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## Submission to Palmerston North City Council's proposed 2018-28 Ten Year Plan

### **Speaking to our submission:**

ENM would like to speak to our submission. Our preferred dates are Tuesday 15th May or Wednesday 16th May. We will be in touch at the end of next week to clarify our availability further, including preferred times.

### **Introduction**

**Environment Network Manawatu (ENM)** thanks the Council for the opportunity to make a submission on the draft 2018 - 2028 Ten Year Plan. Overall, we would like to congratulate the Council on this 10-year plan and the communication process engaging various interest groups in the lead-up to the submissions deadline.

ENM is a charitable umbrella organisation dedicated to enhancing the environment within the Manawatu River catchment area. We currently have some 50 active member groups engaging in water quality and biodiversity, food action, waste minimisation, alternative energies and active transport.

### **One Vision: Small City Benefits, Big City Ambition**

We like the new vision as it promises to give us the best of two worlds.

### **5 Goals**

As a network we can relate to all of the 5 Goals stated by council and we are in particular delighted to see the commitment for Palmerston North to become an **eco-city** (Goal 4).

The target of a 25% reduction in carbon emissions by 2028 is very laudable. And we are keen to support council to achieve the goal.

Goal 3 to become a **connected and safe community** also resonates very much with us. We agree that cities are mainly social networks rather than physical forms only. By supporting ENM as an umbrella organisation, the city has already helped to create a **community asset** that is unique in New Zealand. We encourage Council to further enhance the capacity and reach of the network in pursuit of Goal 3. Doing so will also be supported by Goal 5 to be “a **driven and enabling council**”.

### **Community Funding and the Value of Ecosystems Services**

We understand that the proposed level of Fee for service funding for community groups will not be increased beyond an adjustment for inflation from 2019-20 onwards. Given goals 3 and 5 in particular, the massive contribution already made by the community sector to the city, and the potential for the community sector to make a bigger contribution to the new City Vision and goals, if better resourced, we recommend that the budget to support community groups is increased well beyond inflation going forward.

It appears strange that Support to Community groups does not have a revenue stream against it from 2019/20 onwards. The community sector is playing a significant role in supporting, connecting, informing and mobilising the wider community. While there might not be a direct cash inflow, shouldn't there be at least a footnote to acknowledge the in-kind contribution community makes through thousands of volunteer hours, donations, etc. Also, an engaged community is a community that takes pride in its city and will look after it, so there is a level of "cost avoidance" too.

Looking at Goal 4 becoming an **eco-city**, we noticed (page 185, Supporting Information) two things in particular:

- **No revenue line against biodiversity** – we would like to engage in a conversation around the value of eco-systems services provided through enhanced biodiversity. This is a globally recognised and widely applied approach which will help the city to make a stronger case for creating an eco-city.
- There is a line to **support environmental groups** – we would like to better understand what this budget is going to fund – again we cannot stress enough the contribution community can make to helping council achieve its goals.

**We urge the Council to recognise what is being done and the potential for much more to be done by increasing the resources available to the sector as a whole.**

**We would like to see Council involve the community sector, including the environmental sector, in the process of determining what community outcomes will be funded in 2019-22 and how the benefits can be made visible to Council.**

In general, when setting a new strategic direction, it is important to demonstrate commitment by showing in the Ten Year Plan that it will be resourced sufficiently. We have been unable to gain a clear picture of this for the Eco-City goal. We are unsure why Biodiversity & Sustainable practices and Rubbish & Recycling are the only activities budgeted for under this goal (pp 185-186, Supporting Information) when the Eco-City concept and sustainability principles are relevant across most if not all of Council's activities. And we find the actual budgets for Biodiversity and Sustainable Practices, although increased from 2017/18, to be small, relative to other council activities.

We suggest that the Eco-City goal should also include aspects of:

- 1) green business practises - businesses that are proud to operate sustainably
- 2) green products - businesses that allow us all to operate more sustainably
- 3) green infrastructure - public transport, walkways, people-sized open, green spaces, green rooves and attention to grey water
- 4) sustainability practises such as reducing waste flows
- 5) liaison with the green elements of Massey University and development of sustainability science there.
- 6) adequate preparation for the surprises climate change will inflict on us

### **3 Top “City Shaping” Moves (The Catalyst Projects)**

We see opportunities for engagement with our member groups in all 3 Top “City Shaping” Moves and across many of the stated Catalyst Projects. Our submission addresses key initiatives under each of the 3 categories:

- 1) Enabling Sustainable Growth
- 2) City Centre Transformation
- 3) Manawatu River Network

We have used Council’s more comprehensive “Supporting Information” hard copy document rather than the consultation document only in making our submission.

### **1) Enabling Sustainable Growth (Sustainable Growth Catalyst Projects)**

(Note references are to the **Infrastructure Strategy 2018-2048** document unless stated otherwise)

#### **5.2 Waste Water Treatment and upgrading (p.14 Infrastructure Strategy document)**

We appreciate the difficulty to balance cost to ratepayers in the short term with a long term sustainable solution for good water treatment.

