

Minutes of the Hearing of Submissions and Views to the 2024-2034 Long-term Plan by Southland Regional Council



Held at Environment Southland, 220 North Road Invercargill commencing from Monday, 20 May 2024 at 3.03 pm.

Present:

Chairman N Horrell (Chair)
Cr N Cook – not present on Friday, 29 May 2024
Cr P Evans
Cr A Gibson
Cr R Guyton
Cr L Ludlow
Cr P McDonald
Cr J McPhail
Cr P Morrison
Cr J Pemberton
Cr M Rodway
Cr E Roy

Also Present:

Ms W Falconer (Chief Executive)
Ms A Kubrycht (General Manager, People & Customer)
Ms R Millar (General Manager, Science Strategy and Engagement)
Mrs J M Brown (Executive Officer – *Minutes*)

1 Welcome I Haere mai

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Hearing.

2 Apologies

There were no apologies recorded as all members were present.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Notification of extraordinary items/urgent business | He panui autaiā hei Totoia pakihi

There was no extraordinary or urgent business notified for the meeting.

5 Public Form, petitions and deputations | He Huinga tuku korero

5.1 Consideration of the Long-term Plan 2024-2034 Submissions and Views

The Chairman advised all present that participants would be that the meeting was being live-streamed; that it was being held in public, but was not a public meeting. Councillors were reminded that they were able to ask questions of clarification, but not to debate issues with submitters.

Further, Council would not tolerate the meeting being interrupted, or disrespectful or offensive language being used, and if necessary, the hearing would adjourn should such actions arise.

Resolved:

Moved Cr Roy, seconded Cr Gibson, that Council:

- 1. note that the 2024-2034 Long-term Plan Consultation Document *Investing in Southland Whakangao ki Murihiku* has undergone consultative processes and submissions have been received.**
- 2. receive the submissions made to the 2024-2034 Long-term Plan Consultation Document *Investing in Southland Whakangao ki Murihiku*;**
- 3. receive the submissions and feedback made on supporting documents and concurrent consultations as follow:**
 - **draft Financial Strategy;**
 - **draft Infrastructure Strategy 2024-2054;**
 - **draft Groups of Activities/Performance Framework including links to strategic direction and levels of service);**
 - **draft Financial Information (including Prospective Financial Statements, Disclosure Statement and Funding Impact Statement)**
 - **proposed Financial Reserves Policy**
 - **draft Statement of Accounting Policies;**
 - **draft Statement of Investment Policy and Objectives (SIPO);**
 - **proposed Treasury Policy;**
 - **proposed Marine Fee Reserve Allocation Policy;**
 - **Significant Forecasting Assumptions;**
 - **draft Revenue and Financing Policy;**
 - **draft Funding Needs Analysis;**
 - **Revenue and Financing Policy update and rating review 2024 Statement of Proposal;**
 - **Fees and Charges Schedule 2024-2025 and associated Statement of Proposal;**
 - **Proposed Rates Remission and Postponement Policy (including for Māori Freehold Land) and associated Statement of Proposal;**
 - **Proposed Significance and Engagement Policy and associated Statement of Proposal.**
- 4. agree to accept all late submissions received up to 15 May 2024;**
- 5. agree not to receive any further late submissions;**
- 6. agree to hear all submitters who wish to be heard on the 2024-2034 Long-term Plan Consultation Document *Investment in Southland Whakangao ki Murihiku*, Statement of Proposal Revenue and Financing Policy, concurrent consultations, and supporting documents.**

Carried

Submitter 77 - Meridian Energy – Andrew Feierabend and Hamish Cuthbert

The speakers circulated a presentation and explained the information contained within that presentation. They emphasised the fact that Meridian is looking to have a differential rate imposed on Meridian assets in Southland. They then responded to questions of clarification, noting:

- Meridian have different rating arrangements in other catchments, and explained what they were, as well as how they contribute towards Southland District Council rates;
- If the rating proposal within the consultation documents proceeds, they see this as a like-for-like proposition, and that the existing Funding Agreement would be set aside.

Submitter 44 - Waiau Catchment Committee – Paul Marshall

Mr Marshall spoke to the detailed submission of the Waiau Catchment Committee, making the following points:

- emphasising the importance of Council retaining unchanged the drainage rates, which are the component parts of the Waiau special rating district;
- the Committee is seeking to protect the interests of the catchment that are contained in the 1996 Waiau Agreement;
- the liaison committees are ill suited to socialising Council's proposals beyond the immediate committees;
- it had been challenging to engage in meaningful consultation on the proposals for flood protection and infrastructure requirements for the region;
- there is widespread consternation within the Waiau community about the proposed rating increases; concern that the spending proposals being presented were divorced from the ability of ratepayers to pay – and provided a plea to Council to temper its rating aspirations with economic reality.

In responding to questions from the meeting, Mr Marshall reiterated the Committee does not wish Council to take any action that would put at jeopardy the Waiau Agreement. He noted that if the Waiau Agreement was drafted today, it would be significantly different, and would need to take into account the Ngai Tahu statutory acknowledgement rights.

Going forward there was a need to focus on ensuring there is catchment wide representation, and potentially according liaison committees similar status to that of community boards may be worth exploring, Mr Marshall suggested.

Submitter 60 – The Future is Rail – Mr Dave McPherson

Mr McPherson spoke to the submission lodged on behalf of The Future is Rail, noting the emphasis was on the re-establishment of inter-regional rail links – particularly the Southerner, and also options for commuter rail.

In responding to questions from the meeting, he pointed out that the success of rail passenger offerings was frequency, modernity, electrification, and speed of the units operated. Also, the ability to buy tickets on the trains themselves. He believed passenger rail was a necessary alternative means of transport to add to the resilience of the region, noting it also had lower CO2 emissions per kg/mile.

