to generate discussion, brain storm issues and share ideas, information, experiences and positive stories about kea with local, national and international communities. In the first instance a marketing plan is to be generated. This will provide details of key issues/messages, timeframes for delivery and channels, tools and methods for actioning. Incorporated within this will be existing programmes such as the Winter Advocacy Tour, which will be a vehicle for delivering key annual themes directly to those communities affected.

4.1.1 Project - Develop a marketing/promotion strategy to increase positive public perceptions of kea

Aim

Develop a conservation marketing/promotion plan and identify channels, tools and methods to spread positive kea conservation messages.

Background

A key challenge facing conservation organisations is changing the attitudes, perceptions and behaviour of local communities towards wildlife. This is particularly relevant in the case of kea; a species whose interactive and inquisitive nature often causes conflict. Not for profit organisations also find it challenging increasing public awareness and support for the conservation projects they run and securing funds for vital operational needs. Utilising both traditional commercial and social marketing techniques to deliver conservation messages to a wider audience and to secure much needed support, is now a widely accepted tool available to conservationists, however justifying the use of conservation funds for this purpose continues to be problematic (Leader-Williams et al, 2010). As a result marketing strategies are often neglected; even as it is acknowledged that building awareness of species issues is core to the success of any conservation programme.

Method

Until such time as additional funds become available to employ a marketing professional a basic plan to promote the projects described in the strategic plan documents is to be initiated. There are a number of community based social marketing conservation workbooks which may be utilised for this purpose (NACD, 1994; Conservation Impact 1999, McKenzie-Mohr, 2011). A marketing plan should identify the following;

- Critical conservation issue/s
- Stakeholders – needs and roles (who, desired behaviour and benefit to them)
- Partners - their needs and roles (who, what they can provide and benefits to them)

- Strategy to meet target stakeholders (approach used to engage with and satisfy stakeholder/partner needs, image and brand)
- Action goals – specific and measurable (what is to be achieved (behaviour change/action), how measured and timeframes)
- Success of marketing effort (success of action goals, what worked well or could be changed)

In order to achieve this and as a first step, worksheets derived from the workbooks listed above should be completed. This will then identify the direction of the marketing plan.

As promotion of the strategy is fundamental to ongoing delivery of the conservation outcomes defined in the strategic plan documents, development of the marketing plan should be initiated immediately.

An evaluation section is built into any marketing plan. This should be carried out on an annual basis to enable success stories to be communicated to all stakeholders, changes in strategy to be actioned and key messages identified for the coming year. This will then drive direction of subsequent year's marketing.

For assessment criteria, please refer to section 5.

4.1.2 Project - Run annual Advocacy Tour

Aim

To exchange information about kea and inform local communities of kea conservation status and initiatives they can become involved in.

Background

The KCT Advocacy Tour was initiated in 2008 and has been run annually since that time. The Tour, run in winter, was initially developed as a method to connect with communities throughout the South Island, approximately one week prior to a South Island wide public winter kea survey. The survey has since been discontinued; however the tour continues to provide a valuable opportunity to share information with communities about the particular (and often peculiar) issues facing kea in their local area, and to explore the role of communities and stakeholders in protecting kea.

Additionally it provides a forum for issues and concerns to be aired and enables priority areas for additional research and/or mitigation to be identified for the coming year. Each year a different theme is chosen based on current issues or main annual conservation focus. Previous years themes include "Conflict – impacts and solutions", "A new direction for kea conservation", "working together for kea" and "Curious about kea?" These themes are often controversial, aiming to generate transparent and forthright discussion and action.

Method

The winter tour is run annually for 10 days sometime between the end of June to the end of July. Ideally part of the tour should occur during the school term (to enable some school talks) and after the start of the ski season (as this is when kea become active around sites of human activity and are therefore in the forefront of people's minds).

A final report of all tour outcomes (including audience numbers, donations received, discussion outcomes, expenditure etc) will be completed by the end of August each year and made available to the KCT Board and funder/s. A public summary is loaded onto the KCT website by the end of September each year.

