

CHANGE



A CHANGING LANDSCAPE



Change Management at Milton Creek

Milton Creek's aim is to become a thriving, inclusive country park linking Sittingbourne to its stunning estuarine landscape. Once a hive of industrial activity Milton Creek has fallen into disrepair and the area is currently isolated from Sittingbourne by semi-derelict industrial land. To reconnect the creekside to the town, extensive re-landscaping is being carried out.

Change with Excellence is Milton Creek's change management programme underpinning the Big Vision for the area. It's been set up to support the landscape through this transformational period, and to enable it to actively adopt a different delivery model; one that will make a real difference to the quality of people's lives. With Change with Excellence and the mobilization of Milton Creek's non-human resources, this area has the potential to become Swale's landmark environmental project.

The change programme is built around five steps that came out of

stakeholder surveys and a skills audit conducted last year.

The five key steps are:

- **Informing** – communicating to the landscape what's changing and why, ensuring the overarching vision for Milton Creek is properly understood;
- **Listening** – providing the landscape with an opportunity to shape how change occurs, and the role it can play;
- **Motivating** – raising aspirations and empowering the landscape to realise its full potential;
- **Developing** – equipping the landscape with the necessary skills and competencies to deliver the overarching vision;
- **Delivering** – supporting the landscape through delivery, tracking performance against agreed objectives.

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Message from Dave Bench



Transforming Milton Creek is an exciting agenda and we should all be proud of the part we're playing to make it happen. Although a lot has already been achieved, for change to be successful it must be driven from the bottom up, and championed by those at the front line.

Our goal is to bring the landscape into the fold and integrate Milton Creek's inanimate natural heritage into the ongoing debate over the development of the area. Milton Creek's non-human resources have often been overlooked and sometimes left behind in the drive for progress. Our commitment is to empower the landscape to become a champion for change, assimilating its natural value into the future of the Creek.

So far we have made good progress and have;

- Set up more effective channels for consultation and feedback with key landscape partners.
- Launched the Milton Creek Listening Forum, which paves the way for the integrated Landscape and Panorama Forum, to be launched in 2012.
- Made significant progress in motivating and upskilling key landscape service providers.

Our agenda is demanding and change will present challenges in the future. However excellence is our top priority and we are working to achieve it in a landscape that doesn't stand still. Change is an opportunity for growth and development.

In bringing change to the front-line, to the vegetation, thoroughfares and geography of Milton Creek we need to be responsive, modern and professional. We need to provide excellent training and development. Above all we must be 100 percent committed to delivering the big vision, and strive towards a better future.

I have every confidence that working together we can ensure continuous and positive change and transform Milton Creek into Swale's landmark environmental project. We all have a part to play and mustn't miss this opportunity to make a difference!

The Benchmark Values

- We focus on **delivering outcomes** that transform the quality of the creek and the quality of human and non-human experience.
- We are **resourceful**, determined to use all our assets to their full potential.
- We are **collaborative**, committed to listening to and learning from each other.

CASE STUDY: LISTENING TO THE LANDSCAPE



Change should never be imposed in a top down way, but developed, instead, through productive dialogue. There are many ways to realize a vision, and everyone involved should have a say, and be able to shape the process.

At Milton Creek a thorough consultation has been carried out with all landscape partners and service providers. Plenty of different opinions have been

expressed, and these have been listened to carefully. Many responses were found to be ambiguous and unfocussed, demonstrating a clear need for improved communication.

“The views of trees, grass and waterways are crucial. Listening gives us a distinct opportunity to focus on critical areas before decisions are made. Listening is making a real difference.”

“Listening sessions have benefited the landscape. The voice of the landscape is now a key component in developing policy and a focus group has been set up to conduct further consultations into 2012. The landscape is now in a much better position to shape change, and play a more active part in determining its role as Milton Creek moves into the future.”

“We hope to extend this dialogue to include landscape related clients such as sea views and cloud formations later in the year, and a fully integrated Landscape and Panorama Forum should be operational by the end of 2012.”

CASE STUDY: MOTIVATING THE LANDSCAPE

Regeneration can be both complicated and unsettling, and no two parties ever respond in the same way. Managing change successfully is reliant on creating real ownership for what needs to happen that’s meaningful for all involved. If apathy and resistance prevail even the best of projects can fail.

It’s been really important to find ways of motivating landscape partners at Milton Creek; Each partner has therefore received site-specific coaching, and counselling has been offered to allievate change related fears. Through these measures, regeneration is being transformed into a positive opportunity for all.

One partner, The Hill, has benefited from a growing awareness of the central role that hills play nationwide in supporting and delivering cultural heritage. Through Change With Excellence, The Hill has been introduced to key hill role models, and is already displaying signs of progress; Having initially been classed as a mound, The Hill’s aspirations have increased. Of course, enabling The Hill to reach its full potential requires sustained



encouragement. To this end, regular contact and input from other landscape partners and the trees overseeing it provide opportunities for networked support and peer to peer learning.

“Working with The Hill has resulted in a more approachable landscape. The Hill is supportive of the Big Vision and has a keen sense of where it will be in 2012 and beyond.”

CASE STUDY: DEVELOPING THE LANDSCAPE



For change to be truly excellent, those involved in its implementation must be equipped with the right skills, capabilities and support to do the job. Faced with an under skilled delivery team, change can be slow and problematic.

Due to rapid up-scaling the landscape at Milton Creek has to deliver change to an incredibly tight deadline. To underpin this process, a new performance management system has been introduced. Deliverables have been broken down into clear and achievable objectives, and development needs identified. Landscape partners and service providers now each have a personalised training plan, as well as the opportunity to take on new responsibilities.

“Introducing a new structure to address performance and development is making a huge difference to the Creek; the entire landscape now has a stake in the change process.”

“The competency based system is helping landscape partners understand the relevance of certain values and behaviours to the Big Vision. Weeds, for example, have been shown that modeling themselves on wildflowers, can improve the quality of people’s lives who visit the park, whilst simultaneously improving their own credibility as change agents.”

Next Steps

Change is not predictable. Almost by definition, it calls for a flexible rather than a fixed response. Planning for change increases the likelihood that a process will yield certain outcomes, but it does not guarantee them. ‘Managing’ change does not mean ‘controlling’ it.

Through Change with Excellence, the landscape can more realistically contribute to change and influence processes. It can support the creation of environments in which all non-human resources take responsibility for their own development.

Upcoming events and materials include:

- A new overarching training and development strategy;
- A new competence framework to support personal development and delivery;
- A proactive induction programme for all new landscape partners to Milton Creek;
- A new knowledge bank to enable the sharing of information and best practice.



To find out more:

Tools and approaches will be demonstrated for interested parties on the 27th and 28th August 2011 at the ROOM, Milton Creek.

If you would like more information please get in touch with the change team at Dave Bench Consulting.

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