Submitter 42 - Te Anau Catchment Liaison Committee - Mr B Taylor

Mr Taylor noted his support for changes to the rating system, but was disappointed more options were not provided for the community to consider. He also felt that a letter should have been written to every ratepayer, outlining the impact to them individually, of the proposals. He favoured the process being deferred for a year, to allow the public more time to have their say.

The proposal to increase spending and provide \$2.3M in upgrades to infrastructure was badly timed, and would only contribute to driving inflation up. Urged the process being slowed, and to consider alternative ways to undertake maintenance on the rivers – including removal of gravel (changing the rules, removing the rights of Fish & Game), reducing staff/wage bill. The average ratepayer could not afford this increase.

Mr Taylor opposed the proposal to have “one pool” within the catchment team – there was a need to focus on different catchments, given the issues within them varied. No all the work needs to be done at once – keep talking to the community – ensure the right approach is taken first.

In responding to questions, Mr Taylor felt there was a need to give the community more ideas to consider around the proposals, and have more input. There was some support for change. He expressed concern at the lack of information provided to the liaison committees – re lack of balance sheets to show where funds were spent. He urged the meeting to delay the processes and consult more. The Te Anau community had kept its rates increases to 3% - they focus on their own area/funds.

Submitter 63 – Mataura Catchment Liaison Committee Chair – Hugh Gardyne

Mr Gardyne circulated his written submission and read it into the record. He noted he supported the move to a CV rating system, as it would remove the impact on the A-E classification ratepayers and allow broader concerns on the river to be addressed. Mr Gardyne exceeded his time for speaking and as a result, there was no time for questions of clarification.

Submitter 09 – Mr Geoff Scott

Mr Scott expressed concern that he was not provided with 10 minutes per submission, noting he had provided a number of submissions that had all been collated under the one heading. In speaking to his submissions he noted:

- when showing Council staff about damage to stop-banks, he did not only complain, but came up with viable solutions;
- believed Council had undertaken a flawed, un-democratic process and encouraged Council to put on hold the draft LTP. If this was not done, he would be taking the matter further;
- he would be urging ratepayers and stakeholders to withhold any rate increases that were implemented
- the proposed increase in costs would lead to suicides, damaged families, broken families, people removed from their properties for not being able to pay.
- expressed concern at the gravel within the Mataura river, and the rules that have impacted on people extracting it;
- expressed concerns about wasp nests in the stop-banks;
- maintenance on the rivers has not been undertaken for many years.
- Everyone should pay rates, but there was a need for value for money – he felt the proposals were based on models that were flawed, outdated, and flawed science, and was being driven by fear.

Submitter 79 – Mr Ewen Dunnage

Mr Dunnage read his submission into the record and responded to questions of clarification, making the following points:

- the main highway should be flood-free – by raising the approaches on the north and south sides of the Makarewa River bridge = ES and NZTA need to work together to address it
- NZTA should be the first option for funding for the costs of the work to be done, which he did not believe would prove to be difficult, and was important given the numbers travelling on this road each day.

Submitter 04 – Martin Gledhill

Mr Gledhill spoke to his submission which had been included in the agenda, and then responded to questions from the meeting, where the following points were made:

- was aware that deer are a problem in the Te Anau region, but felt that pests were a major problem and a huge task to get on top of;
- he had joined a local group to try and help.
- poisons, although the initial result was positive, they are not good for the environment.
- It is important that information the Council has about floodprone areas and coastal erosion areas was made known to the public to help them assess where they might buy/build a property.

The hearing adjourned briefly from 4.43 pm to 5.00 pm to await the next submitter.

Submitter 05 – Doug Fraser

Mr Fraser spoke to his submission, which had been included in the agenda, and then responded to questions from the meeting, where the following points were made:

- supported a direct benefit targeted rate being imposed in relation to the Stead Street Pump Station upgrade;
- Council had “taken its eye off the ball” in the last 20 years and not spent enough on flood management, but spent funding on other non-essential/not core business.
- the organisation needed to be resized so that costs can be redirected to where they need to go.
- the rating system needed to recognise beneficiaries of flood-banks – those properties with no flood protection should not be paying as much as those that do receive it.
- Council needed to ensure it was focused on its core business of managing the waterways – increased spending on land sustainability and biosecurity was taking funds away from flood infrastructure.
- the next few years the focus is on protecting the urban areas – they need to be paying their fair share.

Submitter 202 – Andrew Morrison

Mr Morrison spoke to his submission, which had been included in the agenda, and then responded to questions from the meeting, where the following points were made:

- he supported the work to be done, but the magnitude of the ask was too much.
- urged Council to run its pencil through each line of expenditure and see what could be removed.
- acknowledged that central government is saying it wants to do less, and there was a need for Councils to do more.
- encouraged a review of the reserves policy and ask the question “how much should be held in reserves”, given the magnitude of the proposed rate increase.
- supported the UAGC being maximised, given the magnitude of proposed rate increase.
- supported regionalising the revenues created; noted the contribution from the Ōreti and the Waiau may need to be treated separately.
- felt rating on a CV base was appropriate, to reflect the assets being protected.
- sometimes “sacred cows” have to be considered when there is a need to keep costs down to a minimum.

Meeting adjourned from 5.20 pm to 6.23 pm.

Submitter 22 – Liam Calder

Mr Calder spoke to his submission, which had been included in the agenda, and then responded to questions from the meeting, where the following points were made:

- it is intimidating sitting and speaking in front of a Council – it is about speaking to people at the ground level, hearing their concerns and opinions and asking how they would fix it and bringing their opinions back to the Council table.
- go to other Youth Councils in the region and into the schools and focus on hearing that voice. Not all pay rates now, but they will into the future.
- at the suggestion of a Councillor, Mr Calder felt that involvement in a cross-council committee such as the Regional Climate Change Working Group would be a good place to start.
- encouraged having a “pocket sized LTP”, breaking down the key points and making it easier to submit on. Speak to young people in language that they understand – break it down to help them understand.

