

BRCT submission on the Draft Annual Plan 2014-15



9 April 2014

The Chief Executive Officer
Dunedin City Council
PO Box 5045
Dunedin

Submission on the Dunedin City Council's *Draft Annual Plan 2014-2015*.

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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 Dunedin City Council ***Draft Annual Plan 2014-2015***.

The Blueskin Resilient Communities Trust (BRCT) is a registered charitable trust formed in 2008 to support local 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 (Cosy Homes, energy advice, solar), climate change planning (Blueskin Food System Assessment) and as a community hub. We offer support to number of community groups working in the field of sustainability. Jeanette Fitzsimons is our patron.

We wish to commend the Council for managing an extremely challenging financial environment and encourage the growing culture of community collaboration practiced by the DCC. In particular, we strongly support the objective appraisal of the substantial risk the Stadium poses to the city and efforts to reduce the haemorrhage of city finances through seeking a permanent solution.

We support the City vision (“Dunedin is one of the world’s great small cities”) and seek to encourage the improvements in process and services already underway at Council. We support greater partnership with community and closer collaboration between Council and community in all strategic areas. We wish to underline the importance we place on Energy for the City and the great potential that exists to boost economic activity through a more considered and thoughtful allocation of resources. We applaud the Chief Executive’s championing of the ‘invest to save’ principle and the Mayor’s focus on reducing debt levels and making purposeful investment.

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

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2 Specific Recommendations

2.1 Major Proposals

Heritage Buildings: We endorse the increase in funding for the reuse of heritage buildings. This council approach is proactive, forestalling potential negative effects from what may be more restrictive national legislation; supporting the objective of a ‘compact city with resilient townships’; promoting sustainability and livability and ultimately increasing the rates return through tenancy in currently unoccupied buildings. Further, we request that funding for heritage buildings is tied to renovation that includes measurable energy efficiency outcomes.

Food Resilience: We endorse council committing resource and staff to co-ordinate work in food-related areas to develop food resilience. We anticipate greater social wellbeing and greater economic returns from co-ordination and enabling of food related activity within the city and a streamlining of existing work programmes to overcome the silo effect.

Portobello Rd/Harrington Point Rd Project: Generally BRCT supports the objective of ‘Compact city with resilient townships’ and low carbon transport routes in and around settlements. We propose that residents’ views in the Portobello Rd/Harrington Point Rd project area receive positive weighting for decision making, or that the Council trial ‘participatory budgetting’¹ for the Portobello Rd/Harrington Point Rd project. We also request that Council review the latest information from the IPCC² and the joint DCC/ORC work on climate change risk to our coastal communities and evaluate the project after consideration of these formal risk assessments.

Development Contributions Policy: We endorse the proposed changes to the Development Contributions Policy to ensure that “developers pay more of the costs associated with creating sub-divisions and constructing new buildings, rather than general ratepayers”. We support the “equitable apportionment of development-related costs” that the proposed new charge of up to \$5,300 per equivalent household unit.

¹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_budgetting for example.

² The fifth report from the Working Group II on ‘Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability’ from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has just been released and is available at: <http://www.ipcc-wg2.gov/>

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2.2 “Invest to save”

BRCT endorses the leadership of Council in recognising that significant economic value can be obtained through gains in efficiency to deliver a reduction in cost. “Investing to save” is much needed purposeful investment.

We endorse:

1. Restructuring of existing City marketing functions and organisation structures.
2. Development of a report on resourcing ongoing in-house energy efficiency improvements.
3. Further thought on what is best mechanism to provide a greater return on existing investment across all areas of Council activity to support the city vision. We request that the Chief Executive investigate options for ensuring the Council ‘invests to save’ while supporting the Council to make purposeful investment in line with the City Vision and various strategies.

2.3 Energy Plan

BRCT strongly supports the development of the City Energy Plan. The Energy Plan is key to safeguarding our environment, creating social well-being and taking hold of economic opportunity in a changing world. Energy is key to the health of the City.