For assessment criteria, please refer to section 5. For detailed project information, refer to the annual project plan (to be finalised beginning June each year).

4.1.3 Project – Develop and facilitate a South island wide community conflict response and resolution programme

Aim

This project overall, aims to identify the nature of conflict experienced by people living within kea habitat, provide ‘first response’ during conflict situations, help people deal proactively to prevent problem situations arising in the first instance and research practical methods of conflict resolution in collaboration and partnership with communities and DOC.

Background

Human – Wildlife conflict (HWC) is a growing global phenomena common to all areas where wildlife and human populations coexist and share limited resources. It “occurs when the needs and behaviour of wildlife impact negatively on the goals of humans or when the goals of humans negatively impact the needs of wildlife.” (Madden, 2004). It “is as much a conflict between humans and wildlife as it is a conflict between humans about wildlife (ibid)”.

Although conservation is one of NZ’s core activities, we are not exempt from experiencing HWC situations. Kea are often attracted to sites of human activity. Kea conflict with high country sheep farmers was first documented in the late 1860’s (Marriner, 1908). Kea learned that sheep were a high energy food source which, when snowbound, became easy targets for determined kea beaks. High sheep losses were attributed to kea and by the 1870’s a government bounty was initiated which resulted in an estimated 150,000 kea culled up until the early 1970’s.

Today the perception of kea as destructive and a nuisance still persists. Changes in land use and increasing human activity and access into high country areas are resulting in kea coming into contact with more people and their property. For example, Fiordland National Park, one of NZ’s most pristine wilderness areas, and Arthur’s Pass, home to our most visible population of kea, host around 500,000 visitors annually (Statistics NZ, 2013). Property damage is reported each year by private landowners (including sheep farmers), tourists, tourist operators and workers and it is recognised that many more conflict events may go unreported.

Current legal methods of conflict resolution include relocation of kea, or legal killing of nuisance birds (via a DOC permit). These methods are currently under review as neither solution is considered effective nor sustainable.

For kea conservation efforts to be sustainable, resolution of human – kea conflict is a priority. However, to ensure success, a concise plan which fosters community support is vital. HWC often “escalates when local people feel that the needs or values of wildlife are given priority over their own needs” or when they feel disempowered to take action (Madden, 2004). In these cases, disgruntled communities can undermine existing conservation strategies and as such community buy-in, understanding, collaboration and ownership is vital for kea conservation.

Method

The project aims will be achieved by:

1. Developing a strategic plan for addressing local human-kea issues which will include:

- Identification of social, economic and historical conflict factors
 - Determination of actual property damage costs
 - Development of a coordinated research programme investigating resolution methods
 - Development of a database to record conflicts and resolution methods
 - Increasing community awareness of human – kea conflict and mitigation
 - Preparation of a ‘conflicts action package’ and a system for its dissemination
 - Provision of timely on-the-ground support during conflict events
 - Facilitation of community led conflict resolution initiatives
2. Developing multidisciplinary partnerships with organisations involved in human – wildlife conflict (HWC) (eg Human Wildlife Conflict Collaboration (HWCC) and partner organisations globally, and DOC and communities locally)
 3. Up-skilling research personnel in best practice HWC resolution strategies
 4. Monitoring and evaluating project effectiveness, sustainability and future direction
 5. Securing funding to future-proof a successful conflicts resolution programme

For assessment criteria, please refer to section 5.