Submitter 54 – Phil Golden

Mr Golden introduced himself, noting he was the vice Chairman of the Southern Pest Eradication Society, which was a group run by volunteers and contracted for pest eradication in Southern Southland.

Mr Golden noted the SPES has been in place since 1996, but in the last two years had been contracting to ES for this work, and had been operating efficiently. It employs two full time and three part-time employees. They were happy with ES oversight of the contract. The “proof of kill app” designed by ES had been a good resource to keep track of the work done over the 99,000 ha covered.

Many perceive there is no rabbit problem in the southern Southland area, and the SPES view is that is because of the work done since 1996. If they were not controlled there would be damage done to flood banks that could not be reversed, and there would be more costs to landowners than the rate they currently pay.

Mr Golden asked why ES did not promote or advertise the service as available in the area? He then responded to questions and made the following points:

- with the work done by ES staff member Nick Perham, the group is now able to identify where rabbit hot spots are, and where there are landowners that do not support the society or let them on their property.
- the focus of the group is on rabbits; there are PCAs set-up in the area to focus on possums;
- the group has promoted itself via doing “drop cards” into mail boxes, but more publicity would assist the group.

At this time of the meeting, advice was received that Submitter 70 – Sally McIntyre; Submitter 80 – Cheryle Blight and Submitter 82 - Craig Edgerton had withdrawn their wish to be heard by the meeting.

Submitter 130 – Carmen Stewart

Ms Stewart asked for her contact information to be redacted from the hearing report, and this was agreed to. She then spoke to her submission, and responded to questions, making the following points:

- questioned why ES did not write to every individual ratepayer about the changes proposed, despite saying it would do so in the documents issued;
- questioned how many vehicles ES has and how many are taken home – at a cost to the ratepayer;
- suggested using drones instead of helicopters or satellite information to look at riverbeds.
- questioned transparency around use of consultants and their fees.
- farmers are putting their animals first and taking losses, they cannot afford the proposed increases
- urged removal of gravel from rivers.
- questioned the costs around the brochures used to promote the LTP consultation process.
- sought transparency around the fact that Councillors had considered the cost increases.

- did not believe the dollar increase proposed on her own property was relevant to the hearing points she was making.

The meeting adjourned at 6.51 pm.

Hearing Resumption – 9.00 am – with all Councillors present.

Submitter 179 – Russell MacPherson

Mr MacPherson spoke to his submission, and responded to questions, making the following points:

- he objected to the change from a beneficiary-type approach to rating – he supported a direct benefit component.
- commented that the classification system was not perfect but can be adjusted to improve it – CV was worse, and a lazy way to say wealthy people with high value properties can pay more.
- provided examples of rates increases on his own property, and rates reduction for a neighbouring property.
- moving to a CV rate discouraged better environmental practices such as installation of wintering sheds.
- acknowledged that wintering sheds provide income gains for farmers, but also came at a cost.

Submitter 38 – Chris Carran

Mr Carran attended the meeting by Zoom video link and spoke to his submission and responded to questions, making the following points:

- expressed concern at the involvement of Fish & Game in river management and wanted to see them removed from this completely as it was not their skill set.
- few people in Te Anau are aware of the changes that are proposed – poor consultation
- the information is not easy to follow – defer for 12 months and hold more open meetings with ratepayers.
- encouraged a meeting with himself and Councillors when he returned to New Zealand, to discuss this further.

Submitter 197 – Jenny Campbell

Mrs Campbell spoke to her submission, which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following points:

- she found the work and proposals presented in the LTP encouraging compared to the approach of central government currently. She expressed concern at the Fast-track Approvals Bill, which she has also submitted on – the community needed to be the voice for nature.
- stop-banks were a short-sighted solution – look to nature – winding rivers that slow down the speed of water as it heads to the floodplains – look for longer-term solutions. Stop-banks are a short-term solution – take the approach of mana whenua – 100 years and several generations.
- wetland creation should also be a priority – encouraging farmers in the region to put back wetlands that have been drained and remind them of the significance of those for the good of their own properties and those downstream.
- Encouraged ES to consider a Youth Council similar to that of ICC's – young people don't often have the chance to have input into matters such as the Fast-track Approvals Bill – involve them in workshops and listen to their views.

The meeting was advised that Submitter 129 – Bill Cronin, had withdrawn his right to be heard.

Submitter 140 – HWR Group – represented by Sue Hill

Ms Hill spoke to the submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following points:

- Council needed to advocate harder with central government on the need for flood infrastructure funding;
- believes that businesses such as HWR should not be paying as much as it is proposed to Council. It contributed significantly towards roading via RUC, and Council should be entitled to some of those funds back to support protection of the roads.
- the issues need to be viewed as global/national problems, and should be the responsibility of central government.
- many businesses were already doing much work to support the environment and already pay significant rating contributions to Council. More effort is required to make central government more responsible.

Morning tea adjournment taken from 9.52 am to 10.15 am.

Submitter 191 – Annie English and Hamish English

The submitters spoke to their submission, circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following points:

- believed catchment liaison committees should be retained as they are, for their local knowledge and to allow Council to hear from those directly affected.
- catchment liaison committee members know where the problems are, and can work their budgets to suit – having one pot of money would mean individual groups would lose their voice and important work that could head off a problem may be missed;
- there is clearly room for “nuance” in the rating changes – going from 140 down to 1 classification was not appropriate – the underlying reasons for the classification have not gone away. Where banks are being added on to – use a targeted rate.
- irrespective of what rating system is put in place, the accumulated reserves should remain where they have been historically collected.
- anyone can attend catchment liaison meetings; the major focus has been on works and they have been successful in that regard – this should continue.

