



Environment Network Manawatu Incorporated (ENM)

Submission to Horowhenua District Council Long Term Plan 2018-2038

Contact Details

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Hearing of Submissions (please indicate your preference)

Did you provide feedback as part of Pre-engagement on the Long term Plan? **No**

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

Sign language interpretation required? **No**

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 over 50 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.

PROPOSED COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

Did we get the outcomes right? **Yes**

ENM believes that our member groups contribute towards many of the community outcomes identified by Council, particularly the thriving communities, exuberant economy, stunning environment and enabling infrastructure outcomes.

ENM recommends that council actively resources community groups that are working alongside council to achieve the proposed community outcomes for the District, as a way to engage the community and also build greater community ownership.

CHALLENGE 1: PROPERTY

ENM's preferred option is:

Option 4: None of the community halls are retained as council property and are disposed of

Reasons why this is your preferred option

ENM agrees with council that the cost of operation and the cost to bring these buildings up to earthquake standard is not of value, especially when HDC has other very large infrastructural challenges that, in ENM's view, take priority.

However, there is a social cost to this, given communities and groups either lease or hire some of these facilities and, in ENM's view, these facilities should be offered (including transfer of ownership) to the groups that either lease them or to the community that uses them (if they are prepared to set up their own entity) for little or no cost and for them to be aided in taking over the operation of these facilities. Where the building is offered, but is not desired by the community, then the building could be sold by council.

CHALLENGE 2: FOXTON POOL

ENM would support the council in choosing:

Option 2: Extend season to 8 months

Reasons why this is your preferred option

Having a council asset that is inactive for substantial parts of the year is not great use of this council owned asset and by extending hours, those people who have close access to this facility will benefit.

However, council needs to consider that many rural and ratepayers from smaller townships, who will also pay for these facilities as part of their rates, do not have close access to the Foxton Pool or any other council funded pools. Therefore, Council needs to make it a priority for all smaller local communities to have access to suitable facilities to be able to offer learn to swim classes. This includes, but is not limited to, Tokomaru, Opiki, Shannon, Ohau and Manakau. Potentially, this could be offered through the upgrading of school pools and providing learn to swim coaches.

SHANNON COMMUNITY CENTRE

ENM supports the development of a community facilities across the district, so long as there is an identified demand, independently verified feasibility and also the ability for the centre to attract contestable funding from the likes of Lotteries.

ENM supports HDC involvement in helping the community work this through and help remove any barriers to the development of this centre that it has control over (planning, roading, services etc) but does not believe significant capital investment from Council into this development is justified given the other high priority investments forecast for the district.

CHALLENGE 3: WATER AND WASTEWATER

ENM would support the council in choosing:

Option 2: Provide water and wastewater to existing settlement and growth areas

Reasons why this is your preferred option

Well planned water and wastewater infrastructure is an important component in being able to increase the density of some of the smaller townships within the Horowhenua without having significant environmental impacts. However, with provision of this infrastructure, there also becomes the tendency to consume more resources and also to take less responsibility for the waste that households produce.

ENM is concerned by the amount of money that HDC has budgeted to spend on this infrastructure, especially given the current size of these communities and no information on projected growth. ENM would have liked to have been able to see a detailed breakdown on how the costs for water and wastewater for these communities were developed along with the growth predictions that would make the scale of these systems feasible.

ENM would like to suggest that, prior to council undertaking any investment, they create and adopt a water and wastewater minimisation strategy (different from a solid waste strategy) for the district, looking at opportunities as follows:

- 1) Only providing supplementary water schemes to communities who have had to provide their own water supplies until the development of the proposed infrastructure and requiring them to maintain (existing) or install (new build) rainwater collection and storage. This means the design requirements of the water supplies can be smaller and, consequently, a smaller build cost and lower environmental impact for these communities.
- 2) Requiring water efficient, dual flush toilets to be installed as part of any building consent and/or wastewater connection agreement.
- 3) Offering subsidies or incentives for wastewater separation in new builds so that only black water is collected as part of wastewater and that households have the ability to store and use greywater (shower water, laundry, sink water etc.) for gardens and for flushing toilets. This is particularly appropriate for beach communities where greywater can supply significant volumes of irrigation/gardening water for summertime use.

ENM believes that the costs identified regarding the building of new water and wastewater infrastructure is excessive and we would encourage council to investigate more cost effective solutions for the communities identified as a way to limit council debt. A key step to achieve this is to look at solutions around minimising water use and wastewater production.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

It is pleasing to see Council is trying to weigh up its services versus its cost. ENM would encourage council to continue taking steps to enable community participation in decision making. Council needs to 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 2018-2032 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:

Manawatu River Source to Sea

Our submission is that:

- 1) **Council become active participants in the Community driven project, Manawatū River Source to Sea – a project that will enhance biodiversity and bring economic benefits to the Community;**
- 2) **Council include funding within the LTP 2018-2038 of \$20,000 per annum, over the next three years, to directly support Manawatū River Source to Sea (2017 – 2040).**

As a way of trying to curb the biodiversity loss of our region, promote recreation and also turn people's attention to the wider river environment, ENM's biodiversity focused member groups have been formulating a project over the past four years to enable the linking of existing works, fill in voids and encourage greater participation from the community.

ENM supports the Source to Sea submission and would encourage council to becoming active participants and contributors to this project.

Enviroschools Programme

Our submission is that:

- 1) **Council includes a budget in the LTP, initially allowing up to 15 primary and secondary schools to become facilitated enviro-schools, with a budget increase over the LTP to accommodate more schools who would like to join.**
- 2) **It costs \$1000 per Enviroschool per year to provide an Enviroschools Facilitator. This equates to a budget for 15 schools (\$15,000) initially, but ENM would suggest that it forecast for at least 20 schools to be able to join over the LTP period.**

ENM was disappointed 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:

- Enviroschools 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. Providing a budget for this feeds into the councils community outcomes, particularly the 'Stunning environment' outcome.
- In the long term, this will save councils money. The Enviroschools programme compliments and extends Horowhenua's existing zero waste education, which is also provided by other districts.
- A majority of councils (82% of Regional/Unitary Councils and 72% of Territorial Authorities – totaling 58 councils) across New Zealand fund an Enviroschools programme to help achieve their objectives and policies around sustainability and the environment.
- Nationwide, Enviroschools has over 1130 primary schools, secondary schools and early childhood centres participating. Horowhenua District is lagging behind due to a lack of district council funding.
- Enviroschools programme brings secondary outcomes – look at benefits on their web page: <http://www.enviroschools.org.nz/>

- In other districts in the region, funding ranges from \$3,000 to \$15,000 per year which facilitates the 48 current Enviroschools throughout the Horizons Region.
- Horizons Regional Council have identified that Horowhenua District currently has five schools on the 'Friends of Enviroschools' list, plus Opiki School who are all wanting to become Enviroschools.
- ENM also understands that Council has been thinking about providing funding to allow secondary schools to become part of this programme. This would be a useful step for those schools who desire this, but ENM believes the best resources and outcomes from Enviroschools nationally tends to come from primary school level and we believe primary schools should be offered this programme as well.

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. Enviro schools 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, 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 Councils new community facility Te Awahou Nieuwe Stroom are significant and ENM would urge council to assign further funding within the 2018-2038 budget to SORT, to enable them to have a greater funding pool to undertake a robust and compliant work programme within the Foxton Loop over the LTP period.

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 offering public land or buildings (if applicable) and also considering 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's current contribution to this area is around 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 make 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 not made unilaterally, but made across organisations and also have ownership from the community.