4.2 Utilise the captive population for effective advocacy

As of the beginning of 2016, 72 kea were held in 19 facilities around New Zealand (ZAA NZ SPARKS dataset, April 2016). A total of 16 of these facilities are open to the public which welcomed well over 1,000,000 people through their doors annually. These facilities have the potential to educate and influence the perceptions and behaviour of visitors about the species in their care and to inform about wider conservation initiatives outside their walls. As stated by DOC, the primary purpose for holding and displaying kea in captivity in New Zealand is to advocate for kea conservation in the wild (Collen, 2011). This includes an undertaking to raise awareness of threats to the species, increase empathy and understanding for kea, educate the public on appropriate behaviour when in kea habitat and to encourage public involvement in conservation initiatives. Currently few captive facilities actively engage in meaningful advocacy with their captive kea. Recommendations from a review of captive kea management (ibid) state that an advocacy plan which identifies “appropriate advocacy objectives, and the actions and resources needed to achieve them” should be developed and that implementation of this plan should be “part of permit holders’ requirements to hold kea”.

4.2.1 Project- Facilitate development and actioning of a detailed advocacy plan for captive kea holders

Aim

To facilitate production of an effective kea advocacy plan in collaboration with captive kea stakeholders, which a) increases public awareness and empathy for kea, b) provides information on how the public can become involved in in-situ conservation initiatives and actions and c) provides information on how public behaviour impacts on wild keas survival.

Background

There is currently no standardised advocacy plan for kea available for use by New Zealand captive facilities. As such, NZ captive facilities currently fall short of their Department of Conservation

wildlife permit requirements, which states that “protected wildlife may be held in captivity for advocacy only where there is a clear benefit for conservation” (DOC, 2015).

Method

A generic kea advocacy plan team to be established which identifies key conservation messages and up to date species information and research outcomes. This may then be adapted (personalised) by each facility whilst still ensuring that message consistency is retained. Information to support the development of the plan include the DOC advocacy plan template (<http://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/about-doc/concessions-and-permits/protected-wildlife-in-captivity/advocacy-plan.pdf>), the KCT’s Strategic Plan for Kea Conservation and 2010 Kea Husbandry Manual. The strategic planning team will complete the initial template (goals, objectives, key issues and take home messages) and forward to the DOC kea TA (to forward to ZAA and other kea holders) for inclusion and comment.

For assessment criteria, please refer to section 5.

4.3 Increase education opportunities and support research initiatives

Effective education, both formal and informal, is key to increasing knowledge, interest in, and positive perceptions of kea. Any education programme must be such that it allows engagement of diverse cultures, communities, social dynamics, ages, education levels, and abilities. Key messages and learning outcomes should also be identified and developed to be rolled out quickly and effectively in response to specific issues occurring in order to maximise learning and media impact (eg. Kea killed while car surfing at Otira Viaduct). Formal education channels and relationships should be developed at primary, secondary and tertiary levels to enable external development of education material which can be shared between and supported by kea stakeholders. Advocating for and supporting kea research will significantly speed up the delivery of conservation outcomes for kea. To enable this, a research and projects list should be made available to all appropriate research organisations who express an interest in the objectives of this strategy, to provide direction and opportunity for involvement. Additional knowledge and support should also be available through a network of advisors.

4.3.1 Project - Develop a kea conservation education strategy and programme

Aim

Develop a community education resource, to engage a diverse audience with clear key messages/outcomes for kea conservation.

Background

Education and advocacy is fundamental to the success of any conservation programme as epitomised in this 1968 quote from Baba Dioum to the IUCN; “In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.” Development of a freely available and accessible resource which can be used in both formal and informal learning situations (either as a taught programme or individually driven) covering a wide range of education topics and targeted to different levels (primary – tertiary) is imperative if we wish to change people’s perceptions and understanding of kea and their own relationship in the world with this species. Current kea education resources available online, developed and reviewed by the KCT include teacher resources (developed on a voluntary basis by school educators) and a LEARNZ

virtual kea field trip. Whilst waiting for funding to be secured, an effective education programme utilising existing education material as well as a volunteer pool of educators here and overseas may be developed as well as initiated conversation with schools to ascertain what material schools would be most likely to utilise and any NZ curriculum requirements.

Method

This project would be best approached by dividing into a number of sub projects:

- 1) Investigate whether schools are using current education resources and what would increase uptake.