Submitter 142 – Invercargill SaleYards Company Ltd – represented by Colin Lindsay and Dave Marshall

Messrs Lindsay and Marshall spoke to the submission that had been circulated with the agenda and responded to questions, making the following points:

- main concern is the percentage increase proposed on rates and services and asked what increase was going to come with the services being provided.
- are the rates increases going to be translated into the inspection charges and accounts for science and research charges?
- with the proposed cost increases, it was putting the profitability/return of the company at risk/potential sale/loss of a saleyards in Invercargill.
- asked if every avenue had been explored by Council to keep costs down.
- expressed concern at initial lack of publicity given to the LTP consultation process
- supported the rating system as it currently stood, but felt that increases should be related to inflationary costs only, and potentially tweaking the LV rate.

Submitter 153 – Garry and Bev Swney

Mr and Mrs Swney spoke to their submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following points:

- acknowledged that increasing the value of the farm provided the couple with an economic benefit also – however only half the building costs are recouped in any sale (based on information provided to them by a real estate agent);
- all businesses will add on the costs of the rate increase – the service industries and support industries for farmers;
- the couple had not compared the current rates with what the proposed rate would be – they were working on feedback from others in the community.

Submitter 103 – Christine Smith

Ms Smith spoke to her submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- much of the reclaimed area at Otatara and Coopers Creek cannot be reversed, but the mudflats are very unhealthy, and a significant area has filled up with sediment.
- putting in costly flood protection would not be entirely necessary if other options are looked at.
- supported work being done in the Estuary – dredging seems like an obvious solution.

Submitter 10 – John Turner

Mr Turner spoke to his submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- if reserves are tagged for a purpose, use them for that purpose. Don't put money from one generation into the bank for the next one.
- Unitary Authority in Tasman has worked well for 30 years – all Councils are growing “like topsy” and will need new offices – why not only have one unitary authority, one Chief Executive and one group of Councillors – get away from the them and us approach and work together.
- is not proposing a LV rating system – the current rating system is wrong, but the changes are also wrong. Take the time to review. Favoured an area rate.
- those on the flat should not pay any more than the person living on the hill.
- amalgamation should include all of the councils, not just the Tas.

Submitter 157 – Fish & Game NZ – Southland Branch

Jacob Smyth attended the hearing and spoke to the submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- does not need to have a task force on wetlands – can be operationalised simply and there are good examples of wetlands at farm scale.
- work with individual farmers and catchment groups – good starting point.
- Fish & Game cannot provide any funding, but can provide expertise and staff time.
- ES own research is showing that wetlands are still being lost in Southland.
- national and international research is available to support the approach being outlined – Ian Fuller's report should be a foundation with regard to gravel management.
- Some things Councils have done in the past has sped-up water and put it through narrower corridors – and with larger rain events that is now harder to deal with. Need to do things that will help water absorption – need more than just a short-term approach with infrastructure.

Submitter 242 – Lloyd McCallum

Mr McCallum spoke to his submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- questioned whether this was a staff or Councillor LTP – felt Council had been captured by management;
- did not support selling any South Port shares – the asset was provided to the Council, and it was important it managed the business so the rate take was appropriate, and the cash flow was appropriate.
- there are realised and unrealised values in the balance sheet – perhaps it needs a different structure.
- Council has gone into debt because of Government providing funding – it has to be paid back otherwise it will snowball and impact on all future decisions.
- Reserves need to be capped and focused. Align the FMUs, river liaison committees and catchments so that the people from the community deal directly with Council
- Maintenance of stop-banks is key, capital is another matter – do the maintenance of the current banks.

Submitter 164 – Allan Baird

Mr Baird spoke to his submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- there is no certainty that any interest gained in a managed fund investment will be better than the dividend received from the South Port shares. It is a good asset to hold.
- could reduce costs in the business by reducing staff numbers. Technology should have delivered efficiencies, but has not resulted in fewer staff – greater use of technology should assist. It is time Council did more with less.
- now is a time to monitor more than go hard on spending. \$14M of projects identified – can they not be deferred/pushed out?
- stop-banks are important to maintain – they are a big investment – use the reserves to fix those things up.
- If Council is not careful it will create an amalgamation outcome – the community cannot fund all of the things Council wants to do – we need to get the infrastructure in place, we don't need four councils.
- Councils need to provide the services the community wants.

Submitter 168 – Dave Marshall

Mr Marshall spoke to his submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

[During this submission, Cr Guyton left the room from 12.00 noon until 12.08 pm]

- would be upset to see the Ōreti Reserves used for the Stead Street Pump Station upgrade, particularly given the fact they have not had an explanation for the \$9M expenditure;
- did not support reserves going into “one pot”; the funds need to be retained for each catchment.
- there has been some good work done by the catchment committees in the last 20 years and he did not wish to see this history discharged.
- does not object to CV rating per se, it is the weighting of the system, and transparency around how that occurs that is the issue.
- the issue is complex; liaison committee chairs have a greater understanding of what is proposed than the average ratepayer, but more discussion and explanation is required.

Submitter 169 – Christine Henderson

Mrs Henderson spoke to her submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- Mrs Henderson was heartened by the work around wetlands and gravel, which she felt was long over-due, but commented that “good things take time”.

- with regard to the potential of Councils to share accommodation, Mrs Henderson noted that decisions could be made by one Council, and many more things could become integrated. She felt it would be a good working environment and would lead to good work.
- she urged for good consultation to occur in any major works that are undertaken.
- It would be positive to see ES involved in wetland work that is being done by the community – working collaboratively would be good.

