
ENM Submission

to PNCC Annual Budget Consultation 2026-27

Introduction:

The opportunity to submit on the Annual Budget consultation feels particularly important this year, with Councils' facing the challenge of increasing national government constraints on funding and decision-making while at the same time seeking to support their communities at a time of extreme hardship. We are currently facing high and rising fossil fuel costs and restrictions in access to this, and an associated rapidly rising cost of living with significant increases in essential food and utilities costs. Alongside this is the increasing number and severity of extreme weather events occurring.

Climate resilience and mitigation is crucial, and as we noted in our submission on PNCC's 2024-34 Long Term Plan consultation, 'What Really Matters' is a city that is resilient, future-ready and economically stable. Also to be recognised alongside this is the consistent message from communities that the most useful changes are those that reduce pressure on household budgets while strengthening neighbourhood resilience.

Our four Pou are the key priorities that guide everything we do at ENM. By focusing on these, we believe we can achieve our vision and make a real difference.


These Pou are:

- Climate Action
- Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement
- Community Food Sovereignty
- Circular Economy

This then is the lens we are focusing on when examining the Annual Budget. Also central to this is our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and to recognising and supporting Rangitaane as mana whenua in Pāmutana/Palmerston North.

ENM urges Council to have a strong focus on supporting and being involved in renewable energy developments as part of both community support and climate action at this time. This includes making active and public transport a priority. We need a strengthened focus on supporting communities who are involved with a wide array of important environmental and people protection work. This important community work is encouraged and developed by recognising and supporting the huge value of this, including the tens of thousands of voluntary hours generously donated by the many community-minded people involved. Community food sovereignty is a key aspect of this.

Council needs to prioritise adequate capacity for planning and development of an implementation plan for the Food Security and Resilience Policy to promote access to healthy food and support for this in the community. Crucial work is also involved in environmental protection and enhancement, sustainability and circular economy developments to protect and strengthen natural resources and



decrease waste and pollution. These all relate to climate action, including climate mitigation. All of these aspects are very much interrelated and interconnected.

Areas of the Budget Strongly Supported by ENM:

Community Sector Support

ENM appreciates the continued support provided to community groups by PNCC and urge city councillors to recognise the importance and significance of this, especially at this time of extreme hardship and significant energy and climate crisis. **It is so important to protect this funding, and to grow it.**

This work has a high value return for this PNCC investment with the huge number of voluntary hours contributed. It is critical work and has far reaching community benefits, providing many opportunities for participation and connection, enabling projects and ongoing work that supports people, and helps protect the natural environment that is relied on by both human and non-human nature.

Environment Hubs Aotearoa's recently published research [Community is Climate Resilience: Lessons From Cyclone Gabrielle & the Auckland Anniversary Floods](#) clearly demonstrates that investment in community connection is investment in disaster readiness, and provides 26 recommendations toward building collaborative disaster resilience based (See Appendix for the full list).

"When formal systems were overwhelmed during the Auckland Anniversary floods and Cyclone Gabrielle, community steps in first....Neighbours became first responders. Marae opened immediately. Local organisations coordinated food, supplies, welfare checks, and communication....This isn't accidental. It's because resilience lives in relationships."

The Environment Initiative Fund that ENM administer is supporting truly inspiring, wonderful projects in Palmerston North (and beyond) involving a great many voluntary hours by committed and skilled community volunteers. Some examples of new projects and ongoing work funded include: the important community food security work of establishing and upgrading māra kai/community gardens and assisting food rescue initiatives, and school garden related projects alongside environmentally focused educational programmes; predator control work and plantings for biodiversity protection and enhancement; circular economy initiatives such as rescuing and repairing sewing machines/bicycles and their parts for community use, recycling computer parts and textile rescue, repurposing and recycling. Most of this work also contributes to climate action. Strengthening local food production and encouraging the development of circular economy is a very important part of a stable and future-ready city. We commend Council's recognition of this.

