

## Submission to Palmerston North City Council Long Term Plan 2024-34

### Contact Details

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### Overview

A submission on behalf of Environment Network Manawatū with particular input from its Palmerston North City focused member groups regarding all aspects of the given proposal.

**ENM would like the opportunity to speak to this submission.**

### Background

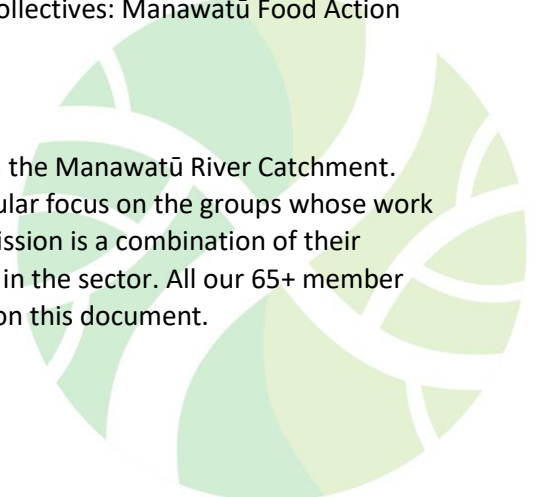
ENM exists to connect and inspire communities for environmental action. We are the environment hub for the Manawatū region providing sector leadership, building capacity and capability, and creating community.

Understanding that all life is part of a thriving, self-sustaining ecosystem our vision is that the ecological and human communities in the Manawatū 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 65+ member groups, that include biodiversity protection, freshwater quality, food resilience, waste reduction, sustainable living, alternative energies, climate action and active transport. The network is organised into two collectives: Manawatū Food Action Network and Manawatū River Source to Sea

### Submission Context

Our network is comprised of groups and organisations who span the Manawatū River Catchment. We consulted with them as part of this submission with a particular focus on the groups whose work takes place within Palmerston North City boundaries. This submission is a combination of their thoughts, and our organisational knowledge of 23 years of work in the sector. All our 65+ member groups have had the opportunity to view and provide feedback on this document.



## Submission

### Issue 2: New and upgraded public facilities.

Despite our support for these developments, we still see that no plans or provisions have been made in the LTP around an Environment Centre. This continues to be disappointing. ENM is in a similar position to the Multicultural Centre of having to use a vast number of external places (most of the above noted venues in fact) whilst working with a substantial number of groups and initiatives. We understand the need for prioritisation yet have questions about our absence in the plan, considering that all other Sector Lead organisations have sufficient, often custom-built spaces provided by council. Again, we advocate for the development of a fully functioning, inspirational Environment Centre as part of the 10-year plan, and for recognition that the environmental sector actually merits this.

First steps to this would be to resource an investigation into what this space could look like, and what function it would have. While we have lots of ideas, and past conversations to draw on, the coordination of a full-scale study into what an Environment Centre can offer, and how it can best run is beyond our current capacity. In the stark understanding of current climate change events and the devastating, heart-breaking impact on many of our regions, 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.

#### **Multicultural Centre proposal.**

##### **Option 1. Proceed with the plan as proposed.**

We support the creation of this dedicated space in the understanding of the concentration and needs of our numerous multicultural groups. ENM collaborates with many of these groups, particularly through the work of the Manawatū Food Action Network (MFAN).

#### **Pasifika Community Centre proposal.**

##### **Option 1. Proceed with the plan as proposed.**

ENM has a strong relationship with the Papaioea Pasifika Community Trust through their collaboration with MFAN. We recently supported their successful submission to PNCC for a community garden. We understand the aspirations and needs of this community and support the development of their facility to help them realise these.