Submitter 172 – Ōreti Catchment Liaison Committee represented by Mr David Rose and Mr Dave Marshall

Mr Rose spoke to the submission lodged on behalf of the Ōreti Catchment Liaison Committee and which was circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- the representatives felt the Government was telling Council to focus on its core business.
- acknowledged that the Invercargill airport was a regional asset, but the beneficiaries were those who used it, and they should pay, not the ratepayer.
- appreciated, as catchment liaison committee chairs, being involved in the initial discussions around the LTP proposals, but felt that when decisions were being made they were not given information and were removed from the process. Were also disappointed that more options were not put out for consultation.
- confirmed the Ōreti catchment liaison committee has traditionally approved its work programme for the forthcoming year, but had not done so this year because it was presented as “being out for consultation and may or may not happen”. They have not been provided with the flood warning or capital works information this year.
- do not support a “single pot” and taking control away from the liaison committees over those funds.

Submitter 182 – Forest & Bird – represented by Jen Miller

Ms Miller spoke to the Forest & Bird submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- acknowledged that the Department of Conservation needs to play its part in pest control (ungulates), but noted they were undergoing severe budget cuts.

Luncheon adjournment taken from 12.51 pm to 1.30 pm. Cr McPhail was absent at the outset of the resumption of the meeting.

Submitter 55 – Mr Ron Baxter

Mr Baxter spoke to his submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- commented that he had been paying rates for 21 years and had no idea what Environment Southland did, and asked for information. Was advised that this would be posted to him, it was not possible to cover it all here today.
- asked how he gets access to information about what water is tested for, and was advised to contact staff.
- advised when he laid a complaint about trucks dumping stuff at Ohai mine, was advised he needed to collect the samples himself and bring them in for testing.

[Cr McPhail attended the meeting at this time – 1.33 pm.]

- with the increased in truck traffic because of a lack of rail ability, he urged Council to make the company pay to have that reinstated, to reduce the impact on the community.

- fly ash is an issue in his community – nothing will grow in the soil, apple trees have rotted – he asked for help with these problems
- would be pleased to be visited by councillors in their community to hear about the issues
- people on the poverty line cannot speak for themselves – he acts as a spokesperson for them in many areas
- many beneficiaries live in his community – their incomes don't go up but rates continue to increase; people may lose their properties.
- save money where you can – don't put the rates up.

Submitter 35 – Diana Pears

Ms Pears spoke to her submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- not maintaining current floodbanks yet you are planning to do more
- urged Council to undertake the urgent repair works
- listen to the projects that work and people with hands on experience – such as the Mataura Slow the Flow project – this will add a natural level of protection.
- listen to farmers alongside the rivers.
- gravel extraction that provides funding towards the required works.
- there has been a decline in mental health and depression since COVID lockdowns – now is not the time for this expenditure
- one income families and young families cannot afford these increases.
- the adoption of the LTP in its current form will see families forced to sell their homes
- be an advocate for the community with central government – work within the system – be the voice for ratepayers and halt this plan.
- does not have any evidence that the CDEM system in Southland is not up to standard – she has just gained this impression from chatting with people in the community.
- when people were talking about submitting to Council the feeling within the community was very negative.

Submitter 57 – Invercargill City Council – represented by Mr Michael Day

Mr Day spoke to the Invercargill City Council's submission circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- In response to questions about the Clean Air Loans scheme, Mr Day felt there were a number of different ways this matter could be approached. There are a number of grants available in relation to that matter and ICC was trying to get funding from Government to run a programme it has within its Council.
- agreed there was always capacity for more collaboration between councils.
- understood why Council wished to move to a simplified rating model but noted differentials could be used to transition this process.
- ICC wishes to work with ES to better understand flood risk for the city, both from downstream events and upstream tidal change.

Submitter 39 – Fiona McCabe

Ms McCabe spoke to her submission that was circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- expressed disappointment in the consultation process given the changes and financial implications proposed.
- locals who have grown up in the province know more about the rivers than Council staff – give them credit.

- questioned the cost of new staff at an average of \$100,000 per annum.
- business, farmers and Southland are struggling.
- the airport has been given extra protection – make it user pays debt via the airport.

Submitter 183 – Martin Silva

Mr Silva spoke to his submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- highlighted the importance of good soil health.
- help use real time flood protection.
- nature-based solutions and wetlands are effective and sustainable flood management tools.
- all will help reduce costs and financial burden.
- very few people have awareness of the importance of flora and fauna; maybe education would help get people included in those discussions.
- financial burden not only on the town, but also on the ratepayers.
- Mr Silva had seen exemplars of soil management/building-up organic matter in soils as a primary defence for flood management – in the EU, and there are climate incentives provided to recover farm land or land that is brought back to its original state.

Submitter 195 – Thriving Southland – represented by Richard Kyte

Mr Kyte spoke to the Thriving Southland submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- Mr Kyte advised that catchment groups were still driving their programmes forward.
- Thriving Southland works with the land sustainability team and are funded via MPI but are seen as independent. Have developed trust within the catchment groups.
- the work of Thriving Southland has a long-term focus. Funding is guaranteed via MPI through until 2025. The team have looked at user pays and do not favour this, but are also looking into sponsorship avenues as well.

Submitter 11 – T P McNamara

Mr McNamara spoke to his submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- floodbanks showing their age; slumped; uneven;
- 2020 near miss – very close to going over the top;
- been to all consultations since that event; promises made that work would be done on TRB down past Gore on stopbank – empty;
- told we need to get a consultant to make decision for us – make your decisions.
- not one thing will solve your problems – a combination.
- need to get the flow-way clear of the trees.
- deal with the railway bridge – impossible to raise in original place.
- going to have to raise the road bridge
- allow flooding to occur at Cattle Flat
- need another channel through East Gore (in Church St area) – houses could be relocated to Matai Ridge, the Gore flood division that is slow to fill
- If the above was done, then wouldn't have to worry about the height of the Railway Bridge.
- agreed this approach would likely require a re-routing of the lower end of the Waikaka Stream;
- this should be funded by the region, as the benefits to keeping road and rail open are region-wide. It is too big a burden for Gore ratepayers.