Actions:

We request that the Council:

1. Maintain adequate resourcing and staffing to ensure the Energy Plan is developed and formalised by December 2014 at the latest, including an adequate consultation period.
2. Ensure that the Energy Plan supports and enriches other plans and strategies such as the Economic Development Strategy³, the Transportation Strategy⁴ and the Social Well-being Strategy⁵.
3. Ensure that the Energy Plan supports Dunedin’s growing renewable generation activity and Cosy Homes activity.
4. Look for ways in which the Energy Plan can be more securely locked in place in the next Long Term Plan.
5. Renew the Warm Dunedin targeted rate ‘tool’ and expand it to include Solar photovoltaic installations at LTP time if not before.

³ See pages 27 and 37 of the Economic Development Strategy.

⁴ See Appendix 1, Focus on resilience: “exploring local alternative fuel development and other ways of strengthening rural transport resilience” and “Exploring funding mechanisms for local place-based transport initiatives”.

⁵ See ‘Strategic Direction 5: Affordable and Healthy Homes’.

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2.4 Stadium Review

The Forsyth Barr Stadium presents an increasing risk to the City. BRCT strongly supports the Chief Executive's review of the Stadium operating model with the goal of finding a permanent solution to the risk the Stadium presents. We recommend that this review is as thorough and complete as possible and places all results and all options before the public.

Actions:

We request that the Council:

1. Freeze the \$400,000 Events Attraction Fund until the results of the review are known and the public consultation/referendum is complete (see below)
2. On completion of the review, presents the results to the public and seeks endorsement of a permanent solution through referendum or other democratic mechanism.

2.5 Waipori Fund

BRCT endorses the formal exclusion of direct investment in armaments, tobacco and fossil fuel companies by the Waipori Fund manager. We request that the high risks of investing in carbon fuels, in particular, is recognised and mitigated to decrease volatility. We would value the risk of 'stranded assets' being factored into investment decisions⁶. We approve the conscious ethical decisions already made by the Waipori Fund Manager and hope that the fact that the Dow Jones Sustainable index⁷ outperforms the general one is also recognised. We also seek evaluation of the Waipori Fund (which is the result of the sale of Dunedin's only significant renewable generation asset – the Waipori Power Station) being used to support economic development in renewable generation and cosy homes. The Waipori Fund can be used to not only leverage capital gain from growth off investment but also from efficiency measures which deliver a reduction in cost and financial value through 'investing to save'.

Actions:

We request that the Council:

1. Formally adopts an ethical investment policy excluding investment in armaments, tobacco and fossil fuel companies for the Waipori Fund

⁶ See <http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/publications/Policy/docs/PB-unburnable-carbon-2013-wasted-capital-stranded-assets.pdf>

⁷ See <http://www.sustainability-indices.com/>

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2. Ask the Chief Financial Officer to investigate mechanisms to invest a percentage of the Waipori Fund to leverage gain from investment in efficiency measures and renewable generation.

2.6 *Cycling and Transport*

BRCT congratulates Council on ensuring that NZTA funding is put to good use for the benefit of residents and the City. We also wish to acknowledge the excellent work by Council staff in ensuring meaningful participation in the Cycling and Transportation developments. BRCT acknowledges the business, health and environmental benefits of low carbon transport and cycleways in particular and hopes that in the future Long Term Plan attention can be given to “exploring local alternative fuel development and other ways of strengthening rural transport resilience” and “Exploring funding mechanisms for local place-based transport initiatives”.

Actions:

We request that the Council:

1. Recognise the excellent work by Council Staff working on the Transport Strategy and the SH1 cycle lane safety improvements project

2.7 *Changes to Fees and Charges*

We note that a number of changes to fees and charges have been suggested. We have some concerns around a number of changes suggested, namely: Building services; Resource Consents; road corridor access fees.

Actions:

We request that the Council:

1. Consider, alongside increasing fees for Building services, providing the much needed service of an Eco-Design Advisor.
2. Consider making a distinction between charges for *public good* land-use planning and subdivision activities and resource consent processing and monitoring costs, and *private good* land-use planning and subdivision activities and resource consent processing and monitoring costs. This distinction should be made in different cost structures.
3. Not increase the annual encroachment on road reserve and road stopping fee nor introduce an administration fee for encroachments but instead recognise the legacy of inherited jurisdictions (such as the Silverpeaks Ward incorporated into Dunedin City).

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3 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott Willis", is positioned above the printed name.

Scott Willis