



ECO WARRIORS: Twyford school students Connor McLeod, Matt McGowan, Sally Mirams, Danielle Pirie, Dominic Nash and Jakob Gibson with teacher Judy Mathews accept an award from Sharron Buer (far right) of the Young Enterprise Trust. PICTURE / PAUL TAYLOR HBT105213-01

Eel viewing platform wins honour

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A group of year seven and eight students from Twyford School, west of Hastings, have been named the ASB Community Enterprise Team of the Year for an innovative eel-viewing platform.

New Zealand's native long-finned eel is an endangered species, which lives in large numbers at a lake in Opouahi Kiwi Creche near Tutira, but there is currently no way for people to see the creatures up close in their natural habitat.

So the children got to work designing a viewing platform

which would not only be structurally sound, but would meet Department Of Conservation (DoC) criteria.

"We decided on a fixed inflatable structure using drums, with wood on top so it's safe for children to get out there," teacher Judy Mathews said.

"We changed the platform design three times until we got something which was approved by DoC and could be moved — we had two engineers who gave up their time to help the children for free."

Twyford students also worked with Environment, Conservation and Outdoor Education Trust (ECOED) to create a model for

the platform that would provide people with greater access to view, feed and learn more about the eels.

"The students' business plan was presented in a very professional manner and their research and partnership with ECOED was outstanding," ECOED general manager Alastair Bramley said.

The project was born from a challenge set by the ASB Community Enterprise which encouraged students to form teams (student companies), to plan a project for a not-for-profit or charitable organisation to benefit their local community.

The project then went up

against other designs in a national competition, which decided the top 10 projects who won a \$500 grant to put their ideas into action.

All up the eel viewing platform will cost between \$1500 and \$2000, and the students have already started fundraising to meet that mark.

"They really stepped out and got sponsorship from around the community, by calling by phone or making a visit — they got a great response," Mrs Mathews said.

"We are really really proud of the students, having won this national award," principal Ross McLeod said.