Submitter 176 – Mr Brian Rance

Mr Rance spoke to his submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- Mr Rance felt the country was struggling to maintain its biodiversity; if funding was reduced many good projects would fall over.
- there was a role for Council to earn carbon credits with plantings – this could be another method used to speed up regeneration. A good trial with a small group of select species would be valuable.

Afternoon tea adjournment taken from 2.59 pm to 3.21 pm.

Submitter 43 – Wendy Joy Baker

Ms Baker spoke to her submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- rates increase – compared 2017 year for property – 147.74% over that time
- questions value for rates for people in Nightcaps
- don't get EnviroSouth publication delivered
- what engagement is occurring in Nightcaps
- more pest control – particularly with regard to possums and ferrets
- enhancement of Wairio Stream edge and McGregor Park – Nightcaps
- suggested joint project ES and SDC to enhance this area
- highlighted the book Life on Earth by David Attenborough – treasure life, treasure nature.
- what are you doing for the people of Nightcaps? Look into the small streams as well as the big rivers.
- is unaware of any catchment or community groups that work in the Nightcaps/Wairio area.
- don't have trouble with dirty water discharges going into the stream, but want the weeds on the side tidied and some plantings done.

Submitter 207 – Dave Riddell

Mr Riddell spoke to his submission which was tabled at the meeting, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- does not like CV rating system; happy with current system; could be changed, but would need considerable thought.
- listening to comments from public meeting – will impact severely on businesses and farmers would be subsidised by commercial installations.
- never did agree with Council selling shares in South Port, but can see merit now and investing in a fund; but Council is the custodian.
- worked the Council in the past – had 50 staff, but when I left in the late 90s had more, and obviously more now.
- flood protection infrastructure – can't support the proposal as there is no detail on the work that is involved, on what things cost.
- can't see logic for another detention dam on Waihopai.
- the stop-banks at Winton and Lumsden – the risks are not that great on the Ōreti, so question the need.
- since 1984 flood the 1/100 year flood has been contained. But the 100 year estimates are not much different now – so I don't know – you have to be careful that you are not going out and spending money unnecessarily.
- Government is good at throwing out a carrot and getting local authorities to borrow. Same with 3Waters, Cycle Trails, and Councils are getting into serious debt.

- design of works needs to fit the data – there is now 40 years more data than there was in 1984 and the frequency estimates have not changed – therefore it might be nice to spend the money, but not if it costs too much.
- Maintain what you have in place now.
- can build detention dams upstream, or wetlands; gravel build-up in the rivers will slow the flow down.
- does not know the detail around computer modelling; noted there was much data between sites on rivers, so wasn't sure what the modelling would show.
- the Esk Valley event last year was an extraordinary event – you can't allow for those. The 1984 flood in Southland was an extreme event. If you put up infrastructure in one place you will be hit in another.
- do the remedial work on the infrastructure we have until there is evidence we need to do more.

Submitter 319 and 237 – Groundswell Western Southland – Sue Allison and Chantel Marshall

The presenters spoke to their submissions which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- Fish & Game need to think about humans – their homes and livelihoods.
- over time the world had experienced global cooling, global warming, issues with the Ozone layer – it is a revenue gathering machine that has taken over – it is a normal cycle for the planet.
- has been told three times in her life that the world would end – acid rain was one of the reasons – some very clever people are out there in the world revenue gathering off such things, and fear mongering.
- spoke to many people who signed the petition – the consensus was they cannot afford the ES rate.
- ES is relying on central government expenditure and other income to get work done, and proposing to add in 7.75 staff next year without getting any work done – cannot afford this.
- take money out of the budget, not off the ratepayer; tighten budgets.
- keep it real – pensioners cannot afford this increase; older people cannot involve themselves in these processes because they do not have access to the resources.
- any increases in business costs will be passed on to consumers – reference the Saleyards submission.
- need to take gravel out of the rivers – aquatic and bird life is no more important than those who live beside the rivers.
- Draft LTP should be delayed 12 months – perhaps grant funding needs to go. It's not that people are not doing a good job, but we can't afford it.
- If you have to do a LTP – don't change to CV, stay at LV, and find the money in your budgets.

Submitter 199 – Federated Farmers – Rachel Thomas (on line) and Jason Herrick

The presenters spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- cannot proceed as outlined; not enough discussion; majority of submitters against; lose trust of ratepayers; not re-elected.
- deeply flawed process – only preferred option is fleshed out
- lack of transparency
- rating change should have been consulted on prior to LTP
- having rating change to CV, in our opinion is divide and conquer
- maximise UAGC.
- abandon regionalisation approach – rivers and communities in Southland are unique, and one size does not fit all.
- audit opinion highlights concerns with Council spending for years 4-10.

- listen to community; conduct consultation; give more than one option to consider.
- council has a mandate to do what is best for the community, not what is best in their own opinion.
- review the rating system, but slow the process down – do that next year and review the Revenue & Finance Policy next year and carry out an amendment to the LTP then.
- need to do better river management than is currently happening.
- one size does not fit all – each river system is different, has its own issues and needs a different approach.
- concerned at not having had the opportunity to consider a range of opportunities/approaches to the rating changes being proposed – engage with the community around options.
- UAGC is about paying equally – why is it reducing?
- Council should have consulted on a rating review prior to the LTP – by at least six months to a year in advance – community is feeling consultation fatigue, and it is confusing.
- the rationale and narrative around flood protection seems to be very much in favour of the UAGC approach, but no part of the UAGC contributes to it. Rating review should look at how each activity is funded.
- trust a local over an international expert when it comes to what should be done in the rivers – they are watching it all the time.
- most farmers became aware of the consultation process around the LTP through the Federated Farmers communication, not the ES communication.

