

BRCT submission on the ORC Long Term Plan 2015 – 2025, 'For Our Future'



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Submission on the Otago Regional Council's Long Term Plan 2015– 2025.

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Table of contents

1	Overview	2
2	Water Quality and Quantity	3
3	Land Protection	4
4	Bio-Diversity.....	4
5	Air Quality	5
6	Other Activities: Transport.....	6
7	Other submissions and initiatives we endorse.....	6

We, Blueskin Resilient Communities Trust, wish to speak to our submission

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1 Overview

Thank you for this opportunity to submit to the Otago Regional Council's **Long Term Plan 2015 – 2025**.

The Blueskin Resilient Communities Trust (BRCT) is a registered charitable trust formed in 2008 to support sustainability and transition initiatives in a planned and structured way. We work as a legal body to provide a public benefit and achieve the long-term objective of building community resilience. Our headline work is our community wind development and our core activity areas are in energy, climate change action, and provision of community services. We offer support to number of community groups working in the field of sustainability. Jeanette Fitzsimons is our patron.

We commend the Council for attractively and clearly setting out the LTP. We believe that some innovative thinking will help engage residents further and we would particularly like the Council to take a leadership role in building a **low carbon** region, through careful appreciation of opportunity and risk. We welcome the desire for more effective partnership with community organisations such as ours which are at the front line of adaptation to Climate Change and engaged in mitigation activities.

While the level of debt is a risk to the Region, we see many opportunities in co-funded projects, in strengthening strategic relationships, and in using good process to assist prioritisation. Our changing world requires innovation and creativity and we offer our support to the ORC in addressing the challenges ahead

We, the Blueskin Resilient Communities Trust, wish to speak to our submission.

BRCT submission on the Draft Long Term Plan

2 Water Quality and Quantity

BRCT supports the initiatives to improve the quality and quantity of water resources. Poor water quality is a growing and extremely significant issue in New Zealand. 40% of our wetlands are gone, 43% of our rivers fail to meet bathing standards, and between 18,000 and 30,000 people each year contract waterborne diseases from microbial contamination¹.

We see improving the quality of our waterways as a priority issue.

The Resource Management Act states:

“sustainable management means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while—

- (a) Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and
- (b) Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and
- (c) Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.”

Our economic and social wellbeing depends on a healthy environment and stable ecosystems. Already many of our waterways have been degraded to a point where they are unsuitable for many recreation activities and in a changing climate they will be put under additional stress. That means that the protection of our natural resources is essential if we are to ensure social and economic wellbeing both now and for future generations, as our social and economic systems depend on a stable ecosystem. Avoiding pollution in the first place is far cheaper than trying to police and clean it up afterwards².

We suggest:

1. Investment in getting a better understanding the cost effectiveness of mitigation solutions for the impacts of farming on the environment, and;
2. Undertaking further ‘Hazard mapping’ to better and more accurately identify those zones at risk from future inundation and/or droughts, and;

¹ See: <http://freshwater.science.org.nz/index.php/news/media7-tv-interview-with-environmental-scientist-mike-joy-talks-about-water-quality-in-new-zealand/>

² See: Foote, K., Joy, M., and Death, R., 2015. New Zealand Dairy Farming: Milking Our Environment for All Its Worth, 2015, in Environmental Management, pages 1-12

BRCT submission on the Draft Long Term Plan

3. Identifying 'good practice' landowners, and promoting environmental stewardship to incentivise change to good practice, and;
4. Assisting with water quality measurement, especially tools that can be used to do real time water quality testing, and;
5. Working with the Dunedin City Council on planning for urban water discharges and other infrastructural elements, and tools, such as a targetted rate tool to support rainwater collection.

3 Land Protection

BRCT supports the initiatives outlined. We see greater urgency however related to flood hazards, as historical data is no longer as useful a guide to the future now that climate changes environmental behaviour. Furthermore, modelling studies predict even greater dramatic change. We also see an essential need for working closely with communities through the provision of expertise and resourcing for community organisations to enable better community engagement and in participating in managing localised risks.

BRCT suggests:

1. A cross-sector approach applied to pest control and a reference group established ensuring that procedures for selection and application of pest control is monitored against best practice.
2. Making future risk management around rising sea levels, changing climatic conditions and the impacts, including greatly increased flood risk, in river catchments and low lying land areas a very high priority now and into the future.
3. Establishing a new \$50, 000 p/a budget to allow productive engagement and resourcing of climate change discussion and action with community organisations. Such an approach can adopt the 'strong engagement model' designed by NIWA to enable a participatory approach which will assist understanding of complex systems, and greater community participation in decision making on service levels. This community partner approach is likely to produce more effective and productive community engagement on climate change than simply holding public meetings.

4 Bio-Diversity

BRCT supports the plans and actions to support the maintenance and understanding of our unique ecosystems and their biodiversity particularly an identification strategy that mitigates risks to these ecosystems now and into the future. Many species and their

BRCT submission on the Draft Long Term Plan

associated ecosystems – many of which are essential to society and our economy – are now threatened with the extinction due to climate change. It is therefore important that we develop and implement new techniques and strategies to prevent extinctions and biodiversity losses where we can.

We submit:

1. That an understanding of the values for biodiversity already present in the Region be developed as an initial step towards protection and enhancement, and;
2. That concurrently an analysis of the economic benefits to the region of biodiversity is undertaken.

5 Air Quality

BRCT supports the plans and actions to support the maintenance and improvement of our air quality, including *“developing an air strategy for improving Otago air quality; engaging all relevant stakeholders in policies and practices, [and] supporting the Cosy Homes Trust in the installation of clean heating appliances in targeted areas”*.

However we request, to further define “support” above, that \$20, 000 be redirected towards supporting the Cosy Homes Charitable Trust to support its operations. The Trust’s objectives are to:

- a) Develop and implement specific programmes to **connect** householders with service providers of insulation and heating;
- b) **Educate** householders about good energy practices and healthy homes environments;
- c) **Communicate** between all relevant parties and stakeholders as well as communicating relevant “warm and cosy” work to the general public;
- d) Encourage **collaboration** amongst all parties;
- e) **Advocate** work in this area on local and national levels;
- f) Source and manage **funding**;
- g) **Evaluate** the progress of Cosy Homes through monitoring and measuring information and processes.

These objectives together will improve air quality while also improving health and wellbeing. The Trust aims to work across all of Otago to ensure “Everyone lives in a warm and healthy home”.

BRCT suggests:

1. That \$20, 000 be redirected towards supporting the Cosy Homes Charitable Trust to support its operations.

BRCT submission on the Draft Long Term Plan

6 Other Activities: Transport

We actively encourage the Council to work productively and actively with the Dunedin City Council to create a Region-wide bus service which aims at reducing the reliance on carbon, encourages greater rates of participation and improves mobility for residents and visitors.

7 Other submissions and initiatives we endorse

We will make reference to other submissions we support at the formal presentation of our submission.

We thank you for your attention to this submission

Yours sincerely,



Scott Willis