Again we want to note that this community sector support shows excellent alignment with your goals to see Palmerston North as:

1. An innovative and growing city
2. A creative and exciting city
3. A connected and safe community
4. A sustainable and resilient city



The Establishment of Te Motu o Poutoa

We are strong supporters of the aspirations of Rangitaane o Manawatū, and their shared plan with Council for a civic marae and cultural centre to be built at Te Motu o Poutoa. We are supportive of this centre being developed and led by Council in partnership with Rangitaane o Manawatū as mana whenua, and we congratulate Rangitaane and Council on the significant progress made so far. We understand that there is just 1/5 of the funding still needed which is planned to come from government, and that progress in the approval process has occurred, but still needs to be finalised. We trust that Council will advocate strongly for the approval process from government to be completed.

Climate Action and Sustainability

The current 0.94% of rates spending on climate action and sustainability is very low considering the importance of this. We desperately need climate action for climate resilience and climate mitigation. This is a very small portion of the PNCC budget, and ENM urges councillors to not only protect this, but **increase it**.

This work is so very important at this time of climate crisis, and the PNCC staff working in this area are an essential team that needs to be valued, protected and grown. We want to see climate resilience embedded into all planning. We support a growing investment in, and use of, renewable energy as a continuation of what has been started. We support for example more solar panels on Council buildings and for this to be linked to civil defence planning. We support the Council's low carbon fund to lower emissions and provide support for a sustainable future. We want to see greenhouse gas reductions from Council activities, and Council actions that support low-carbon city outcomes. We need to move towards sustainable best practice in Council activities and for the wider city. We also need to strengthen our city's adaptive capacity. A part of climate action and mitigation is to strengthen local resources such as keeping productive soils available for food production.

Resource Recovery

Reducing waste and increasing the amount of resources re-used through recycling is important and it is pleasing to see the local soft plastic recycling initiative by Council beginning in July. We hope this will be an ongoing initiative.

Active and Public Transport

We support Council initiatives to increase active and public transport. It is concerning to see the loss of funding for transport initiatives due to government cuts through NZTA Waka Kotahi. We support Council finding other ways to develop this work.

The Climate Conversations held in 2023 by All Saints Green Task Force and Palmerston North Interfaith Group identified "Accelerating initiatives to decarbonise local & regional transport" as one of 10 local actions to mitigate climate change – in particular to support a shift away from school drop offs, through biking to school and walking buses. Without further investment in safe active transport pathways, this will be difficult to achieve.

Footpaths and Active Transport

We strongly support investment in footpath renewals and **support Option 3**. Good quality footpaths are very important in encouraging active transport along with being an important health and safety issue, particularly for the elderly. Fit for purpose footpaths are very important for their multiple uses and user needs which include walking, running, people using walkers, crutches or walking sticks,

wheelchair and mobility scooter users, scooters, children on bikes and trikes, pushchairs... Higher fuel costs and fuel shortages will see more footpath usage, alongside more public transport use.

Public Transport

We support a better bus terminus as a way to encourage further use of public transport. Better facilities will help provide a better user experience for bus users, and encourage more bus use, particularly when the weather is cold and/or wet. It will also value and support our bus drivers by providing bus drivers with a room for their use. We hope that Council will also be a strong advocate to government for increasing train services.

Local Water Done Well – Water, Wastewater, Storm Water

Central Districts Water is a crucial area of development for Council in partnership with other Councils in our region. This has been a significant area of challenge for Council, requiring high investment over many years. We understand the need and importance of this spending for public and environmental good. We are encouraged to know that Central Districts Water cannot be sold, will not contract out the services required as has occurred elsewhere, such as Wellington with dire consequences, and is progressing well for a 2027 start. We understand that other councils may opt in to join Central Districts Water which is more advanced in its development, and this too sounds very positive.

Biodiversity and The Manawatū River

We are strong supporters of strengthening biodiversity protection and enhancement, and the important work towards a healthier Manawatū River and keeping 'dead' wastewater out of the awa. We support plans by Central Districts Water to redirect wastewater for irrigation use, and plans for wetlands development and protection. We want to see a strengthening community connection with our precious Manawatū River and our precious natural environment. We support riverbank planting, biodiversity protection work to protect, enhance and increase natural areas including bush remnants and berms. Greening our city will also assist with water absorption at times of high rainfall, and with urban heat mitigation.

