

Long-term Plan 2024–34



Respondent No. 367

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I'm providing a submission (choose one):
 on behalf of an organisation

Write organisation name here Royal NZ Forest & Bird

Do you want to speak to Council about your submission at our public hearings on 2 May?
 No

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Submission

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about this LTP?

Forest & Bird supports the purpose of Council's in as described in the Local Government Act 2002

1. Forest & Bird is concerned at inconsistencies in the application of the purpose of Local Government as set out in the Local Government Act s 3 (d), particularly where local government is required to balance the four well-beings – economic, environmental, social, and cultural, has led to suboptimal outcomes for the environment. It is therefore the Council's legislated duty to give effect to the environmental wellbeing outline in the LGA, this responsibility cannot be ignored or deemed less important.

2. Forest & Bird is concerned that environmental well-being is too often perceived as a "nice to have" when in fact it is a vital component to ensure the other well-beings can be achieved. Attempts to 'balance' the four well-beings, particularly in pursuit of economic well-being, has led to the incremental erosion of environmental well-being, and the subsequent demise of social and cultural well-being across parts of their communities.

Forest & Bird's view on the Place focussed items in the LTP

The primary focus of submission is on place.

"Place : Our natural environment, water, land, and infrastructure remains accessible, well maintained and protected from degradation, including climate change impacts as we grow."

(p.8, LTP)

3. While the overarching statement concerning Place incorporates our primary areas of concern as a society, the breakout needs and priorities are biased, echoing our concerns raised

regarding the Council's LGA responsibilities outlined in the previous section.

4. Furthermore, 'well maintained and protected from degradation' is hardly aspirational.

Council should lift its sights higher in its commitment to protecting our environment.

Water

5. The Council is responsible for water infrastructure but how it implements its response to the requirements of the three waters can significantly affect the environment.

6. Using nature-based solutions is an effective way forward, and there are already guidelines available as a useful starting point ^{1 2}

. Making room for streams and rivers keeps

communities safer, costs less, is better for our wildlife than hard engineering approaches – and will become valuable for future climate change impacts.

7. Furthermore, the proposed National Policy Statement on Natural Hazard Decision Making includes a policy directing a preference for nature-based solutions over hard-engineered solutions.³ We encourage Council to continue to invest in nature-based solutions as it did with the Waikanae River recharge scheme. Nature-based solutions implemented now can get ahead of potential climate adaptation policies and be a preferable option to hard engineering with many co-benefits for wildlife, emissions reductions, and communities, often at lower initial (and ongoing) cost.

8. One example of where these nature-based solutions could be implemented is the proposed development between Kāpia Road, the Expressway and the Wharemauku Stream. The outcomes would deliver for the environment and for social wellbeing, which is core to the vision of the LTP (p.8). Using this approach across our district will further support this vision.

¹ Room for the River Guidelines (resilientrivers.nz)

² F&B_Room-For-Rivers_Report_online_0.pdf (forestandbird.org.nz) ³ Page 7: Proposed-National-Policy-Statement-for-Natural-Hazard-Decision-making-2023.pdf (environment.govt.nz)

9. Forest & Bird encourages the Council to educate, support and work with developers and rural landowners to reduce flood risk and runoff into local rivers and streams. This work could be supported by riparian planning and rates rebates.

10. We commend the Council for its foresight in implementing water meters early, a step which has stood our district in good stead. We hope future Council investments will show the same foresight.

Sustainable Land Use

11. For development to be sustainable, developers need to take care in the damage they cause to the environment from their development. This requires oversight and enforcement by council especially in a Cost-of-living crisis where the savings of cutting corners becomes more tempting. Ensuring natural areas on private land are protected as part of developments is an important way Council can show their care for the environment.

12. We encourage the council to continue to plan for and invest in infrastructure to support active transport – walkways and cycleways for example. This will require planning whenever developments are proposed (though some may be able to planned ahead). One of the great things about living in Kāpiti is its walk/cycleability though there is room for improvement. These pathways are a great community asset and can be used as eco-corridors to help native fauna to move through the district.

Climate change and Resilience

13. While Forest and Bird is glad to see the environment mentioned in this point, the environment exists beyond climate change and we reject that action on the environment is only in this context. However plans to respond to climate change and to improve resilience should consider and improve the environment.

Communities and People

14. We are disappointed to see no consideration within this section (p.9) on people's wellbeing.

15. Trees, walkways, and natural spaces are an important part of making a city liveable.

We recommend the council adopt the 3/30/300 rule, promoted by the UN with respect to Urban Trees. The 3/30/300 rule states that everyone should be able to see at least three trees from their homes, 30% of everyone's neighbourhoods should be covered with tree canopy, and no one should live further than 300 metres from a park or green space. This rule emphasises the vital role that urban forests and other elements of urban nature play in enhancing our health and well-being. It offers a simplified idea that allows urban planners to implement and monitor green space development in urban areas. Some areas of Kāpiti do meet this goal, but there is certainly room for improvement. The presence of trees has been

linked to many benefits, including cooling effects, improved microclimates, better mental

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and physical health, and the potential to reduce air pollution and noise. Denser green areas act as natural defence systems protecting against flooding and soil subsidence.

