

From: Roger & Linda
Sent: Sunday, 3 April 2022 10:33 pm
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To Whom

Please see attached my submission to the Environment Canterbury Regional Council Annual Plan Consultation 2022/23.

I do not wish to be heard

Thank you
Roger Bray

Submission to Environment Canterbury Regional Council

Draft Annual Plan 2022/23

My Submission to the Draft Plan comments on:

1. Funding ECAN Rates,
2. Climate Change
3. Flood Recovery and Protection.

1. Funding ECAN Rates.

Both ECAN and the District Council have signified significant rises in rates which will impact on the ratepayers. Whilst I expect Councils to act with prudence in the way they spend ratepayers' funds I consider both councils have not responded to the economic situation that prevails at this time. Areas outside the control of our community have caused significant financial impact on most of our community over the past 2 or so years, especially those that are on fixed or low incomes. As well as increased government debt, a shutdown of our tourism sector, an unhealthy investment in residential property, and a promotion of spin that farming returns are at all-time highs, give a view that is quite distorted. The reality is that for a lot of our community it is a struggle to maintain lifestyle and pay for the inflation that is now becoming rampant.

As ratepayers we sometimes see Council spending that some would consider 'empire building' I urge Councillors to look at their 'wish list' to see if the ratepayers' resources might be utilised better in funding core activity for the next few years. The community is facing a situation where only the affluent may be able to own property and a section of our community will be forced to live a transient lifestyle camped in river beds and other public access land. In my travels I have noticed an increasing number of people that live in campervans, caravans and motorhomes as well as those that live in garages, sleep outs and tiny homes where the owner of land 'shares' occupancy with other families. The social consequence of having a section of our community living this way places stress on an already stressed community. I urge Councillors to consider the wide variation of financial security or insecurity that exists in our community when they impose their demand for rates.

2. Climate Change.

I think we can all acknowledge there has been 'global warming' with a significant amount of moisture being held in the air around the earth. This has caused weather patterns to change with what was once considered tropical rainfall being experienced over different areas of NZ. I do not consider it necessary to fund a special category of climate change and then use funds to conduct research and dialogue into the future. There is however a need to address climate change as it happens. Council has acknowledged increasingly frequent flooding, storms, fires, and droughts. What has not been acknowledged is the 'standard of protection' that ECAN strives to maintain, is also changing. For example the flood 'protection' for the Ashburton town has been designed to cater for a one in 200 year event, whilst the protection for the rural areas is for a one in 50 year event. Climate change has seen in parts of NZ rainfall events that were once rare occurring on a more regular basis. There appears a need now to reassess how we define 'events' and the protection based on those events or we may find ourselves 'talking' a 200 year event that occurs regularly every 10 years.

We cannot predict the severity of future events but we should be able to assess the effect of different amounts of rain that fall in the catchment of our rivers and assess if our drainage systems have been engineered to cope with flows that are likely to be experienced into the future. There is little point in maintaining a river protection system that has not been engineered to cope with flows that could be expected into the future. River protection relies not only that the systems are robust enough to stand the forces of nature but that the rainfall event is able to be contained within the confines of the river boundaries.

My recommendation for climate change to the councillors is to consider the effects of climate change when undertaking activities. There is no need to provide a slush fund for climate change and spend that money on promoting discussion on the intangible.

3. Flood Recovery and Protection.

As a member of the community that suffered damage from the Ashburton River floods, I have suggested Council reviews its protection and funding options for the river. There is some community discussion and decisions that should be initiated rather than applying a bandage to the present protection system. The rivers need to be considered in a holistic manner with development of the surrounding area taking into account the effects of global warming and a higher frequency of heavy rainfall events.

Whilst I support the redistribution of rates in the Ashburton River rating district to fund remedial work associated with the recent floods and a maintenance of the current protection, I consider there needs to be a longer term strategy developed that looks at both the river management and the development of the surrounding area. Included in that longer term strategy would be to revisit the notion that some people and property should have a different level of protection than others. Current river protection and floodplain development affirmed by a Community Advisory Group (CAG) in late 1990's, have created a situation where collectively some groups of people can effectively push a flood onto others because of their collective ability to fund flood protection systems. While I understand the rationale used to provide different levels of protection to different parts of our community that embarks on a policy of creating inequality within the community. If there had been a flood protection based on equality over the entire river protection works, then it is most probable that the volume of water in the North Branch Ashburton River during the May 2021 event would have put pressure on the true left bank at Jessops bend, rather than bursting out in the upper reaches. Under the current protection adopted by ECAN the rural areas provide a safety valve to save areas of the Ashburton town, particularly those within the natural flood plain, to be inundated with floodwater.

Countries that traditionally have tropical rainfall, particularly what has been called the Monsoon season have, by necessity, built their houses and infrastructure to suit the conditions that prevail. Floods happen and drain away leaving little real damage to houses and business buildings that have been built on piles above the flood waters.

If we care to consider the evolution of the Canterbury plains we see rivers have meandered across the plains and transported sediment from the mountains and deposited that sediment to build up the plains. That process will continue and as a society perhaps a decision needs to be made how and to what extent the community will maintain our river systems while providing for the evolutionary process to continue. Should the community futureproof the drainage system by straightening the Ashburton River to have a straight channel from the catchment area to the sea? A river with no

bends can be engineered to accommodate huge flows and flush gravels and sediment to the sea as the Rakaia River now does.

The Ashburton River poses some issues for flood protection with its configuration, do we have a longer term plan say for the next 200-500 years? Should the Ashburton River be split into 3 distinct and separate river systems each with their own paths to the sea? If that is a considered option then perhaps there should be 3 flood or river corridors established now to prevent development in the area that cannot withstand an anticipated amount of water flowing through in an extreme event.

At some future time might there be a need to carve a new direct river channel to the sea to overcome 'design' problems with the present configuration of the river? For example it may be a common sense longer term solution to straighten the North Branch at Jessops bend and flow that part of the river on a separate channel to the sea. That path would be north of Ashburton town along a former river path to the sea at Wakanui beach.

Perhaps we should also be aware the possibility of the government becoming part of the disposal of storm water under the 3 Waters proposal which is being implemented at this time. Whichever way we look at river systems they remain part of a natural process that disperses 'storm water' that cannot drain into soil. Is the maintenance of our river systems going to be taken from the Regional Councils and be placed in the hands of a race based authority that assumes control of some essential parts of our wellbeing?

For this section of my submission I simply recommend Councillors give consideration to what I have written and decide whether to kick the can down the road while they are part of a decision making process. Or if Councillors have a vision extending well into the future, perhaps they could initiate a community discussion for longer term solutions to the natural process of evolution.

I do not wish to be heard in support of my Submission, nor do I have any objection to the release of this Submission or the release of my name, as per the Official Information Act.

Thanking you for considering my submission.

Roger Bray,