

BRCT submission on the Draft Annual Plan 2013-14



9 April 2013

The Chief Executive
Dunedin City Council
PO Box 5045
Dunedin

Submission on the Dunedin City Council's *Draft Annual Plan 2013-2014*.

Submitters' Names: Blueskin Resilient Communities Trust (attention: Scott Willis)
Address: 31 Hill Street, RD2 Waitati, 9085 Dunedin District
Phone (day): 03 4822048
Phone (evening): 03 4822249
Email: office@brct.org.nz

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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 2013-2014***.

The Blueskin Resilient Communities Trust (BRCT) is a registered charitable trust formed in 2008 out of the need to support local sustainability and transition initiatives in a planned and structured way. In 2009 BRCT was selected to be one of five national Climate Change Hubs supported by the Hikurangi Foundation. Our core activity is supporting the development of a resilient energy system in Blueskin Bay¹ and we act as an umbrella organization for a number of community groups working to build local food production and sustainable transport. Jeanette Fitzsimons is our patron.

We wish to acknowledge the significant strategic work undertaken by the Dunedin City Council in a challenging financial environment and the growing culture of community collaboration practiced by the DCC.

We support the Council working to represent community interest and its vision of: “Dunedin is one of the world’s great small cities”. We believe the Council can best meet the current and future needs of communities through a comprehensive appraisal of risk and a bold approach in regards to opportunity. Overall, we are of the opinion that great effort must go into maintaining and enhancing **productive** infrastructure in challenging times. By **productive**, we mean infrastructure that ensures maintainance of the local economy in a period of resource depletion and climate change. Priority should be given to ensuring affordable city energy supplies, for example – as energy underpins the economy – while actively moving away from fossil fuels. We provide greater detail in the sections which follow.

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

¹ Via the ‘Blueskin Energy Project’. See <http://www.blueskinpower.co.nz/>

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2 Specific Recommendations

2.1 *Purpose of local government*

We recognise that the amendment to the Local Government Act 2002 (enacted on 5 December 2012) has changed the fundamental purpose of local government in legislation.

It is our opinion that local government exists for and from its community and must represent community interest. Community interest includes the social, economic and cultural wellbeing interests of people and communities; and maintains and enhances the quality of the environment; and meets the foreseeable needs of future generations.

Clearly local government all around the world is facing up in different ways to three interlinked manifest risks: Climate Change, Resource Depletion and Economic Volatility. These interlinked risks present challenges to local government and community interest. We believe that once these risks have been explicitly acknowledged in all strategy documents local government will be in a strong position to represent community interests while also enabling democratic, local decision making.

Actions:

We request that the Council:

1. Explicitly recognises the three interlinked manifest risks of Climate Change, Resource Depletion and Economic Volatility in all future planning and strategy documents (including the Environment Strategy, Transport Strategy, Arts & Culture Strategy and Parks & Recreation Strategy).
2. Trial new forms of community engagement to enhance local decision making including community led planning; and participatory budgetting² within specific work areas; and community led development in line with Council objectives.

2.2 *Fiscal Constraint and Economic Strategy*

BRCT appreciates the leadership of Council in collaboratively developing an Economic Strategy and hopes that future Economic Strategy development will set an even wider collaborator net to develop Economic Strategy.

² See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_budgeting;
<http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/> .

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BRCT acknowledges that the Council's Longer Term Plan has stipulated a maximum rate increase of 4% for the 2013-14 financial year and in parallel BRCT acknowledges the efforts undertaken by council staff to find savings and increase efficiency. We congratulate Council's growing economic prudence. Globally, local government in every corner of the world is confronting similar challenges, with the world economy in great uncertainty. We wish to express our support for careful management of city finances and the value of strategic investment of resources in boosting and maintaining the local economy.

The "Economic Development Strategy" has an ambitious goal of creating "an average of \$10,000 of extra income for each person"³. The maintenance of a good level of economic prosperity within Dunedin is a worthy goal and BRCT supports all work that will build a resilient economy within a challenging environment. The economic challenges we face and the opportunities for economic resilience should not be seen in isolation from the interlinked risks of Climate Change and Resource Depletion. BRCT does not support short-term economic reasoning that fails to consider wider risks.

BRCT believes that the Council may be at an economic cross-roads of sorts (in part due to a lack of a current Energy Strategy), and is contemplating a choice between what is effectively a Brown Tech or Green Tech development path. The Brown Tech development path places priority on getting more energy out of lower grade non-renewable resources without consideration of Climate risk. The Green Tech development path is one in which renewable energy sources grow rapidly through leadership to develop a more diverse, resilient and distributed mix of energy, assisting a resurgence of the local economy. BRCT urges Council avoid the Brown Tech path at all costs.

Actions:

We request that the Council:

1. Actively looks to harness and support the business capacity of the Dunedin community that is active or intends to be active in delivering stronger community interest outcomes (combined social, environmental and economic benefit).
2. Encourage the facilitation of Community-Council exchanges with a view to capturing economic capacity while furthering the Spatial Plan objective of 'compact city with resilient townships'). This activity may require a refocussing of a current role or establishment of a new position and would ideally assist with the development of business vitality through ensuring "Red carpet, not red tape"⁴ becomes common practice.

³ Dunedin's Economic Development Strategy: By Dunedin For Dunedin And Beyond 2013-23, pp. 8.

⁴ Ibid, pp 23.