#### **Te Pātikitiki Library proposal.**

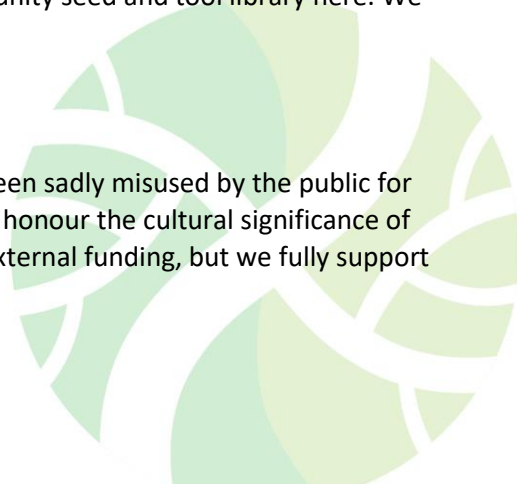
##### **Option 1. Proceed with the plan as proposed.**

Te Pātikitiki is an important and incredibly inclusive community hub. We have liaised closely with hub as a venue for our Future Living Skills Programme, for Let's Grow Highbury and with the development of their community garden. MFAN houses a community seed and tool library here. We support the development of this facility.

#### **Te Motu o Poutoa. Anzac Park proposal.**

##### **Option 1. Proceed with the plan as proposed.**

Te Motu o Poutoa. Anzac Park is a sacred historical space, that been sadly misused by the public for decades. The plan to develop a public marae here will more fully honour the cultural significance of this space. We understand there is a degree of dependency on external funding, but we fully support the development of this facility.



### **Central Energy Trust Arena Proposal.**

#### **Option 2: Supportive of the project but with some conditions.**

We understand the Central Energy Trust attracts a lot of events and tourism to the region and is of local economic benefit. Arena 5 is home to Barber and Bell Halls, Waldegrave Lounge the Gym and Speedway offices. Compared to other parts of the arena, we question the relative usage of these spaces and question if their refurbishment can be placed in the latter years of the plan.

### **Awapuni Community Library Hub Proposal.**

#### **Option 1. Proceed with the plan as proposed.**

As documented the current library space is not fit for purpose, and due to its size, is not a hub in the sense that other library venues are. Being in the heart of the 4412 area of the city where MFAN bases much of its work, we fully support the development of this facility.

Our caveat to the development of all these facilities is that PNCC ensures improvements have a strong environmentally led focus to help the planet, our resilience and electricity costs long term for ratepayers (e.g. solar, rainwater tanks).

### **Issue 3: Seismic upgrades to landmark facilities**

#### **Option one. Build on our existing planning and continue work to look at the buildings as a collective project and explore co-funding opportunities.**

We understand that many of these buildings are landmarks, and well used, necessary spaces. Again, our caveat is that PNCC ensures improvements have a strong environmentally led focus to help the planet, our resilience and electricity costs long term for ratepayers (e.g. solar, rainwater tanks).

### **Draft Development Contributions Policy**

#### **CBD redevelopment**

##### **Option B. Increases to user payments.**

**Increase the contributions for residential development and decrease the non-residential fee to more equitably distribute the cost of growth.**

We agree.

**Stop collecting development contributions for growth costs associated with the Nature Calls wastewater project, due to Council's proposal to seek external funding for the project.**

We agree.

**Add the cost of interest from borrowing that funds infrastructure growth into the calculation of development contribution fees. Most other councils around New Zealand already do this.**

We agree.

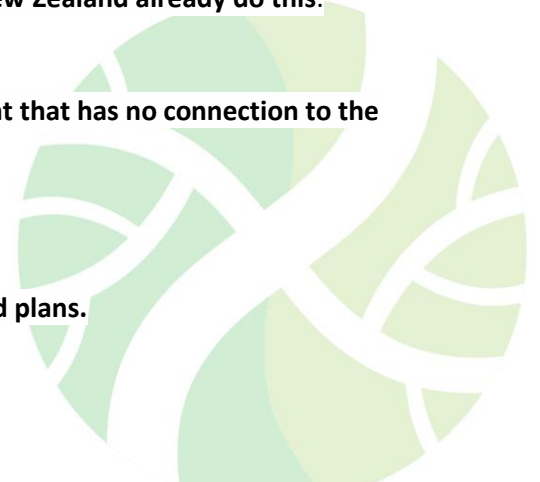
**That we shouldn't charge a fee for non-residential development that has no connection to the water or wastewater network?**

We agree.

