

NPDC Proposed Resilience, Energy and Climate Action Plan, 2026-2032

Climate Justice Taranaki Submission, 15 September 2026

Overall

The quote from the Office of the Auditor-General is powerful, as it highlights that “...councils are at the front line of a wider response to climate change... largely responsible for civil defence, regional and district land use, planning, and major community infrastructure. They are the owners of significant assets, some of which are at risk because of climate change. They also have a role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Councils have obligations to keep their communities and assets safe from the impacts of a changing climate...” (p.6)

Council recognises its full responsibility to reduce energy and emissions in their operations and to adapt their infrastructure and services to be resilient.

Council roles and responsibilities in energy and emissions, resilience and adaptation are well laid out (p.7).

The document sets out clearly & quite frankly the context and constraints Council sits within, notably the lack of bipartisan approach (p.10) from central government and policy instability, financial limitations, and its limited control over non-council asset operations.

We strongly support:

- Minimizing climate risks by avoiding building and development in high risk areas
- Strengthening council assets’ resilience and adaptation with better data
- Energy conservation and transition off fossil gas in all council assets supported by renewable energy generation
- Empowering communities in resilience and adaptation
- Enabling community energy initiatives to foster energy conservation, renewable generation and sharing

Economic growth and planetary boundaries

We have issues with this statement “The Government needs to support our economy to grow while reducing emissions” (p.8), even though certain parts of the economy such as health, education, regenerative agriculture and distributed renewable energy, warrant far greater government support.

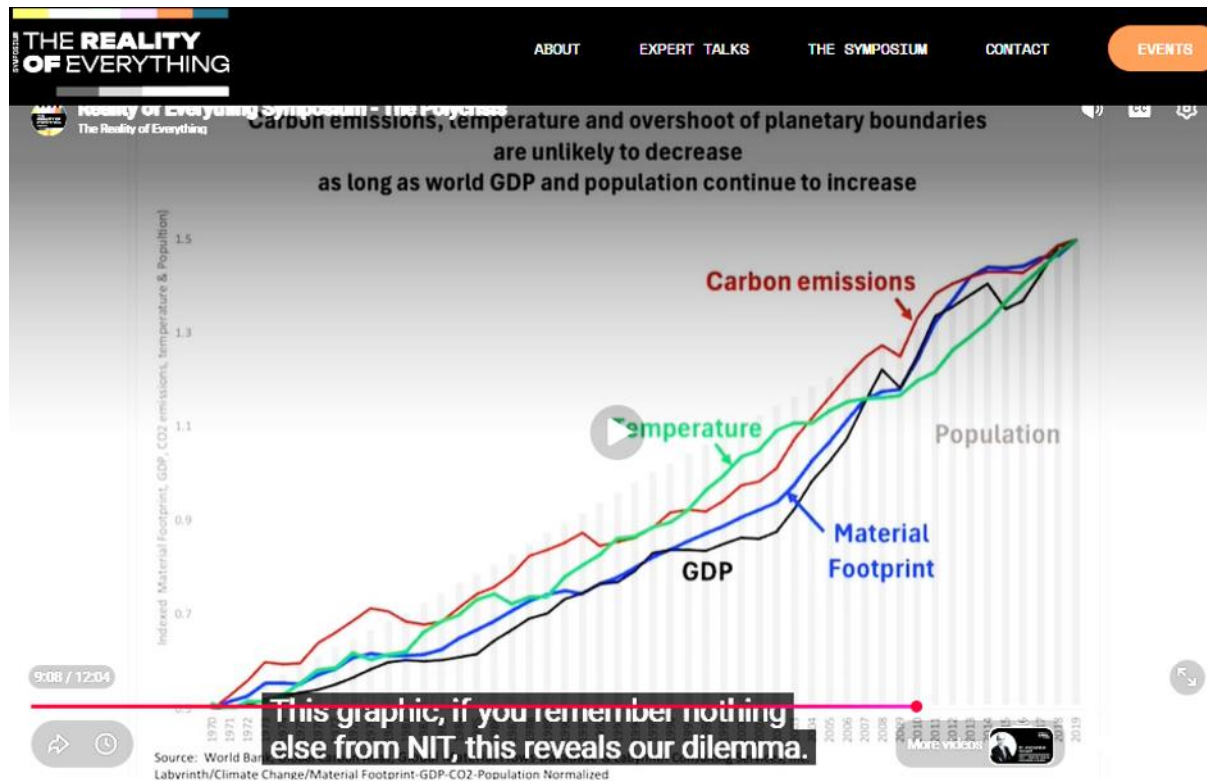
Since industrialisation, economic growth has been reliant on fossil fuels resulting in greenhouse gas emissions. In a few countries, emissions grew at a lesser rate than gross domestic product (GDP) growth as some of those reduced emissions had been outsourced to another country.

It is also crucial to recognise that climate change is just one of the [7 planetary boundaries we have overshoot](#). The tunnel vision on emissions reduction is not helpful as it does not address other overshoots which risk irreversible damage to our own life support system. Given the urgency and the limited resources we have on multiple fronts, it is wise and prudent to commit to actions and solutions that create synergies and co-benefits, rather than single-issue focused actions with trade-offs.