We applaud council on its commitment to engage with community from an early stage onward.

We ask council keep ENM’s members in the loop throughout the process. ENM would like to assist the Council to engage with the wider community on this issue – we have the structure, contacts and community networks to do so – we can do this to some extent but our capacity is limited by resourcing constraints (we have just 1.3 paid staff members).

We are in particular keen to see more discussion around topics such as:

- reducing waste in water at source
- turning “waste” water into a resource

#### **5.3 Regional Freight Ring Road (pp 15,16 Infrastructure Strategy document)**

- We support the development of a freight ring road as a means to reduce heavy traffic in the city centre in principle.
- We encourage Council to pro-actively include pedestrian and biking infrastructure at critical points such as road bridges connecting parts of a growing walking and cycling network.
- Although rail is clearly not within the scope of this plan, we note that it is desirable that a much bigger proportion of the freight passing through our region is transported by rail in the future.

#### **5.4 Infrastructure for Residential Growth (pp 16,17 Infrastructure Strategy document)**

We understand the need for making more land available for population growth. However, this should not come at the cost of our natural environment. We would like to see a clear strategy around:

- Valuing and utilising natural land features such as gullies for storm water run-off. The importance of natural land features such as as the three gullies leading into Moonshine Valley for containing inundation cannot be overemphasised. Further planting of such areas helps to stabilise slopes, moderate the downward flow of water, protect at-risk aquatic life (as in the case of the Moonshine Valley Stream)

and adds ecosystems services value. To not acknowledge the importance of gullies and the need for them to remain open and planted would be an error that would be very costly for future Councils and generations to re-mediate.

- Providing good access for active transport options. With 700 new properties proposed for Whakarongo, it's crucial that the council consider the effects of extra traffic on roading infrastructure, and provide safe passage for cyclists in the form of separated cycle paths. Including cycling infrastructure at the outset of new projects should be a key policy for all urban growth projects and new roading, including the new Gorge road and city Ring Road (see above)
- We support Council encouraging well designed and orientated infill housing in the closer to City central areas. This makes sense to fully utilize existing infrastructure. By having more people living closer to City centre the city becomes more energized as people can more easily **walk** to work and entertainment. (This also relates to the Creative and Liveable City Strategy Page p 131) We need to also continue to soften the streetscapes of the City with appropriate trees species. We also believe that the rating mechanism should not be such that it discourages those who wish to be self-sufficient in food production.

We'd also like to see a statement under the Eco-City goal that Council actively promotes environmentally sensitive design for residential and commercial developments (as well as for public spaces and public buildings).

#### **Infrastructure Strategy 5.7 - Facilities to encourage alternative transport modes (p 20)**

We are very much in support of this approach. We have the following comments:

Cycling infrastructure:

- Feedback from our members is that the city needs to make cycling safer as it develops infrastructure, not just by providing off road cycle paths but by providing safe infrastructure for those who cycle to inner city destinations, to work or to school.
- There needs to be coordination among the programmes to ensure entire sections of the network are addressed consistently. For example there are safety issue with road markings at roundabouts. To address this and avoid driver and cyclist confusion, we recommend these are standardised across the city in the first year of the plan rather than spread out over a number of years.

Public transport:

- We support the new Main Street East Urban Bus Terminal (Programme 243, P17 of the Groups of Activities document) but are disappointed this is not to commence until Year 4.
- We support Programme 1528 (P52, of the Groups of Activities document) - proposing funds to support a free bus trial as this will encourage people onto buses. It is important the free bus trial covers a long enough period for people's habits to change – that way they are more likely to continue using the bus after the free period.

#### **5.8 and 5.9 Drinking Water (pp 20 – 22 Infrastructure Strategy document)**

- Security of Water Supply and Resilience - we would strongly support any initiatives for PNCC to implement bulk purchase of domestic water tanks and thus obtaining a cost benefit.
- We suggest that the water situation is explained in the Square Circular so that new people understand it more and at public places such as the Lido Showers, where for example colourful water conserving notices can be posted.

## (2) City Centre Catalyst Projects

### An Environment Centre

We would like to take the opportunity to float the idea to develop an Envirocentre in Palmerston North. To achieve a major shift from thinking to actions there needs to be a physical centre from which new **eco-city** initiatives are showcased.

The Council seeks Partnerships for the Future (Significance and Engagement Policy) - ENM offers to partner with council as an environment-focused community group. Our initial thoughts.

- The Centre must be futuristic and truly innovative.
- This Centre can showcase such things as water saving devices and tips (Page 97, Groups of Activities Document)
- Education and tips on how to become a more sustainable community - domestic and business - and showcase Council initiatives
- It can demonstrate food action initiatives and connect interested people
- It would be an opportunity to showcase Massey innovation - another partnership (contributing to Goal 1: An innovative and growing city)
- Encourage, by showcasing and demonstrating, efficiencies in clean energy
- Show how intensified housing can be attractive, resource saving and better suit how people live today
- Demonstrate what we have in our local natural environment and tell stories about it
- Promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging public participation in the outdoors

We encourage the Council to see the community itself as a resource to partner with. An enviro-centre will help it towards its goal because it can be operated by community groups (with some paid staff)

Sports and Culture have their own centres and if Council is serious about becoming an Eco-City we need a place to be the focal point of the action to inspire and give life to this transition.

