

Lessons learned from one of New Zealand's most challenging civil engineering projects: rebuilding the earthquake damaged pipes, roads, bridges and retaining walls in the city of Christchurch 2011 - 2016.

## The Lonely Cone Recall communication plan

**Story:** The Lonely Cone Recall

**Theme:** Communications and Community

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A document which outlines the communication strategy behind the Lonely Cone campaign.

This document has been provided as an example of a tool that might be useful for other organisations undertaking complex disaster recovery or infrastructure rebuild programmes.

For more information about this document, visit [www.scirtlearninglegacy.org.nz](http://www.scirtlearninglegacy.org.nz)



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# SCIRT's Lonely Cone Recall

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## COMMUNICATION PLAN

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## BACKGROUND

The humble road cone has been a feature on Christchurch streets since the SCIRT programme began in 2011. It has become synonymous with the rebuild of Christchurch, at the peak of repairs more than 100,000 cones were on the streets at any one time.

A June 2012 news article discussing the replacement of wayward traffic cones highlighted the significant amount going missing, at that time; about one-fifth were reported as 'walking off the job'.

In 2012, *Canterbury Television* created a 'life cycle of a road cone' video featuring an abandoned road cone. It proved popular online when *The Press* ran an article about the video and put it on its website. More than 28,000 people viewed the short 1 minute clip and discussed it on social media. Elsewhere road cones have featured in a special exhibition at the Christchurch City Council, been dressed up by residents as the Easter Bunny and on the anniversary of the September 2010 and February 2011 earthquakes, flowers are often placed on top as a sign of remembrance.

New feedback from the 2016 SCIRT focus groups suggests road cones are an emblem of people's frustrations with road works and impatience with the rebuild "Please just pack up the cones and go". There is also an expectation by residents that Christchurch Streets would be cleared by cones at the end of the SCIRT programme (December 2016).

As SCIRT winds down, the number of road cones is already starting to decrease, less than 30,000 are on the streets at present and that number is expected to fall to about 20,000 by November. Its currently estimated 5 percent of those cones go missing each year, equating to about 1500 lost cones.



**Above:** An abandoned road cone in Fendalton.

When SCIRT finishes a project and exits a residential street, sometimes cones can be misplaced and accidentally left behind. For several months following the end of a project, the SCIRT Communications team will still receive the odd call about a long lost road cone or road sign.

With the end of the SCIRT repair programme in sight, it important that SCIRT begins tidying up the streets, targeting these missing cones and signs, and rescuing them from gardens, drains, rivers and parks. It's an opportunity for SCIRT to signal the end of the programme, the great cone recall.

A long-lost worse for wear road cone or sign is not how SCIRT's work should be remembered, let's take the focus off the cones and put it back on the work itself.

## COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

1. To rid the streets of abandoned road cones and signs.
  - Rescue more than 500 lost and forgotten road cones from Christchurch Streets by from November 1 to November 30 2016.
2. Generate positive publicity for SCIRT, demonstrating our commitment to cleaning up our work sites and signalling the end of the SCIRT programme.
  - Produce more than 10 positive print articles, radio and television interviews about “SCIRT’s Lonely Cone Recall” by the end of the campaign, 30 November 2016
3. Use social media as a new channel for SCIRT to generate interest.
  - Generate more than 10,000 views on the campaign launch video by 30 November 2016.
  - Receive more than 100 positive comments on various social media pages plus 1000 engaged followers on the campaign Facebook page by 30 November 2016.

## ISSUES AND RISKS

ISSUE or RISK	MITIGATION STRATEGY
Social media campaign receives comments highlighting negative experiences with SCIRT	This is a single issue (road cone) campaign, other comments will be referred to delivery teams and <a href="mailto:info@scirt.co.nz">info@scirt.co.nz</a>
The Community don't respond to the campaign	SCIRT proactively collects cones / seeks them out.
The public feels SCIRT should not be spending money on this campaign "if they can't fix roads".	Media strategy around being tidy kiwis with a visibly low cost campaign.
People call about cones from active work sites.	A small reward such as a rubber cone and sweets will be used to minimise the chances of this happening. Traffic management responsible for assessing whether cones are no longer being used.
The 500+ target isn't reached.	Collect as many as possible during the campaign, targets won't be publicised, SCIRT employees find cones and organise for TM to collect.
The cones belong to Enable, City Council general maintenance, City Care, BAU projects	TM will check logos and the location of the cone to check if SCIRT has been working there. If cones are collected that don't belong to SCIRT, other companies will be notified.

