

Submission to the Christchurch City Council 2006-2016 Long Term Council Community Plan

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Submitted by:
Alice Shanks and Lindsay Main
80 Colombo Street
Beckenham

Phone 337-1256 (home), Phone 366-1246 (work)
Fax 366-1247
Email: alice@caverock.net.nz, lindsay.main@caverock.net.nz

My submission refers to the Summary Version printed in The City Scene.

Tree Renewal

We understand that the tree stock in the City is aging and many were planted 150 years ago and need replacing. This is the opportune time to reflect in our planted landscape the way that our European heritage has changed to a New Zealand culture in response to this land and the existing Maori culture, by using trees indigenous to New Zealand in European landscaping patterns (avenues, street trees, specimen trees) and in new ways.

At present only about 10% of the protected trees in Christchurch are indigenous to Canterbury. We would like the replanting programme to work towards increasing this percentage by planting indigenous trees worthy of protection in the future.

We would like to see more use of kowhai trees instead of cherry trees to provide spring displays of colour.

We would most street trees to be trees indigenous to Canterbury.

We would like more trees planted to increase the number and distribution of bellbirds/korimako, wood pigeons/kereru and other birds indigenous to Christchurch and the Port Hills.

We would like the Council to take note of their list of plants and trees that cause allergenic reactions and stop planting these trees. In particular I would like the planting of silver birches to cease. Despite trees being removed to relieve neighbours (Tuscany Place, potentially Beckenham Park) silver birches are still planted (Hallswell Quarry).

New Bus Exchange

The partnership between the City Council, its subsidiary The Red Bus Company, and ECAN to improve to quality, comfort and frequency of the bus service in Christchurch is to be applauded. We would like the Council to retain the Red Bus company as an essential strategic asset as it will give the city more control over future transport options. In this time of uncertainty over price of oil, the long-term decline in the supply of oil, and the possibilities of alternative fuels we believe it is in the interests of all rate-payers that the City maintains an interest in, and some sort of control of, the city bus network.

We are always embarrassed to take visitors or our children to the Inter-city bus services depot - a tiny space crammed in Worcester Street behind the Cathedral and near a massage parlour. Long-distance bus passengers need:

- A Drop-off area
- Car parking for people farewelling bus passengers
- Protection from the rain
- More space than the current footpath for pedestrians, bus drivers loading luggage, and bus passengers

We hope that the new bus exchange can include an Intercity Bus area that can be used by all long-distance bus companies. When we have caught the bus in from the airport we end up having to lug our luggage from Worcester street down to the Bus Exchange to catch a bus home. Surely the Airport bus service can link with other bus services through the new bus exchange

Strategic Land Purchases

We do not want to see any decrease in the budget for strategic land purchases for recreation and biodiversity protection. Last night we took part in a Rogaine (a type of orienteering) on the Port Hills. Most of the land we ran over was purchased by the City Council in the last decade. The recreation value of that land is immense and is used intensively.

Purchases such as Scott Valley cost so little in relation to the recreation they have generated, especially as this block linked Major Hornbrook, Castle Hill, Britten Reserve and Heathcote Quarry.

Most of the Rogan participants appeared to be 20 and 30 year old professionals who rate adventure recreation (mountain-biking, long walks, running, rock-climbing, parapenting) highly and who will choose a city by the life-style opportunities for this type of recreation. These people will not be walking around the Botanic Gardens until they are 80. The value the semi-natural areas close to the city highly. We implore the Council to take every opportunity to acquire any land on the Port Hills, including land to the south outside the City boundaries. They do not want intensively managed areas, instead they want to "get away" from their computers and the city and recharge their batteries and exercise in a natural environment.

Other areas that could provide such recreation are Mt Cass ridge (the City Council has an interest in this land through the Waste Management Company that runs Kate Valley), the proposed semi-arid park to the north of the City, Kaitorete spit, Banks Peninsular, the Foothills forests, and the waterway corridors of the Canterbury Plains ie. Banks and riverbeds of the Rakaia, Waimakariri and Ashley rivers. We see the City Council working with neighbouring District Councils, ECAN, and the Department of Conservation to achieve recreation and biodiversity protection in these areas.

At ANZAC, with a group of 23 family and friends, including our 9 year old niece and blind 70 year old father, we all completed the Central Otago Rail Trail. What a wonderful combination of exertion and comfort, as we pedalled for five hours, ate out, and enjoyed the comfort of camp grounds, motels and B&B's. Pubs and small town have been revitalised by the money brought in by the Rail Trail tourists (and I was surprised that most are New Zealanders). But where to next? There is a huge, mainly middle aged group wanting comfort adventures. I have been on a few of the Meurkey Walks and heard Dr Colin Meurk talk of his vision of a walking trail around the city. This is exactly the type of challenge that we would relish. I would like the Council to make the necessary land purchases, budget for implementing the tracks and signage. This type of project cannot be undertaken by private enterprise but when put in place generates a lot of exciting business opportunities.

Outsourcing Rates Payments to New Zealand Post

This will save a piddly amount of money and ratepayers will lose a vital link to the Council. The type of ratepayers that continue to pay over the counter as usually elderly. This is their chance to interact with The Council. They talk to the staff, feel as if they are being heard, and often a small problem can be sorted out with correct information or redirection to the appropriate agency. These people do not want to talk to a call-centre. We have seen people at NZ Post being very frustrated that their enquiry about their bill cannot be sorted out by the Counter staff. While people want to pay over the counter the Council needs to provide the service.