The hearing adjourned at 4.47 pm.

The hearing resumed at 11.00 am on Friday, 24 May 2024.

[Cr Cook was not in attendance upon resumption]

Submitter 263 – Mrs Judy Scott – Geoff Scott presenting on her behalf.

Mr Scott spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- Mr Scott expressed concern that all of his submissions had been joined together, and that he was not given 10 minutes to speak to each one.
- the Chairman had said to him that town hall meetings were a waste of time – concerned this came from an elected member.
- the hearing panel was complicit in breaches of the 2002 Act.
- ES has a habit of not responding to communications.
- the draft plan consultation process was flawed – he has travelled over 1800 km, attended multiple meetings, distributed thousands of submission forms, and the biggest response he has had from people is “why”.
- he favoured a rates revolt, using ES own rules against them to force a full and public response.
- believes the number of submissions lodged with Council is much higher than is being stated.
- urged a delay for 12 months and ensure all are fully consulted, which he was prepared to assist Council with.
- his submissions were not just on the consultation process, but on the fact he had feedback and solutions he wished to offer. Concerned all of his submissions were combined into one, and that this was an attempt to silence him. He does not have evidence of this.
- favoured town hall meetings, letters with full details to every ratepayer to draw their attention to these matters; hold meetings in the evening when people can attend, not at all hours of the day.
- should stay with a well maintained level 3 programme of work.
- cost of getting gravel out of the rivers is prohibitive.

Submitter 294 – Christine Bogers

Ms Bogers spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- drop-in sessions were held at the wrong time – when people were busy with work, children, sport, and were poorly advertised (not on Community Facebook pages).
- concerned that ratepayers were not written to as proposed in the documents, and noted the change in the documentation around this.
- transparent and respectful consultation required.
- change in rating system should be separated from the LTP – it is hard to understand when increases/changes are lumped together.
- Southland is in a serious financial downturn. Cost increases take a mental toll.
- you are putting the climate change “hysteria” ahead of people.
- reduce your staff.
- If projects cannot be self-funded (without borrowing) they should not proceed.
- Ratepayers are not a bottomless pit – where is your line? In 10 years time I won’t be able to afford our rates and we will lose our farm.
- noted devastating impact on NZ economy of Government’s narrative over lockdown – don’t be filled with climate change hysteria. Cannot afford to destroy the farming industry in Southland over idealistic things that might happen.
- advised she did not get the consultation information on the rating proposal
- advised she does not attend catchment liaison committee meetings.

Submitter 300 –Shona Stewart

Ms Stewart spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- the proposed 32% increase in her rates is significant.
- Of the 250 people that signed the petition, only 3% had heard anything about the LTP and knew nothing about the proposed changes.
- townsfolk were shocked to realise the changes would affect them.
- Does not support change from LV to CV.
- Look after the environment, but not at the cost of people losing their jobs, not being able to pay their bills.
- Asked Cr Rodway to apologise to submitter for incorrect information he provided at the hearing on the last day (re flood levels in Aparima). *Cr Rodway undertook to retract those comments with the submitter when the process was completed, and to Federated Farmers also.*
- Consent conditions not working on gravel extractions and cited example of trucks in waterways and exceeding the number of crossings allowed.
- believes Councillors are trying to trick ratepayers.

Submitter 314 – South Catlins Charitable Trust – represented by Paul Duffy

Cr Duffy spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- spoke in support of the work undertaken by Southern Pest Eradication Society.
- noted the benefits of the work done by the society are wider than to just individual farmers.
- noted that the Trust voluntarily traps and baits possums in the area – unless you are at possums all the time they come back quickly – need a consistent approach.
- there are big concerns in the southern area about rising numbers of deer and pigs – concerning situation.

- the SPES situation could be re-created in other parts of the province – locals in an area can deal with matters well. Areas can be cleaned up if there is a mechanism to do it.
- SPES has done well – its kill numbers are not high, but that is because they are on top of the situation.

Submitter 316 – Cook Farming Co Ltd – Mr Russell Cook

Mr Cook spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- disagreed that anything needed to be done re increased rainfall events – they are not happening and provided his personal knowledge of the Mataura in support;
- climate predictions are conjecture at best – wait to see what is happening before you spend money on floodbanks that are not likely to be needed.
- agrees with gravel extraction – should not have stopped – keep the “greenies hands off” – gravel could be made available for free to local enterprises, or at a nominal rate – ES PR would increase significantly.
- the \$2.3M for flood protection work is not required, nor is it sustainable.
- Councils are determined to go their own way despite ratepayers going broke.
- surprised to hear ES has 180 staff – what do you all do? Instead of increasing rates, decrease the staff by half and save \$5M a year.
- staff are trying to protect their own positions at someone else’s expense.
- GHG emissions – what about yours – how much CO2 goes into the atmosphere from driving around.
- staff are influencing policy to protect their patch and have a “cushy job for life” – Council do the policy.
- Supports the SPES rate – rabbit number are at low levels – that is one thing we like about ES. Having a compulsory rate is the only way it works.
- not opposed to switch to a CV rate, but this will hit the commercial sector hard – they will increase their costs back to the community so ratepayers will pay twice.
- Was aware of Government changing its regulations but was not aware of ES Plan rules that are in place. He felt Council should “hang fire” on its rules for 12 months and see what happens.