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

'SCIRT's Lonely Cone Recall' campaign will enlist the help of the public to help find lost road cones that have been left behind and are now littering Christchurch Streets. Stray road cones will be rescued and sent back out to work or off to the great cone melting pot in the sky. The campaign will run during the month of November and will increase SCIRT's reputation as an environmentally conscious organisation by cleaning up after itself. Removing road cones will help tidy up the streets where we have been working while signalling the end of the SCIRT programme.

The communications strategy and approach for 'SCIRT's Lonely Cone Recall' is to use proactive communications to receive a positive response from Christchurch residents.

A CTV video in 2012 describing road cones as a 'species' had a great effect on residents who continued to personify road cones in their comments on social media. In SCIRT advertising and publications, lost and lonely road cones will be personified as the foot soldiers of the Christchurch rebuild.

SCIRT will involve its alliance partner, Christchurch City Council in the advertising approach. The City Council's video department will be invited to assist SCIRT in creating a video personifying the road cones and recalling them from the streets. The video will be scripted by the SCIRT communication team and edited by the City Council.

As an additional visual element, a sign written 'SCIRT CONEMOBILE' will be created and will travel around the city to pick up cones that residents have called in to the 'Cone tip line' (0800 SCIRT CONE). The CONEMOBILE will attend SCIRT community events to promote the campaign. A SCIRT 'tip line' will also be set up on the website so residents can directly email the traffic management and communications team about where cones are kept.

SCIRT will also use social media for the first time as part of a campaign. A Facebook page will be created with a humorous campaign launch video about finding lost cones. Residents will be encouraged to post photos of cones and addresses where SCIRT can expect to find a lost cone. If residents private message their own details a rubber SCIRT cone and SCIRT lollies will be left in their letterbox to thank them for their efforts. Residents will also be encouraged to share photos of road cones.

Regular radio advertising over the course of the month will target commuters who see the 'same road cone on the side of the road every day'. Drivers will be encouraged to visit the SCIRT website, Facebook page or phone the 0800 number to 'dob in' the offending road cone.

SCIRT's monthly advertising will heavily feature the road cone campaign in its theme, the ad will run several times across multiple publications. 'Wanted posters' will also be distributed around public places in the city such as Library's and community centres. The aim of which is to generate a responsibility among Cantabrians to track down these lost cones, their way to help SCIRT clean up the city.

SCIRT's existing communication channels will also be used; delivery teams will also publish a line in their work notices with the 0800 number during the month of November. Thousands of work notices are delivered every month and this will be an excellent channel to get the message out.

## MEDIA STRATEGY

The Media Strategy for this campaign is proactive. The tactics section includes specific opportunities where we will provide written and visual collateral to media outlets. All Media Inquiries about the campaign will be handled by Marta Steeman, with Ian Campbell as the media spokesperson.

By working with existing media partners, such as radio, television and print outlets, SCIRT will grasp every opportunity to generate interest in the campaign and competition. We will work with the Christchurch City Council to produce the video and use social media to distribute the campaign to residents throughout the city.

The SCIRT IST Communications Team will work to identify further positive media (free publicity) opportunities as they arise and develop these with local and national media.

Ian Campbell will be the spokesperson for the campaign, at a media launch event with the “Cone Mobile” and the traffic management team rescuing cones from the streets at a media stand up.

As outlined in the communication strategy, a new Facebook page will be created to help engage with the community over the course of the campaign. Regular Facebook advertising will help SCIRT generate interest about the competition and campaign.

Residents will be encouraged to post photos to be featured as “the saddest cone of the week”.