Mike Joy, in his recent presentation at the Reality of Everything Symposium said, “...our dilemma: economic growth – the goal of governments and, it seems, almost everyone – simply means more

fossil energy consumption, more greenhouse gas emissions and more non-renewable material extraction.

Gross Domestic Product, or GDP, comes in for a lot of flak, but one thing it is good at is measuring harm. Of all the environmental indicators available, it is the best overall predictor of environmental and climate harm.” <https://realityofeverything.org/speakers/mike-joy/> (26 June 2026)



We live in a finite planet which operates within fixed biophysical limits, it is only logical that we can't keep growing, not least the economy. We caution the push for 'green growth' (p.9).

It is time we consider alternative economic systems like circular economy, steady state economy, economy of enough, doughnut economics and wellbeing economy.

Reducing energy use is a big part of this, and we're glad to read that council recognises, "*we have full responsibility for our operations to both reduce energy and emissions and to adapt our infrastructure and services to be resilient.*" (p.6)

New Plymouth District emissions to downscaled national targets (graph, p.8)

This graph needs a bit more explanation. It is not clear how the "downscaled national targets" of 2030 and 2050 are derived. Where would transport emissions fit?

It would take enormous efforts at many levels to reduce New Plymouth's per capita emissions from being nearly double the national average, largely linked to our heavy reliance on the fossil fuel and dairy industries. We cannot continue to rely on the Emissions Trading Scheme to drive emissions as it has not worked due to rorting, lobbying and other problems. (p.8)

We appreciate that "there are numerous caveats to this graph". Two such caveats could be Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) import and the new emissions associated with the emergence of [Taranaki Alliance](#), with \$500,000 funding from NPDC, to develop "[leading heavy industrial and advanced manufacturing](#)" in the region, not least for high tech [defence capability](#). Notably, the

[2025 Defence Capability Plan](#) has downgraded climate change from 13 mentions in 2019 to just two mentions. With the country's largest fossil gas user, [Methanex closing](#), we had hoped that it would allow for more time for a managed energy transition while workers move into smart, distributed and potentially innovative renewable energy systems. Yet the government remains hellbent on LNG import and Resources Minister Shane Jones is geared up to get Taranaki engineers to boost the Defence Force's resources.

Council Climate Change Objectives

We agree with the overarching objectives and outcomes, in particular "Council fosters and empowers the community to drive resilience, energy and climate action." (p.11)

Summary of Actions

It is good to give a high priority to actions that have "multiple benefits". (p.12)

Do "risk registers" exist already but require more "climate change risks" to be integrated into them? Are they in the public domain? (p.12)

In the action table (p.12), we suggest reporting on the financial impact of climate change events, not only "understand and monitor".

"Ensure that future developments do not occur in risky areas" is of high priority and critical.

Where is Council at with the New Plymouth Wastewater Treatment Plant (NPWWTP) Master Plan? Will the public have a say? (p.12)

Can we assume that the NPWWTP solar PV will be part of the Master Plan? (p.13)

Maybe Council could explore [community participation opportunities](#)?

It makes good sense to replace gas boilers at Council assets with electric ones as they come near to their end of life.

Is there any possibility for microhydro or microwind for some sites, in addition to solar?

It's great to see high priority given to "Optimise fleet size and utilisation". Can this be extended to the community, say community groups, school fleets, childcare centres, shared community EV?

We'd like to see "Sustainable procurement practices" be given higher than "Low" priority. (p.14)

We're unsure about Council investing in energy innovation, when there are known technologies to reduce demands and emissions. We'd suggest **low** "risk appetite and tolerance" for energy innovation rather than medium (Table on p.13).

We fully agree with Council supporting the Ratepayer Assistance Scheme to fruition and request that Council give higher priority to support solar for renters (p.14), incorporating heat pumps and water heat pumps.

Climate risk, resilience and adaptation

Policies to support adaptation and resilience are critical, hopefully council will come up with something that is proactive, practical and empowering, in addition to the mentioned loss and damage and asset abandonment.

Not enabling development and building in risk areas is crucial (p.27). In some cases, it would likely take a very strong Council to stand up against development pressures and lobbying from the real

estate industry – a form of “barriers to cease building in risky areas...” perhaps (p.28). Working closely with the insurance industry would be beneficial, to avoid putting at risk places that are currently not a priority for adaptation. Civil defence and emergency management teams also have expertise and experience to offer, especially if given more resources.

Catchment groups have a role to play in caring for and monitoring their river catchments and working with rural communities to lower flood risks and manage extreme events. More resources are needed to build their on-ground capacity, taking some load off council staff.

It is a good idea to engage rangatahi/youth in adaptation planning, as well as kaumatua (p.28). Indeed, we would support council expanding its climate team for mitigation, resilience and adaptation, so that more research, data collection and community engagement can be done.

Lessons learnt from the local adaptation planning of Urenui, Onaero and Waitara would be extremely valuable for other communities.