16. We encourage the council to review its species list for urban trees planted in parks and on berms, to assess whether some of the current choices may become a problem in the wider environment (e.g. ornamental cherries growing in the wild). We would welcome the inclusion for more native New Zealand trees: Tītoki, totara, kowhai and lemonwood, for example, all make fine specimen trees, are endemic to our area, and support other native species of fauna.

Forest & Bird would like to see increased funding for Parks and Reserves

17. The Kāpiti district contains over 600 hectares of parks and reserves, of which about 100 areas are of high ecological value, yet there is no mention of this large area of council land in the Long Term Plan. These parks and reserves are a major drawcard for residents and visitors to our area. They should be improved not just be maintained.

18. Forest and Bird considers the maintenance of these areas to be under supported and underfunded. The cost control measures suggested in the LTP show a sinking lid on employees and very tight budgets. We think this approach a blunt and lazy tool suggestion by council and encourage the council to increase both personnel and funding for biodiversity. Budgets also need to account for inflationary increases over time.

19. Funding for weed and pest control was not addressed in the LTP as far as we could tell, but we request better funding for this as at the moment the weeds and pests are winning.

20. Pioneer plantings done as part of the Council's revegetation programme will require more investment over the term of this Long Term Plan. Empirical evidence based on 27 different restoration projects in the North Island suggests 80% canopy cover will likely be achieved sometime between 7.0 and 18.1 years.⁵ At one lowland restoration site on the outskirts of Hamilton, 96.6% canopy cover was achieved 9.6 years after planting.⁶ Furthermore, research suggests pioneer planting needs to have ongoing weed management if it is cross the threshold of canopy closure.⁷ It would be a waste of ratepayers money to plant and then not care adequately for plantings. This funding needs to be budgeted for in the LTP. It is important to ensure trees planted survive weeds and it will take time for young plants to grow big enough to do this. Health and Safety laws are making it increasingly difficult for volunteers to make any significant contribution to weed control.

21. Furthermore, there has been an explosion in the rabbit population over the last five years in our district and funding for pest control (both predators and rabbits) needs to be increased as the situation is deteriorating. Rabbits like to chew young trees, rats and ungulates have a significant impact on forests, particularly on undergrowth and new seedlings. Forest and
5 Wallace, K.J. and Clarkson, B.D. Urban forest restoration ecology: a review from Hamilton, New Zealand. *Journal of the*

Royal Society of New Zealand, 49(3), 2019, pp. 347–369. 6 Wallace, K.J. et al. Restoration Trajectories and Ecological Thresholds during Planted Urban Forest Successional Development. *Forests* 2022, 13, 199.

7 Wallace, K.J. et al. Exotic weeds and fluctuating microclimate can constrain native plant regeneration in urban forest

restoration. *Ecological Applications*, 27(4), 2017, pp. 1268–1279.

Bird produced a report on these carbon loss impacts of browsing pests on native habitats in 2021 8

. These pests need to be controlled through an active pest management strategy.

22. In addition to the rabbit problem, Kāpiti performs worse than other districts on predator control, such as Wellington and the Capital Kiwi initiative. More funding is needed to set up trapping lines, buy baits and lures, and to do the trapping. While there are some keen volunteer trappers around, there are not nearly enough to do an adequate job, and there are many areas the public just don't go (and shouldn't for safety reasons).

23. Council also has a role to play in educating and encouraging private landowners to effectively manage their weeds and pests.

24. Forest & Bird comments on documents related to the LTP

Councillors' Ten Priorities

25. In reviewing the Councillors' Ten Priorities we note that water, sustainable land use, and climate change are all included, however the emphasis is on the environment as a tool rather than an asset and a responsibility.

26. Furthermore, we note that the Ten Priorities only look forward 4 years at most, where the Long Term Plan on which the Council is consulting extends to 2034. These priorities are therefore represent a short term, rather than a long term view. We are concerned for the ambiguity this results in for the longer term.

Significance and Engagement Policy (referenced in LTP, p.42)

Forest and Bird notes the council's intention to consult on Strategic Assets and that these include "the open space network as a whole, including parks, walkways, sports fields, and other facilities under the Reserves Act 1977", we agree the council should consult, however we further note that the intention only requires consultation when consulted on as a whole. Forest and Bird considers this inadequate and thinks the council should consult on proposed changes to these facilities individually too. For example, we have noticed plenty of consultation about playgrounds but less on parks yet both are important and well used spaces.

Conclusion

We remind the council of its responsibility for the environment beyond three waters and climate change. We encourage the council to ensure equal emphasis is placed on the environment as on community, economy etc. We desire to see a more nature-based approach to solutions, improved funding for biodiversity, and look forward to working with the council on these plans for our region.

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