Submitter 318 –Josh Cumberland

Mr Cumberland spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- has ten years’ experience in river engineering hydrology.
- does not have confidence in Council’s ability to deliver on the proposals – it has not done the basics well – gravel management in particular.
- cross-sections to see if channels are aggrading or degrading are not being done – this is not expensive work.
- felt the river manager should live in the region – they would be more invested in the province.
- how can ratepayers have confidence in Council’s ability to fight hypothetical floods that may/may not happen in 100 years – focus on basics and protect for floods that historically happened.
- agree with those who think the climate change issue is alarmist – build resilient rivers for current conditions.
- Terminology in the documentation quotes 1/100 yr or 1/50 yr events – use annual exceedance probability – it will be less alarming.
- does not consider himself a climate scientist but a specialist in flood modelling.
- Supports a focus on river managers fixing current issues, and supported the slow the flow initiatives.

[Cr Evans left the meeting at this time.]

Submitter 321 – Otatara Landcare Group – Mr Brian Rance

Mr Rance spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- flagship project – Bushy Point – restoration programme
- Otatara Pestbusters co-ordinated by the Landcare Group
- biodiversity – supports the Environmental Enhancement Fund – want to see portion of the funding available for longer than a single year period.

[Cr Evans returned to the meeting at this time – Cr Pemberton left the meeting at this time.]

- appreciates support from Biodiversity team
- support for Predator Free and work in Bluff and Omaui region – to assist with limiting spread
- wants to see increased funding to increase knowledge of Southland's biodiversity and know its condition
- Wants to see SOE reporting on these matters and to see increased wetland conservation and support for landowners working in this area;

[Cr Pemberton returned to meeting.]

- need to support landowners with what they need in their own situations with regards to wetlands – be that weeds, restoration, re-creation, technical advice.
- cats at Omaui – this is a social issue – need to raise awareness of cats and the problem of feral cats.
- EEF – some applications are for one-off projects, but some projects requiring weed and pest control over a longer period could be supported – giving greater confidence to applicants to complete the work.
- [Cr Rodway declared he was a member of the Otatara Landcare Committee and had done work in the past with this group].
- with regards to wasp control, there are new toxins available with increased efficiency and multiple agencies are looking at this.

Submitter 323 – Ken Buckingham

Mr Buckingham spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- following on from last submitter, noted the problem of feral cats is increasing.
- there should not be any rate increase – ratepayers cannot afford it.
- South Port – retain shareholding – don't sell the family silver. They are a sound long-term investment and subsidise rates.
- If the change to CV rate goes ahead Council will receive less from forestry owners but increase rates on everyone else – this is already happening at SDC.
- retain the targeted rabbit rate for SPES – leave us alone to carry on with the successful control of rabbits in southern Southland.
- has not studied the rate proposals – likes the sound of land area, but Council could carry on with the status quo.

Submitter 2 – Alanna Barrett

Ms Barrett spoke to her submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- spoke to NZ Statistics from 2002 on Southland when speaking on the proposal to change to CV rate.
- expressed concern about the former Government's Water Services Entity Bill, which she felt provided for unlimited rates rises.
- the rates act is a "free for all" and "should have been publicly notified" that there are no limits.
- the standards in the Rating Act have been removed since she purchased her property.
- there is a conflict of interest, with planners writing the rules, getting Council to pass them, leading to people leaving their homes.
- pensioners are on limited incomes.
- with regards to South Port shareholding – Council inherited them through their former lawyer and should never have had them – they should have been held in trust for the Community Board of Bluff. They should go back to the people of the community who should be administering them – a rainy day sort of fund.
- the never-ending rate increases referred to are in the Local Government Ratings Act, Schedule 1, AAA.

Brief adjournment taken from 12.30 to 12.34 pm.

Submitter 58 – Predator Free Rakiura

Mr D Fagan attended the hearing by Zoom link, spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- wants to work on biosecurity plan and an approach to stop predators entering Rakiura.
- recently appointed shared biosecurity employee – focused on risk pathways for the likes of rats etc from re-entering Rakiura.
- Biosecurity Audit - encourage this work to be commenced, which will have cost and research implications.
- any investment in biosecurity will be off-set by savings in eradication on the Island in the future.
- partner with ES to do this work.
- the work done by the Bluff Predator Free group has been significant, but Bluff will continue to be a significant cargo and personal transit point, as well as the recreational and commercial users going in and out of the port and over to Rakiura – need a biosecurity border in two locations – one at the point of departure and also one at the point of arrival.

Submitter 206– Bertram Hammond

Mr Hammond attended the hearing by Zoom link, spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- expressed concern that everything was going up – ES rates keep going up and up.
- businesses need to look hard at themselves and focus on what is necessary; keep an eye on staff numbers.
- owns a house but can't afford to live in it – is eating into savings – pensions are not going up.
- will be 72 this year and didn't want to go back to work, but might have to go and get a job.

Submitter 175 – Mid Dome Wilding Trees Charitable Trust – Ali Ballantine

Ms Ballantine attended the hearing by Zoom link, spoke to the submission which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to questions, making the following additional points:

- the funding partners are very supportive of the Trust and the work it does, and cognisant of the gains made, but have had central government funding cuts at both LINZ and DOC.
- all financial contributions to the Trust will help. When the Trust has been fully funded it spent \$1.5M per year, but now looking to spend that amount over the next 4-5 years, to reach the maintenance phase.

- the Trust is trying to protect not just the Dome but the large area beyond the Mataura Valley to the west, where there is wind spread from seed source trees. Seed spread is now being faced from new plantations happening on risky, high wind sites.
- lands cleared to date are more productive farm land and there is less likely to be spread from there because of browsing animals that can control it. Will not hand back to the Council under the biosecurity rules unless it is known the areas are completely clear.

Termination

This concluded the hearings, and the hearing closed at 1.01 pm.