Energy and emissions

[Importing LNG](#) makes no economic or climate sense. It is also extremely dangerous to put an LNG import facility in Port Taranaki, surrounded by thousands of homes, many schools, childcare centres and public beaches. Numerous organisations and experts including [industry insiders](#) have shown that LNG is not needed and that the dry year risk can be dealt with by cheaper, cleaner and less risky alternatives. We call on NPDC to make a stand and advise the central government against LNG. We assume Council meant LNG (not LPG) on p.29.

The NPWWTP is the largest electricity and fossil gas user amongst Council assets. How the Master Plan shapes its future will affect Council's power costs and emissions profile. As we have submitted multiple times on the WWTP and on hydrogen, using hydrogen as a fuel is extremely wasteful and illogical, especially to dry sewage. Burning it as a blended fuel with fossil gas would prolong the reliance of fossil gas. Installing solar panels at the WWTP could cut the power bill but not emissions in the long run. It's good to see the mention of anaerobic digestion (p.37).

We would like more transparency about the 16% of “investment emissions” and 32% of “supply chain emissions” (p.30). We believe the Scope 3 emissions reduction targets on engaged suppliers are too low (p.34) and suppliers that do not have any climate goals or proven efforts in lowering emissions do not warrant council business.

We would like to see more ambitious investment emissions reduction and divestment away from Israeli companies.

How would Council's \$500,000 investment into **Taranaki Alliance** affect emissions in NP, Taranaki or further? (see above)

While it is good to hear that Colson Road landfill emissions are declining, it is frustrating to read that there is nothing else to do to cap it.

Is the current trucking of our general wastes to Bonnie Glenn outsourcing our emissions to another district?

We would like more information about Council's plan for local solutions for processing organic waste to reduce emissions, e.g. Green Loop.

A great deal of caution and the precautionary principle need to be taken to avoid prolonged, tragic impacts on the whenua, awa and neighbours. There are lessons to be learnt from [Remediation](#)

[NZ's](#) supposedly organic composting and vermiculture [operations](#) in the Uruti valley, especially if oil and gas exploration and drilling resumes or expands, and as local [landfarms](#) run out of [capacity](#).

Actions and Priorities

It's great to see "energy conservation and energy efficiency", renewable energy generation (p.38) and "Gas transition programme" (p.36 & 37). "Value for money" for Council and ratepayers would be open to interpretation though.

Will Council invest in batteries for energy storage alongside solar panels? For some facilities where night-time power use is significant, having battery storage could be useful.

It's good to see fleet optimisation and opportunities to reduce total vehicle numbers (p.41). Maybe Council can showcase how it's done!

Energy innovation

Yes, "be cautious to avoid unproven or over-hyped technologies..." So-called green hydrogen is one of those.

It is important to follow the waste hierarchy, so that only turn organic waste that cannot be composted or worm-farmed would be considered for bioenergy. (p.43)

Energy storage like the 100 hour Nickel iron battery or salt ion battery may be worth exploring.

Community energy and resilience support

Excellent!

The Home Energy Assessment Tool (HEAT) kit sounds interesting. Community groups and schools can help promote its use in the community when it is ready.

It's great to continue and expand the Community Climate Action Fund, and with more focus on energy conservation, community resilience and adaptation. Education and community buy-in are crucial across these areas.

Yes to microgrids, especially for new residential developments in green field and remote areas and papakainga, and with the integration of electric transport.

With water meters billing from July 2027, it is a good time to educate households and communities in water conservation, harvesting and reuse.

We would like council to seriously consider mandating and/or incentivising **new residential development to install rainwater tanks** and/or stormwater capture for reuse, both would contribute to community resilience while reducing demand/burden on council water supply.

Taranaki Emergency Management Office (TEMO) needs to be better funded, staffed and resourced, so that it can support communities in emergency preparedness and management.

We encourage council to invest in **community resilience planning and emergency hubs** (in resourcing and capacity building) to empower communities to better deal with emergencies, e.g. when isolated by extreme weather events which are becoming more frequent, or in a fuel crisis [when the trucks stop](#). In the longer term, building local [food resilience](#) and community capacity and connections are key.

Moreover, Taranaki already has extensive catchment management programmes and plans. We propose building on these by developing integrated Catchment Climate Resilience Plans that bring

together existing freshwater, land, biodiversity, hazard, infrastructure and community initiatives and explicitly assess their resilience under future climate conditions. This catchment approach could continue to work in view of changes to the current local government structure, involving iwi, hapū, landowners, industries and community groups.

At the national level, it was a real shame that the [Climate Emergency Response Fund](#) which ring-fenced revenue from the Emissions Trading Scheme for climate initiatives, was scrapped by this coalition government in May 2024. The [funding cut on research organisations](#), at a time when climate and hazard data have become paramount, is equally incomprehensible. The [complexity around who pays](#) for adaptation and retreat, preferably managed, is huge. We do not pretend to know the answer other than incorporating the 'polluters pay principle' and a much more progressive and equitable tax system. We also urge that a strong precautionary approach is taken at all planning stages, from district plan review to decisions on landuse consents, to minimise risks and consequences.

Thank you for this piece of work and we look forward to the opportunity to contribute and collaborate.