



Orana Wildlife Park
McLeans Island Road
Christchurch

ORANA WILDLIFE TRUST

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Cathedral Square West
Via Visitor Centre or Pathway Shop
Christchurch

SUBMISSION

CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

DRAFT LONG TERM COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN 2006 TO 2016

Submission Details

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Date: 1 May 2006
Hearing Request: I wish to talk to the main points in my written submission at the Hearings to be held between Thursday, 25 May and Wednesday, 7 June 2006

Subject: Continuation of Grant Funding for Orana Wildlife Park

Body of Submission

We urge that the Christchurch City Council provide continued operational funding support to Orana Wildlife Park and factor this into the Long Term Council Community Plan. It is our understanding that the Council is soon to undertake a review of its grants funding policy and changes may be implemented with effect from 1 July 2007 and this essentially means that further funding is not guaranteed after this time. Therefore, we propose that a commitment be made to continued operational funding support for Orana Wildlife Park through the Long Term Council Community Plan process considering its great importance as a major city asset.

For close to 30 years, Orana Wildlife Trust (a registered charitable trust) has operated Orana Wildlife Park, a Canterbury icon providing quality recreational experiences for the people of this region. Since October 2000, the Trust has also operated Southern Encounter Aquarium & Kiwi House located in Cathedral Square.

The Trust's team are committed to ensuring that both the Park and Aquarium continue to provide quality recreational experiences to be enjoyed by the people of Christchurch and Canterbury. We are also very committed to our wider goals, firstly conservation work in support of endangered species and, secondly, environmental education particularly aimed at local children who will be the protectors of our precious fauna and flora in the future. Both facilities are quality community assets of which we are proud.

The Orana Wildlife Trust is very grateful to the Christchurch City Council for the operational funding assistance provided over the last nine years. It has been fundamental in our drive to assure the financial viability of both Orana Wildlife Park and Southern Encounter Aquarium & Kiwi House.

Nine years ago the Trust's financial situation was very grim. Several years of losses had compounded cash flow difficulties and debt levels were very high. Visitor numbers were dwindling due to increased competition for the leisure dollar and the Park was looking very run down.

With the CCC's funding assistance, we have made significant progress in the last nine years. Paying visitors have increased markedly, debt has been retired, significant overdue maintenance work has been completed and new attractions have been built (fully funded by other organisations). A break-even or better financial result has been achieved in each financial year (with the CCC operating grant factored in, but before depreciation), while still fulfilling the Trust's core objectives of conservation and education.

Orana Wildlife Park is the only major zoo in New Zealand that is not Council owned and operated. The other major zoos in New Zealand (Auckland, Wellington & Hamilton) each receive between \$1,200,000 and \$1,950,000 per annum in operational funding and up to \$2,000,000 per annum for capital developments. Both the Park and Aquarium provide excellent recreation opportunities for Christchurch and Canterbury people at little cost to the ratepayer. The Christchurch City Council has provided the following operating grants to the Trust over the last nine years: 1997 - \$150,000, 1998 - 153,000, 1999 - \$156,000, 2000 - \$159,000, 2001 - \$162,000, 2002 - \$150,000, 2003 - \$175,000, 2004 - \$200,000, 2005 - \$225,000.

While much progress has been made towards assuring the future financial sustainability of the Park and Aquarium, there is still more to do. It is crucially important that we continue to keep our on-going maintenance on track, regularly add new exciting exhibits to increase visitation and continue to market both facilities to new market niches.

Furthermore, we are entering a time where successful trading is becoming more difficult due to a number of reasons. Costs are escalating, particularly in the areas of animal food of all types, electricity and vehicle fuels. In particular, the Trust must address increasing wages for staff at all levels. We continue to significantly fall behind market rates and we will be unable to retain quality staff at the current rates of pay. In addition, the Trust has always extensively utilised government subsidised employment schemes to provide additional essential labour over and above our full-time staff (e.g. our budget does not allow for any permanent gardening staff). Recent changes to the government employment subsidy schemes and the low unemployment rate (meaning that suitable candidates are not available) have also added significantly to our annual labour costs. The entrance prices will need to be increased again at the Park, but this will only partially offset these increased costs.

The continued support of the Christchurch City Council remains essential to our continued successful operation. We ask that the Christchurch City Council continue to provide an annual grant of at least \$225,000 per annum to assist with the Trust's operations at both the Park and Aquarium. Funding for capital projects would continue to be sought from other external sources.

As mentioned above, when compared to other major zoos in New Zealand, we are providing two high quality facilities at low cost to the City. There are also many wider benefits to the community, which include quality recreation facilities, real conservation work being carried out in our community (particularly for our precious endangered New Zealand native species) and environmental education for our young. In addition, the Park and Aquarium contribute to economic development by providing good reasons for visitors to come to our beautiful city.

We implore the Christchurch City Council to consider specifically providing for an annual operating grant to Orana Wildlife Park in the Long Term Council Community Plan document so we may plan for future operations with certainty. We understand that other major cities in New Zealand have made specific commitments to their zoos in the Draft Long Term Plans and ask that the same is implemented here in Christchurch recognising the importance of the facility to the city.



Lynn Anderson
Chief Executive