## TARGET AUDIENCES

- Christchurch residents who have experienced road works in their streets.
- Community and socially focused individuals and families.
- School children
- Local and national media.
- Community groups e.g. residents associations
- SCIRT staff – the eyes and ears on the streets

## STAKEHOLDERS

STAKEHOLDER	RELATIONSHIP MANAGER	HOW	BRIEFING MATERIALS	WHEN
Christchurch City Council	Linda McGregor	Heads up at a monthly meeting	Briefing document about the campaign	September - December
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet	Linda McGregor	Heads up at a monthly meeting	Briefing document about the campaign	September - December
New Zealand Transport Authority	Linda McGregor	Heads up at a monthly meeting	Briefing document about the campaign	September - December
SCIRT Communication Leadership Team	Linda McGregor	Heads up at a monthly meeting	Briefing document about the campaign	September - December
SCIRT Delivery Leadership Team	Linda McGregor	Heads up at a monthly meeting	Briefing document about the campaign	September - December
SCIRT Board	Linda McGregor	Heads up at a monthly meeting	Briefing document about the campaign	September - December
Traffic management team	Linda McGregor	Heads up at a monthly meeting	Briefing document about the campaign	September - December

## KEY MESSAGES

- SCIRT would like the help of residents so road cones can be rescued and recycled.
- Help us to track down missing road cones that have 'walked off the job'.
- SCIRT is community and environment focused, it's important to our team that we take pride in cleaning up after ourselves.
- As SCIRT winds down, the number of road cones in use on the streets has decreased from 100,000 to just 30,000 cones.
- It's estimated there are hundreds of cones on the streets of Christchurch that have been misplaced and need to be returned.

The key messages will help to inspire communities to help us to find long-lost road cones.

## KEY DATES

**Late September / early October:** Video scripting and filming with the Christchurch City Council begins.

**October 24:** Video, advertising and the media release are finalised. 'SCIRT's Cone Mobile' is prepped and ready to be rolled out.

**November 1:** Campaign launch, Facebook page launch and the video and press release is released. Advertising campaign begins.

**November 15:** Media release about the amount of cones returned is released

**November 30:** End of campaign 500+ cones have been returned, media release about the progress to date.

**December 9:** Analysis of the campaign is complete and published.

## TACTICS

AUDIENCE	TACTIC	WHEN	MATERIALS	BY WHO
<b>PHASE ONE: PREPARING THE CAMPAIGN</b>				
Christchurch City Council	Contact and discuss working together on the campaign.	Late September / early October	Video	Marcus
Community	Prepare a Facebook page to be published on the day of the campaign launch	October 14	Facebook, Social Media	Marcus
Advertising team	Organise and craft a special advertisement, radio and print.	October 14	Advertisement draft	Marcus
Community	SCIRT Cone Mobile is ready with trailer, signwriting and 'cone mowhawk' complete.	October 24	Vehicle, Trailer, sign writing	Marcus, traffic management
Community	Produce the campaign video and have it signed off by the SCIRT board.	October 24	Video	Marcus

Other Media	Work with Marta to prepare a media release about the project, include the video as a resource.	October 24	Media release	Marcus / Marta
<b>PHASE TWO: LAUNCHING THE CAMPAIGN</b>				
Comms team / Media	Campaign launch	November 1	Media release, stand up	Marcus / Marta
SCIRT staff	Cone mobile launched	November 1	Signage, trailer	Traffic management
Public	Facebook page goes live	November 1	Video / photos	Marcus
Public	SCIRT advertising runs, radio / print	November	Radio, Facebook and print ads / SCIRT work notice	Marcus
Schools	CONEMOBILE calls on primary schools in the target areas, delivering poster	1-7 November	Posters	Laura / Jess
Public Libraries - Council Service Centres	CONEMOBILE calls in and puts up poster	1-7 November	Posters	Laura / Jess
Media / Public	Update about the campaign, number of road cones recalled	November 15	Media release / FB page	Marcus
Media / Public	Campaign ends	November 30	Media release	Marcus / Marta
Traffic management teams	Road cones are recycled, donated or thrown away	December 15	Phone calls	Traffic management

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

### OUTPUTS

- All comms plan actions completed to deadline.
- Issue at least four media releases about the campaign.
- More than 20,000 views within five days of the video going live on social media
- October's advertisement is issued focusing on the campaign and the competition.
- 'The Cone Mobile' is sent out to pick up cones off the street.
- Each communication carries more than two key messages.

### OUTCOMES

By the end of the campaign:

- 80% of online comments are positive about the campaign.
- 10 positive media articles achieved as a result of the campaign
- More than 500 lost road cones are returned to SCIRT

### BUSINESS RESULTS

- The project was completed on time and on budget – there were no hold-ups contributed to by poor communications.
- The project contributed to building SCIRT's reputation, as measured by positive online feedback.