I am also concerned that this is one step towards closing Service centres. We in Beckenham love our lovely Service Centre in the South Library and really appreciate the knowledgeable staff, especially staff like Iris who have been there for years and know everything.

Street Works

We believe that money can be saved in the Streets and Transport area. We love street-quietening as it makes it much safer to bike around the City. The Council has to work hard on alternative transport to cars. Providing more and more roads only increases the number of cars as many overseas cities can attest. The lack of cycleways along Marshlands Road and the Causeway out to Sumner have stopped us taking the family on an adventurous cycle trip out to the beach in the weekends.

The Tennyson Street cycle lane was pronounced a success in a Council survey of cyclists, resident and motorists. We would like to see more cycleways built like this, especially in some of the wide streets in Christchurch eg. Birdwood Avenue, Antigua Street, Rolleston Avenue. These off-road paths are ideal for the elderly person's motorised scooters, kids scooters, and Sedgeways (should they ever catch on). With the number of back-sections increasing these cycleways keep kids on scooters away from the danger of backing cars.

The drop on traffic in school holidays shows how many trips are school-related. A simple way to reduce traffic is to continue to promote the Safe Routes of School programme and make parent realise that by not allowing their children to actively get themselves to school they are killing their kids with kindness. The gentle exercise of walking kilometre to school and back five days a week is never replaced by a 10k walk at some other time.

More and more people bike on the Port Hills for exercise. The mix of the increasing amount of Governors Bay traffic and cyclists is dangerous. We would like to see an asphalted cycle path (not road) laid along the 4WD road at the top of Huntsbury Hill. Once Broad Oaks is connected to Huntsbury Avenue that will provide two access roads to the track.

Refuse Minimisation

The Council cannot plan to increase the density of housing without a kitchen and greenwaste collection system. Small units do not have room for composting. For those with bokashi buckets I would like to see these collected and a new one delivered at the gate. Once again small units do not have room to bury all the bokashi waste. Perhaps we can learn from Ashburton how to do this.

We hope the Council makes a budgetary provision to continue to investigate using kitchen and greenwaste for fuel or gas production.

Implement the Biodiversity Strategy

Council surveys show that the City is losing sites with indigenous vegetation (not planted), habitat for birds, lizards and insects. Biodiversity cannot wait for another ten years. We would like the critical parts of the Biodiversity Plan to be implemented to "hold the fort". The education programmes can be introduced later, but without the plants, lizards, birds, and insects there will be nothing to interpret in ten years time.

Another way of looking at it is to consider how much it would cost to restore what is being lost. It is far cheaper to retain what is there, even in its modified state, than to rebuild the environment that has faded away for the want of a little protection.

The importance of Biodiversity to resident's well-being cannot be under-estimated. Many people need to escape the City and it is to these areas that we go. Christchurch is the New Zealand major city with the least biodiversity and wilderness, and I know anecdotally that this is taken into account by young, informed professionals when choosing where to live.

Heathcote River Vision

We would like the Heathcote River Vision to be included in the 10 Year plan, completed and implemented. To me this is a matter of keeping faith with the South Christchurch ratepayers and maintaining the integrity of Consultation processes.

Some years ago Waimea Terrace residents and Hunter Terrace were being plagued by "hoons" revving up in Hunter Terrace and having parties, complete with Boom Boxes, at all hours of the night on the riverbanks. The simple solution to us was to close part of Hunter Terrace. We sent a petition to the Council and were told that they would consider this once the new Library was built. During the Library consultation we were told that Hunter Terrace would be considered a separate issue so that the Library could be completed as soon as possible. Once finished we were told it would be a while to not close but to reassign Hunter Terrace south of the library. Then we were told that we would have to wait for the Heathcote vision. I, and my neighbours, enthusiastically took part on the consultation meetings. With the success of the community consultation over the South Library we had high hopes for a collaborative and attractive plan.

Then it all fizzled. There was no formal notice to those who took the time to take part, despite the Council having our addresses, instead we read about it in a Spreydon/Heathcote December 2005 Newsletter.

All these years on and we still have the carpark on the Riverbank opposite the Cashmere Club open for boy racer parties, a river used as a conduit for sewage overflows, river water levels dropping, no walking path by the river, and a hotpotch of trees species, wilding sycamores and oaks, and high-maintenance willows that topple over in strong wind. One of my neighbours has attended three consultations on landscaping the Heathcote River over 15 years. All we ask is that the Vision document and consultation be completed, so that all the money spent on consultation so far is not wasted. The implementation can then take time as budgets permit, but at least any future landscaping will work towards a cohesive, bigger picture.

Revitalisation of the Square

The Square lost our interest when old buildings were replaced by faceless anodyne high-rises, especially that boring ANZ building on Colombo Street. There is nothing to attract us to the Square. And the Council cannot do much about that. However, the Council can advocate and plan to make sure that cheap, uninviting and unattractive developments don't ruin an area. Rebel Sports and Tower Junction spring to mind.

Rates Increase

Our household is willing to pay (a little) more rates to implement more projects. We do not want to see Christchurch stagnate.