

Open Government Case Study: Pocket ranger

Developed by a DOC and Project Tongariro partnership

Pocket Ranger is a smart phone application (for iPhones or Android phones) that has been developed by a partnership between the Department of Conservation (DOC) and Project Tongariro, a Turangi based community group and registered charity. The application is based primarily on open data made available by DOC. Project Tongariro managed the development of the application, engaging an Auckland based software developer.

Application features

The application gives users just about all they need to know about the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, including:

- descriptions of the tracks and their surroundings
- points of interest
- stories
- photos
- maps
- safety information
- local services available

Offers just about all users need to know about the Tongariro Alpine Crossing

Pocket Ranger also has a Quick Response (QR) Code reader included. Installed along the trails are posts with a QR code on it; when read by a smart phone with Pocket Ranger installed, relevant information comes up based on the user's location.

The next release of the application will make use of GPS functionality in smart phones to provide a "you are here" feature.

Local Police and Search and Rescue like the good safety information and advice

Impacts

Local Police and Search and Rescue are pleased that good safety information is included in the application, and advice about what gear walkers should take with them. Making this information available to walkers before they reach the park should keep them safer.

Application funded by local businesses paying to have their services included.

Project Tongariro has been able to make the application available for free by including information about local services such as accommodation, transport, food outlets, and other activities in the area. The local businesses pay to have their services included, thereby funding the application, and increasing their exposure to travellers using it.

Free to users

A key feature is the ability to provide, through the use of QR codes, location based information to walkers actually in the park, without having to place large information signs (that have a detrimental impact on the landscape). This also reduces the need to produce books and displays which can be costly.

Project Tongariro owns the intellectual property for the application template, which can be purchased at a fraction of the price of development, and applied to any other walks, national parks and cycle tracks.

Downloaded by more than 2000 people so far.

Uptake

The application has been downloaded by over 2000 people so far. The second release, in December 2011, incorporated feedback from early users and new features including the QR code reader. Now that there is confidence in the application, a full campaign to promote it is planned for Spring 2012, when the new walking season begins.

Full promotional campaign planned for Spring 2012



Economic and social impacts

A local community has developed a viable new community service

- a community group has developed the application benefiting the public (national and international travellers)
- revenue earnings are gained through sales of the application template
- revenue earnings are gained through advertising local services
- the application provides an innovative new advertising channel for local businesses
- improved public safety through travellers being better informed about local conditions and equipment required
- there is less impact on landscape through use of QR codes on posts instead of big information signs

Travellers are better informed and prepared

Efficiency impacts

Publishing costs have been reduced; others can re-use the template

- the costs of publishing information about the Tongariro Alpine Crossing are reduced
- search and rescue costs are potentially reduced
- the template can be applied to other walkways and cycle routes