An Environment Centre relates to the Strategy 4 Eco-City because it will "show the way"

Under the Arts Plan (P3) it says PN has sometimes had a reputation for lacking in imagination. The Enviro Centre will "knock their socks off" - we will give the innovative science and creative people a space to display in. (Goal 1: An innovative and growing city)

Imagination and creativity should be useful as well as beautiful or even both. The centre can demonstrate the results of river cleaning initiatives as the Manawatu River Source to Sea Project takes effect.

### **Te Manawa (Infrastructure Strategy document 5.13, p 26)**

We support the redevelopment of Te Manawa, are aware of the exciting potential options of the TM2015 report and float the idea of integrating an Enviro Centre element, if not the whole Envirocentre as outlined above.

We support Council spending \$153,000 for a further investigation plan for Te Manawa and encourage the inclusion of the existing Art Gallery building within the redevelopment because of its architectural significance in the City's evolution

We believe that the linkages between a Museum without Boundaries, the Manawatu River Source to Sea Project and the activities of Environment Network Manawatu can be displayed in such a facility as Te Manawa, until such time we get an Enviro Centre for the static displays and other initiatives (including those not yet invented or dreamed of!)

### **Central Energy Trust Arena masterplan & projects**

We support the ongoing investment in this important facility in principle.

We agree that it is very important to have a (physically) active community, however physical activities in the natural environment also provide great health and wellbeing benefits.

We question the level of funding going into the Arena - some of this expenditure could be used productively elsewhere, for example on protecting and enhancing biodiversity and on an environment centre, both of which would contribute to the Council's target for reducing carbon emissions.

## **(3) Manawatu River Network Catalyst Projects**

ENM is delighted to see the City's ongoing commitment to the Manawatu River and the creation of an attractive collection of nature-based experiences along the river. The Manawatu River Network is well aligned with the ambition of ENM's Biodiversity Cluster groups' Manawatu River Source to Sea initiative (see separate submission).

We appreciate the council's ongoing engagement with community on how to enhance existing areas such as the Esplanade or Ahimate Park through extensive community consultation processes. In return, many of our groups actively participate in planting and maintenance efforts.

We very much appreciate the City's/Mayor's leadership in Te Apiti and would encourage a move towards bringing the community back into the project.

Please note our support for programmes 752, 560, 1455, 1486

### **The Biodiversity Plan**

"The Biodiversity Plan will detail how the ranges will be connected to the city by green corridors alongside city streams, and how native wildlife will be protected within the urban area. Planting of the stream banks will also go some way towards improving water quality."

ENM notes our support for the great work the Green Corridors Range to River group is doing in developing biodiversity corridors along the Turitea Stream and in the Aokautere Gullies.

We would also be highly supportive of the development of biodiversity corridors in neighbouring gullies and streams, including in Moonshine Valley, the land between Polson Hill and the Pahiatua Track and into the Kahuterawa Valley.

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As noted above, the budget for biodiversity is very small and want to see it increased and the area of engagement widened over time.

### **Esplanade Master Plan:**

ENM supports of Forest & Bird Manawatu Branch's submission that:

- Adequate numbers of disabled car parks be provided in each of the parking areas and that the more commonly used paths are upgraded for people with physical disabilities, wheelchairs and young families.
- The proposed new connection path between the park central and the river takes the least destructive route to minimise the number of native species removed.
- Weed problems in the bush need to be addressed and managed over the long term. There may be an opportunity for community volunteers to support weeding efforts.

## **30 Year Infrastructure Strategy, debt and finance flows**

We note that the next 5 – 10 years require relatively steady maintenance/replacement but that investment will have to accelerate after that. This plan sees the cap for debt to rate ratio increased from a 175 – 200%.

In the interests of sustainability and the eco-city concept, increasing the cap for overall debt is a negative step. We cannot buy our way to sustainability. In relation to the climate change challenge, what we need to do is divert capital away from activities that produce greenhouse gas emissions and into activities that are part of the solution. In the 2015 Paris Agreement, Article 2 calls for "making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development."

This is a **productive** investment for a more sustainable future for business and our children. A decisive transition could boost long term economic output if we include the avoidance of climate related damage. The net effect on combined GDP is 4.7% higher than "business as usual" by 2050.<sup>1</sup> We need to move our thinking in line with this reality.

## **Conclusion**

Once again thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 10 Year Plan. We would be delighted to take any opportunity to further discuss any aspects of our submission in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures are from the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate (with modelling by the OECD) and were highlighted in the recent Dominion Post article: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/103141057/we-must-spend-more-green-to-get-more-green>