

# **Annual Plan Submission New Plymouth District Council**

**by Climate Justice Taranaki**  
**[www.climatejusticetaranaki.info](http://www.climatejusticetaranaki.info)**

**17-04-2014**

**Contact for this submission**

Urs Signer  
297 Mid-Parihaka Rd  
Parihaka  
06 7638298  
[climatejusticetaranaki@riseup.net](mailto:climatejusticetaranaki@riseup.net)

**We would like to speak to our submission.**

**Tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou,**

*Ko Rangi  
ko Papa  
ka puta ko Rongo  
ko Tānemahuta  
ko Tangaroa,  
ko Tūmataurangi  
ko Haumiatiketike  
ko Tāwhirimātea.  
Tokona rā ko te rangi ki runga  
ko Papa ki raro  
ka puta te ira tangata  
ki te whai ao  
ki te ao mārama  
Tihe, mauri ora!*

Please find below our comments on the draft annual plan for the NPDC for 2014/2015. Most councillors will be familiar with the work our group does. We are opposed to the oil and gas industry because of its impact on the local and global environment. Our group combines environmental protection with the quest for social justice.

We would like to state our opposition to the drilling for fossil fuels. We need to take climate change and the risk to our local environment seriously and cease the unsustainable emission of greenhouse gases. A NO to fracking, landfarming, deep-well injection, flaring and oil and gas drilling is a YES to a sustainable and just future for the generations to come.

Council's 'Regulatory Services' activities require substantial improvements. The District Plan, in its current form, does not 'promote sustainable management of the environment' as it fails to protect the public and the environment from the aggressive expansion of the fossil fuel industry, its activities and infrastructures. The land-use consenting process does not take into account comprehensive assessment of effects on nearby residents and the environment. The unbundling of consent processing and separate hearings between district and regional councils does not allow assessment of cumulative impacts. Joint assessment and hearings are essential.

We now provide some specific comments to sections as they appear in the draft plan.

### **Road and Footpaths**

We note that you have listed congestion, delays and noise and air pollution from roadworks and road construction as potential negative environmental and social effects on the community. We would like to point out the obvious: there aren't just potential negative impacts from roadworks, there are plenty of negative impacts from roads! Local environmental impacts as well as global impacts (climate change!).

We appreciate that, given our fossil fuel dependency, roads need to be fixed. However, we oppose further widening of roads. Land purchases for road widening is listed as a major project. We think this is a waste of money. We don't need more roads and we don't need wider roads. This money is better spent on public transport initiatives as we transition to a fossil fuel free society and low-

carbon economy. We don't have a choice but to do so because in about 20 years time we will live in a very, very different world with unaffordable petrol. Firstly, oil is a finite resource. Secondly, the burning of fossil fuels is the key contributor to the greenhouse effect and climate change. In order to prevent, catastrophic climate change, we need to urgently change our lifestyles and our society to ensure that we don't destroy our planet beyond repair.

### **Stormwater Drainage and Flood Protection**

We are pleased that climate change is acknowledged as a challenge we face with increased rainfall. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report talked a lot about adaptation. Yes, we need to adapt to the new realities and ensuring that there is adequate stormwater drainage is certainly important. However, we need to move beyond adaptation and ensure that we prevent catastrophic climate change (ie. no further oil and gas extraction!).

A crucial element in storm water and flood protection is providing sufficient natural storage of water such as wetlands and vegetation to allow the land to act as a sponge that soaks up and slowly releases water and thus reduces the impact of heavy rainfall. By concreting surfaces and clearing waterways we allow water to run off faster but this is not necessarily a good thing. Increased speed increases the force of the water causing further erosion of soils, riverbanks and beds and allowing more debris to be moved and more threats to the safety of people and livestock.

We should therefore be reducing compacted soils and concreted surfaces and utilising grass, vegetated soils, gravels or those specially designed concrete tiles with holes in them. Wetland protection and riparian planting should be a priority.

### **Solid Waste and Refuse Collection**

Again, it is important to acknowledge our fossil fuel addiction when it comes to our waste: plastic, plastic and more plastic. Not only are we filling landfills that then leach into the environment, our oceans are covered in plastic waste that then enters the food-chain. Plastic takes millions of years to biodegrade and in the meantime creates a soup of tiny toxic plastic particles in the sea that get eaten by birds and fish whom we later consume. Yes, we need to recycle but we also need to stop this plastic-madness! There are many cities around the world that are now 'plastic-bag free' or even 'plastic-free'. The district should be working towards this as a near-future goal.

We welcome the proposed Resource Recovery Facility. However, we wonder what happened to it once the Colson Road landfill closes in 2019/20 and a new landfill opens in South Taranaki. We would suggest that a potential move of the Resource Recovery Facility to the new facility in South Taranaki or to a more central location in New Plymouth is considered in the design of the facility.