Develop a survey to answer the project questions and contact schools (primary – secondary) throughout NZ, preferably engaging known contacts, to ensure higher survey response rate. Utilise this information to direct development of curriculum based education material for schools (refer sub project below).

- 2) Develop formal (curriculum based education material for schools) and informal education resources which reflects current understanding of kea.

Utilise the services of education professionals from a variety of backgrounds (ie zoo, school and conservation educators), initially in a volunteers capacity and develop material targeting all age groups and utilising both formal and informal learning methods. Material should be engaging and create action outcomes that can be easily assessed and provide opportunities for empowering children to take part in kea conservation initiatives.

- 3) Initiate a volunteer educator delivered programme for schools.

Develop and initiate a volunteer kea educator's visitors programme for schools which could be delivered all year round, based on other species conservation programmes (eg Bat Conservation International (BCI)).

For assessment criteria, please refer to section 5.

4.3.2 Project - Develop a research and project list to engage and guide additional stakeholder involvement.

Aim

Project: Guide and support externally driven projects through publication of a list of projects (and supporting background information) which tertiary institutions and conservation organisations can access.

Background

Research and development of projects to address specific species conservation needs, is an important part of species management. The Strategic Plan for Kea Conservation outlines a number of projects which are either completed, active or have been identified as needing to be carried out in the future. The majority of this work is presently being driven and funded through the KCT or DOC. A number of additional research projects on kea genetics, behaviour, ecology and biology have or are being carried out by universities here and overseas. Development of a projects list which identifies clear conservation outcomes for this species (ie those that have been identified as filling current information gaps) would potentially encourage universities to also become involved in conservation based projects, thereby speeding up the time in which this information could be collected. This is extremely important for a species which is endangered and is subject to multiple threats.

Method

A projects list covering all topics within the Strategic Plan (inclusive of pure research, education, advocacy, marketing and community engagement) to be generated and circulated for comment.

For assessment criteria, please refer to section 5.

4.4 Facilitate formation of community led kea conservation initiatives

The importance of communities buying-in to the success and longevity of local conservation initiatives has been demonstrated repeatedly worldwide (Berkes, 2004). Increasing community collaboration and involvement with kea conservation initiatives will be achieved through a number of key projects including development of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) directly between communities and kea, development of an active and effective volunteer base, and supporting and encouraging external stakeholder kea conservation initiatives.

4.4.1 Project - Develop a MOU between South Island communities and kea

Aim

This innovative programme aims to develop and acknowledge:

- individual community's responsibilities, intentions, goals and aspirations for kea
- the unique challenges of living with kea
- a sense of value and pride in local wildlife
- an understanding of the vital services provided by kea
- a unique working relationship between communities and their kea populations
- opportunities for direct community involvement in conservation projects
- connections between partner communities South Island wide
- conservation training opportunities to the wider public
- opportunities for communities to benefit from external expertise and volunteer effort
- additional avenues for resolving conflict situations
- opportunities for tourism and business connection

Background

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) describes an agreement between two or more parties. It expresses a "convergence of will between the parties, indicating an intended common line of action". It is commonly used here in NZ between organisations to define and clearly outline responsibilities to achieve a common goal. This programme proposes to develop an MOU directly between communities and kea which is facilitated by the Kea Conservation Trust with support from our community partners. We have chosen a facilitation role to ensure that communities don't lose sight of their direct partners and beneficiaries, to ensure that local population ownership care of kea is embraced and to minimise any potential 'us and them' issues which may otherwise arise between outside organisations and stakeholder communities. Important principles to remember with this approach include the need for adaptive co-management (sharing of management, power and responsibility and creating an environment that encourages learning, stewardship and mutual trust), implementing solutions at the local community level first, provision of incentives to the community (such as equity and empowerment), sharing of local and ecological knowledge and potentially moving from a western centric definition of conservation to a cross cultural one (Berkes, 2004).