### **General Comments.**

**Please share any feedback you have about our vision, goals and plans.**

**Goal 4: A sustainable and resilient city.**



We note the change of wording from being an Eco-City.

#### Biodiversity

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. We ask council to act with increased urgency around recognizing, acknowledging, and resourcing this space on a city-wide level.

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. Rivers, soils, habitats, communities, and consequences have no boundaries. There are many issues that can only be addressed at a catchment scale. An example is the invasion of *Phragmites karka*. This relatively new pest weed is establishing itself in waterways, on farmland and along the coast. The extensive root system has the capacity to undermine stop banks if allowed to establish in their proximity, invade estuaries and rapidly fill wetlands reducing their water retention abilities, grow up through road surfaces, and overrun native vegetation and destroy biodiversity. This weed cannot be tackled in a piecemeal way as disposing of removed rhizomes needs to be done in a way that is highly controlled to stop further spread.

#### Food Resilience

Food insecurity continues to be an ongoing city-wide concern, that will only be exacerbated by winter, and the increases in the costs of living. Engagement in activities linked to MFAN continue to increase on all levels as people seek ways to move towards food sovereignty. Ongoing conversations, submissions and presentations to PNCC have resulted in stakeholder consultation around the development of city-wide Food Resilience Policy that aims to mitigate food insecurity. We increasingly understand that it is vital that this is adopted. It would allow widespread recognition of food resilience as a pertinent, pressing issue and will enable corresponding actions and initiatives linked to MFAN and other food resilience focused organisations to be executed with speed and ease.

However, this is not addressed at all in the LTP, within the Goal 4 outcomes, or as a challenge. We understand that once words are placed in this space, questions and actions around resourcing need to follow. We ask council to act with increased urgency around recognizing, acknowledging and resourcing this space on a city-wide level.

#### Predator Control- Ruahine Kiwi

Strategic planning and future proofing have been at the fore for Ruahine Kiwi as funding linked to the DOC 'Jobs for Nature' initiative finishes at the end of June 2024. There is a firm understanding that this is a forever project, and though we are on track to release kiwi in 2026, there is still much mahi necessary to keep current traps monitored and get the area kiwi ready beyond mid-2024.

We are currently working toward consolidating the project for ongoing success, and have identified the following actions toward our goals, for which we are currently seeking resourcing from multiple potential streams including individuals, businesses, philanthropic bodies, professional fundraisers and councils:

- 1) Using volunteers to continue trapping and employing a trapping coordinator to oversee this process. This is a bare-minimum initial approach, to enable regular trap checking and data collection essential for releasing kiwi in 2026.

- 2) Increasing Ruahine Kiwi's capacity for strategic leadership to ensure the project potential to establish and maintain a safe kiwi environment in the long-term. Strategic leadership will ensure that we are:
  - a) Increasingly connecting and collaborating with mana whenua and neighbouring projects toward developing and implementing larger landscape-scale predator control programme.
  - b) Encouraging increased community, business, and council support to enable a strongly run, well supported and sustainable project.
  - c) Consistently identifying potential risks and barriers to success and finding solutions to reduce these.
  - d) Maintaining a capable, reliable team of people working together toward a common goal. Maintaining a reliable team of trappers and volunteers.

PNCC don't directly fund this project, though celebrate it as a significant beacon of sustainability achievement for the city in various communications. There is an incongruity here. We ask for PNCC's more direct involvement in this dialogue and a financial commitment linked to this.

