



The Wednesday Challenge Project: Influencing behavioural change through effective communications

The first wave of COVID-19 lockdowns in Tauranga was like a dystopian shockwave that brought our streets to a sudden full stop. Then, in the quiet left behind, once the cars were gone from the roads, some interesting things started to happen.

People of all ages, sizes and on all manner of wheeled contraptions, took to the streets. We saw neighbours riding past in carefree abandon on bikes, who we never even knew owned one. Little kids riding confidently down the road who normally get a lift to school. The elderly came and sat at their front gates on deck chairs, and people stopped to chat, or smiled and waved as they strolled or rolled past.

When lock down ended the cars returned to the roads, in abundance. But the catalyst of an idea was formed ...The Wednesday Challenge. What if we could create a movement for change? A movement that had the power to influence our choices and reduce our over-reliance on cars.

The Wednesday Challenge is an invitation to take control back for ourselves, to decide to change in one bite-sized step, one day a week, for a year. The benefits sit across the environment, reducing carbon emissions, improving health and wellbeing and growing community connection.

Funded by Waka Kotahi, BOP Regional Council and Tauranga City Council it piloted in Tauranga in 2022. In 2023 it is underway again in 2023 with other cities and towns across New Zealand now seeking to join the Challenge to benefit their own regions.

The Wednesday Challenge is a behavioural change movement. Effective behavioural change is dependent on several key factors, not least of which is effective and engaging communication. Behavioural change takes time and requires a mindset change if we are to achieve sustainable change. Effective communication and engagement at community level has power to connect, engage, resonate and influence people's mindsets. But how do you do that effectively and sustainably?

Find out how Wednesday Challenge engaged and influenced thousands of residents, businesses and schools across the Tauranga community in 2022 and how, through effective communication any community initiative or movement for change can build momentum.