
MEDIA RELEASE

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Children get Behind the Plug at Clyde Dam

Hundreds of children from across Central Otago are about to become experts on the Clyde dam and hydroelectric energy in a pilot education programme delivered by Contact Energy.

Last week (30 July), almost 30 teachers from 13 participating schools visited the Clyde dam as part of the 'Behind the Plug' education initiative. The education resource has been developed by Contact which owns and operates the dam in collaboration with education consultancy Schoolkit.

The resource was partly inspired by insights from local business and stakeholders who Contact consulted with last year as part of an ecosystem services review, seeking diverse perspectives on water use in the region.

One of the insights from the process was that locals wanted to see more educational opportunities offered around the dam.

Boyd Brinsdon, Contact's Head of Hydro Generation says the goal with Behind the Plug is to give students a fun but comprehensive understanding of the Clyde dam, which is a central part of our local community and history.

"These children have grown up with this dam in their back yards. Many drive past it every day, their families have stories and connections to it and they know people who work in our team here. While a lot of Behind the Plug is about us helping local children understand the mechanics and physics of the dam, there's a very strong focus on the wider social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts – including the history behind the construction of the dam.

Schoolkit's Emma Bettie says there has been strong interest from regional schools with an enthusiastic response to the offer of participating in the two term pilot programme.

"Schools are very keen to learn more about the dam in the classroom and use the flexible and fun resource that distils the wealth of information behind the Clyde dam into lesson and activities that engage children."

Image-rich and packed with activities, the resource engages children in learning through activities such as creating large maps to work out how everybody in the region is connected by the dam. They get to make electric play dough to understand how electricity is created – and then link that back to the Clyde dam.

"Contact wants children to understand the full context. And that's the magic. As well as being a really edgy science and social resource it relates back to the community these children live in. That's rare and really valuable in an education setting."

Behind the Plug Clyde dam is the second of Contact's education resource package with the first created around geothermal generation at the Te Mihi power station near Taupo.

While created for local schools, the resource has also had significant global up take with thousands of downloads via the iTunes U app – a large percentage of which come from Asia.

"We will be investigating options for how we might roll out both of these resources to schools nationwide in future," says Contact's Boyd Brinsdon.

"There is a real hunger for this type of resource, not only for the science value but because they are about communities, social and cultural history and the wider economic and environmental impacts."

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About Contact

Contact is one of New Zealand's largest electricity generators and retailers. We keep the lights burning, the hot water flowing and the BBQ fired up for around 562,500 customer across the country. Powering the country with electricity, natural gas and LPG, our team of around 1,050 lives, works and operates in communities throughout New Zealand.

We have two hydroelectric power stations in the Central Otago region: Clyde dam, commissioned in 1992 and Roxburgh dam, commissioned in 1956. We work closely with communities in the Clutha region and support activities that are important to them such as the Contact Alexandra Blossom Festival and New Zealand's ultimate mountain bike race, the Contact Epic - the once a year chance to circumnavigate Lake Hawea, which plays an important role in Contact's hydro generation in the region.

www.contact.co.nz www.lakehaweaeptic.co.nz www.blossom.co.nz

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