



Environment Network Manawatu

Submission to Horowhenua District Council Annual Plan

Contact Details (You must provide your contact details for your submission to be considered)

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Hearing of Submissions (please indicate your preference)

Do you wish to present your submission to Council at a Hearing? **Yes**

Sign language interpretation required? **No**

I would need to speak on **Thursday 4 May** as I am travelling nationally on Wednesday.

I would prefer to present my submission in the **Daytime**, but will also be available in the evening.

BACKGROUND

Environment Network Manawatu (ENM) is a charitable umbrella organisation dedicated to enhancing the environment within the Manawatu catchment. We receive funding from Palmerston North City Council, Lotteries, Eastern and Central Community Trust, Community Organisation Grants Scheme and project funding from additional organisations. We currently have 49 active member groups, four of whom are based in the Horowhenua District and four extra groups who are routinely working in the Horowhenua.

This submission has been written in response to initial comment on the plan from our member groups. It has been revised in response to further member group feedback.

TOPIC 1: SHARED PATHWAYS

ENM's preferred option is:

Option 3: Allocate \$250,000 to shared pathways for 2017/18

Reasons why this is your preferred option

To be able to encourage communities to get outdoors, turn their eyes towards the natural environment and to get motivated in being involved with its protection and conservation, communities need to feel safe to do that. By including shared pathways into the transport infrastructure across the district and connecting these regionally will aid communities to recreate and commute safely, without the worry and danger of being alongside and/or amongst cars and trucks on the road.

This shared pathway network should follow logical lines, which includes alongside existing roads where road corridors are wide enough or, where new roads are being surveyed, including space for a shared pathway.

Unformed paper roads and also river corridors provide another excellent opportunity. ENM would encourage council to look into the network of paper roads and open up these roads for shared pathways where they provide linkages. River corridors are more challenging given that the rivers have often shifted over time and private titles extend into the river, but this should be investigated.

ENM would like to encourage Horowhenua District Council (HDC) to submit to and meet with Horizons Regional Council (HRC) to discuss the opportunity of purchasing the land underneath the stopbank infrastructure across the district and the entire region. By doing this, it would enable shared pathways to be installed on the top of stopbanks throughout the region without the challenges of negotiating landowner approval, with the only hurdle being to ensure that this does not impinge on farming access and that the stopbanks continue to provide the protection of land that they were installed for.

TOPIC 2: HERITAGE INCENTIVE FUNDING

ENM would support the council in choosing:

Option 2: Allocate \$50,000 per annum

Reasons why this is your preferred option

ENM understands the importance of building a sense of community and to do this, we often have to look back to our past for us to be able to make good decisions about our future and to also highlight the history of our townships and settlement.

We understand that a level of funding may be needed to aid landowners with these buildings to be able to help ease the burden, especially any particular regulatory burden, but we would urge caution around allocating too much into this budget when there are so many other pressing and expensive matters that council needs to deal with.

TOPIC 3: SIGNIFICANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

ENM would support the council in choosing:

Option 3: Update the draft Significance and Engagement Policy following feedback from the community and adopt it

Reasons why this is your preferred option

ENM fully supports council taking a more consultative stance, where strong facilitation enables members of the community to voice their opinions and contribute to all matters that council has duties, powers and desires to regulate, operate and administer. This is how you foster local ownership and buy-in, minimising conflict and hopefully hastening good outcomes.

Investment at the front end of these processes is the only way forward to avoid mistrust, conflict and costly proceedings that are a burden on the ratepayer.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

It is pleasing to see Council is trying to weigh up its services versus its cost, as shown by its recommendations of the topics it's wanting feedback on this year. ENM would encourage council to continue taking steps to enable community participation in decision making, and ensure that all proposals are grounded at a community level and that plenty of time is given for a decision to be made, which will set up your council for long term success where you can generate community buy-in and ownership of project work.

