
Submission to PNCC Draft Annual Budget Consultation 2023-24.

To: Palmerston North City Council

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 linking to support and suggestions around the Draft Annual Budget for 2023-24.

Background:

Environment Network Manawatu (ENM) is the environment hub for the Manawātū Region with the key purpose of facilitating and enabling communication, cooperation, and increasing collective action amongst its member groups and the wider community. ENM provides leadership by underpinning, fostering, and encouraging environmental initiatives in the region and our 65 plus current member groups are from throughout the Manawātū River Catchment with interests including biodiversity regeneration, freshwater management, citizen science, food security and resilience, sustainable living, alternative energies, and active transport. The network is organised into two collective focus areas: Manawātū Food Action Network and Manawātū River Source to Sea.

ENM's constitutional purposes are to:

- coordinate and communicate the efforts of the member groups to enhance the local environment:
 - actively protect, maintain, restore and enhance the environment of the Manawātū;
 - promote ideas to the wider community to encourage them to participate in environmental projects;
 - develop concerted long-term plans of action to enhance the environment and actively progress the implementation of these plans;
 - encourage the provision of “green” areas for passive recreation;
 - work together to identify, initiate, support, implement and maintain environmental projects that benefit the wider community;
 - initiate, develop, implement and participate in environmental education.
- Act as a central point of access to environmental information.

- Advocate for ecological sustainability and matters of agreed environmental significance.
- Work in partnership with iwi to recognise kaitiakitanga and environmental aims and objectives in common.
- Liaise with similar organisations elsewhere in Aotearoa New Zealand and around the world as appropriate to source and share ideas for environmental projects and issues.

Submission:

We acknowledge the pressure that the last three years of living with a pandemic has placed on council operations. This increasing momentum of the effects of climate change, increased costs of living and rising food insecurity all add extra challenge.

Despite this, it is important to recognize that decisions that are made from primarily economic, social or cultural viewpoints often have detrimental environmental impacts. Without a healthy living environment, we simply don't have life. The two are fundamentally interconnected and inter-twined. Therefore, we would encourage council to ensure that an environmental and ecological lens is placed over these budget decisions to ensure they are truly sustainable.

We support:

- The trial and implementation of food waste collection services throughout the city which we understand will reduce food going to landfill, reduce emissions and generate a valuable resource in the form of compost. We note there is a strong government-led directive for the kerbside collection of food waste to be implemented by local authorities within the next few years. Council statistics note that the current percentage of food waste in our stream to be high. We support and encourage council to be a national lead in reducing food waste going to landfill, as is consistent with its Eco- City priorities.
- The establishment of protected cycleways on Featherston Street and Summerhill Drive to increase active transport use across the city, and reduce the use of vehicles, emissions, and the resulting climate implications. We strongly support and encourage council to continue making active transport safer including creating a viable cycling network right across the city. Cycle networks should be a strategic priority. Evidence suggests that the occasional cycle path does not increase cycling by much unless it is connected to a bigger network (Christchurch is an example of a cycle lanes having limited effect until there is a network).
- We support the proposed reduction in speed limits near schools to enable children to walk to school and reduce the need for their parents to drive to school. Speed reductions will have limited impact on travel time due to the need to stop at traffic lights, and will increase safety and create nicer places to walk ([This article nicely summarises evidence for the positive impacts of slower speed limits in cities - making them better places to live](#)).

- Proceeding with the Nature Calls project by working with Horizons Regional Council to obtain a new resource consent for discharging treated wastewater.
- The rises in fixed charges to ensure the continuing high level of services linked to the provision of water, waste disposal, recycling and wastewater.

We challenge and question:

- The centralisation over localisation of the food waste collection service, in the understanding that the compost could be used as a valuable locally based resource that people could introduce back into their gardens. Resources could also be invested in encouraging and support local communities to undertake composting as an option.
- How little funding is put into Eco-City priorities comparatively to other areas, this currently being the third to lowest area of spending. We encourage increased investment in this.
- The reduction in the climate change mitigation budget from 388k to 258k for this coming year. Reflecting on the damage caused by climate related events over the last few months we seek further explanation around this rationale. It is essential that climate change mitigation continues to be prioritised.
- The reduction in budget for biodiversity and sustainable practises. As noted above, this is linked with our Eco-City Goals and our need as a society to do all we can to mitigate climate change. Resourcing to undertake and improve biodiversity initiatives and sustainability practices is essential.
- The concept of an Envirohub being deprioritised for 2023-24 and added to the 10-year plan. We strongly advocate for the fast tracking of the next steps towards development of a fully functioning, inspirational Environment Centre for our rohe. We ask, at the very least, that an exploration into what an Environment Centre could and should look like, and what the benefits to the community would be is resourced. In the stark understanding of current climate change events and the devastating, heart-breaking impact on many of our regions this seems increasingly imperative. A space that can model change, innovation and offer support and information to people to guide them through the vital adaptation to a more sustainable climate friendly lifestyle is immensely important.

In addition:

N.B We strongly encourage council to include the development of a City-Wide Food Resilience Policy in the final budget, as per their previous decision. ENM's Manawatū Food Action Network has made a more detailed submission regarding this.

