

# **New Plymouth District Council Long-Term Plan 2024-2034**

## **Climate Justice Taranaki submission, 12 April 2024**

### **Introduction**

1. Climate Justice Taranaki (CJT)<sup>1</sup> is a community group dedicated to environmental sustainability and social justice. Composed of a broad range of people with varied expertise and life experiences, CJT has engaged respectfully with government on numerous occasions.
2. CJT appreciates the opportunity to submit on the New Plymouth District Council Long-Term Plan (hereafter referred to as the LTP). Our team has examined the three 'Big Calls' Council put forward and wish to emphasize the connectivity between those calls and how investment (or lack of) on one could affect the viability and effectiveness of another. With the increasing challenges we face, environmentally, socially, politically and economically at multiple levels, it is important to seek solutions that create synergies and co-benefits, rather than to ignore or accept trade-offs.

### **Big call 1 – Future proofing our district**

#### **Infrastructure**

3. We support option 2 – double renewal funding for transportation assets, but with much greater focus and investment into safe streets, crossings and cycleways as well as bus shelters and associated services. These are essential to facilitate the shift from private car dependence to active, shared and public transport. We recommend bringing forward the cycleway projects earlier in the LTP.
4. Re flood protection involving the upgrades of three flood protection dams and one stormwater bund, we urge that Council explores working with nature and collaborates more with mana whenua and local communities<sup>2</sup>.
5. We are concerned about the proposal for a New Plymouth ring road to access the Port along with other heavy vehicle bypass options in other towns within our district. Such a proposal goes against emissions reduction as more roads will encourage more road users, notably heavy trucks (See CJT submission on the Draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport)<sup>3</sup>. It is also an extremely expensive proposal, albeit not until years 11 of the infrastructure plan when land acquisition is proposed to start.

#### **Disaster recovery reserve**

6. We support option 3 – boost funding to \$500,000 per annum plus PIF release.
7. Rather than putting aside the entirety of this money “to smooth the cost impact of any natural disaster”, a portion of this money can be used to provide advice, support and training for initiatives that prepare and empower communities to better deal with emergencies, disasters and post-events recovery. Learnings can be taken from how iwi Māori dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic and cyclone Gabrielle<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://climatejusticetaranaki.info/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://environment.govt.nz/news/natural-flood-protection-investigated-through-jobs-for-nature/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://climatejusticetaranaki.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/cjt-sub-gps-land-transport-2024\\_34-2apr24-final.pdf](https://climatejusticetaranaki.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/cjt-sub-gps-land-transport-2024_34-2apr24-final.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://eastcoastexchange.toha.nz/>

## Big call 2 – Sustainability

### Climate action programme

8. We support an expanded option 4 – greater acceleration of the programme, by including Council’s contribution to Taranaki Regional Council to support a high frequency bus trial and increasing funding for Planting our Place. The latter could be accelerated many folds by greater collaboration and support for hapū, iwi, schools, community groups and landowners.
9. An expanded option 4 would also enable improvements for safe walking and cycling, stormwater management, waste minimisation and water use. Stormwater network improvements would indeed help to build resilience to extreme rainfall events. More nature-based solutions<sup>5, 6</sup> for stormwater management such as water-sensitive urban designs can be more cost effective and offer co-benefits including temperature regulations, pollution and emission reduction and more green space for people.
10. It is encouraging to read that Council has assessed the risk to assets associated with climate change. We urge Council to proceed with adaptation plans from year 1 of the LTP (rather than year 2), including spending on Urenui and Onaero coastal erosion risks assessment and adaptation planning. We also agree with support for managed retreat of Rohutu Block.
11. At this stage, we do not support the proposal to spend \$37m for the establishment of a local wastewater treatment plant for Urenui and Onaero towns and domains. We are concerned that it may not be prudent to spend that sum of money (likely blown out later) when there are probably targeted, small scale and more cost-effective solutions that could be part of an adaption plan, given the risks of sea level rise and coastal erosion.
12. Indeed, waste management and minimisation remains problematic across New Zealand<sup>7</sup>, with New Plymouth’s kerb-side organic waste being trucked 300km to a Waikato composting facility and general wastes going to Bonny Glen landfill near Marton. While it would be an improvement to establish a regional organics facility, a network of localised community-run composting hubs<sup>8</sup> would further reduce transport emissions and increase local benefits from job creation, training, to community building and local food production. Such hubs already exist in a number of towns and cities like Auckland<sup>9</sup>, Wellington<sup>10</sup>, Nelson<sup>11</sup>, with support from Councils, other organisations and volunteers.
13. To substantially reduce Council’s own emissions, Council needs to accelerate the Decarbonisation Programme set out in the Emissions Reduction Plan<sup>12</sup>, embedding principles like resource efficiency, circular design, and lifecycle assessment within its infrastructure, both new and existing (e.g. Puke Ariki). We remain disappointed that the renovation of the Council building did not incorporate roof top solar panels. Combined with electric vehicle chargers for Council E-fleet and staff EVs, such a relatively simple intervention would help to reduce peak electricity demand on the grid, build some

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<sup>5</sup> <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/aotearoa-new-zealands-first-emissions-reduction-plan/working-with-nature/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40726-024-00297-8>

