

Submission to Horowhenua District Council Long Term Plan 2024-44

Contact Details

Organisation: Environment Network Manawātū
Contact Person: Helen King
Address for service: 145 Cuba St, Palmerston North 4410
Phone: (06) 355 0126
Email: comms@enm.org.nz

Overview

A submission on behalf of Environment Network Manawātū (ENM) regarding the Horowhenua District Council Long Term Plan (LTP). We are submitting specifically on Topic 2, as well as providing additional comments.

ENM would like the opportunity to speak to this submission.

Background

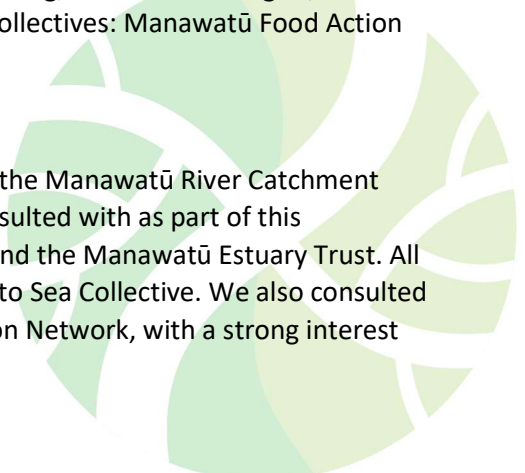
ENM exists to connect and inspire communities for environmental action. We are the environment hub for the Manawātū region providing sector leadership, building capacity and capability, and creating community.

Understanding that all life is part of a thriving, self-sustaining ecosystem our vision is that the ecological and human communities in the Manawātū River catchment, are living in harmony.

We work strategically to demonstrate best-practice as a member-led environmental organisation. We promote environmental activities and advocate for positive environmental outcomes. We connect volunteers, support organisational sustainability, provide educational opportunities and seek to increase the stream of funding to the sector. We support and enable our membership through meeting needs, holding space and creating opportunities for increased connections. We celebrate the diverse passions of our 68 member groups, that include biodiversity protection, freshwater quality, food resilience, waste reduction, sustainable living, alternative energies, climate change and active transport. The network is organised into two collectives: Manawātū Food Action Network and Manawātū River Source to Sea.

Submission Context

Our network is comprised of groups and organisations who span the Manawātū River Catchment which includes the Horowhenua District. Member groups we consulted with as part of this submission include Wildlife Foxton, Save our River Trust (SORT) and the Manawātū Estuary Trust. All these groups are active members of our Manawātū River Source to Sea Collective. We also consulted with Shannon Kai Hub, who are part of our Manawātū Food Action Network, with a strong interest



regarding anything linked to food resilience in the region. This submission is a combination of their thoughts, and our organisational knowledge of 23 years of work in the sector. All our 68 member groups have had the opportunity to view and provide feedback on this document.

Submission

How should we minimise and manage waste?

2A: How should we pay for Levin Landfill aftercare and Landfill debt?

Option 1. Repay through a separate Targeted Rate where every property pays the same rate. Most ratepayers will produce waste that eventually ends up at landfill, no matter how it is disposed of. We assess option one to be the preference.

2B: How should we fund kerbside recycling services? Who should pay?

Option 2. Transition to a Targeted Rate for kerbside recycling where those that are currently receiving the service pay their share of the costs.

A user pays service seems equitable, and those receiving the service should pay for it.

2C: Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (WMMP)

(i) Do you support the WMMP Vision?

The stated WMMP Vision is, “To provide households and businesses with affordable and impactful waste management and minimisation services. To promote community empowerment, individual responsibility, and positive behaviour change.”

This is a complex question to give a yes or no answer to, and we have the following comments around wording:

- That there is clarification around the term ‘impactful’; on who or what? This is nebulous. Should it be “effective?”
- We note that minimisation is not a service, rather the outcome of a course of actions. The outcome of minimisation actions should be the focus, rather than the service itself.
- Including reference to business and industry would be helpful. As part of the community, industry and business are part of the solution and the problem. The onus is very much on the individual when data in the WMMP show, for example that the building and demolition trade for example creates huge amounts of waste, much of which could be reused or recycled rather than buried.