We support the call for a green waste pick-up for composting and the promotion of composting at home for organic gardening, especially in rural areas.

We think more money should be made available to waste minimisation education and recycling programmes in the community to teach people how to recycle and how to rely less on wasteful packaging and disposal items. It is truly astonishing to see the lack of awareness of waste minimisation in Taranaki compared to other progressive parts of the world.

The council should be working towards zero waste by 2020 as more proactive towns such as Raglan, Kaikoura and Wanaka are doing. They utilise many ingenious ideas such as stockpiling currently unrecyclable items to be sold later as markets open up, operating shops to sell re-usable items, compacting waste into wool fages, crushing glass on-site to use as a leachate under the landfill and selling compost made on-site. These industries have greatly reduced waste in a very short time, created lots of new jobs, created income for council and greatly extended the life of landfills.

## **Water Supply**

There is currently a rapid expansion of the oil and gas industry and escalating number of discharge consents issued by the regional council, allowing the discharge of industrial waste (e.g. treated stormwater, produced water, surplus drilling water) onto land and into tributaries and streams.

Council needs to acknowledge in the Annual Plan the current and emerging impact of the oil and gas industry on council's ability to provide residents with a safe, reliable, sustainable and affordable water supply. More specifically we seek detailed information from council regarding the total watertake (surface and groundwater) and the cost paid by the oil and gas industry.

We also ask NPDC to review the current water monitoring and treatment facilities, to ensure that water intakes are free of oil and gas contaminants and that there is adequate monitoring/testing to ensure that water treatment facilities are able to provide safe drinking water (See Kassotis et al. 2014, <http://press.endocrine.org/doi/abs/10.1210/en.2013-1697?journalCode=endo&>).

Moreover according to the Ministry for the Environment Guidelines for Local Government on Managing Environmental Effects of Onshore Petroleum Development Activities (March 2014, <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/managing-environmental-effects-onshore-petroleum-development-activities/index.html>), “[d]rinking water suppliers are required to prepare a plan for managing the risks of contamination under the Health Act 1956. If oil and gas activities have the potential to contaminate drinking water supplies (either through groundwater or surface-water contamination), councils should consider whether the relevant district health board and any drinking water suppliers should be treated as affected parties for the purpose of notification on resource consent applications.” We urge council to take note of the MfE guidelines and work with the Regional Council and District Health Board in processing consents which have implications on the sustainable provision of a safe drinking water supply.

## **Wastewater Treatment**

The treatment of wastewater remains a major issue, both in the cities and in rural areas. We think that both septic tanks and centralised wastewater treatment facilities are failing us and the environment. They are expensive and ineffective, pushing our waste out of mind and out of sight.

Instead, we think council need to urgently investigate and promote natural sewage or composting toilet facilities with separate grey and black water systems, where possible. Most grey water can be used on gardens, orchards and pasture as irrigation. Black water can be treated biologically as we are starting to see dairy effluent systems move towards. This reduces or halts the need for chemicals, reduces methane emissions, greatly reduces water pollution and creates a valuable compost fertiliser. The methane can be collected for energy use as is being demonstrated at

Lepperton's piggery and on small scales elsewhere. It also upskills the community on waste issues and creates employment. Many communities across the globe are leading the way in implementing these natural sewage systems instead of treating it chemically or simply dumping it. We encourage the council to look into this as a matter of urgency.

## **Recreation and Events**

We note a distinct lack of kaupapa Maori events that the council organises, funds and promotes. We think more should be done! Research clearly shows that if communities are engaged culturally they are more comfortable, have higher self-esteem and achieve more out of life.

## **Regulatory Services**

We believe Council's 'Regulatory Services' require substantial improvements if it is 'to contribute to a safe and progressive community'. The District Plan currently fails to protect the public and the environment from the aggressive expansion of oil and gas activities. The impacts of such activities commonly include unacceptable noise and light disturbance to nearby residents, heavy traffic with its associated danger to road users, and the substantial safety and environmental risks from the storage and transport of hazardous substances associated with drilling, fracking and production.

The assessment, monitoring and control of these impacts are all within Council's responsibilities, yet does the Council have adequate technical capacity, financial resources and political will to truly deliver? We urge Council to objectively assess these and to come up with capacity building and resource gathering strategies, such as raising consent application fees, introducing monitoring charges and insisting on bonds to cover in-depth investigations on specific cases.

Undeniably, the 'continually growing community demand and expectations for regulatory services' and the 'growth in complaint numbers and types' are at least in part associated with the often blatant encroachment of the oil and gas industry into rural communities and village environments, despite objections from local communities (e.g. Tikorangi).

According to the draft Annual Plan, 'Regulatory Services' also includes the 'provision of information and education on policy, bylaws, regulations and the District Plan'. We ask Council to expand this to include full disclosure of all oil and gas consent applications and monitoring reports, making them available on Council website as soon as they are available, to enhance transparency and meaningful public participation.