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3. Begin a strategic refocussing of investments contained within the Waipori Fund towards low risk local economic activities, as part buffer against global economic uncertainty and part enhancement of the local economy.
4. Give greater attention to analysing the “Reasons and Effects of Uncertainty” of the external factor of Climate Change when making forecasting assumptions.
5. Continue work on developing an Energy Plan and approve an ongoing operational budget. Affordable energy has underwritten all economic activity since the Industrial Revolution and “an ambitious, prosperous, diverse and resilient economy that builds on its strengths” must make an Energy Plan a priority to have the successful outcome of “A Thriving and Diverse Economy”⁵.

2.3 Energy

BRCT wishes to again highlight the importance of Energy to the city. BRCT supports the development of a second generation District Plan that takes into account Generation within the District Plan. We would like to see further leadership from the Council in embracing clean energy systems, technologies and actions.

The Council is developing a reputation nationally for its willingness to consider collaboration in an effort to enhance local energy security. BRCT believes that Council and community interests could be greatly enhanced and furthered if the Council were to be more explicit about its commitment to clean energy and warm, cosy homes. BRCT and a growing number of community groups are working independently and sometimes in partnership with the Council to pursue energy actions, while the Energy Plan promising a city wide vision is in development.

BRCT supports the development of an Energy Plan to develop a city wide vision to guide priorities.

Actions:

We request that the Council:

1. Approve an operational budget of at least \$50,000 to enable the implementation of the Energy Plan once developed.
2. Set up a public goal to run the Council as a sustainable institution and begin the planning to do so (such a goal to retrofit one vehicle from the Council fleet with an electric engine).
3. Develop a planned collaborative approach to boost local renewable generation within city limits through a diversity of ownership (Council, Community, Individuals, Business).

⁵ Draft Annual Plan 2013-14, pp. 4

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2.4 *Climate Change*

Of all the challenges facing our city, Climate Change presents the greatest threat to Community interests. BRCT supports current Council work on Climate Change 'hot-spots' with a current focus on South Dunedin. BRCT is currently working on a community-led approach to Climate Change planning in collaboration with a Council team and values the growing interest in addressing Climate Change through planning and planned adaptation.

BRCT believes that Council activity in other areas (Energy for example) will also help mitigate Climate Change through lowered emissions and we believe that including an appraisal of Climate Change risk in new Plans and Strategies will help build a community consensus around work to support community interests.

Actions:

We request that the Council:

1. Delay all significant Council investment in Climate Change 'Hot Spots' until a Climate Change adaptation strategy is put in place.
2. Make 'Climate Change an 'Activity' line in the Annual Plan and spell out activities.
3. Pursue greater high level consensus with the Otago Regional Council to work together on a Climate Change adaptation strategy.
4. Make a public commitment (Vision) to building a low carbon economy and pursuing relationships that will further this Vision.

2.5 *Roading, Footpaths and Transportation*

As identified in the Forecasting Assumptions⁶, oil price volatility presents significant risk to contract pricing and therefore potentially challenges the ability of Council to deliver on basic infrastructural projects. At the same time, work BRCT is doing with the Waitati community is revealing a great deal of community interest in low carbon transport routes and systems, which have a low infrastructure development cost.

We note that "No specific allowance has been made in budgets to accommodate oil price volatility"⁷. We would like to note that BRCT's strategic planning is concerned with making the transition to a resilient Blueskin community and while there is no formal agreement between Council Transport Strategy and Blueskin

⁶ Draft Annual Plan 2013-14, pp. 158 – 174.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 161.

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Strategy, there is general agreement between BRCT strategic planning and citywide planning documents.

BRCT is interested in assisting the active transition to a less carbon-intensive transport system which includes a much greater role for walking and cycling, and public transport, including passenger rail, and car-sharing. We believe that Council can maintain good levels of service through greater collaboration with the community sector while maintaining costs and managing risk more effectively.

Actions:

We request that the Council:

1. Implement a trial of participatory budgetting⁸ withinin the work areas of roading and footpaths
2. Ensure the 'Parks and Recreation Strategy' and 'Transport Strategy' development includes participation from community stakeholders who have expressed an interest in assisting with the transition to a low-carbon city transport system.
3. Identify actions that will led to successful outcomes within multiple strategic areas⁹, such as the active development of a cycle route from central city through Blueskin Bay to the national cycle network¹⁰.

2.6 Strategic Framework for DCC Activities

BRCT congratulates Council on the revision and rationalisation of Strategic documents and Plans set out in the Draft Annual Plan 2013-14¹¹. We recognise that two key plans will be developed over the coming year (the Second Generation District Plan and the Energy Plan). BRCT strongly endorses the Council application of key principles¹² across Plans and Strategy.

Actions:

We request that the Council:

1. Develops a mesuring tool to evaluate and express how well the principles have been applied to Council activities. This tool will serve community interest by reporting on how activities align with principles.
2. Investigate new and innovative ways to collaborate in the development of Strategy and Plans with community partners to enhance community interests and build community participation.

⁸ See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_budgeting

⁹ Such as the Spatial Plan, Economic Development Strategy, and Social Wellbeing strategy.

¹⁰ Elements of such a cycle network already exist, such as the Harbour cycleway, the Central Rail Trail and the Alps to Ocean cycleway.

¹¹ Draft Annual Plan 2013-14, pp. 109.

¹² "Engagement with Maori/Treaty of Waitangi; Leadership; Sustainability; Partnership; Affordability", Ibid.

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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 written over a faint, light blue rectangular background.

Scott Willis