We support any focus on waste minimisation initiatives and positive behaviour change as key actions to empower all facets of the community.

(ii) Ranking the WMMP Goals:

ENM would rank the WMMP goals as follows:

1. Reduce waste where we can.
2. Educate the community on waste minimisation.
3. Promote the reuse of waste.
4. Maintain community services.
5. Manage waste responsibly.
6. Make it easy to recycle.
7. Promote environmentally safe disposal of all waste.
8. Provide high impact, low-cost delivery of targeted waste diversion initiatives.

9. Provide the best priced disposal of urban waste.
10. Council to advocate for our community on a regional and national level.

We understand that waste reduction and reuse is optimal, and that community education goes hand in hand with this. We also strongly advocate for the responsible management of waste so that it has minimal impact on the environment. We champion the work of **Levin Repair Café** as a strong waste minimisation initiative in the region, that serves to reduce the number of items sent to landfill, educates the public in how to mend, and creates an important sense of community connection and cohesion.

We highly encourage the promotion of product stewardship and the re-use of packaging such as glass bottles, where possible. Having a refund scheme that encourages people to collect and return to manufacturers is an important lever to reduce waste to landfill. We encourage HDC to consider supporting local initiatives toward reuse as well as using it's voice to advocate for improved national policy on packaging and implementation of product stewardship schemes.

We also understand from the WMMP that 52% of collected waste is organic. A significant percentage of this will be food waste, and our understanding is that the logistics and infrastructure for a regional food waste collection service will not be feasible until 2028 when government mandates require this to commence.

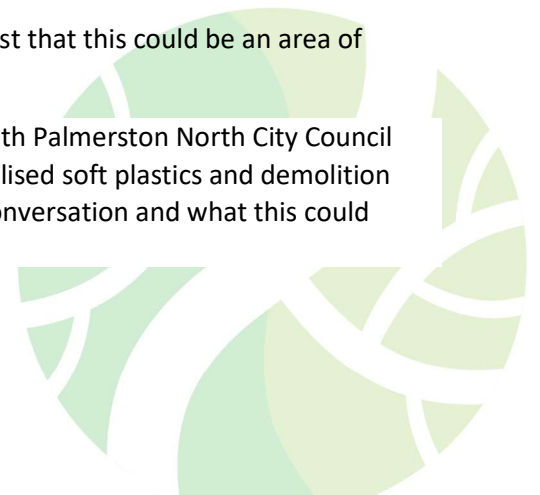
Palmerston North waste audits show that organic waste volumes are similar to those found in HDC. ENM recently completed a successful 10-week community composting trial in Palmerston North, with the aim of encouraging and enabling people to compost their food waste locally. As well as turning a waste product into a valuable resource, the pilot increased social cohesion, as participants taking their waste to the composting sites made new connections. To reduce food waste to landfill, we encourage HDC to support local food recycling/composting and surplus food redistribution initiatives, for example Shannon Kai Hub, Te Awahou Kai, Community Fruit Harvest Manawatū and Just Zilch.

Over the period of 12 weeks since December 2023:

- 55 composting buckets were allocated to households and organisations. These were either 0.3kg or 0.6kg in size.
- Six food waste collection and composting sites were established around the city, primarily in the 4412-postcode area.
- 44 participants actively dropped off waste at these composting sites, which are overseen by volunteers. The average drop-off weight was 3.87kg per visit.
- By March 2024, 898.96kg of food waste had been diverted from landfill.

We are looking to continue and develop this initiative and suggest that this could be an area of consideration for HDC.

We are also aware from recent LTP community conversations with Palmerston North City Council (PNCC) that there is conversation beginning around more centralised soft plastics and demolition waste recycling facilities. We wonder if HDC is involved in this conversation and what this could mean for local waste diversion.



Is there anything else you would like to tell us about this LTP?

How long is Long-Term?

A major goal of ENM is the preservation and restoration of biodiversity, both in its own interest, and because it is becoming increasingly clear, even to the thoroughly urbanised, that nature is an important partner in and provider of the needs of humans.

The LTP needs to reflect these goals as our region has less than 1 % of its lowland forest left, only 15% of its coastal vegetation, and 10% of its wetlands. The ecosystem services these areas provide are now lost and are difficult to restore.