Natural Burial

Developing the natural burial option as approved for Ashhurst Domain, and beyond is an important part of a sustainable city and biodiversity building initiatives. Natural burial assists in the development of biodiversity with native planting providing habitat for native wildlife. The ideal is to use bioregional native planting that is true to the area. It is important that any operational level need is provided for to ensure the planning process continues. It is likely however, that this will easily fit into existing funding streams.

Areas of Concern in the Proposed Budget

Reductions in Active and Public Transport

The reprioritisation of transport programmes, in particular the defunding of shared pathways and cycle networks due to loss of Waka Kotahi government funding is disappointing. We recognise that the co-funding for this is largely out of PNCC's hands, but want to see that these ideas remain priorities, and that new funding sources are sought and/or rescoped to enable at least some ongoing active transport and safety improvements to occur. Our member group, Greasy Chain Trust, have provided excellent examples of activities that could be undertaken by council to ensure we continue to progress and improve active transport options. In particular, we would like to see Council engage with their recommendation to maintain the development of alternative transport initiatives using

creating thinking and planning. We urge Council to follow the example of councils such as Christchurch who continue to prioritise this by increasing their active transport spending and infrastructure and increasingly reap the benefits of this creating a great city to live and work in. A safe city to travel using active transport will reduce car use, carbon emissions and road maintenance costs, with less people travelling by car – all this helps to make a healthier liveable city. We urge Council to be brave and keep prioritising active transport options. Investing in better facilities for people to get around by bike for everyday journeys is one of the best spending opportunities available to cities and the benefits save money in the long run.

Food scrap Collection

We are concerned that the food scrap collection plans are under review and spending has been deferred. This is an area of climate related action that could be brought back into the annual budget.

Low Spending on Climate Action and Sustainability

As discussed earlier this important area needs to become more of a priority and given more investment.

Conclusion

It is commendable that Council have achieved a proposed overall rates increase of 4.9%, which is lower than the 8.5% originally assumed in the Long-Term Plan. We do however support small additional rates increases in support of the areas as outlined above.



Appendix

Recommendations for Building Collaborative Disaster Resilience from Environment Hubs Aotearoa's [Community is Climate Resilience: Lessons From Cyclone Gabrielle & the Auckland Anniversary Floods](#).

Recommendations for Building Collaborative Disaster Resilience



Putting Community at the Heart of Emergency Management

- Support community-led approaches
- Leverage existing community networks
- Prioritise dedicated relationship-building roles
- Actively recognise, support, and resource community responders
- Support the development of localised, community-led emergency management plans
- Provide formal recognition and authority for community first-responders
- Support horizontal knowledge sharing and learning



Māori Leadership

- Formally recognise and empower Māori leadership in emergency management
- Recognise and resource marae as critical infrastructure
- Support existing Māori-led networks



Vulnerability and Inclusion

- Incorporate mechanisms to account for vulnerability
- Ensure procedures are accessible and culturally appropriate
- Ensure diverse voices at planning and decisionmaking tables
- Increase proactive welfare-checking



Resourcing and Capacity Building

- Support proactive resilience building
- Establish streamlined funding processes that support short, medium, and long-term recovery
- Promote community preparedness alongside individual and household level preparedness
- Increase skills and training for Civil Defence personnel and volunteers
- Invest in community infrastructure that supports disaster resilience



Governance and Policy

- Address policy incoherence and integrate resilience thinking across all policy areas
- Implement decentralised decision-making and implementation structures



Communication and Coordination

- Implement planned redundancy into all communication and coordination systems
- Create mechanisms for two-way information flows between authorities and communities



Long-term Resilience

- Support local resource sovereignty
- Prioritise people-centred approaches
- Address disaster resilience as climate justice

PG 125 | Community is Climate Resilience: Lessons From Cyclone Gabrielle & the Auckland Anniversary Floods