WHAT OTHER PROJECTS OR IDEAS SHOULD COUNCIL BE CONSIDERING FOR 2018/19 AND BEYOND?

ENM would like to HDC to consider some additional projects for 2017-2018, targeted around enhancing the districts environmental organisations and environmental education:

Enviroschools Programme

ENM was saddened to hear that **Horowhenua District Council is the only Council in the Horizons Region that does not support the Enviroschools programme** (see Horizons Regional Council environment committee reports). This is despite the facts that:

- A majority of councils (82% of Regional/Unitary Councils and 72% of Territorial Authorities – totaling 58 councils) across New Zealand use Enviroschools (ES) to help achieve their objectives and policies around sustainability and the environment.
- Nationwide, ES has over 1050 schools and early childhood centres – representing a reach of over 264,000 young people and their families
- Community outcomes identified in HDC Long Term Plan point to a district that wants a healthy local and growing economy, a sustainable environment, and a community of knowledge, culture and diversity where people are proud to live.
- ES is a long term behaviour change programme, which has a strong focus on minimising impacts on the environment and restoring natural ecosystems – reducing the burden and associated costs of infrastructure required by communities. In the long term, this will save councils money.
- Enviroschools programme brings secondary outcomes – look at benefits of ES on their web page:
<http://www.enviroschools.org.nz/>
- Council support of \$1000 per Enviroschool per year provides for an Enviroschools Facilitator. Funding from other Territorial Authorities ranges from \$3,000 to \$15,000 per year which facilitates the 48 current Enviroschools throughout the Horizons Region.
- Horowhenua District currently has five schools on the 'Friends of Enviroschools' waiting list, plus Opiki School who are looking to join.

ENM would like to see HDC providing funding for any schools in the district that are currently 'Friends of Enviroschools' or any schools looking to join this programme (up to a maximum 8 schools in 2017-2018) to become an Enviroschool. This programme provides critical resourcing for schools and learning for children that will provide positive outcomes throughout the district for years to come.

Manawatu River Loop at Foxton

Both Save Our River Trust (SORT) and Wildlife Foxton Trust are member groups of ENM.

In SORT'S case, ENM is well aware of the newly granted resource consent that has been granted by Horizons Regional Council to SORT, which has significant implications for this group implementing works on the town frontage of the river loop. The potential benefits that works around the town frontage could have for both this community and for the Te Awahou Nieuwe Stroom Project are significant and ENM would urge council to assign further funding within the 2017/2018 budget to SORT for when they complete their Operations and Management Plan, which is their last hurdle before being able to undertake a work programme during the summer.

Wildlife Foxton Trust has also become a member group of ENM and hosted the network recently during the Foxton Enviro tour. ENM believes this organisation has a significant opportunity to create an environmental hub for Foxton, showcasing New Zealand native fauna and providing educational

and tourism opportunities. ENM would encourage District Council to consider investment into this facility into the future.

Manawatu Estuary

ENM would like to highlight the Manawatu Estuary as an area where Council should be investing significant energy and resource. This Estuary is one of only six places 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.

Horowhenua District Council is responsible for management of the dune lands at the foreshore end of the site and also the bird sanctuary spit, both of which are habitats that require significant investment over time to keep them in good condition. We would encourage Horowhenua District Council to increase its funding for these special reserve lands with high biodiversity value and making sure that they still have these internationally recognised environments, and the flora and fauna which they provide for, for future generations.

We would also encourage Horowhenua District Council to continue to work actively with the Manawatu Estuary Trust and the Manawatu Estuary Management Team to be able to ensure that decisions about this estuary are made unilaterally across organisations and also have ownership from the community.

Privacy Act 1993

Please note that submissions are public information. Information on this form including your name and submission will be made available to the media and public as part of the decision making process. Your submission will only be used for the purpose of the annual plan process. The information will be held by the Horowhenua District Council, 126 Oxford Street, Levin. You have the right to access the information and request its correction.