It is clear to us that the current land-use consenting process does not take into account comprehensive assessment of effects on nearby residents and the environment. Often, companies' so-called mitigation strategies are used to push forward consents, despite risks/effects exceeding permitted levels, especially in regards to hazardous substances.

Notably, the unbundling of consent processing and separate hearings between district and regional councils does not allow assessment of cumulative impacts; such as health impacts from noise, stress, safety risks from hazardous substances, air pollution from flaring and potential water contamination from waste discharges, all combined. It pressures council to consent to applications they might ordinarily reject because companies have already started the project. We strongly request that NPDC and TRC commit to joint assessment and hearings of consent applications on

inextricably linked oil and gas activities.

Another important case of cumulative impacts lies in the risks from intensifying and upscaling fracking and deepwell injection activities across the landscape. Such risks include groundwater contamination and damaging earthquakes, the latter have been well documented recently in scientific literature and have prompted US authorities to tighten relevant regulations (see CJT media release, 1 April 2014; AP 11 April 2014). Increasingly, the line between 'natural' and human-induced hazards is becoming blurred. Council indeed needs to keep abreast with scientific research and evidence overseas to inform its policy and make regulatory changes to minimise hazards to people, infrastructure and the environment.

Moreover, the Parliamentary Commission for the Environment's final report on her investigation into hydraulic fracturing is due to be released shortly. We urge Council to consider carefully the Commissioner's findings and recommendations (acknowledging her political and financial constraints) when finalising the Annual Plan, reviewing the District Plan and processing relevant resource consents.

Council needs to desist from any practice of only consulting the Historic Places Trust on matters of Maori waahi tapu and other areas potentially affected by oil and gas or other activities. Primarily hapu as well as iwi need meaningful consultation with sufficient resource and timeframes to enable them to understand the issue at hand and to respond satisfactorily. Council needs to heed their recommendations seriously, more than just ticking a box required by the RMA.

## **Economic Development**

The NPDC funds and oversees the Venture Taranaki Trust which then delivers the districts' economic development initiatives. We think that Venture Taranaki is doing an inadequate job and that the type of economic activity promoted by them is not sustainable. Therefore, it can't be called development because the idea of development hinges on sustainability.

Venture Taranaki has shown on many occasions that it is a strong supporter of the oil and gas industry in Taranaki and wants it to expand. We are not opposed to economic development. However, we don't consider developing our fossil fuel addiction and further putting the planet at risk to the point of no return is a worthwhile activity.

We want economic development that is based on sustainability. We want economic development based on justice. The oil and gas industry offers high salaries for the CEOs and a few international workers and profits for the shareholders. However, to the rest of the community we get a few short-term casual jobs and corporate sponsorship (with corporate advertising) of things that should be community-run resources. The planet just gets used up and trashed.

We don't want rate-payers money wasted on promoting a dead-end strategy. Either Venture Taranaki adapts to the global realities of impending climate change, or they should cease to receive public money.

## **Management of Investments and Funding**

Two members of Climate Justice Taranaki recently addressed a NPDC meeting on the PIF investment in Tasmania. We would like to re-iterate here our STRONG opposition to the proposed

expansion of the dairy farms owned by the council. The destruction of 1806ha of forest in this day and age is unacceptable. We wouldn't do it here so we shouldn't do it somewhere else with public money. When the dairy export industry crashes as fuel prices become unaffordable, what will be left?

Forests are important carbon sinks. Without forests, life cannot exist. If we promote fossil fuel extraction and at the same time cut down forests, we are doing twice the damage.

We want to ensure that public money is invested along ethical guidelines put in place by the community. Therefore, we want ethical guidelines added to the current investment policy. For example, we don't want our money invested in weapons manufacturing, the tobacco industry, fossil fuel extraction or forest destruction. We urgently need a community-wide discussion to create such guidelines and we think it is a priority for council to initiate that. This is public money therefore the public gets to decide what it is invested in.

## **Section 5**

We were deeply disappointed to see once again Maori shut out of more effective decision-making in the New Plymouth District. This is a slap in the face to indigenous people, who are supposed to be protected and provided for by the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This is not an issue of race. Indigenous people are tangata whenua. They know the district, they are committed to it for the long haul. They have a valuable view of our district that goes well beyond an annual plan or even a ten or twenty-five year plan and their input needs to be sufficiently acknowledged.

We would like to see the Maori seats set up and for hapu representaton on community boards or as hapu see fit.

We would like to see all councillors and staff attend regular reo maori classes and learn about local Maori history from local Maori.

We will end this submission here and will expand on it when it comes to the hearing.

## **Nga mihi**

Urs Signer, Catherine Cheung and Emily Bailey on behalf of Climate Justice Taranaki