Method

A draft community MOU to be developed and promoted during the KCT's annual winter advocacy tour (June/July) to a minimum of 7 communities identified as having an on-going association with kea. Discussion and comment initiated and incorporated into the document. A final draft (inclusive of proposed local projects) sent out to key community contacts for sign off and projects initiated.

For assessment criteria, please refer to section 5.

4.4.2 Project - Develop and maintain an active pool of kea volunteers

Aim

To develop and maintain an active and up to date volunteers database and volunteers programme.

Background

Like many conservation organisations, the KCT is run primarily on a volunteer's basis. As a result a significant proportion of kea conservation work in NZ is carried out by volunteers. The trust has developed a volunteer's database to log volunteer's details (including skills and knowledge base as well as preferred volunteer area). However, the amount of time and resources required to support and direct these volunteers into meaningful projects is currently unavailable. This means that a potentially valuable conservation resource is being neglected to the detriment of kea conservation.

Method

Develop the position of a part time volunteer's coordinator. This position will process all volunteers' requests, update the volunteer's database, drive and support kea conservation volunteers, help develop and oversee projects and promote and highlight volunteer positions.

For assessment criteria, please refer to section 5.

4.4.3 Project - Identify and support external stakeholder kea conservation initiatives

Aim

To support and encourage local, national, international initiatives which support kea conservation outcomes.

Background

Kea conservation initiatives driven by external stakeholders (defined as those individuals/groups outside of the KCT or DOC) have been or continue to be developed. These include local community groups involved in pest control, individuals initiating lead removal programmes in their local area or international zoos driving advocacy/education campaigns etc. Supporting the work of these individuals/groups either through project development, lending of equipment, writing support letters for funding or provision of on-going technical/knowledge support encourages communities to initiate their own kea conservation programmes and in so doing, increase the scope of the strategic plan. Facilitating externally driven projects from the ground level up ensures a more sustainable future for kea conservation and helps moves conservation efforts into the public domain.

Method

- Develop protocol to deal with external stakeholders
- Publicise support for kea conservation initiatives (through the MoU)

For assessment criteria, please refer to section 5.

5 Assessment of outcomes – implementation, monitoring, reporting and review

The aims and projects outlined in this strategy must be able to adapt and evolve in response to on-going monitoring and assessment of outcomes. Reevaluation and reassessment of individual projects will be conducted annually, while the strategic plan itself is to be reviewed every 5 years. This will ensure that projects that are implemented remain responsive to real needs and that strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each project and the management documents are identified and managed (Bryson & Alston, 2011).

5.1 Project - Develop an outcomes assessment table for each project

(Refer appendix for Strategic Objective 3's projects table which can be utilised for this).

6 References

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7 Appendices

7.1 Projects List

A community engagement plan is designed, implemented and evaluated.

Increase positive view of kea through exposure via a range of media

3.1.1 Project: Identify channels, tools and methods to spread kea conservation messages

3.1.2 Project: Run annual Advocacy Tour to encourage community engagement and involvement in kea conservation initiatives

3.1.3 Project: Develop interpretation and advocacy material to address specific threats to kea and raise positive awareness in general

3.1.4 Project: Evaluate success of advocacy methods

Proactively engage with communities to prevent conflict

3.2.1 Project: Develop a conflicts database

3.2.2 Project: Prepare an advice package for people with conflict issues

3.2.3 Project: Research methods of conflict resolution

Utilise captive kea population for effective advocacy

3.3.1 Project: Develop an advocacy plan for use across all stakeholder groups

Increase education opportunities

3.4.1 Project: Investigate whether schools are using current education resources and what would increase uptake

3.4.2 Project: Develop curriculum based education material for schools which reflects current understanding of kea

Support research and project initiatives

3.5.1 Project: Provide a list of projects which could be developed by specialist organisations

3.5.2 Project: Guide and support externally driven projects

Facilitate the formation of community led kea conservation initiatives

3.6.1 Project: Develop and nurture an active volunteer's database

3.6.2 Project: Identify and support any local kea conservation initiatives (national and international).