The current trajectory of plausible climate change scenarios show that over 60cm of sea-level rise can be expected along our coast over the next century, or even sooner, along with an average annual temperature warming of 4°C. This will result in salt-water inundation of low-lying areas, erosion of the coastal dunes several hundred metres inland, and increased surface flooding (freshwater) over much of the coastal plains. Simultaneously there will be increases in heat, storm frequency and severity, flooding and drought. This will affect most agricultural and horticultural activities, and much of the amenity plantings in the region, while climate change impacts on the remaining native vegetation and fauna is unknown.

Yet nothing in the LTP reflects the extent of the urgency needed to avoid or reduce these changes. Nor is there any overall guidance offered to the human inhabitants of the region as to how these climate changes and the requisite mitigations might or will affect their lives as currently lived. What is required here is a LTP which has a sense of human needs over a period of several to ten decades, which sets the general direction and level of urgency of councils' policies.

Phragmites Karka

Our Feilding-based member group, Awahuri Forest Kitchener Park have had their forest remnant severely impacted by Phragmites Karka and have been working over the last few years to try to control it. Phragmites Karka is difficult to contain and control, and densely smothers other plants, and we will be encouraging Horizons Regional Council to recognise it as a noxious weed. We feel obligated to extend a stark warning to Horowhenua District Council to keep your eyes peeled for this significant pest weed, and to take action to remove it with all haste. It is currently spread from Whanganui through to Kapiti, and there are already at least 12-15 sites where it has taken hold in the Horowhenua District, including at the Waitarere Beach inlet. In the last 18 months the infestation has spread via the Makino Stream and Oroua River from Feilding to Rangiotu, where the Oroua River meets the Manawatū River. We have strong concerns if this weed spreads down the Manawatū River to the estuary, and is not contained, it will have a significant negative impact on this internationally recognised RAMSAR site.

Food Security

We understand food security to be an ongoing concern exacerbated by the pandemic and the rising costs of living. We strongly support the work of Shannon Kai Hub in this space, who are also a member of ENM's Manawatū Food Action Network. As Sector Lead for the Environment for Palmerston North City Council we work in strong collaboration with them around initiatives that help our rohe move towards food sovereignty, including supporting community-building and education opportunities, the installation of community gardens, pātaka kai, berm plantings, and composting bins. We are currently in conversation about the development of a City-Wide Food security policy.

We invite HDC to learn from some of these initiatives, and to support the work of organisations like Shannon Kai Hub toward building food security in the region.

Membership Submissions

We support the submissions of our member groups SORT, Wildlife Foxton and the Manawatū Estuary Trust to the Horowhenua LTP. In particular we would like to comment to the following:

Save our River Trust (SORT)

We understand SORT has been awarded funding over three years to assess the viability of connecting river flow to the water. We advocate for the continuation of this funding and for the support of HRC around work to restore the river verge, reestablish the Piriharakeke walkway, and remediate Kings Canal leachate.

Manawatū Estuary and the Manawatū Estuary Trust

ENM would like to highlight the Manawatū Estuary as an area where Council should be investing significant energy and resource. This Estuary is one of only seven in New Zealand to be listed as a wetland of international importance with the international Ramsar Secretariat, due to its diverse population of migratory and sedentary native and indigenous bird species. We understand that Horizons Regional Council and the Department of Conservation are investing in this area. HDC's contribution need to at least equal that and a budget line should be created specifically for that purpose.

ENM also understands that unconsented water is currently entering the estuary and that a new Foxton Beach Stormwater consent process is in place to remedy this and ensure cleaner water going into the river and the sea. We look forward to participating in this consultation and to seeing strong, broad community and stakeholder conversations for the benefit and protection of the Estuary and the people who reside near it.

To conclude

HDC and the Horowhenua region glean tangible benefits from the work of our member groups, particularly around biodiversity. It is the role of ENM to connect and inspire communities for environmental action, and to underpin and support their mahi. Palmerston North City Council recognizes us as Sector Lead for the Environment and resources us for our role. We would absolutely welcome conversation with HDC about increased partnerships so we can work together to provide and expand services to the region.