**Please share any feedback about our proposed transport projects.**

We are supportive of the increased commitment to public transport and active transport as evidenced by increased cycleways throughout the city, slower car speeds, increased safety for pedestrians, cyclists and bus users (Featherston Street as an example), and proposed investment in shared pathways and cycleways which is significant. We encourage the continued strong collaboration with local district councils to ensure that active transport has a strong commuter focus, not just primarily a health and wellbeing one.

We do understand that with change (again, we note Featherston Street as an example) come challenges, which need courage and deep conversation. There needs to be positive guidance offered to those affected how these changes may impact them. We need to help people understand the importance of this and the multiple long-term benefits for people, places, and businesses. ENM and its member groups have important experience in this space and can advocate in partnership with the council.

We encourage the intensification of bus and possibly train services between Feilding and Palmerston North. There is a vast amount of commuter travel between the two townships, and traffic has become increasingly heavy.

Considering active transport over car use.

We all know the environmental benefits of more people walking and cycling and subsequently, less car usage. However, less well known are the economic benefits to the city. These are as follows:

- Waka Kotahi has estimated the net benefits from cycling at 16 cents per kilometre primarily from reduced burden on the health system. It makes sense to encourage more people to cycle. A focus on cycling infrastructure (pathways, bike parking etc.) is encouraged.
- Retirees are amongst the largest group taking up e-bike cycling, and PNCC could be well ahead of the wave in terms of supporting our senior residents. For example, Arvida's Waimea Plains village, near Nelson have assisted the active residents there to start a cycle group complete with a custom-built bike trailer provided by the village. With multiple retirement homes within the city we'd encourage PNCC to provide economic assistance and cycling coaching guidance to the residents, thus reducing car usage.

- Increased retail patronage: Direct economic benefits have been reported to retail and other businesses from investing in walkable communities with high amenity values and proximity to frequently used destinations such as shopping, eating places, schools, and parks. This is particularly important for 'main street' retailers, many of whom are suffering due to more online shopping and the propensity for people to 'jump in their car' to visit a mall or plaza. A greater emphasis on active transport is encouraged.

### **Feedback about proposed plans for water and how we will fund Nature Calls proposed plans for water and how we will fund Nature Calls.**

We understand this to be an area of high-level uncertainty in the long-term plan and that there will be a huge impact on the ratepayer. We advocate for the solution that has the best environmental impacts, whilst not coming at a prohibitive cost.

Members have raised questions around any options for water/wastewater that include privatization/partial privatization. The disestablishment of the three waters framework has sparked the consideration of a public-private partnership. Private companies involved in building, operating, and owning this infrastructure takes this crucial natural and public resource out of public hands/council control. There could be a negative environmental impact if there is a 'profit' angle present. We may need to accept the alternative of some combination of government funding, higher rates and debt to cover the cost in the understanding that it will protect our natural resources better.

Because of the impact water will have through large rain events and potential periods of drought as a result of climate change, we believe it will be viewed as a different kind of asset in the forthcoming years. As noted, to mitigate this PNCC will install larger underground pipes, create wetland type environments, maintaining streams, and work with developers to ensure new developments are well designed to cope with more intense rainfall events in the future.

The current trajectory of plausible climate change scenarios shows 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.

We are pleased to see that PNCC has identified our changing climate as a challenge it faces as part of its larger consultation document. However, we question if the LTP reflects the extent of the urgency needed to avoid or reduce these changes. There needs to be a significantly stronger focus on what this means for our people in our rohe and our endemic flora and fauna. People need to be prepared for what is unanimously regarded in the scientific community as an absolute certainty. There needs to be overall guidance offered to the citizens 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.

### **Feedback about our proposed plans for housing and city growth.**



We understand the council plans to build 400 new houses. The countrywide housing crisis has precipitated an increased focus on land development and building. Our member groups and members of the public have voiced concerns around this frequently, more recently linked to work in Aokautere. There is a threatened orchid in this area, and concerns about escarpment run-off in spaces where considerable conservation efforts have taken place. We will continue to listen to these concerns and advocate, when necessary, in the understanding that a balance needs to be achieved.

