

**Pest Free Banks Peninsula Working Group**

**Submission to Environment Canterbury's 2019/2020 Annual Plan**

From:

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**This submission is made on behalf of the Pest Free Banks Peninsula Working Group.**

**We wish to be heard in support of our submission.**

**Key points:**

- We congratulate the Canterbury Regional Council (the Council) on its commitment to the Pest Free Banks Peninsula (including Port Hills) / Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū Initiative.
- We support the proposed changes to the Revenue and Financing Policy to create a rating area (including the Port Hills) to support the vision for a pest-free Banks Peninsula.
- In addition, we ask that the Council programme in this change plus an additional \$400,000 from year 3 onwards of the Long Term Plan (LTP).

**Support for the change in Revenue and Financing Policy for Pest Free Banks Peninsula**

The Pest Free Banks Peninsula / Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū Initiative is a collaborative programme to protect and enhance biodiversity on the Peninsula through the widespread eradication of animal pests. In November 2018, it was formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by 14 foundation signatories including the Council.

The Council's support for Pest Free Banks Peninsula is a tangible demonstration of the step change in effort for biodiversity. It is consistent with the values and principles to which the Council has committed itself including regional leadership and working collaboratively with the community and partner agencies, including Ngāi Tahu.

The primary outcome of the Initiative is enhanced and protected biodiversity. Banks Peninsula is a biodiversity hotspot with both endemic and threatened species. Like most other biodiversity programmes, there will also be economic, social and cultural benefits. With the Peninsula being part of greater Christchurch, it provides opportunities for the urban population to be involved in protecting this unique biodiversity. The Council's support for this initiative is consistent with your pest management functions under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

The Council's funding will provide a foundation upon which other financial contributions can be leveraged. It is anticipated that with the proposed contribution from Council, we will be able to build up an annual work programme exceeding \$1.5M in the 2019/2020 year. The Council's contribution is critical to securing the additional funding from other partners.

### **Additional funding from 2020/2021 onwards**

We ask that the Council programme in a further increase of \$400,000 from 2020/2021 onwards to bring the total financial support to \$1M per annum. This will enable us to seek further funding from other partners and provide a solid foundation for achieving the long term goal of Pest Free Banks Peninsula 2050.

The Working Group are confident that we will deliver a strong programme to justify this additional funding and we are happy to be judged on our existing track record and future performance. With this additional support, we believe the programme can become a flagship for the step change in effort in biodiversity.

To maximise the external funding that can be leveraged from the Council's contribution, it is important to programme in the additional future funding now, rather than waiting until next year or the next LTP. Over coming months, we will be making multiyear funding applications to external funders. A clear indication from the Council of further financial support will enable us to leverage all your future funding in our applications. If decisions regarding additional funding levels are delayed, the opportunity to leverage additional funding from other sources will be diminished.

### **Specific comment on the Revenue and Financing Policy**

We note that where other programmes have a primary benefit of biodiversity, the Council's contribution is funded entirely from general rates. This long standing policy reflects the public good nature of biodiversity.

We believe a strong case can be made for funding this initiative in the same manner. We recognise, however, that this proposal is building on the existing Community Initiated Programme (CIP) for possums that was introduced at the request of landowners on the Peninsula for both biodiversity and production benefits which were more pertinent at that time. While the proposed programme is primarily for biodiversity, it is acknowledged that, like most biodiversity projects, there will be local benefits for those living on the Peninsula. These include enjoyment of rejuvenating bush and increased bird life, less erosion leading to better water quality, improved mahinga kai, and some economic benefits for farming and tourism.

We also want to ensure that it continues to be community lead and believe that having a targeted rate component provides a stronger basis for this. We also recognise that funding this initiative entirely from general rates may lead other parts of the region to ask for similar support without the same local commitment that has been demonstrated through this initiative and the CIP programme. For these reasons, we accept the proposed 50:50 split between general and targeted rates as a pragmatic solution that allows local community aspirations to be met while also acknowledging the wider benefits of biodiversity.

We also note and support the continuation of rabbit control rate as a separate programme. At this point we believe the Council is best placed to deliver this separately from the rest of the Pest Free programme.

### **Pest animals, not plants**

The Pest Free Banks Peninsula Initiative is focused only on animal pests, not plants. We recognise that control of plant pests is important in achieving the ultimate goals for biodiversity and that there are people who would like it included in the programme. We are, however, of the strong opinion that adding plant pests to our programme at this time would be a mistake. Achieving the vision is already an ambitious and challenging goal that will stretch our capacity, demand innovation and require widespread community support. The addition of plant pests would dilute the focus and significantly increase the risk of non-achievement. This position may be reconsidered in the future, once the programme is properly established.

### **About the Working Group**

This submission has been prepared by the Pest Free Banks Peninsula Working Group. It has been endorsed by all the members of the Working Group apart from the Council's representative, who abstained from decision making on this matter. The working group is an informal group put in place to progress this initiative until the governance and management arrangements outlined in the MOU are established. The members of the working group currently represent Christchurch City Council, the Department of Conservation, the Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust, the Summit Road Society, Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust and the Council. Other signatories to the Pest Free Banks Peninsula Initiative include the Cacophony Project, Living Springs, Ōnuku Rūnanga, Selwyn District Council, Te Hapū o Ngāti Wheke (Rāpaki) Rūnanga, Te Rūnanga o Koukourāata, Te Taumutu Rūnanga and Wairewa Rūnanga.

Finally, as a resident and landowner on the Peninsula, I can personally say that I am happy to pay this rate and I believe this programme will enjoy widespread support from others in my community. We look forward to continuing our work with the Council to achieve the Pest Free Banks Peninsula vision.

Yours sincerely



Dr David Miller

**Chair, Pest Free Banks Peninsula Working Group**