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## **Feedback on the Dunedin City Council Annual Plan update: Tō tātou āpōpō - The future of us 2023/24**

### Introduction

1. The Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society Inc. of New Zealand (Forest & Bird) is Aotearoa New Zealand's leading independent conservation organisation. Forest & Bird has played an important role in protecting and preserving New Zealand's environment and native species for a century. Forest & Bird is independently funded by private subscription, donations, and bequests. The Society's mission is to protect and preserve New Zealand's unique ecological values, flora and fauna, and natural habitats in a climate crisis and to continue that mission into the next century.
2. Forest & Bird has an active volunteer branch in Dunedin, along with a Kiwi Conservation Club for tamariki, whose multigenerational members and supporters play an important and active role in protecting and restoring the region's native species and habitats, in biosecurity, as well as in education and advocacy for nature in a climate crisis, in their respective districts. Within Forest & Bird there is a wealth of knowledge and expertise on protecting and restoring Aotearoa New Zealand's native ecosystems and species.
3. Forest & Bird is grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Dunedin City Council Annual Plan update: Tō tātou āpōpō - The future of us 2023/24. Forest & Bird acknowledges the work that Councillors and staff are doing to improve the city through the annual and long-term plan processes.
4. Forest & Bird wishes to be heard in support of this feedback.
5. Dunedin City Council have asked two key questions in their annual plan submission process:
  - a. How are we doing? Is there anything you would like to tell us?
  - b. What other ideas should we be thinking about to include in future plans for our city?

The below is in response to those questions, in particular question two.

## 6. Nature Based Solutions

New Zealanders received a wakeup call about the impacts of climate change with the immense devastation caused by Cyclone Gabrielle and the Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland floods. As we look to recover from these disasters and reduce the impact of future extreme weather events, nature has a key role in helping us to adapt. By protecting nature, we can protect ourselves and our communities.

One key lesson from the years since Cyclone Bola, is that action which should have been taken to build resilience has been neglected, and where action was taken, it was not properly thought through, which has resulted in the damage from forestry slash. We cannot afford to repeat these mistakes. There are limits to adaptation and other parts of the world, and some of our own communities, lack the resources needed to adapt. We must step up action to reduce emissions and minimise unavoidable climate change.

Critical actions in the light of Cyclone Gabrielle include:

- Creating room for rivers
- Doubling wetlands
- Restoring and expanding native forest and shrublands
- Improving land use
- Adapting in ways that protect and enhance nature
- Keeping emission reductions at the core of climate change policy

Improving land use, not overly relying on flood protection works, and the role of native forests were all understood after Cyclone Bola in 1988. It is now time for the best available knowledge to be applied to build our resilience.

Although it appears on the surface that many of these actions fall into the responsibility of regional authorities, there is plenty that city and district councils can be doing to support these actions and comply with their responsibilities under the Resource Management Act and Local Government Act:

- Section 31 of the RMA allocates several functions to territorial authorities related to climate change and environmental wellbeing, including ‘integrated management’ of natural and physical resources, ‘the avoidance or mitigation of natural hazards’, and ‘the maintenance of indigenous biological diversity’.
- The LGA also sets out its purpose ‘to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future.’

City councils such as DCC can advocate for and integrate nature-based solutions through their city planning, land use and subdivision consents and code of subdivision and development, parks and reserves network, infrastructure planning (including transportation and three waters), Significant Natural Areas (SNA) identification and mapping, climate change/zero carbon planning and policy, waste management and more.

## **Conclusion**

In dealing with the dual crises of climate and biodiversity, no single portfolio can be looked upon in isolation. Integrating ideas, proper resourcing and working effectively with others while being inclusive of those in the community with knowledge and expertise, will help achieve environmental outcomes and climate resilience, faster.

Forest & Bird strongly supports innovative green funding mechanisms to deal with climate change, on the condition that nature-based solutions cut across all port folios and underpin any climate change action plan for Dunedin.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback.

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