<sup>7</sup> <https://thespinoff.co.nz/business/14-04-2023/why-our-food-scraps-are-being-driven-hundreds-of-kilometres-out-of-town>

<sup>8</sup> <https://compostcollective.org.nz/find-a-community-composting-hub/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.pmcasa.ac.nz/topics/food-rescue-food-waste/what-can-i-do-with-my-food-waste/community-solutions-for-food-waste/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://wellington.govt.nz/climate-change-sustainability-environment/sustainable-living/community-composting-hubs-trial>

<sup>11</sup> <https://communitycompost.co.nz/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.npdc.govt.nz/media/2a3fdw35/district-wide-emissions-reduction-plan-2023-adopted-12-september-2023.pdf>

resilience in case of an extreme weather event and show leadership in climate action. Another cost-effective way of reducing Council's operational emissions would be better coordination and optimisation of activities and vehicle movements, in addition to phasing out its fossil fuel fleet.

14. Moreover, we urge that Council re-establish the Sustainable Homes Voluntary Targeted Rate (VTR) Scheme to enable some ratepayers in retrofitting their homes to make them healthier and more energy efficient<sup>13, 14, 15</sup>. We also urge that Council retain funding for the Sustainable Design Adviser position to support homeowners in their sustainability journey.

## **Big call 3 – Paying it forward**

### **Establishing a Sustainable Lifestyle Capital Reserve**

15. The heading 'Sustainable Lifestyle' is open to interpretation. It needs to incorporate environmental, social and economic sustainability bottom lines. The criteria on selecting projects must also be aligned with the triple bottom line.
16. Until the above is clearly discussed and adopted, we do not support the establishment of the 'Sustainable Lifestyle Capital Reserve. We are also concerned about the added financial burden on some rate payers when there are clearly other more critical and urgent funding needs. Our preference is therefore option 1.

### **Tūparikino Active Community Hub**

17. We do not support spending \$38.8m to \$91m on a sports hub, in view of other financial demands for more critical and urgent projects identified in the LTP and highlighted in this submission. We are also concerned that the sports hub would be counter-productive to emissions reduction. As stated in our introduction, we need to work smartly and strategically to avoid trade-offs and create synergies and co-benefits instead. As an example, investments in nature, adventure and education-based sports and experiences would be more climate friendly while bringing our young people closer to nature and building their skills and resilience needed for an increasingly challenging world.
18. Our preference is therefore option 1 – do not proceed with the hub in this Long-Term Plan.

### **Brooklands Zoo**

19. We support option 3 – undertake upgrades to Brooklands Zoo vision phases 1 to 3 to meet MPI compliance.
20. We appreciate the educational and community values of the zoo and see that there is potential to further its conservation role by strictly following international best practices and principles<sup>16, 17</sup>. We recommend that it be gradually transitioned to house more indigenous species and only injured or rescued animals that cannot be returned to the wild and ensuring their wellbeing. More efforts in providing good educational displays and programs would further enhance its value.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.hbrc.govt.nz/home/article/1164/sustainable-homes-programme-recommend-by-ventilation-user?t=featured&s=1>

<sup>14</sup> <https://nzgbc.org.nz/news-and-media/new-vtr-changes-will-help-new-zealanders-improve-their-homes>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.sustainabletararaki.org.nz/sustainable-design>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.npdc.govt.nz/brooklands-zoo/about-the-zoo/conservation-and-biodiversity/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/2023-position-statement-on-the-role-of-botanic-gardens-aquariums-and-zoos-in-species-conservation.pdf>

## **Bellringer Pavilion**

21. We support option 2 – repair the existing pavilion. We do not support Council’s preferred option to replace the pavilion because it would be the most costly in the demand on materials, energy and finance.

## **Other projects that will pay it forward**

22. We support greater allocations of funding for community partnerships to address increasing social and environmental challenges and to nurture community cohesion and initiatives.
23. We support creating a working capital fund to improve and expand housing for the elderly and others in need.
24. We support investments in making Ngāmotu New Plymouth city centre greener, safer and pedestrian-friendly. The World Health Organisation has evidence<sup>18</sup> that demonstrates the link between such city designs with positive health outcomes and documented examples of cities that have been transformed successfully<sup>19</sup>. We have not looked into the details of the strategy however.
25. We support additional funding for enhanced iwi and hapū capability and Te Tiriti partnerships.

## **Other matters for feedback**

26. We do not support setting up more Council Controlled Organisations that are profit driven.

## **Infrastructure focus**

27. We are appalled by the budget blowout for the New Plymouth Wastewater Treatment Plan upgrades. At the time of consideration, we were strongly opposed to the replacement of the thermal dryer with one that could take a blend of fossil gas and hydrogen, as we saw that as an expensive greenwashing venture. We are now under the impression that the use of hydrogen would only materialise if backed up by a business case. So it appears that even the greenwashing case is failing.
28. Of course it is important to ensure that Council assets are fit for purpose. We urge that in any upgrade or renewable program, such as for Puke Ariki or other Council buildings, priority is put on decarbonisation, and energy and material efficiency (see point 13 above). The same priority is needed for any new infrastructure projects.
29. We understand that the challenges of climate adaptation are enormous, e.g. the ‘eight priority historic landfill sites at risk of storm and erosion exposure’. The sooner we deal with them and other similar problems, the better.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289057882>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVVeMQ3TjT8>