We are also acutely aware of the diminishing availability of good soils for food production. Food resilience on a regional scale needs to be recognized as essential and the protection of Class 1 soils for this purpose is paramount. When building we ask, if they are not already, that soils are assessed and that Class 1 soils are protected for food production. We understand that the Government identified some of these around major cities but are not aware if Palmerston North is included.

A key space, currently unaddressed here, but not capitalised on, is land in urban areas, such as berms, which can be touted as key growing areas to increase food security. We understand that PNCC offers guidelines to promote this. These could also be mapped as part of the process.

We support the longer-term lens (30 years) that is being given to city growth so that PNCC can carefully plan how we can provide more space for new homes and businesses, while protecting our environment and other things that make this a great place to live.

**Other Feedback. A natural burial site in our city.**

A meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> of May coordinated by ENM and attended by 37 people (though with a much longer list of interested people) indicates that there is still strong support for establishing a natural burial site within the city. We understand that there has been previous work done in this area, and the identification of a site has proven to be difficult. We also understand that council has supported a recommendation to seek expressions of interest from the community for a partnership-based approach to providing a natural burial site in Palmerston North. We would like to see this and/or investigations around finding a site progressed with some urgency. Advising families to access the Whanganui site for natural burials is not a viable solution.

**Other Feedback. Simplifying the process for establishing Community Gardens on Council Land.**

In a recent submission to the establishment of a community garden as part of Bill Brown Park, ENM and most other submitters noted the difficulty and complexity of the process to establish these. Councillor Johnson asked council staff if simplification was possible and the answer to this seemed to be a conclusive 'no'. We strongly encourage this thinking to be revisited, as the current process creates significant barriers for community groups to establish new garden. We wonder if the legislation around use of reserves can be read in any other way to better enable community gardens to be established by interested groups. There is significant interest in community gardens in Palmerston North - we facilitated a community gardener's hui last year with over 60 participants who were actively engaging in or interested in engaging in community gardens. When participants were asked what was needed for community gardens to thrive, 'more support from council' was identified as one of the most common themes. We note the Roslyn Commons project is submitting to the LTP on this issue and we support their submission in formulating a less time-consuming process to establish spaces for our community to grow food and feed families.

**Other Feedback. Herbicide uses in public spaces.**

There has been recent groundswell of interest and concern about herbicide use in public spaces, particularly in playgrounds. ENM responded to this concern by disseminating a questionnaire to the public to ascertain the level of this concern and what people think can be done. Almost 70 people

responded, the main concerns being around effects on soil health and effects on bees and insects, and use of it around where our children are present, namely playgrounds and schools. Overwhelmingly, participants would like to see the testing of low and no-spray options in urban and freshwater spaces, more information shared about herbicide use, and petitioning to council to adopt and implement low and no spray policies.

**Other Feedback: Nature-based play outcomes for the city.**

ENM strongly supports any initiatives council or community based to support and incentivise nature-based play within our city. We understand that nature-based play celebrates our incredible natural assets and encourages children and their families to interact, understand and appreciate the environment more. We believe this should be prioritised over a traditional playground model and normalised in the understanding it uses less resources, is cheaper, and has equally if not better play and learning outcomes for children.

**To conclude**

PNCC and the city glean tangible benefits from the incredible work of our member groups, particularly around biodiversity but increasingly around food security. It is the role of ENM to connect and inspire communities for environmental action, and to underpin and support their mahi. PNCC 's recognition of us as Sector Lead for the Environment and the resourcing, conversation and collaboration that has occurred from this has been impactful. Taking this to the next level in the LTP around provision for an Envirocentre is more than warranted. We would welcome conversation with PNCC about this in the near future.

